

Letters from Vietnam
Sent to Joe & Jenny Flynt
Norman, Oklahoma
(27 November 1969 – 26 May 1970)



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Thursday, 27 November 1969
Long Binh

Joe & Jenny

I lost the 24th of November on our way over. That was the birthday of the Captain who sat next to me on the flight. I am now quartered at Long Binh. It is a replacement depot. Tomorrow, I leave for Dion, which is the Division HQ of the 1st Infantry Division. My first choice on what we call our *Dream Sheet*.

They say there was a rocket attack here 3 nights ago. Landed about a ¼ mile away in an open field. Guess it was for harassment. Our interior compound is guarded by new in-country enlisted personnel. They are so nervous that I tend to be a little hesitant about walking outside at night. I woke up this morning to a B52 air strike. It shook the ground, found out it was 13 miles away. They have a lot of SV (South Vietnamese) citizens working here. They go through rigid security checks before coming in every morning.

Our billet is quite secure, about 50' x 20'. 8' high and surrounded by 2 layers of sand bags, 4 ft high.

Coming over I had an 18 hr night. We stopped at Honolulu, Wake Island, & Okinawa.

Write Later
John

Saturday, 6 December 1969

Joe and Jenny

Waiting for my Company assignment. I have been assigned to the 2d Bn 16th Inf. The Headquarters are in Lai Khe (Rocket City). This base is rocketed more than any in S. Vietnam. Few land anywhere near the perimeter. The VC shoot them from their maximum range and just hope.

Our AO (Area of operations) is about the easiest and safest over here. The VC are pretty well whipped and except for the booby-traps in our southern extension, we receive very few casualties.

They say, I'll be an assistant Platoon Leader for a few weeks until they open a slot and I get my feet on the ground. I'll be working out of Fire Base Dominic on 3-10 day patrols. At the end of these patrols, we'll be pulled into the Fire Base as a ready reaction force for usually one day. After 75 days in the field, the unit will be pulled back to Lai Khe or Dion (pronounced Zeon) for a 3 day stand-down.

Intelligence says the V.C. In the area have been knocked down to 18 men (1 company), 12 of whom are holed up sick. I hope we can keep it that way.

All the officers and enlisted personnel I have talked to prefer to stay out in the field. In Lai Khe, they are getting ready for pre-IG and IG inspection time – shades of Fort Benning. Everybody agrees that they get much more sleep and rest out on patrol even if they are set up in a night ambush.

I will try to recount my trip once in-country. When last I wrote, I was in Long Binh (pronounced Lon Ben). I was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division and had to wait 2 days before I could leave for our Division Base Camp at Dion (Zeon). At Dion, we went through 3 ½ days of training in 1st Inf tactics and techniques and I was then assigned to my Bn. That was kind of nervous, not knowing where I was going. Then Thursday morning we packed up and went to the airfield to get a ride here to Lai Khe, after waiting five hours in the sun and being fortunate to eat C-Rations for lunch. Mine was spaghetti w/ground meat, spiced, Ugh!

We left by truck convoy down Thunder Road. I was a little apprehensive about going down this road after hearing its well deserved name, since none of us were armed and the only weapon was carried by the driver who had a 45. My fears were unfounded. We discovered the road well patrolled by dusters (armored cars with twin mounted 40mm canons) and mechanized infantry.

The ride turned out to be quite pleasant, mostly rubber trees (dressed right and covered down as far as you could see) intermixed with rice paddies. This is the harvesting season, so a lot of US and S. Vietnamese troops are out guarding the harvest. Well that brings us up to the present – locating me in Lai Khe, which looks like a housing developers nightmare.



I'll have to get a smaller pad. Never be able to take this thing out to the field.



Write Later
John

My address is:

LT John P. Cook

HHC 2nd Bn 16th INF

1st Div

APO SAN FRANCISCO 96345

The HHC will be changed to a Co. designation later but meanwhile this will get the letters to me.

14 December 1969

Well, I'm saddled up and ready to go. We came in out of the field yesterday to replace B Co. I'm with L platoon of Charlie Company. These people are good – real good. There are only 18 men in Lema counting myself & the Plt Ldr (Platoon Leader). His name is John Tranbow (His hat has *The Rock* monogrammed on it). I'm his asst until I get the hang of it, then I'll either get his platoon or Oscar (Mortar Platoon).

Bravo (Company) had a man killed yesterday. First time in 4 months that anyone in this Battalion was KIA. One of those chance encounters. Our platoon will probably bush (ambush) there tonight.

Since I got back, I was able to clean up for the first time since coming to Dominate (Fire Base). We blew a bush west of Ben Cat. Got a probable kill (couldn't find the body but found parts). Checked out a base camp which had been occupied that morning by an element of the VC Arty (Rocket squad shooting into Lai Khe).

Our Company Commander, CPT Camp, prefers to have his company split up and work the platoons independently. Gives more security because of the less noise and greater chances for making our kills.

Could you send me some packages of sweetened Koolade or Start & maybe some canned sausage – C Rations are awfully boring.

We seem to be keeping the VC hopping – no time for them to set up and make an organized strike. From all indications they are starving. You can see around their base camps where they have dug for roots and their small pit traps for catching lizards, frogs and rats.

My address is:

Lt. John P. Cook

C Co. 2nd Bn. 16th INF

1st INF DIV

APO SANFRANCISCO, CA 96345

Write Later
John

PS Could you put some Jack Daniels or George Dickel in a plastic bottle, can't get liquor or beer out here.

31 December 1969

GREAT DAY

I received your care package this morning at 11 o'clock when the convoy came in. Did I tell you I am Oscar (Mortar) platoon leader. Tonight, I leave for another ambush, we usually find nobody (and nobody finds us). I have 13 men in my platoon. They usually want 2 bushes, but I sometimes put the extra on paper only, if I can't get a Machine Gun & Radio for the other team.

We are moving our Battalion down toward the coast, South-east of Bear Cat (which is south-east of Saigon). I was easily able to find room in my pack for the care package – especially for the bottle of Clorox. That goes with me. I'm not trusting that to anyone.

I'm kind of wondering how to cook the casserole, but I'm sure one of my squad leaders will think of something.

Our Company goes on stand-down, 11 January – a real big drunk they say. Everything provided free by the Army. It lasts two days. Every Company gets one every 75 days.

3:10 same day. Got my orders. I split my bush, 6 men & 7 men. No contact in area since 21 Dec. There's a cease fire tonight that means we can defensively blow anything away!

Thanks again for the Package.
John

New Years Day (1970)

I got your Package yesterday!

Wrote you a letter, don't know if you'll get it though. It disappeared before I could put it in the mail sack. Hope it was mailed.

Put some Koolade into my canteen for the ambush last night. Celebrated the New Year with it. No way would I take any of the Clorox out with me. I was with five others in our ambush.

You should have seen the sky on New Years at 12 midnight. Dominic was all lit up with parachute flares; Lai Khe was using 50 cal tracers; the thunders were using red & green parachute flares. It was pretty but if it was any other night, any aircraft and arty base in the area would have been obligated to shoot "final protective fires" and "fires within the battle area" for those bases -- that's what the red & green flares mean. I bet all the brass were on the horn quickly telling everyone that the area was cold and to hold all fires.

In case you didn't receive my other letter, I'm the platoon Leader of the Oscar (Mortar) Platoon. There are only 15 men in my platoon – about the size of a good reinforced squad. Before I came, only two people had been out on ambush, but they're learning.

We are moving our Battalion down to the coast of the South China Sea – Southeast of Saigon and Bear Cat. Guess its about time, there are only about 43 VC still in one piece here and they are so harassed that the society for prevention of cruelty to Humans was beginning to look closely at us.

There are bad rumors of the 1st being pulled back to the states. Hope that doesn't happen yet. I don't have enough time here and I would be reassigned to a dud unit.

I think I told you about my CO (Captain Camp) stepping on a booby-trap. Blew him up pretty good. Well he was lucky. He lost his right gonad, both legs were broken & he was in danger of losing his left leg, his eye & being deaf. He'll be in the hospital for at least a year. It took every bandage we had to patch him up. But they fixed him up. His RTO (Radiotelephone Operator) was ten feet behind him. Only caught one piece of shell fragment, and died. We held his services when we got back. Odd how those things happen.

That same operation the man right in front of me stepped on a trip wire. The mine was only five feet from me. Nothing happened. I'll never complain about my luck again.

Write later, John

I actually wrote my father soon after LT. Matt Roach and Mike Platoon were destroyed by the booby-trap. Dad was a Combat Surgeon during the Philippine Campaign during WWII. That was not a letter he shared with my mother. He understood my pain, but there was not much he could do with an information delay from 4,000 miles.

You learn to live with it and not get sloppy. The VC (sometimes shortened to Charlie) can't booby-trap the entire country. Don't follow any trail you didn't cut yourself. If you didn't drop it, DON'T PICK IT UP! Life is simple.

18 January 1970

Last New Year's Eve, I was out on bush with the Oscar (Mortar) Platoon. On the 4th, I helped unload the gear from Mike Platoon. (Delivered from a recovery helicopter) They ran into a 155mm (Artillery Shell) booby trap, 11 dust-offs. Of the 4 men killed, Lt. Matt Roach, the Plt Ldr, lived 10 minutes. He was one of my friends here in Vietnam.

I am now Mike Platoon Leader. I have only 8 experienced people out of 25 to bring the platoon up to combat readiness.

This is our second mission together. Yesterday, my point man came face to face with an NVA. The NVA came out 2nd best. 3 shots from my point man got him in the arm, turning him around so the second shot hit him in the side of his rucksack. The 3d round got him in the back of the head. The 3 shots were fired so fast, it almost sounded like he was on automatic.

Pretty good shooting. I'm going to get the man a 3 day pass. He was lucky though, when we ejected the round from the chamber of the AK47, we found out it had misfired. The firing pin didn't hit the primer hard enough or it was a defective round. I gave him the round for luck.

Waiting for lift off for another operation – Hump hard then wait.

Keep those cards and letters coming in folks.

John.

18 January 1970 (afternoon)

Well I'm able to write twice in one day – very rare.

Right now, I'm sitting in a day bush. We're the blocking force for another Company that is driving the VC out of their AO (Area of Operation). We're set up in a squashed egg perimeter with all our clay-mores out – ready to blow anybody away. In other words, we're sitting on our cans and enjoying it.

My people have nicknamed our platoon Cook's Rookies after my point man blew away that NVA on the 16th.

You might be interested to know what happened on my first operation with Mike.

We LZ'd in and promptly found some mortar duds. Since I was the mortar man in the Company, the other platoon leaders and I started carefully digging them up to find out what kind, whose they were, and from which direction they were fired. (Stupid for all the Platoon Leaders to be there but we found out they were 81mm [ours] and too old to be used as booby-traps)

From there we moved into the bamboo forest. This was old bamboo, about 30-50m high, in large clumps so that there was plenty of room underneath but so thick that air observation was impossible. We found an old base camp and bushed there that night.

Next morning we pushed on down the stream and at about 9am, Lima, the point Platoon had the whole world open up on them. You'd never believe how fast you can go from a standing position to a prone position with rucksack in front of you. All I know is that, suddenly I was there.

Fergy, (Pvt Ferguson) the best point man in the Company, spotted the kill zone and emptied his magazine toward the enemy. This alerts his platoon on the location of the enemy and makes them duck, giving him a chance to leave the Kill Zone.

I grabbed my RTO and leading gun team and went to the front. All of Lima was firing and throwing frags (grenades). We ignored the sniper fire from our flanks and gave everything we had into the bunker which was 20m away. Fergy had gotten that close to the bunker before seeing it.

Obviously they were only firing from sound, because their first tremendous burst did nothing but knock down branches (about shoulder high) to stirring up the dirt in front of the MG Team. Lima having almost all veterans of at least 3 to 9 months in-country, lost

no time in returning fire.

Once Infantry spot an enemy emplacement, we are like ants at a picnic. We should never have been allowed to leave that Kill Zone alive. The VC were finally persuaded to leave after the longest 15 minutes of my life. We followed two good blood trails (one shot in the neck, the other in the leg, determined from the amount & spacing of blood drops) but couldn't find them. If we couldn't overrun them, we would have fallen back and called for HE Delay artillery, to stir the pot.

I took a squad on a cloverleaf across the stream and found some spider-holes. (about 2 ft. in diameter. When fitted with a cover, it is big enough for 1 VC and his weapon but you can almost be on top of him and not see it.) These were the probable location of the sniper activity earlier. Glad no one was in them when we came looking. The snipers must not have been well trained. They did a lot of shooting without hitting anything. They did not prepare their positions and give themselves a good field of fire. *A machine gun cuts down trees and branches like a chain saw, but a well prepared position by someone firing semi automatic can remain hidden because his firing lane has been prepared by removing foliage to give the shooter targets.* (Keep bushes standing but remove individual leaves from bushes 6 inches to 1 foot from the ground.) They were firing at the sounds with no results. The rest of the operation was boring, no more contacts that afternoon.

That night, I took my platoon into the spider-holed area and when I crossed the stream (I was 6th man) everybody began screaming back to me (in a whisper) to get the Gun (M60) forward. There's movement!

After getting the gun across and whispering to get Arty support in front, we advanced upon a whole herd of VC Pigs. Boy did we feel foolish – but very relieved.

Tunnel Rat

Next day, we found another Bunker complex. Only way to find out if it has anything of interest is to go down. I went slowly, slowly. Found nothing but spiders. Spiders meant no people, but had to watch for booby-traps. Found no paperwork or equipment. So we had to pack up and move on.



After that we went on stand-down in Dion (pronounced Zeon). Every Company is authorized 1 stand down every 75 days and it turns out to be nothing but a 2 day beer drunk. The stand-down center is built to be torn down in 2 days and be rebuilt for the next Company. No MPs allowed.

While we were there, the BN Commander's orderly brought LT John Tranbow "The Rock" (Lima Plt. Ldr.) some papers recommending the BN Commander for a Silver Star for flying over Rock's position during contact. Rock did it grudgingly but found out later, the BN Cmdr only got a Bronze Star with V-device. Guess that was the lowest the General could give him. Pleased us all that he didn't get the Silver Star. I guess the REMP's (Rear Echelon Military Personnel) get the Medals because they have the time to do the paperwork.

John

After arriving at Dion, the Company Commander called all the officers together and we started opening beer cans as fast as we could and lined them up on the counter. The 1st Sergeant finished his announcements and released the company into a thundering herd going straight for the beer.



That night we had Pop/Rock groups from the Philippines. The music was good and the GO GO Girls were excellent! The Sergeants kept enough order that everyone had a great time with no problems worth reporting.

7 February 1970. TET

Well we're waiting for our resupply. Hopefully we'll be able to get our letters out at the same time.

I'm growing a mustache and beard (not by choice). We're supposed to be out in the field one more month as the 1st Div. Then we'll go back to Dion (Zeon) and be reassigned to another Division. Maybe I'll get a rear job.

Interrupted.

We made it to the clearing for our resupply in only ten minutes. Its a beautiful glade approximately 100m in diameter. We checked it out and no recent VC activity (no booby traps). I'm always afraid of bringing in a chopper when there may be a 105 round booby-trapped and waiting.

We play quite a bit of poker over here. I have won and lost \$50 about 2 times. Right now I'm \$57 ahead.

If you've heard that the 1st Division is coming home, you can believe it. The colors are leaving April 15 with about 2 % of the 1st Division personnel.



Our PX with Hair Saloon on the left

The money you get over here is Military script and rather hard to spend. When you are in the field, there is nothing to buy and when you are in the fire base, there's nothing you want to buy. The PX in the Fire Base is about the size of a large closet and sells only those things we get in a SP(supplemental packet) in the field minus cigarettes. The only cigarettes in the PX are Kent, Parliament and Kool. When they started removing the SP's from our resupply I had to start smoking Parliament – Ugh!

I got sort of fond of Winston or Marlboro. No way to smoke a pipe in the field. Anyway the only pipe tobacco you get is Cherry Blend.

I brought my camera to the field with me this time. Maybe I'll get some pictures to send you.

John

14 February 1970

Hey Gang.

November Platoon has contact right now. Caught 4-5 VC in a crossfire and all they got was blood trails. They're following now and calling in Arty in front of them. Hope they get something. A contact like that is what every platoon dreams of – being set up and having them walk into you. If they don't get anything, they have no one to blame but themselves.

They just got through shooting the arty. 150 rounds worth \$12,000. Hope they got something.

When chopper pilots ask us to identify ourselves on the ground (with smoke) they say “I identify grape” for violet, banana for yellow, and lime for green. On our last resupply, to get any color through the trees on a double canopy jungle, I popped one of each and when asked what color we popped, I told them tutti-fruity.

Just finished supper. I had one of the C Ration ham & eggs chopped, with hickory flavored cheese and a couple dashes of Tabasco sauce – Great! Topped it off with the last of my Vienna sausages and some Koolade.

Everything is starting to settle down again. We've been extended again for 2 days. Will be getting our resupply tomorrow.

My pack is starting to fall apart. Carrying 60 lbs isn't good for it. Not doing too much for me either.

Gotta finish this so I can get into a blackjack game just starting.



This is my medic 'Doc' Kerch preparing breakfast using C4 to heat his meal. C4 is a general purpose explosive used for destroying enemy emplacements and when rolled into marble size balls, making coffee.

John

Hot Showers with our PX



Enjoying a well deserved
break in my hammock



Hair Salon in the back.

24 February 1970

The last days of the 1st Div.

Well it was one of those nights when nothing went right. Last night at 9 o'clock, we saw lights (flashlights). I was alerted and we had arty plot them while we decided whether or not they were moving. Finally we decided they were definitely moving about 700m South and in our direction, and would you believe it, they were playing a drum. Weird!

It took 35 minutes for the Arty to shoot and when they did they were 500m off. We gave them a correction and they moved 100m closer. By this time I was getting impatient. I felt as if I was in a large crowd and had to go to the bathroom but too embarrassed to ask where it was.

Of course when the arty fired the second volley (it only moved 100m from the first) the lights went out and they stopped beating the drum. I got mad and sent them an 8 digit coordinate and asked them to shoot that, but they finally radioed me that my corrections were too bold and they felt it unsafe to fire again. I told them to stuff it and we would use frags.

What made us mad was that we thought the VC were staging a funeral and we wanted to direct it.

The VC easily outnumbered us but before they could get near us they would have to pass our Claymore mines then try to route us out of the rocks on top of this frigging hill. By the way, I am in a squad size bush. Luckily, it was so dark last night that nobody could find anybody. Good for both of us!

Well things are boring again but I don't think I'll forget those VC with their flashlights and playing that big drum for awhile.

By the way – I'm told I will go to the 1st Field Force – REMP Job! (Rear Echelon Military Personnel) usually spoken with a sneer.

John



PFC Jeminez with Kit Carson Scout
Nguyen Thanh Trung



PFC Robert Elcheck
Plt Sgt Elly's RTO

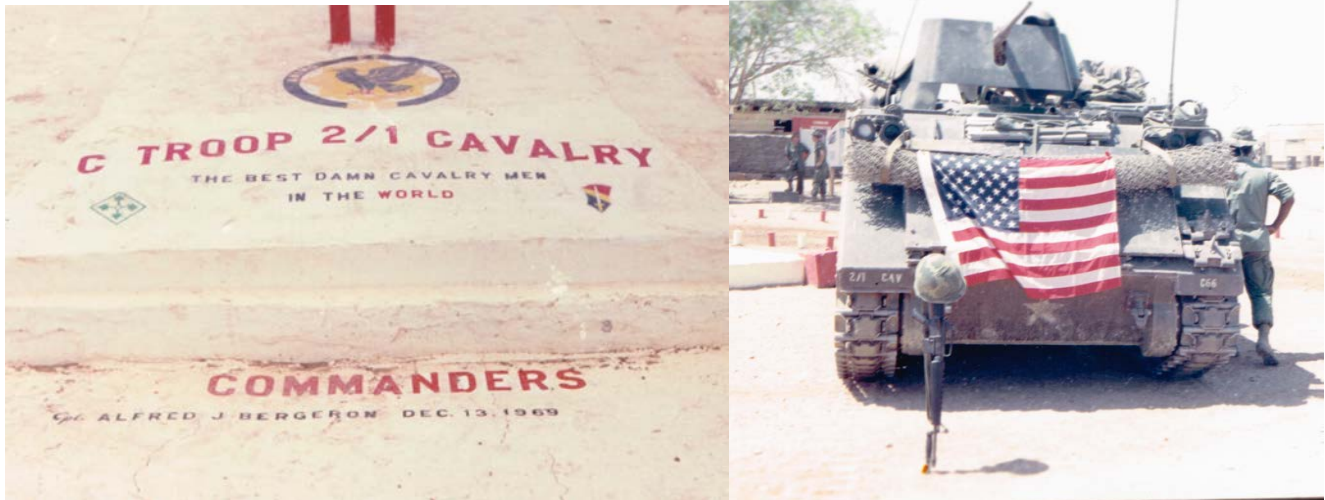
The smiling, Lt John Tranbow 'The Rock' (Lima Plt Ldr), with C Company 1st Sgt, and CO. I'm all spiffed up with my best party clothes.



*2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry
(1st Regiment of Dragoons)
APO San Francisco 96321*

24 March 1970

Sorry I haven't written for such a long time!



As you can tell I'm in the Cavalry. Before I got into this unit, I didn't even know they still existed. Well now that I'm in it, Ill tell what I have. I have assigned: 3 M-48 tanks, 6 Armored Cavalry Tracks, and 1 Mortar track.

The M-48 is a medium size tank weighing 52 Tons. It carries a 90mm main gun which can fire either HE, Flechette or Cannister. It is also armed with a 7.62mm coaxial mounted machine gun (fires same direction main tube is pointed) and a 50 cal machine gun.

An A Cav is an armored personnel carrier (M113) mounting 1-50 cal machine gun and 2-M60 machine guns, all sporting gun shields of approximately ½ inch steel.

My mortar track carries an 81mm mortar and for its own protection, carries a 50 cal machine gun.

I had never considered having so much fire power under my command. I have more firepower than a Tank platoon leader. The only fly in the ointment is MAINTENANCE.

Running the roads and keeping them open, which is our main mission, is hell on tracks. They were designed for open country – knocking down trees is nothing to a tank, but going over ruts at high speed is murder. Of course, mines are a headache. In the 1st Inf Division, when we hit a mine we had all kinds of casualties. Here when a tank or A Cav

hits a 105 – it shakes up the driver and causes maintenance difficulties. The big mines will do a job on us, but they are rather few and far between and we usually spot them and destroy them causing no damage except the road. This creates another rut which causes discomfort to all passengers. I'm afraid the only real discomforts we have are the never ending dust and the increasing boredom of our jobs.

At the end of March, C Troop were assigned to a dismounted search and destroy mission into the mountains. We received military intelligence telling us that there was a large force in our area large enough to attack our positions. I received permission to leave half of my 52 man platoon behind to repair and pull maintenance on our tracks. My platoon occupied the sector of our defensive position most likely to be attacked. I told my Troop Commander I could handle my responsibilities with 26 troopers. The VC either didn't count the troops leaving or where the troops were sleeping when off duty. Half the defenders for the defensive area were from my platoon and sleeping in their tracks.

The VC have sappers who can walk through barbed wire like a stroll in the park, so we added trip wires to explode our claymore mines in the wire. They could no longer slip into our position undetected.

Early in the morning of April 1, a reinforced Battalion of VC attacked the C troop position. They slipped a Bangalore Torpedo under our barbed wire and blew open a path for their attackers. They were met by the best gunner in C troop firing Flechette and Cannister rounds. He loaded, fired, moved the gun 5 degrees and did it again. They probably had whole platoons destroyed in the first 10 minutes of the attack. Few got past the wire and the full attack was stopped. One sapper got into the defensive position and firing from top of one of the latrines, destroyed the brand new ice maker in the Dining Facility. His explosives were hit and blew him into hamburger. One American was killed by a 50 cal. MG ricochet, during the defense.



It was O Dark thirty, early morning, no moon, my CO, CPT Alfred Bergeron, Charlie Troop Commander, was pacing in circles listening to his radio and piecing the action together on the attack of his Troop Fortifications. We were stuck in the mountains unable to influence the outcome. As we listened, we tried to remain calm. Those were our friends. One comment from the radio said they blew up my No. 5 Tank. (Sappers put a charge on the track and almost took off the fender. Repaired next day.) We didn't sleep much that night with worry. No cigarettes or coffee until first light. The next morning was almost worse. The morning of April 1, The Squadron Commander scrambled 2 Troops of Cav and all the Helicopters after the attackers, catching the VC battalion in the open. CPT Bergeron had to listen as the rest of the Squadron found and destroyed the remainder of the VC Battalion. He was like a star football player sidelined during a major football game. The actual body count was 166 bodies – but they were still finding them all over the place 2 weeks later. Our squadron sustained 1 Tank and 2 A Cavs damaged. No one killed.



A mobile PX came by a week ago and I bought a cassette tape recorder. Unfortunately, they didn't have any tapes. But I figured it would be better to have the tape recorder and scrounge the tapes later – hopefully soon. I'm trying to get some here but they don't have much of a selection. Could you send some to me? I'll write you a check for however much they cost.

Chopper is leaving
Love John

After Action Report on the early morning attack of 22 May 1970

I arrived at our platoon defensive position after dark from CPT Bergeron's briefing on the next day's mission and operation orders. Our scouts guided us into our prepared position.

About 3 am, the VC attacking force, estimated as a heavy weapons company reinforced, began the attack with Rockets and Mortars. I was sleeping in my clothes, so I only had to put on my flack jacket, headset, and helmet to be properly attired.

During a fire fight, I'm responsible for maintaining communication with all tracks and coordinating defensive fires. I had no communication. I had primary and auxiliary radios to listen on two bands and talk on one. My primary, talking radio was not operational. Leaving my track to go to another during an attack was suicide. I took up the firing position at the right hand machine gun and fired 3-5 round bursts, searching fire.

I saw SGT Gary Bixler's track explode and heard screams. I had no idea about casualties. The mortar track was firing 81mm illumination rounds beyond the battle to silhouette attackers. Firing slowed and finally stopped.

I went toward SGT Bixler's track to check on damage and casualties, but the Medic took one look at me and pushed me down. I only felt hot, sweaty and mad as hell. I apparently had a face covered in blood and was staggering a little. My helmet must have absorbed several glancing blows. The Medic put me on a Medivac chopper heading to the Hospital at Pleiku. When we landed, I received primary care because of the head wound. They found the chest and fragment wounds in Emergency care. Everything else that night is gone.

Hospital in Pleiku

22 May 1970

Pleiku

Well I wrote you yesterday, but I doubt if you will ever get the letter. We were hit last night. VC came after us with B40 rockets (RPG). We had 16 dust-offs from my platoon – no one killed or permanently injured. I got shrapnel in both arms, another piece going into my left chest entering at my arm pit. My people thought I was pretty bad off. I had also received a scalp wound which, of course, covered my face with blood (I thought it was sweat). I'll probably spend about a week in the hospital. This is only my first day here and I'm already bored. I've felt worse after the car accident at home.

Well I'll write later this pm or tomorrow
John

I could not write for almost a week because my hands and forearms became swollen due to the trauma from shrapnel. Could not use my hands well enough to shave or handle eating utensils. Did not enjoy anyone spoon feeding me and shaving my face.

After the swelling went down, I made it to the chow hall and they filled my tray so full I could barely carry it to the table. Best food in the world! Life is Good.

26 May 1970
Pleiku

WOW! Blow my mind. I was all prepared to rejoin my unit in the field tomorrow but just got the word I'm going air evacuate to Japan!

There must be a mix up somewhere and it seems to be in my favor. WOW! Can hardly believe it. I was scheduled as a litter patient but I asked to sit up. I would much rather sit up and enjoy the trip.

I've been awful lucky, but this is unbelievable.

I'll write you a post card or letter from Japan.

Love John

My father was a Combat Regimental Surgeon in WWII Philippine Campaign. He told me that my class of injury (Multiple fragment wounds: Head, chest & arms,) required a cleaner environment than available in a Combat area. The chest wound had to remain open to drain and heal properly. I was probably a poor patient. At that time, I believed the trip to Japan was like a 3 day pass. I would only be in Japan for a week or so before returning to my unit.

I called home when I arrived at Camp`Zama, Japan. Told mom I was sorry for the reverse charges but I had no checkbook in Japan. She said she was thrilled to hear from me in Japan and the checkbook would be in the mail immediately. My CO told me that if I was going to Japan, I would not be coming back to Vietnam. He was correct, but until my Doctor told me I was going home on the next Medivac plane leaving Japan in mid June, I had expected to return to my unit.

The Medivac plane landed at Fort Sill and I called my brother Scott for a ride. Scott was working for the Lawton Newspaper at the time and when he asked for some time off to collect his older brother and take him home, they almost pushed him out the door to take care of the wounded hero. Scott and I laughed about that for a long time.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters I Field Force Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96350

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 800

17 July 1970

AWARD OF THE PURPLE HEART

TC 439. The following AWARDS are announced.

Awarded: Purple Heart
Date of service: As indicated
Theater: Republic of Vietnam
Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of USARV Regulation 672-1 and AR 672-5-1
Reason: Wounds received in action.

✓ COOK, JOHN P. [REDACTED] FIRST LIEUTENANT United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321 ARMOR
Date of service: 21 May 1970

ACHY, MICHAEL H. [REDACTED] STAFF SERGEANT United States Army, Troop A, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1AO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 1 April 1970

EIXLER, GARY L. [REDACTED] SERGEANT United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

MELLINGER, JAMES [REDACTED] SERGEANT United States Army, Troop A, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1AO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 3 July 1970

SENNETT, DENNIS M. [REDACTED] SERGEANT United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

CARNES, CLEVELAND D. [REDACTED] SPECIALIST FIVE United States Army, Troop A, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1AO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 1 April 1970

ANGLIN, JAMES G. [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

BAYER, DAVID B. [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

KASTEN, LEONARD H. [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army, Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

General Orders No. 800, HQ I FFORCEV APO SF 96350 dtd 17 July 1970.

MC KORMAN, EDWARD A. [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army,
Troop C, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

POWELL, RANDELL [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army, Troop C,
2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1CO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 21 May 1970

WALKER, JAMES T. [REDACTED] PRIVATE FIRST CLASS United States Army, Troop A,
2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry (WFB1AO), APO San Francisco 96321
Date of service: 1 April 1970

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:



ROBERT L. ALDERMAN
Lieutenant Colonel, AGC
Adjutant General

PATRICK W. POWERS
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

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1st Inf. Div. Personnel named in letters

CPT Camp, my 1st Company Commander in C Company.

LT Matt Roach, Mike Platoon Leader, KIA January 4, 1970.

LT John Tranbow, Lema Platoon Leader. Owner of a magnificent handlebar mustache.

His Boony Hat was monogrammed "The ROCK". Impossible not to smile when meeting and talking with him.

SSG Elly, my Platoon Sergeant (Plt Sgt), Mike Platoon.

PFC Robert Elcheck, the Plt Sgt Radiotelephone Operator (RTO).

PFC Myers, my RTO.

SP4 Kerch, Medic, referred to as "DOC".

PFC Jeminez, Machine Gunner, M60.

PFC Ferguson, Point Man, Lima Plt.

C Troop, 2d Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment

CPT Alfred J. Bergeron, Cmdr C Troop, 2/1 Cav.

Men in my platoon wounded in the same attack:

SGT Gary J. Bixler, Inf. Track Cmdr.

SGT Dennis M. Sennett, Track Cmdr.

PFC James G. Anglin, Inf. Track

PFC David B. Bayer

PFC Leonard H. Kasten

PFC Edward A McKorman

PFC Randell Powell

Beloved C Ration



B-1 Units	B-2 Units	B-3 Units
<p>Meat Choices (in small cans):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beef Steak Ham and Eggs, Chopped Ham Slices Turkey Loaf <p>Fruit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applesauce Fruit Cocktail Peaches Pears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crackers (7) Peanut Butter Candy Disc, Chocolate Solid Chocolate Cream Coconut Accessory Pack* 	<p>Meat Choices (in larger cans):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans and Wieners Spaghetti and Meatballs Beefsteak, Potatoes and Gravy Ham and Lima Beans Meatballs and Beans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crackers (4) Cheese Spread, Processed Caraway Pimento Fruit Cake Pecan Roll Pound Cake Accessory Pack* 	<p>Meat Choices (in small cans):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boned Chicken Chicken and Noodles Meat Loaf Spiced Beef <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bread, White Cookies (4) Cocoa Beverage Powder Jam Apple Berry Grape Mixed Fruit Strawberry Accessory Pack*



