

## **“LETTERS HOME” OF DAVID LLOYD PARKER – COMPANY D, KIA JANUARY 31, 1968**

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**September 6, 1967**

Dear family,

I am sitting on the ship watching the miles of water go by. We've been out to sea for this, our sixth day. It's something to see, all of this water. We have 2900 troops on the ship. It is called the USNS General John Pope. It's a Merchant Marine type ship. Our equipment has gone on ahead in another ship. We are supposed to get to Okinawa on September 15. That is where I'll be mailing this letter from.

The wind is blowing across the bow here real hard and it's pretty hard to write. We flew from Temple, Texas...which is about 20 miles from Fort Hood...to San Francisco. From there we took a bus to the dock and boarded the ship right away. The ship left at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 1st. I have been instructing a course on the ship called the "Quick kill". Dad should remember he read about that when I first got my draft notice. Its main concept is concentrating on the target with your eyes and hitting it without using the sites. We have BB guns and fire at cans and popsicle sticks on the stern of the ship. I have been one of the instructors for four days now and can hit almost anything with a BB gun. The same Accuracy should come with any weapon. I just got the word a little while ago that I should be able to get off the ship for a few hours when we reach Okinawa. I sure as hell hope so.

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**September 10, 1967**

I hope you didn't work too hard on Friday. I never knew such a day. We crossed the International Date Line and went from Thursday to Saturday<sup>1</sup>. The days keep ticking by. We have hit some rough weather. It's been misting and blowing real hard and the boat is rocking pretty good. I haven't had any trouble with being seasick. I just pretend I'm drunk and staggering... not because of the boat. I bet I can't even walk straight when I get on land.

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**September 12, 1967**

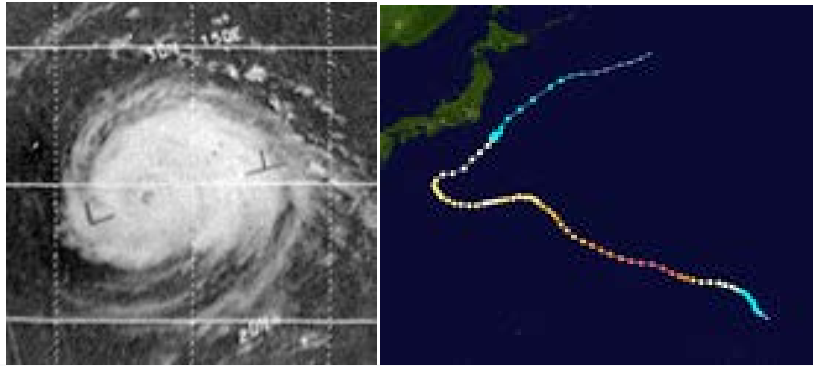
Well, we just passed through some rough weather. There were three typhoons around us. It got rough as hell for about 24 Hours or so. The Temperature is getting higher every day. It's so hot on deck that you can hardly breathe but the compartments are air conditioned and really comfortable, temperature wise.

<sup>1</sup> There is only a single day difference when crossing the International Date Line.

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## Super Typhoon Opal

A powerful system that peaked in winds of 180 [miles per hour](#) the equivalent of a [Category 5 hurricane](#).



**Duration:** August 29 - September 17

**Peak intensity:** 285 km/h (180 mph) (1-min) 920 hPa (mbar)

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### September 15, 1967

Well, tomorrow we get to Okinawa. I plan on getting drunk as hell. We've been on this ship now for 16 days. The walls are closing in more every day. I'm sure glad that we'll be getting off for a little while. Nothing much more to say. If you have written me to Fort Hood I'll get it at Okinawa, hopefully. I could sure use some mail. Haven't got any since the 30<sup>th</sup> of August. Well guess I'll close this one up. Please urge people to write. I'm feeling pretty low.

Your Son,

Dave

PS: Dad, Please do me a favor. Next time you're in town buy me a motorcycle magazine. Then in the advertisements take the addresses of Triumph, BSA, Harley-Davidson & Norton bikes. Either send them to me or write them a post card and send my address asking for a complete catalogue with prices. (I'm thinking of buying one through the PX and save a lot) Thanks

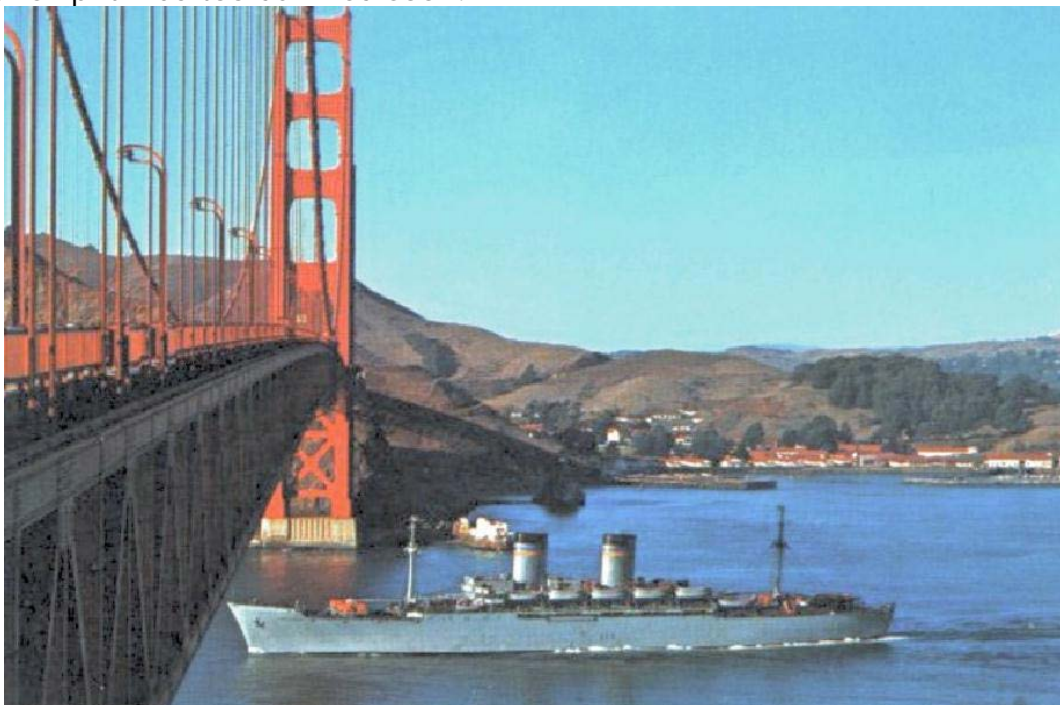
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### September 16, 1967 – OKINAWA, JAPAN

Well right now we are underway for Vietnam. We should arrive at Vietnam in about four more days. We left Okinawa at five this afternoon. We were allowed Shore Leave from about 830 this morning until 3 o'clock this afternoon when we had to be back aboard ship. It gave us a chance to have a few beers and look over the town. These slant-eyed girls are really fine. The town here was pretty dumpy but large. There is a lot of construction going on there. There are also many fine hotels and restaurants. The vegetation was very beautiful and the mountains rugged in appearance from the boat.

The trip, although short, proved very interesting. It is about 9 PM and I'm on CQ again. That tearing around we did in town has made me very tired.

I can hardly keep my eyes open. At this stage of our journey my only comment is..."If I ever see another ship it'll be too damned soon!"



**USS General John Pope (AP-110) Troop Transport Ship**

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**White Beach, Okinawa, 2013**

Only a single pier existed in 1967 (Probably the lower one pictured here) and the beach extended all the way to the tip of the peninsula at the top of this image

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## September 18, 1967 (Monday)

Well yesterday was a typical Sunday on board ship. I went to church, we had communion, and then we played cards and slept all day. We had a meeting this morning. Our leader let us in on what the area is like and just a few things to expect in country. This afternoon we had a drill on how we'll be getting off the ship. We'll be beaching with the use of landing craft just like on "Combat". Not much more to say except it's getting a little close. The butterflies are starting to come alive in my stomach. I wish now, In a way, that I wasn't a sergeant. What I say or have my men do can mean the difference between life and death with many people. Two more days and will be there. I hope maybe by the time you receive this letter that my other letter will have reached you and that you have one on the way to me. I haven't gotten any mail since 28 August. But then I guess I can't complain too much. Most all of these guys have got wives or girlfriends besides their parents to worry about. I just got my parents and relatives. No girlfriends. Eileen didn't write once since I was home last and frankly I don't give a damn. They can all go to hell till I get out and then I'm going to get in some new stock. I hope the next 260 days go fast.

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## September 19, 1967 (Tuesday)

Tomorrow we will arrive at a port in Vietnam. A bunch of troops will get off. Not us. We go farther up the coast. Don't have much to write today except that I've got to pack up my bags again and get ready to get off. I'm finishing this letter today so it can go out tomorrow morning. Hope everybody is OK. No mail yet!

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## September 24, 1967

Dear Family,

I suppose you're wondering where I'm at and what I'm doing. Right now I'm at An Khe. It's a pretty well-established camp. We're living in real nice hooches. We landed at Qui Nhon yesterday and flew here. We're connected to the 1st Cavalry Division. The country is really rugged. The mountains are steep and covered with vegetation. We'll be processing in-country and be undergoing some additional training.

The 27th we will fly back to Qui Nhon and pick up our vehicles. We have a 70 mile road trip to the area where we will have to build our base camp. It'll take approximately two months to build base camp. The route we're going to travel to that site was hit the last time it was traveled on. 50 dead, 155 wounded<sup>2</sup>. I'll be real happy to get set up. Once we get our bunkers built in our perimeter me we should be pretty safe. Our base camp location will be approximately 12 miles South Southwest of Bong Son.

The cav units here are Airmobile. They have helicopters galore. They fly over here 24 hours a day. This morning we could hear the artillery firing. One lieutenant has been shot at by a sniper while he's been here. He's from our unit in the advanced party. We have a real nice NCO-EM club just a little ways from here. I got a little boozed up last night. It had been a long time since I had any good beer.

<sup>2</sup> Although there may have been an event such as Dave describes here on the route from Qui Nhon to Bong Son, Highway 1, there is no documentation to support that such an event happened days before the 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry column headed North to it's temporary home at LZ Ichiban. It is probable that a story was heard and misconstrued. Highway 1, the infamous "Street Without Joy" of Bernard Fall's book title fame, was a heavily travelled route up the coastal area of Binh Dinh Province. It was relatively secure in most places during Daylight...but travel at night was restricted to military operations only.

Minnesota is playing some good baseball this year. I met a guy at the club last night from Fairmont. He's the supply sergeant here. Yesterday I got two letters from you and two from Caroline. I hope she understands why I don't write her much. When I write to you I say everything of interest and if I write her I could just use a carbon paper.

I don't have much more to say except I hope everybody's fine and please don't worry about me. I'm taking real good care of myself and except for a month old mustache I'm the same guy.

I'm going to buy a camera pretty soon and I'll send the film home. Color prints are not needed here. They have to be sent to the states. I'll send them home you get the prints made and I'll tell you about them when school is out. Bye for now, Dave...New address!!!

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## **September 26, 1967**

Dear Family,

Hope my letters have been getting through! Tomorrow we move out to a hill called LZ (Landing Zone) Ichiban...named after the old 1/50<sup>th</sup> slogan. LZ Ichiban is a green area with nothing on it. We'll be there until about April. It is part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail<sup>3</sup>. The NVA have been using it unhampered for about ten years. It is a resupply route for most of South Vietnam.

About half of our platoon has been snipered at already. This morning we had an alert. Just before daybreak a few VC hit our northern boundary. The other day we went out of the perimeter to test our weapons. We had to March about 2 miles back to our perimeter. We were lucky and didn't get it.

Yesterday I processed into the 1st Cav. I am going to draw \$50 each month. The rest (\$200) is going to be kept in finance. When I go on R&R, I can draw out what I need. When he gets build up, I can draw out 3 or 4 hundred dollars and send it home. We also filled out a form on whether or not I want my next of kin notified in the event I get wounded. I told them I did. That way in case I am unable to write you'll know what's going on. This war is rougher than I imagined. I hope that with God's help I'll be able to make it back. Please write.

Dave

PS: if you ever see Eileen, ask her to write! I've written her but she won't answer.

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## **October 3, 1967 (Tuesday)**

Dear Family,

Happy birthday to me<sup>4</sup>! I have received 2 letters from you since I left Fort Hood. They were dated around the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. It is apparently taking a real long time for mail to get squared away. I hope you have received the letters I have written you.

<sup>3</sup>. LZ Ichiban was the initial destination and intended home of the 1/50<sup>th</sup> and was located about 4 kilometers North of LZ Uplift, an existing large improved Landing zone and base camp which had been built by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry's 8<sup>th</sup> Engineers and occupied by various infantry and supporting elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division beginning sometime during 1966. After a short period of time at Ichiban (about a week or so), the 1/50<sup>th</sup> was moved to LZ Uplift, which became it's Forward Area Base Camp until late summer of 1968. Ichiban was abandoned and left unimproved except for a circular unpaved perimeter road. Also, although LZ Ichiban's location in coastal Binh Dinh Province received some re-supply via the Ho Chi Minh Trail...it was not considered a part of the trail which ran from North Vietnam down through Eastern Laos and Cambodia.

<sup>4</sup>. David Lloyd Parker was born on October 3, 1946. He turned 21 on October 3, 1967, This was his last birthday before being killed in action on January 31, 1968.

We have had one casualty in my platoon. One guy got hit by some shrapnel from a "Dud" round the engineers were blowing up below the hill we're on<sup>5</sup>. It went through his leg in the groin area.

We were hit by the VC the other night. We got a few but by morning their bodies had been drug away. We have sniper fire every night and day. It rains here constantly in the mud is deep. I have been working hard night and day and have been wet since I got here. We work, eat, and sleep in the rain. When it isn't raining it's so damn hot you can't move.

Yesterday we fired a mission with the 81 mm mortars and artillery all at once. We got quite a few but the bodies could not be accounted for.

This is the most godforsaken place I've ever seen. Why anybody would even be here I can't stand. I haven't been eating hardly anything because I have been working too hard.

I am up most of the night firing and don't get much sleep. In other words I'm so miserable sometimes I wish Charlie would get me!

I don't have a chance to write much so be patient and I'll write when I can. Vic wrote me! Thank him for me and show him this letter. (Next time send the whole bottle). I don't know when I'll write again but don't worry and remember I love you all.

Dave

PS: If you would please, when you write, put two or three blank envelopes in with the letter. We have no place to buy anything. Our soap and cigarettes we get from care packages<sup>6</sup>.

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## **October 7, 1967 (Saturday)**

Dear Family,

I got the birthday card yesterday. A little late, but I still got it. The money you sent was quite unnecessary. You see it's a federal offense to spend American Money over here....but I was able to trade it for Military Script with a man who is headed to Hawaii for R&R and will be getting some photos developed and needed it.

Right now I'm sitting in a bunker (just like World War II) and trying to keep dry. We have just arrived here at LZ uplift from where we were in LZ Ichiban. We are about 3 miles from where we were. The artillery has some 8 inch guns right next to us and they have a tank with 40 mm guns up on the hill that shoots right over our heads.

I still haven't been promoted yet. I don't know when I will. A guy in my squad just got two boxes of goodies from home. You asked me what I wanted or needed. Well about all I've got is what's on my back so anything you send will be appreciated. I would like you to send a small can of oil, some mixed nuts, a few plain chocolate bars, and 2 pints of Canadian Calvert.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of this incident, David Parker was assigned to Headquarters Company. Company "D" was formed later in the month of October of 1967 and all HQ Company Mortar men were absorbed into this 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Line Company. Historian Jim Sheppard was assigned to Charlie Company at the time and recalled this incident. This would place Parker's Mortar Squad on top of the hill in the center of LZ Ichiban.

<sup>6</sup> "Care Packages" were what soldiers commonly called packages received from loved ones...but the phrase was also used to describe the "Service Packs" we received periodically which were boxes of cigarettes by the carton and other items. There was a good variety in these...as Historian Jim Sheppard recalls smoking Menthol cigarettes during the Vietnam war and at times over 3 packs per day. There were also small packages of cigarettes (4 to a small box) that came with each C-ration meal.



I just came from a meeting. Our platoon and the rest of headquarters Company have been made into D company<sup>7</sup>. We are now rifleman and not with the Headquarters mortar platoon. I am a little more scared now than I was before. I don't like to beat through the jungles. It's too wet to use our tracks so will be "hoofing" it. A helicopter just got shut down and the choppers are taking B Company out to protect them.

I always thought this war was slow but the VC are hitting closer all the time. We are supposed to start on operations Monday. If you don't hear from me for a while you know why.

I got a card from Nona and grandma... Thanks so much. I hope they will forgive me for not writing but my time is very limited they really keep me busy.

B Company got hit pretty hard out after that downed chopper. Total casualties are not yet known<sup>8</sup>. It's pretty rough here I've left out the more gruesome details. I think it would be just as safe in a hurricane. Sorry I don't have any good news. Eileen and Mary don't write so "Que será, sera". By now.

Dave

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**October 10, 1967 (Wednesday<sup>9</sup>)**

Dear Family,

How's everyone? Fine I hope. I sure haven't been getting much mail. Have you been writing or is it just messed up?

We are now on perimeter guard. We are in bunkers surrounding this place. There are mountains all the way around us. It looks real nice during the day but at night it's a different story. We had a real quiet night last night. Tonight I am in LP (listening post) way beyond the perimeter. It sounds pretty rough but it's not really.

How's the duck hunting? I sure wish I was home. This is as close as I want to get to hell. If it isn't muddy and raining it's blistering hot. But I guess I can stand it. Once I get out of this place I can't imagine how I'll act. I want to do so many things when I get out, but I'll probably get back to the old routine.

Mary never writes. I haven't heard from Eileen since I was home. I guess I'll have to start from scratch when I get out.

I would like very much for you to send me a half pint of whiskey. I would also like to know where the guys are at over here. Got to go.

Dave

<sup>7</sup>. TO&E for Mechanized Infantry stateside had been for 3 Line Infantry Companies and 1 Headquarters Company per Battalion. In Vietnam, Infantry units were limited in operation capability by generally having to have a contingency remain behind (Usually a Company sized element) at base camp for perimeter security. Hence soon after arrival in Vietnam, a 4<sup>th</sup> Line Company was formed drawing staff from Headquarters Company as well as the other 3 Infantry Line Companies.

<sup>8</sup>. There is no record of any significant action involving any 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry unit on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1967. The 1<sup>st</sup> week in October saw the beginnings of operations for the 4 Infantry Line Companies with first fatalities on the 11th. Prior to the first KIAs, there had been several wounded from Booby traps.

<sup>9</sup>. October 10, 1967 was a Tuesday.

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**October 18, 1967**

Dear Family,

You probably are worried because I haven't written so I am trying to write now at 5 o'clock in the morning by moonlight.

I'm sitting on a white sandy beach in between two villages with the rest of the company. We have had a chance to swim in the ocean and got clean at last. We have been on a big search and destroy mission since about a week ago. We've been lucky in a way, as we haven't made contact. Happy birthday dad, I didn't know the month has gone by so fast!. I guess it's darker than I thought. I lit a cigarette and see I skipped a line...I sure hope you can read this.

I have just received a letter from you dated the fifth. I wish you would let me know if you're getting mine.

On this mission we have covered about 6 to 8 miles on foot, carrying all our gear on our backs. We were airlifted by chopper to a mountain top about 2 miles from here and made a sweep down the side and through the villages. Today we're supposed to be airlifted someplace else.

Have to quit. My eyes are sore. I'll try to write more next time. We had our first church service since I've been here yesterday. I'm OK, don't worry.

Dave

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**October 20, 1967**

Dear Mom, Dad and Sis,

I got your package tonight when the chopper brought out our mail, water and supper. I am still on a search and destroy mission. We have been out almost 2 weeks now and hadn't made any contact with the VC until tonight.

I guess the package must have done it. We started out from our base camp early this morning on the base of the Tiger mountains just southwest of Bong Son. We walked all day across this valley, across rice paddies, checking out villages and looking for signs of the enemy. We found plenty.

We moved up here, where I am now, on the side of the ridge. Myself with Sergeant Higgins and Sergeant Bell, both of whom have been in this before, had just built a shelter after supper and covered the entrance with a poncho liner. I just tore open your package and showed everyone (Bell and Higgins) what I had got when one or a few VC fired upon us from across the rice paddy. The bullets flew through the area. Only one man was hit. He just got a minor leg wound. We jumped on our mortar and made it "hot" for a little while.



In the meantime a med-evac (helicopter type ambulance) arrived picking up the wounded man within two minutes after he was hit. Then to gunships (helicopters with the Rockets in 1 million machine guns) came in and killed everything... including the ants in the area that the shots came from. That's about it. My first small firefight. I kept my head, moved my men into position and didn't fire a shot from my rifle because I couldn't find a target. Higgins and Bell said I reacted like a pro and we're very happy with my performance.

Sergeant Bell is a Negro and the greatest guy I've met since I've been in the army. On our patrols, I am the anchorman making sure we don't get hit from the rear. I am also the tracker watching for signs of VC when we go through the jungle.

My base camp is at An Khe. My base camp of operations where we actually live is Landing Zone Uplift, about 3 miles north of Phu Cat, where honstad<sup>10</sup> was.

I have been getting letters regularly from you so don't worry about the mail I'll write when I can but it's hard to find time. Thanks for all the goodies you sent me. I had to give most of it away because we are moving every day and have to travel light because of all the hazards we travel over. I hope you won't get mad when I say I don't want you to send me any more packages. If there is something I really need I'll ask for it, other than that forget it. It costs too much and I don't even have time to enjoy it.

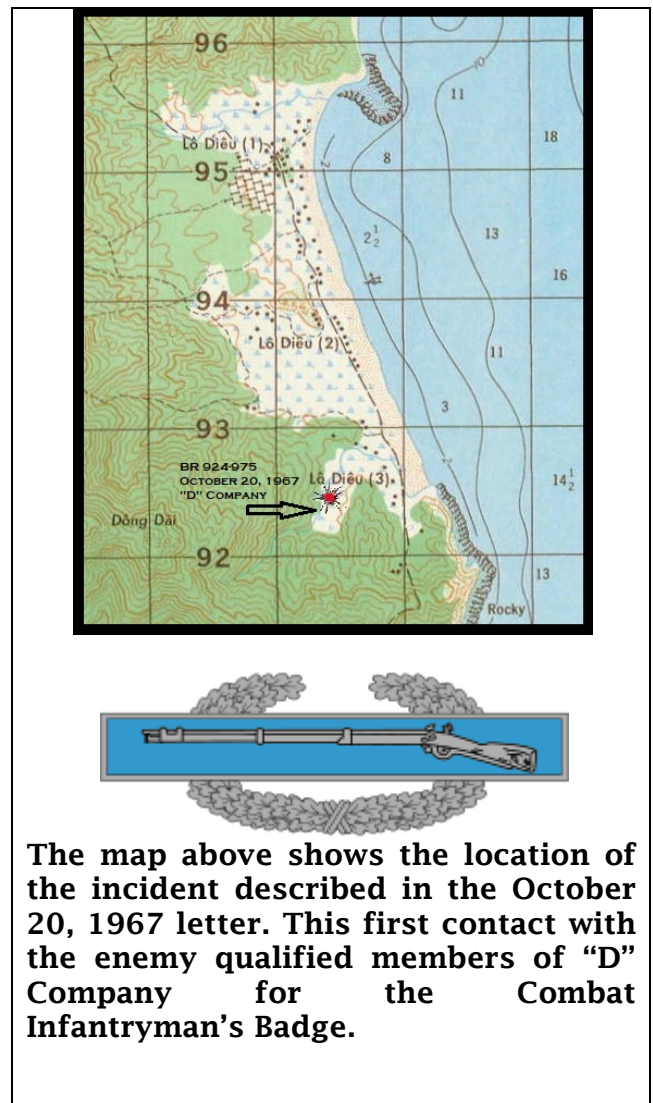
I'm really beginning to enjoy this war. It's just like one big hunting trip. I'm one of the best shots with the fastest reaction time in the company. This doesn't mean I may not get hit but it cuts the odds down to 100 to 1. I want all of you to worry about what you've got to do and let me worry about what I've got to do. I believe in God and I'm not afraid in the least, but I am the most cautious SOB in the army.

The paper and envelopes are fine but I don't think I'll be able to keep them dry...either sweat during the day or rain at night. But I have a real great idea. When you write me right on only one side of the paper and enclose an envelope. I can write you Right back then, see! Pretty smart huh?

Tell Vic and Gail hi and tell grandma and Elmer that I am getting their letters OK. It's rough here but please don't worry so much. If you do I won't tell you everything I'm doing. Keep smiling and don't let it get you down, I'm not.

All my love to everyone who reads this letter!

Dave



<sup>10</sup>. Not sure of the reference...it may be something the Parker family is familiar with. He clearly wrote ronstad...not capitalized. My first thought was Linda Ronstadt....since there were many large USO shows at Phu Cat Airbase...but she was not well known until 1970...and the first letter is clearly an "h".

**October 21 or 22, 1967 (Can't remember)**

Dear People,

Just a short letter to let you know I'm A-OK.

We flew from the area where we had contact and made camp on the ocean beach. We swim in the ocean and slept most all day. It was really a rest. Then this morning we flew here to a spot in the jungle where I'm writing this letter. It's really a beautiful area. You know I kind of like it here. The only thing that makes me mad is that "hunting" is not very good here. A plane spotted a regimen of the sea in the mountains but we couldn't go. I can't wait to shoot a gook.

I don't really have a lot to say. We get cigarettes and candy along with our beer rations every day. It's supplied with the money contributed to those funds back there<sup>11</sup>. It makes life a little more comfortable for us.

First chance I get I'm going to buy a Polaroid And then I can send pictures in these letters and let you see the different areas I'm in.

Everything is fine!

Don't worry.

Dave

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**October 25, 1967**

Dear Everyone,

Well you can all relax along with myself for a while. I'm back at base camp for two weeks. We got back about 10 this morning.

Yesterday and last night was really bad. We marched 8500 meters with full rucksacks through some real bad terrain. Then we set up till 12 midnight when we moved out and circled a village. We stayed up all night watching for VC entering or leaving. At six this morning we, 12 of us, went in and cleaned out the village. We didn't find any VC. It rained all night and we froze till this morning. But now I'm dry and clean and it doesn't seem so bad now.

I've been getting your letters regularly. They take six days from postage date. I did get the money from Caroline, you, and the package too. I am located at LZ uplift which is about 3 miles North of Phu Cat and 19 miles South of Bong Son on Highway 1. It shouldn't be hard to find on the map.

Don't have much more to say now. Will write again soon.

Dave

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<sup>11</sup>. Also see footnote 6...The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division's ample supply of helicopter support afforded troops in the field better support than most Vietnam Infantry units. A ration of beer was flown to us on occasion...but not every day. We were usually limited to two cans per man for obvious reasons. A can of beer worked miracles for a soldier's morale.

**October 29, 1967 (Sunday)**

Dear Family,

Hope everyone's fine! I am OK now! I wasn't a day or two ago. I was cleaning a 50 caliber machine gun on top of a track (APC). One part was stuck and I jerked it. It came all of a sudden and I fell back and landed on my back on top of the mortar. I went to the hospital and got x-rayed. I'm OK now though.

I put in a transfer request today for a door gunner position on a helicopter. If I get it, no more walking for me.

Don't have any news. We're still in Base camp. I'll write again soon.

Dave

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**November 1, 1967 (10:00 AM)**

Dear Family,

Well I'm sorry I haven't written for a while but I've been pretty busy.

I got a letter from grandma yesterday and am using the envelope she sent me. We are moving out again this afternoon. I don't know how long we will be in the field, but I hope not too long.

Charlie Company got hit pretty bad the other night. They fought for five hours. They had three men dead and 11 wounded. They just came in and now we're going out.

I've got a buddy who's girl sent him a tape recorder and a taped letter. It was so sweet I cried myself to sleep that night. I've been thinking, if you could buy a cheap tape recorder I could use his and we could send letters like that. It wouldn't cost you much more to send them and I can send tape home free. I will pay you for the recorder when I get home...for I plan on getting one anyway. Tapes are pretty cheap and we could use just one or two and erase them, record, and send them back.

One of my buddies got a Hot Rod magazine with pictures of the new cars. The Dodge Scat Pack looks great especially the Dart GTS. I like the Plymouth Road Runner too.

I've got to pack up to go now. Write soon.

Dave

PS: send Sell sealing envelopes!! The others are stuck together when I get them. Like this one.

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November 5, 1967 (Sunday)

Dear Family,

Just a short note to let you know I'm OK.

I am out in the field again. I've been out in the country for five days now. They spotted 200gooks in this valley. We're sitting in there now along with three or four companies. We surrounded the valley and set up on the mountain trying to spot them. We fired our motors in the area we thought they were in and yesterday we searched through the area. We found one dead as hell, all white and everything. It wasn't too pretty with the ants and all.

We were just ready to move when our lead platoon tripped a booby trap and wounded eight people not too bad. Then today one guy had a trip flare in his pack on his back. It went off somehow and burned his back real bad. A guy helped him and burned his hands bad. Foolish accidents. I got smoke burnt today. We threw a smoke grenade in a tunnel and when nothing came out I went in to look for weapons etc. I found none.

Thanks a lot grandma for the letter and envelope for without it I couldn't have sent this letter. I hope the house is ready by the time I get home. I'm sure I thanked Caroline for the money but if I haven't "Thanks a lot". No more news now... hope everything's OK.

Dave

PS: Dear Vic, "Hang it" or "Write"

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY
CONFIDENTIAL, AVDAGI <u>F11-0469</u>
1. (U) 1ST AIR CAV DIV INTSUM NR 308.
2. (U) 040001-042400 NOVEMBER 67.
3. (C) ENEMY ACTIVITY. OPERATION PERSHING CONTINUED
03-04 NOV. D 1-50 INF (M) 1145 HRS BR 975904 FD ONE EN KIA BY 81MM MORTAR, ALSO FD ONE CHICOM 9MM PISTOL.
1220 HRS BR 975905 11 US WIA (TWO SERIOUS, NINE SLIGHT, MED-EVAC) FM TWO EXPL TYPE BT
DECLASSIFIED Authority NND 873341
DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS DOD DIR 5200.10
Confidential

Extracted from Intelligence Summary for November 4, 1967, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Division Operations

**November 11, 1967**

Dear Family,

Sorry I haven't written sooner but I've been very busy.

We left for the field on the first and are still there. Right now I'm sitting in a deluxe, number one, customized bunker that is the closest thing to home I've seen yet in Vietnam. We are getting a little rest pulling Bunker guard on LZ Pony. We were picked up yesterday from an area and flown to LZ Ollie and from there to here. We were at an area where a regimental CP (Command Post) and two Companies of the Viet Cong had been spotted. We have been walking all day and getting up at 2:30 in the morning and surrounding a village. When first light comes we move in and see what we got. We have captured about 20 VC this way. We have not had any more casualties since I wrote you last except for broken and sprained ankles and legs due to the fatigue and terrain we travel in.

We haven't received any mail for three or four days so I should have some someplace.

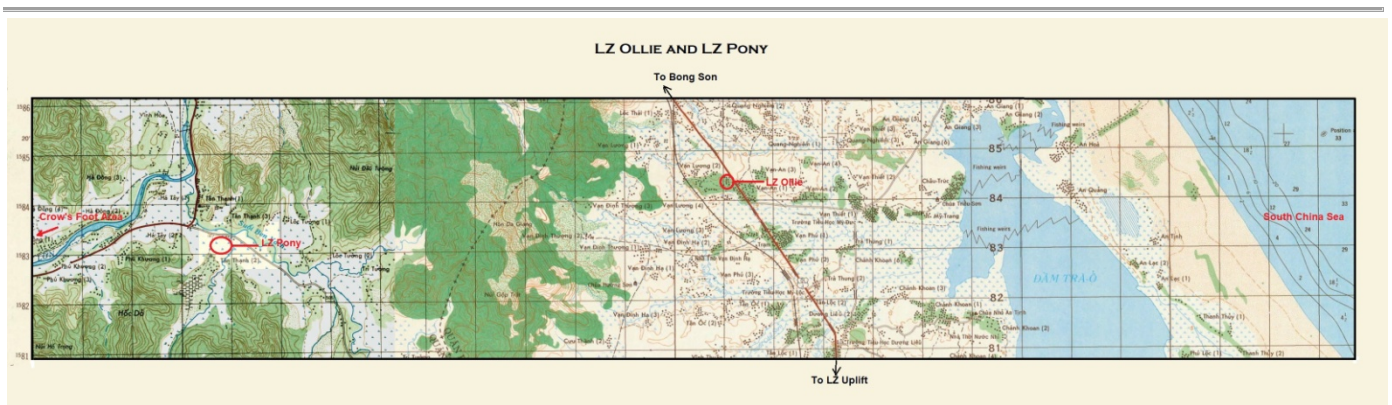
I imagine you might have snow and cold weather by now. I sure could use some. I was so cold yesterday I thought I'd freeze to death. It rained as usual but this time I had to stand in it. If we are moving or in the jungle it's not so cold but otherwise it's cold as hell and especially at night when it gets cold anyway.

We are supposed to get our tracks today. It would be the first time we use them. If we do get them will probably be going to Bong Son to guard the bridges there. The VC have been trying to blow up those bridges since they were built but haven't succeeded yet.

I have run out of things to say right now. Hope everyone's fine and don't forget to keep those hands out of the corn picker. Please try to get Vic to write again. "So long" for now.

Love, Dave

PS: I'm fine but tired of the whole damn mess.



**November 12, 1967**

Dear Family,

Well today I got caught up with my mail. I got this letter plus 2 from Caroline. It sure was nice to get some. Your letter here says you're glad I am in camp taking it easy for a while. Well I sure haven't been. We were supposed to but with the monsoon season moving in we are always on call to move out. The Viet Cong do most of their intensive fighting during the rainy weather which makes it difficult to move and find the enemy for us.

Now I am still at LZ pony which is an isolated landing zone south west of bong song about 40 miles or so. We are still happily pulling guard around the perimeter. We're supposed to get our tracks (Armored Personnel Carriers) soon.

I have two requests to make. One: please when you write a letter, put the day of the week down so I can figure out what day I'm on. We have to have our own private little church on Sundays because a chaplain never comes out. We've had one since I've been here. My second request is if you would please take some pictures around home of just little things that I realize meant so much to me before. Like the lake and the trees around home, the dogs, yourselves and Elmers and grandma. I'd like to see some of the things I like that seem very far away right now.

I am getting pretty good at taking care of myself so you're worrying can ease just a little. I keep my rifle and ammo clean, my eyes ears and nose operating all the time and keep my finger on the trigger. If anybody plans on getting the kid he better have all his shit together or "his ass is out" as we would say. I wrote Vic a letter yesterday to remind him I'm still around. You know that Brandenburg girl that's going to have her second baby is the one I took out a few times and Dick went with before Gail. Well be good and keep worrying. Love, Dave

Thought of some more to say. You maybe wonder what we carry with us when we stomp around in the jungle. Well, if we're lucky, our rucksacks are lifted out in the morning and brought in at night. They contain shaving gear, socks, fatigues ammo, foot powder, a poncho and poncho liner and an air mattress which all weigh about 35 pounds. On my back then without the rucksack I carry 2 canteens: 1 quart and one 2-court. I carry a 45 pistol, a riot gas grenade for tunnels, a flashlight (also for tunnels) and a first aid pouch. Also I have a cleaning gear pouch with cleaning rod, oil, patches, rags, brushes, etc. for my rifle and pistol. I carry 16 magazines loaded with 20 rounds each for my rifle and my demo kit, which contains 10 non-electrical blasting caps, a crimper, 12 feet of time fuse, 20 feet of detonating cord and 10 fuse lighters. I am the man that blows up booby traps and things of this nature that stand between us and where we're going. I had quite a bit of demolition in "Davy Crockett"<sup>12</sup> and volunteered for the job. I'm good at it too.

Bye now,  
Dave

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### **November 19, 1967 - 12:45 AM – On Guard**

Dear Family,

Well how's everybody? I'm just fine.

I'm still at LZ pony pulling bunker guard. If I could only do this the rest of my time over here I would be happy. The bunker we've got looks a lot different. We got a roll of tar paper and fixed the roof and we build bunk-beds in it. We built them out of ammo crates we got from the artillery. Our only tools were a pliers and a shovel. But as they say, if it can be done, a GI will do it.

I don't really have too much to say. Oh yeah, about the next package you send: I've seen a lot of packages come in and the things I'd like the most are magazines (Outdoor Life, Motor trend, Guns and Hunting, etc.). One guy got today in a package a roll of summer sausage and I was thinking of deer sausage and drooled all over. Candy we have a lot of so don't send any. Some homemade date bread or banana bread would be great.

<sup>12</sup>. As an 11C Military Occupational Specialty (Mortars) soldier, David Parker likely received some training related to firing the Davy Crocket Missile System. There would also have been some demolition training as well. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davy\\_Crockett\\_\(nuclear\\_device\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davy_Crockett_(nuclear_device))

Well, my guard is about up so I'll close now. Hello to everyone and keep writing (especially Vic).

Bye now,  
Dave

---

### **November 20, 1967**

Dear Family,

Decided to write again and let you know how I'm doing.

We are still on guard at LZ pony. But we go out on short one day operations. One such an operation, walking down a creek, I slipped and sprained my ankle. Didn't hurt much, but I acted good and now I am in base camp taking it really easy.

I got your letter today telling about the packages you're sending. As lousy as the chow's been lately I could sure use some goodies from home. I took a hot shower today, the first for three weeks. I think I finally got clean after about two hours of washing. We've got wooden homes now here at base camp. They have a canvas roof but wooden sides and floor. They're real nice after you've lived on the ground for two months. Do you know that by the time you get this letter that I'll have 3/4 of my two years done and 1/4 of my time in Vietnam done...won't be long now!

If you're interested in what the rest of the Battalion is doing, "B" Company ran into a Company of VC and NVA and wiped them out. What they didn't kill they captured along with a lot of guns and ammo. They had 2 lightly wounded. But back here at basecamp, a guy found a blasting cap and not knowing what it was messed around with it until it went off. He's going back to the states. We don't have any use for men with one eye.

I suppose I could tell you how many mosquitoes we have or how terrible the water tastes or how hot it gets during the day or how cold it gets at night or how wet it is walking through the rice paddies or how much Vietnamese villages stink or how many poisonous snakes there are or how scared I am of booby traps or how the VC treat American prisoners or how lonely I am or how much I wish the war was over or how much I miss you all but I ain't got time so this will have to do.

Love you all. Happy Thanksgiving!  
Dave

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### **Thanksgiving Day (November 23, 1967)**

Dear Family,

I hope sincerely that everyone is having a happy and joyous day. I can just imagine all of the food there spread out on the table. I sure would have liked to have been there. My day wasn't very nice for being Thanksgiving Day. We pulled guard as usual last night here at LZ pony.



We have three small boys that come to our bunker and clean up and work for us. We give them "C" rations and a little money to work for us. Well today we took them to the village just outside of the perimeter and got them haircuts and then we went to this place and sat around drinking Coke and talking to a few girls. We got a ride back here and that's when I got your package which served as a Thanksgiving day feast. I was crying when I opened it. How perfect it was time to. But what really broke me up was that when we were sitting around eating a guy came in with some more mail. A letter from you and Caroline, but most of all, "The Voice" with a daily devotions book in it. I have seen a chaplain once since I've been here and we had just been saying how it's a damn shame we couldn't get one today. Anyway I turned to today and read aloud to all of the men in my bunker and I had tears rolling down my cheeks. I think that by the time I get home I'm going to lose half my mind. These young boys are real nice kids and they help take my mind off of everything else.

In your letter you said you were going to send a box a week and if I wanted anything I should let you know. I have been trying to buy a camera since I've been over here but I haven't had a chance. Before I leave here I will buy a Polaroid color camera, but there are a lot of pictures to be taken and I can send film home free. I'd like a small Kodak Instamatic if it's not too much to ask. Don't send any candy, gum or Kool-Aid. If Vic sent me a bottle of whiskey, I haven't got it yet. I'm OK and think I'm putting on a little weight. "Beaucoup beer, you biểc?" (Mama-san a lot of beer you understand?)

Bye now  
Dave

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**November 29, 1967**

Dear family,

I'm real sorry I haven't written before this, but I have really begun to enjoy life a little here in Vietnam. Right now, while I write, I am sipping on a whiskey sour, something I haven't had for a long time.

I'm still at LZ pony pulling perimeter guard. We work as little as possible... so do nothing during the day. I have been going into this village and I met this girl. Well you know me, we fell for each other and so I keep busy and my mind occupied at the same time. Her name is Lum Li, she's 17 and a real nice girl. Sometimes I wish she wasn't so nice but she keeps me away from all the bad girls. I can speak a little Vietnamese and her a little English so most of the time we both have our own school classes. She's real sweet and I can't wait till you meet her. (Hey dad, pick mama off the floor and tell her I was only kidding!). I am just fine as far as health goes and we have real good chow now.

Well, six more months and I'll be back to the states. That's half the year. I hope it goes by as fast as the last six months. Well, short but sweet. "So long" for now.

Love.  
Dave

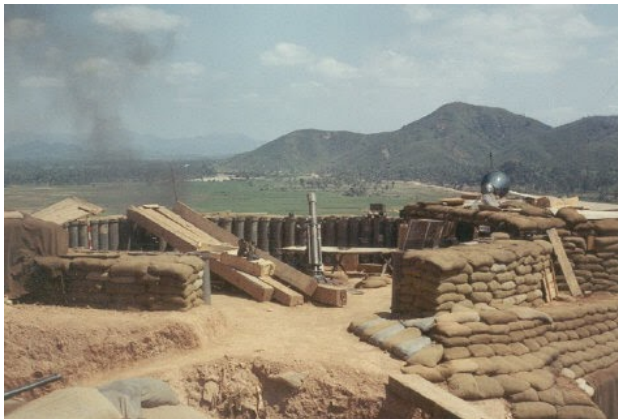
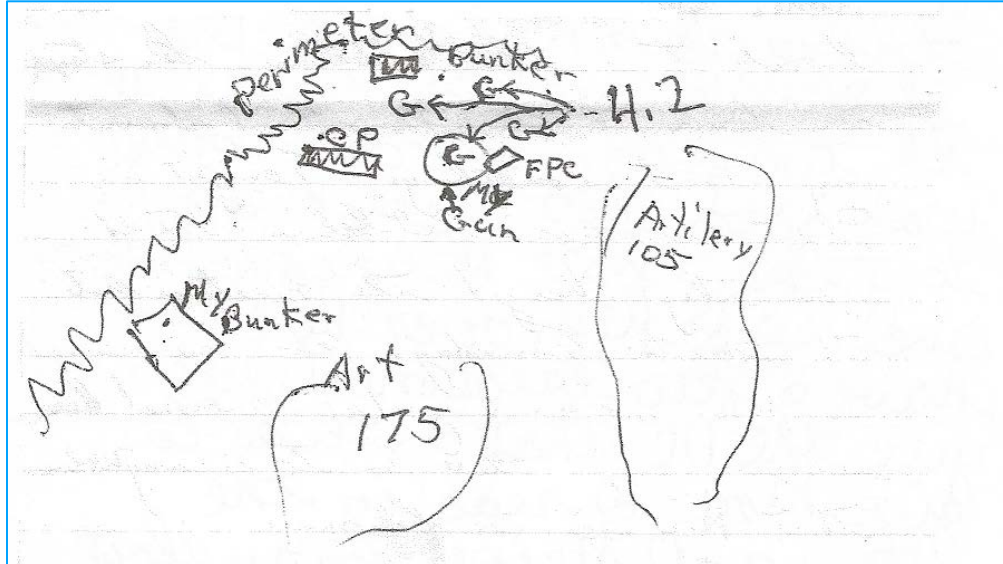
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**December 1, 1967**

Dear family,

Hope everyone's fine and doing well. I am just great, still at LZ pony on guard. Yesterday we got our 4.2 Mortars and I feel that we are really a part of the army again. I'm the only one who has his bunker and gun pit built. I did it today with the help of "gook" kids.

We are set up like this:



### Photos of LZ Pony, 1967

Thanks a lot for the letter dad, I really enjoyed it. Caroline, I get a letter from you every week at least. The mail is great. I got that package of yours and everything was fine. The bars where as fresh as could be but you really screwed up sending those damn Hersheyettes. We get about 2 trillion of those damn things and if I never see anymore it'll be too soon. The date bread was good too.

I read in the Stars & Stripes today about that battle of Dak To. There were two guys killed in it that I knew in basic and AIT.

I was glad to hear everybody's done plowing. It sure makes it a lot easier in the spring.

We are supposed to be here at LZ pony 'till after Christmas. I am not going to worry about Christmas presents and I want you to tell everyone that a card will be fine. Now if someone sends me anything it will make me real mad because I can't send them anything.

Oh hey I am planning on going wolf hunting when I get home. I think it'll be great fun, shooting wolves. I'm going to have to get me an M-16 though. Maybe we'd have a few more deer then. I was just talking to a buddy who's friend has a hunting cabin up north. We already have a wolf hunting trip planned.

Well I have about wrote enough for this time. Oh dad tell Earl that we can really use oil. Now with a mortar we use a small can every two days. Well, take care and I'll do the same.

Love,  
Dave

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**December 14, 1967**

Dear family,

I'm very sorry that I have not written sooner, but the last week has been pure hell. We have fought the VC very hard. You have probably read about us in the papers and on TV. We got a lot of VC... but the VC got a few of us. My platoon got over 75% of the kills in the Company. In my platoon Wright and Farrell were killed. Edwards, Huya and SGT Curtis were wounded pretty bad. Lieutenant Blochberger, Sergeant Bell and a couple of others guys got small nicks. I got a slight scratch from a piece of shrapnel. I was never so close to getting it. We fought our ass off. Lieutenant Sadowsky, leader of the second platoon, was killed also. We fought against the third NVA regiment<sup>13</sup>.

Shortly after that I got real sick. My lungs were hurting so bad I could hardly breathe. I went to the hospital for two glorious days and nights where I got shots and pills and temperature checks every four hours. They finally gave up on malaria and said I had the worst case of pleurisy they ever saw. I got released from the hospital this morning in joined up with the rest of the company back here at uplift where we are resting up until our next mission.

I'm feeling just fine now so if you were worrying about me up till now...stop.

We are having winter over here now. It got down to 44° last night which will freeze the balls off any gook. Well got to take some pills right now.

Bye now,  
Dave  
PS: Merry Christmas

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**December 15, 1967 – 10 days till Xmas**

Dear family,

I'm real sorry I haven't written sooner, but it has been impossible. Last time I wrote I was at LZ Pony. We left there in our tracks and moved about 4 miles North of Bong Son where the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were getting their ass kicked fighting the Third NVA Regiment<sup>13</sup>. We went into support them along with a number of other different units. We were there for about three days. We had about 10 people wounded but nobody killed.

From there we went to an LZ and got refueled and resupplied. We were in the process of this when we got a rush mission of some South Vietnamese soldiers needing our help. We moved about 2 miles North of Bong Son and lined up with infantrymen from the 1/8<sup>th</sup> Cav between tracks ready to sweep a so called fortified Village.

<sup>3</sup>. In what became known as the Battle of Tam Quan, it was not the 3rd NVA regiment it was the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Battalions, 22nd NVA Regiment of the 3rd NVA Division.

We barely entered when we were hit very hard. Two tracks were hit and knocked out by recoilless rifles. Then we're getting it all over the place. My Mortar Platoon was in the middle of everything, killing gooks like mad.

The third platoon on the right got hit hard and pulled part way back leaving a track full of wounded men behind. My track was then sent to the right flank to take over their area. I was firing my 50 caliber machine gun like crazy. There were VC in the trees, in bunkers...everywhere!

The mortar platoon had a total of six tracks. We rallied together and cleaned them out after about four hours of fighting. The Commanding Officer said that the Mortars Platoon saved the whole Company. We got 95% of the enemy kills. We ended up with three people killed and 28 wounded. Wright and Farrel from my platoon were killed and Edwards, Curtis and Huya were wounded. I got hit (just a Nick) by a piece of shrapnel. It didn't hardly bleed, but they might put me in for a Purple Heart, I don't know.

The next night after that I got a real bad pain in my lungs and went to the hospital the next morning. I was there for two days. They thought I might have malaria, but it was just a real bad case of pleurisy. I was released yesterday morning and join the rest of my company back at base camp for some rest.

We were there about five hours when we had to move out and support C Company who were getting the shit kicked out of them. That was yesterday. This morning we are firing or 4.2 Mortars in support. It's a hell of a lot better than going in with machine guns.

I have been getting your packages and everything has been just fine. I wish you'd hurry and send my camera and when you do be sure and pack it real good. You can forget about sending the popcorn as I have no way to pop it.

I got a letter from Mary the other day. She's got a swell job working as a receptionist for the field director of the Smith Corona Corporation. She was one of the welcome hostesses of their annual display of new products. She's broke up somewhat with that guy she was going with that's in the army now.

I got a letter from pastors Scholie expressing his concern for us here without a chaplain. He gave me some passages to read to people who might be hurt or die.

We've been having winter here in Vietnam. It has been getting cold enough to freeze the balls off of Ho Chi Minh. It got down to 44° and that's cold as hell over here.

I imagine Elmers are moved in their new house by now. I hope I'll be able to see it someday.

Well I've got to close for now so take care. Pray for me and have a very merry Christmas.

Love,

Dave

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<sup>13.</sup> In what became known as the Battle of Tam Quan, it was not the 3rd NVA regiment it was the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Battalions, 22nd NVA Regiment of the 3rd NVA Division.

**December 16, 1967**

Dear family,

My buddy Homer (Homer C. Osborn, Conway, Arkansas, HHC Maintenance) got some pictures back and gave me these as he knew you'd like to see them.

We had a man killed yesterday by a Claymore Mine. It was his fault but an accident. I saw him blow up...he was decapitated from mid chest.

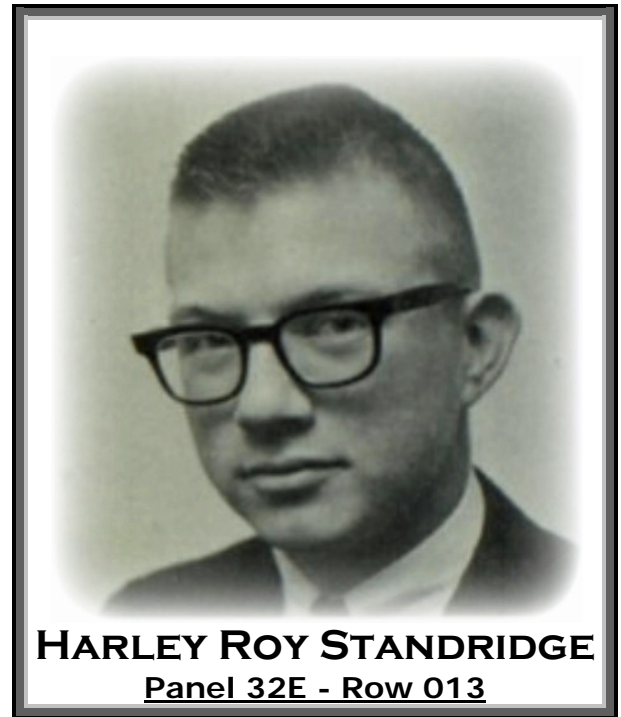
I have somewhere around \$600.00 or \$700.00 saved up in my finance account. I'll be going on R&R as soon as you send my camera. I'm feeling fine. I got three shots...Flu Cholera and Plague. Today we're at Base Camp. We go out again tomorrow. The weather is good for Tracks and so they are keeping us on the go to prevent the VC from organizing a large offensive.

We get the Stars and Stripes (Newspaper) every couple of days so we know what's going on. I've got a million things to do so will make this short.

Take Care,

Love,

Dave



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**December 21, 1967**

Dear Family,

Well, I suppose by the time you get this the happy days of Christmas will all be past history. We're still out in our Tracks hunting gooks. I've been lucky...and we haven't found any.

I'm feeling pretty good now. I told you we got some shots....well that Flu shot gave me the flu and I had a case of the "GIs" (Diarrhea) that was really bad.

I got your package yesterday and things were good...but crushed. I was thinking that maybe you could send some canned fruit or something that would be less perishable...and would be fresh on arrival. How long is it going to be before you send my camera? I saw some country along the beach the last few days that would have made some beautiful pictures. When you send it, enclose a few rolls of color film too, please. Don't have much to say today so take care and I'll write again soon.

Love,

Dave

**December 23, 1967**

Dear Family,

With hopes that everyone is well and doing fine, I again take a few moments to write to my dear family.

For the last two days I have had the opportunity to stay here at base camp. My Track broke down. We could drive it but it had an oil leak and the regulator was shot. We had to start it with a slave cable. They didn't have the parts for mine so I've been working on another one plus mine. It's a good break though. We get to sleep all night and take a hot shower every day. They show new movies up at the theater and you know we don't miss that. We stop at a place on the way and buy a cold 6-pack to drink at the movie. Yes we have it made don't you think?

The rest of the outfit in the field has been participation in an operation against another regiment of NVA. I don't know if they'll be coming in for Christmas or not. We'll probably not even know the difference from one day to the next, but then it makes little difference what we do here away from Christmas as I know it at home. I should be going on R&R next month and get away from it all. Well that's it for today

Love,

Dave

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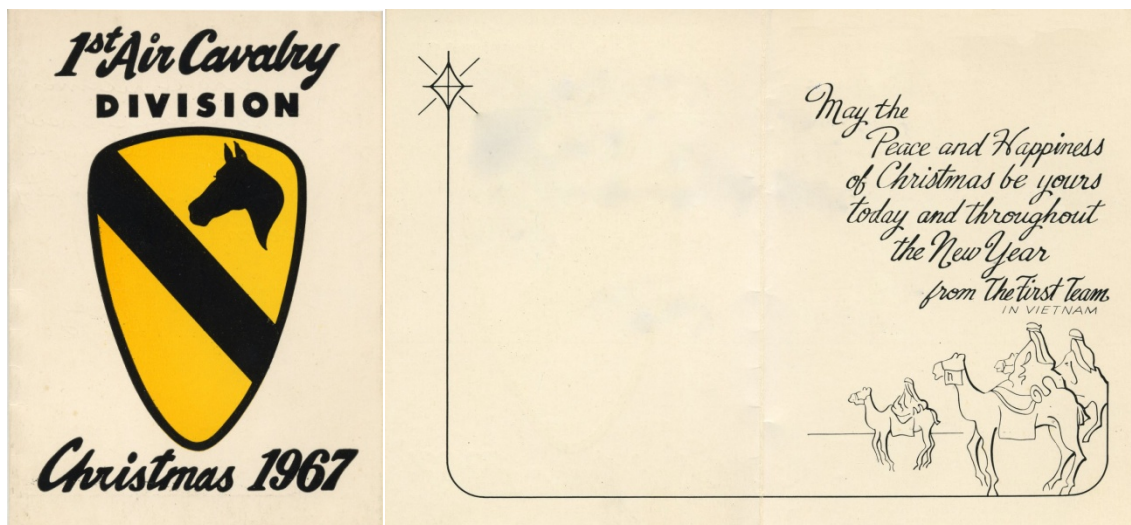
**December 24, 1967**

Well, today we are sitting around taking it easy while the rest of the company is out on an operation. I came out to the field yesterday right after I finished writing. We have a case of fifths of Jack Daniels Bourbon for tonight. The men who went out today killed two NVA.

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**December 25, 1967**

Merry Christmas! Well last night everybody got a drunk on except me. I just couldn't get in the mood for it. We messed around and sang Carols and I was feeling really bad. Today we went to Base Camp for two hours to take showers. We had a real good Christmas Dinner brought out to us and we had church services out here too.



I hope by now you have my camera on the way. If you don't, then forget it. I'm going on R&R to Hong Kong on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January for a week and will buy a cheap one there.

I have received Christmas cards and letters from Elmer, Melvin, Mrs. Henry and Donald Talge, Patzolds, Fritz Johansen, Ben Bathkis, Eileen, Mary and all the Beckers including Duane. Then from Dad's side I got one from Katie. I didn't hear from Vic or Melanders yet. I'm feeling as bad as you probably expect I do.

Please take care and in 5m months, I should be back to the good old United States.

Well take care and God bless,

Your loving son,

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### **December 27, 1967**

Dear family,

Well it's time to write again. I got your letter dated the 18<sup>th</sup> today as well as a letter from Dora and Gloria. I got a package from Vic late Christmas day afternoon just after I wrote you last. It was a great package. He sent me a half pint of Calvert and a half pint of peppermint Schnapps and a bottle of Grain Belt. He also sent some cookies, candy bars and a bunch of "Look" magazines, a "Sports Afield" and an "American Rifleman". A really great package.

I'm back at Uplift again. I have an infection on my leg where I banged it up on an ammo box. It never did hurt very bad but the medic wanted me to come in and get it checked...but you know me, I told him I was alright. That was about a month ago...and now the damned thing is infected. I get a million units of penicillin in my ass every morning. It will be alright though. I might even get sent back out again tomorrow.

Things are kind of quiet right now...not too much action going on out in the field.

Well, so long for now.

Love,

Dave

PS: Enclosed is a coin I found in a village. It's old Vietnam money...not the kind they use now.

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### **December 29, 1967**

Dear family,

Got your package today and all was well as usual. The camera is really great. I'm working on the Black and white film right now. I'll be going to Hong Kong for R&R on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January and will get the pictures and write on them before I send them home. That way you'll know just what they all are.



I also got a package today from Alfred and Sarah. They sent me two big cans of nuts and a nice card. I was happily surprised to receive it.

I'm still back here at Uplift with my infected leg, but should be going out in the field any day now.

I'm sorry to hear about Penny. It sure is too bad. Well maybe when I get home I can get myself a good hunting dog of some sort. I always wanted one.

Well...don't have a lot to say today. I just thought I'd let you know I got the package OK.

Take care and God Bless.

Love,

Dave

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**January 1, 1968**

Dear family,

Happy New Year. This is going to be one of the greatest years of my life if it don't turn out to be the worst!

To answer a couple of your questions; No, I have never had to read any of the scriptures to any wounded or dying men. Being in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) we have Med-Evac choppers within 5 miles of wherever we're at. When someone gets hit, a medic is right there and a Med-Evac is called immediately. The longest it ever took for one to arrive was 8 minutes. In the meantime, the men who are wounded are moved to a somewhat safe area where they are picked up by the helicopter.

Yesterday I was walking to see the doctor and on the way I go by the refueling area for the helicopters. A helicopter was refueling and it caught on fire. It exploded and was completely destroyed. No one was hurt, luckily.

I found out today that my R&R is from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month. I will be coming in (if I ever get out!) on the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> and will go to An Hhe on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>. I will be there getting my Khakis ready and my money straight. Then I'll go to Cam Ranh Bay for a day of getting the paperwork straight. Then I'll fly to Hong Kong where I'll spend 6 glorious days and a lot of money.

It's cold and rainy here today... a real nasty day.

You made a big mistake... you said I has 6 months. I only have months left in Vietnam as of the 6<sup>th</sup> of January.

Take care now.

Love,

Dave

**January 5, 1968**

Dear family,

Well how's everybody? I'm just fine. I'm back out in the woods hunting for VC. Today we moved from LZ English to the Beach... about 30 yards from the ocean where we are set up for the night right now. On the way out here today we went through the area where we had that first big battle of the Bong Son Plains<sup>1</sup>. The VC must have moved back and set a lot of mines and booby traps in the area. We ran into a nest of them. One track hit a mine and in the confusion of getting out the wounded a man tripped off another one. He was messed up pretty bad but alive. We captured a couple of VC.

I took a picture of them as they road back in my track.



I'll be going in getting ready to go on R&R the day after tomorrow if everything goes right. I shouldn't be in any action then until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month. A little rest anyhow.

Well, so long for now.

Love,

Dave

1. Battle of Tam Quan