

Letter from Iowa Soldier during the Vietnam War, September 6, 1967

Orderly Room
Co B, 504th MP Bn
CAMP HOLLOWAY
Pleiku, "wet" Central Highlands
Republic of Viet Nam
Wednesday pm, 6 September 1967

Dear Mrs. Greene:

We had some excitement last Wednesday night. We were sitting around reading and writing at 8:30 when the company area shook with an explosion. Someone yelled, "incoming mortars!" The alert siren in the motor pool was turned on, and grabbing weapons, flack jackets and steel pots, we scrambled for our bunker. After five minutes we noticed that we seemed to be the only company on alert. In ten minutes the word came down that it was a false alarm; two guys in a 179th Aviation Company hooch (150 yds from our hooch) were taking apart a M179 grenade round to convert it to a salt shaker when it exploded. One guy lost a hand and part of his leg, and the other [caught] a piece in his side. Such a waste and a tragedy! They won't even get a purple heart.

We have an unusual new vehicle in our company. IT is one of six new V100 Commando Armored Cars recently delivered to Vietnam. The all-around seven-ton weigh armor makes the crew immune to small-arms fire, hand grenades and many other explosive devices. The hull is designed with no vertical surface (like the CAIRO, to deflect large projectiles). IT doesn't have to stick to solid ground either. When the crew buttons up" the hutches, the car can navigate calm bodies of water. IT can go 60 mph under ideal conditions, and even if all four of its big tires should lose pressure, the thing will still top 40 mph on a good road. We are very happy to have the car for escorte of important convoys through unsecured areas.

Do you remember my mention of a fellow named Ferraro being accidentally shot in the leg? Well that poor guy is the unluckiest person I've ever met. He finally got on his feet and back to duty after 6 weeks and what happens-he gets thrown through the windshield in a jeep wreck. He now has a broken leg taped wrists and stitches all over his chin, and won't be able to take the case off till November. The common consensus is, "give the poor guy a hardship discharge before he kills himself." His nickname is "combat."

Headquarters personnel of this company got a new platoon SGT last month in the person of Supply Sergeant McMullen who is affectionately called the "The Buzzard" because of his stopped back, big ears and hooked nose. He insisted on separating us in our living quarters by job category so far last two weeks all the supply and personnel clerks have been swinging hammers and hauling lumber. Our new hooch is really nice- 40x20' with 8' walls and large general purpose tent covering our A'frame supports

to keep out the weather. While we were at it I built wooden shelves to fit the inside of my metal wall locker. I am now perfectly organized for the first time since I entered into this military existence.

This last weekend elections were held in town. Extra MP's were brought up from the 4th Div at Dragon Mt to handle any enemy-inspired disturbances. The only thing so far was that a convoy was ambushed Saturday night on Hwy 19 near Mang Giang Pass with 8 killed and 10 wounded. I rode through Pleiku Sunday morning as a shotgun for our mail clerk. The streets were filled with ARVIN soldiers and people in their colorful holiday clothes. I saw many buildings flying the red and yellow Vietnamese flags, and there were long lines of voters in front of several. There were election posters all over, and everyone seemed to be having a good time. As of tonight there haven't been any incidents downtown. "Maybe" we are making some progress over here.

Two of our guys just returned from R&R in Bangkok, and for a couple of days straight we've been hearing of the Wow girls (photos to prove it) and "lovely nights." I'm not going on R&R; I don't think I could say "No" once I got there. Besides, the couple of hundred I'd spend is going for new typewriter when I get home.

I'm sure it would amuse you to see me now. Our new platoon sergeant doesn't mind mustaches, and I've been cultivating one for last 2 ½ weeks -really like "un hombre malo."

After much changing of mind it now seems that our whole company will move to Camp Schmidt on their side of Pleiku by the end of this month. Everyone hates the idea of moving.

You know, I've been here so long (and become really fond of one of the little Vietnamese mama-sans) that it's going to take some time to readjust to the shining qualities of American girls ... like maybe a whole hour or two. But seriously, Vietnamese girls are very charming!!!!

Look forward to hearing from you soon, and getting all the latest news. I'm sorry I am so very late in answering-

Sincerely,
Jim

PS. We now have a new CO and 1SG, and it seems that life is pretty near 100% different then it was here just a short 50 days ago. Speaking of days, I now have only 169 to go-SHORT!!!