

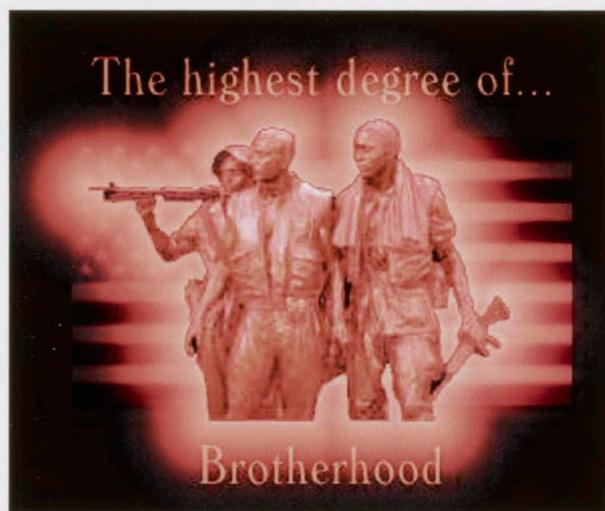
Letters of the Vietnam War Era

1966 - 1967

from

L/Cpl. MARK RYAN BLACK, U.S.M.C.

April 10, 1945 - August 14, 1967



LETTERS of the VIETNAM WAR ERA

1966 - 1967

from

MARK RYAN BLACK

L/CPL UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

APRIL 10, 1945 - AUGUST 14, 1967

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Compiled and Edited

1973 - 1974

by

Mrs. Paul Black  
Sweetser, IN

Revised  
1987

Mrs. Paul Black  
Frankfort, IN

INTRODUCTION

During the time L/cpl Mark Black was in the Marine Corps he sent home many letters and pictures. Some of his letters were tape recorded and have been transferred to paper. His hand written letters have been type written for easy reading.

Mark was a native of the small rural town of Sweetser, in Grant County, Indiana.

His first experience in learning responsibility began in about his 6th year of school when, for 3 years, he delivered the Indianapolis News.

He was active in sports and football was his favorite. He closed his football career by scoring 5 touchdowns in his last game.

After graduating from Oak Hill High School he went to International Barber College in Indianapolis. He acquired his Barber License and worked in his father's Barber Shop, in Sweetser, one year to earn his Masters License.

THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS BUILDS MEN appealed to him. Knowing it it was inevitable that he would soon be drafted into the Army he chose to enlist in the Marine Corps. He preferred the Corps 2 years of duty and the rice paddies in Vietnam to 4 years in the Army.

He left home on April 29, 1966 and his last words were, "Don't expect me to write much." Surprisingly the first letter he wrote was that same day as he was flying to the San Diego Marine Corps Recruit Depot. This was the beginning of his many letters. In addition to the 89 written letters and 26 tape recorded letters he also wrote to other relatives and friends.

After 8 weeks of training at the M.C.R.D. and 4 months of advance training at Camp Pendelton he was granted a 25 day leave. Just one week before leaving the states he had the privilege of being best man for his brother's wedding.

On October 29 he departed, by plane, for Okinawa making a short stop

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After 8 weeks of training at the M.C.R.D. and 4 months of advance training at Camp Pendelton he was granted a 25 day leave. Just one week before leaving the states he had the privilege of being best man for his brother's wedding.

On October 29 he departed, by plane, for Okinawa making a short stop

in Hawaii. Part of his time in Okinawa was spent in jungle training.

December 2 he went, by ship, to the Philippines for more training. He left there December 29 for the Mekong Delta in South Vietnam where he was engaged in his first major combat operation.

He returned to Okinawa on January 18, 1967. The 31st of January he was sent to Phu Bai in the northern part of South Vietnam, just below the DMZ, arriving February 5th. There he was engaged in 4 major combat operations.

After being transferred out of the fighting zone he took training and schooling to join a Combined Action Company. He spent the remainder of his time with a C.A.C. unit.

His attitude throughout the 16 months of serving in the Corps was that of a positive out-look. His thoughtfulness of others, his feelings of gratitude and of appreciation are outstanding in his letters. His often humorous remarks and good mental attitude is almost unbelievable under the circumstances.

Sometimes he expressed anger about the war, their rifles and the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese could not be trusted. They betrayed our Marines.

He was concerned that the news media did not always tell it like it was. He felt the United States government did not know what was going on in Vietnam. And considering how he was killed his feelings were verified because the telegram from the government said he was killed while on patrol. This was not true. The facts of his death would not have been known if his father had not written to the Sergeant in charge of the compound asking for details. Letters from the Marines in the compound gave detailed descriptions of how Mark was killed.

We, his parents, believe that Mark's intention for the many letters and pictures he sent home was to tell his family, friends and barber

customers, the best he could, what the war and the people in Vietnam were like.

A 55 minute slide program consisting of his pictures and selections from his taped letters has been prepared for public use. (This is now a Video)

Mark was actually looking forward to building his own home when he returned from his tour of duty. In High School he enjoyed working with wood and took a course in construction. During summer vacation he worked for a contractor. It was this enthusiasm, hope for the future and faith in God that helped preserve his good attitude and sanity.

The Oak Hill Memorial at Oak Hill High School was initiated, in lieu of flowers, at the time of his death. It became a reality by contributions from relatives, friends and residents of the community. It is dedicated to the graduates who gave their lives in the Vietnam conflict and a tribute to those who served.

An athletic award in memory of Mark was established at Oak Hill and is presented each year to a Senior athlete who has displayed the most outstanding dedication, desire and competitive spirit in High School sports.

The following words of scripture from 2nd Timothy, chapter 2, verses 3 and 5 are on a memorial in the Methodist Church he faithfully attended in Sweetser, Indiana.

"Take your part in suffering as a loyal soldier of Christ Jesus. An athlete who runs in a race cannot win the prize unless he obeys the rules." (Good News for Modern Man Version)

His book mark was at this place in his Testament when it was received with his personal belongings.

It is intended for these letters of facts, truths and actual experiences to be informative for all who read them.

Parents: *Mr. and Mrs. Paul L. Black*  
1555 N. Main St.  
Frankfort  
Indiana 46041

SUMMARY

Mark flew to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (M.C.R.D.) in San Diego, California April 29, 1966 for 8 weeks of recruit training. After graduating from M.C.R.D. he had 4 months of advance training (ITR & BIT) at Camp Pendelton.

He had a 25 day leave from August 27th to September 20th. The last family get-together was a week-end in Las Vegas when he was BEST MAN for his brother's wedding on October 22nd.

October 29th, he departed, by plane, for Okinawa, making a short stop in Hawaii. Part of his time there was spent in jungle training.

On December 2nd he went, by troop ship, to the Philippines for more training. He left on December 28th, by ship, for the Delta in South Vietnam where he was engaged in his first major operation.

January 18, 1967 he returned to Okinawa on the Iow Jima. He left Okinawa, the second time, January 31st and arrived at Phu Bai, South Vietnam February 5th. He was engaged in four more major combat operations, took C.A.C. schooling, and the remainder of his time was spent with a C.A.C. unit.

His Chaplain paid tribute to him by being at the airport the evening he began his last journey home. (see the Chaplains letter on page 267.)

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A MARINE'S PRAYER

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DEFINITIONS

- USMC - United States Marine Corps
- Cpl - Corporal
- L/cpl - Lance Corporal
- MCRD - Marine Corps Recruit Depot
- DMZ - Demilitarized Zone - Dividing line between North and South Vietnam
- In the Nam - In Vietnam
- Squad - 12 men
- Platoon - 3 squads, 36 men
- Company - 4 platoon, 144 men
- Batallion - 4 companys, 576 men
- Patrol - Searching for the enemy
- Ambush - An enemy surprise attack
- Grunts - The Marines jokingly call themselves "grunts"
- NVA - North Vietnamese Army
- Charlie - A North Vietnamese
- VC - The Viet Cong who were communist guerrillas living in South Vietnam.  
They fought against the South Vietnamese and the American forces.
- Gooks - The enemy
- Choppers - Helicopters
- LZ - Landing zone
- Heliport - Landing zone for Helicopters
- KIA - Killed in action
- WIA - Wounded in action
- Medi-Vac - Removing the wounded and killed by Helicopter
- Law - A light anti-tank weapon
- Blowed away - Killed
- Hootches - Vietnamese term for huts, homes, dwellings, tents
- CAC - Combined Action Company
- R & R - Rest and Relaxation

In flight...



ALTITUDE 31,000.....

LOCATION ~~San Diego~~ left Chicago

**AMERICAN AIRLINES**

7CE  
Help

We left Indianapolis at 4:30  
 There are 11 of us going together <sup>straight</sup> ~~straight~~ to  
 San Diego. Tom is the officer in charge of us  
 until we get there. It will take us about  
 3:40 to get there, the weather is good,  
 We took a 707 from <sup>Indy</sup> ~~Indy~~ - now we are  
 on a 740. They are just getting ready to  
 serve us dinner, they told us at Indy  
 we might be in ~~Airborne~~ Airborne help  
 Airborne is Paratroopers (isn't that great)

Love  
Mark

In flight

Altitude 31,000

Location Just left Chicago

AMERICAN AIRLINES

Hi

H e l p

We left Indianapolis at 4:30. There are 11 of us going together straight to San Diego. Tom is the officer in charge of us until we get there. The weather is good. We took a 707 from Indy--now we are on a 990. They are just getting ready to serve us dinner. They told us at Indy we might be in Airborne. ha ha. Airborne is Paratroopers (isn't that great).

Love Mark

PVT. MARK R. BLACK 2210392

PLT. 2012

M.C.R.D.

San Diego, 92140



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
"Semper Paratus"

Sat 2:00  
afternoon  
H.

Hi again,

I can't remember what time we got here last night but they keep us up all night giving us some of our supplies. We did get one hour sleep <sup>through</sup> though. Today we stood at attention just about all day it seemed like. So far I like it. We are on our feet all day. The food is not very good but we get all we can eat. The first thing we did was to get a hair cut all top & sides. It is hard to finish a letter in one sitting, we are on the move all ~~the~~ time. I am sending you this letter because I may not ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> time to write again soon. I'll try to write <sup>(I did)</sup> David a little letter if I have time, I won't have visitors for quite a while. Got to go

Love  
Mark

Pvt. Mark R. Black 2210392  
Plt. 2012

M.C.R.D.  
San Diego, 92140

Sat. 2:00  
afternoon & eve

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Hi again,

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The first thing we did was to get a hair cut, A 1 top and 1 sides. It is hard to finish a letter in one setting, we are on the move all the time.

I am sending you this letter because I may not have time to write again soon. I'll try to write David (I did) a little letter if I have time. I won't have visitors for quite awhile. Got to go.

Love

Mark

---

May 3, 1966

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3 May 66

Hi

Doing the same thing, getting all of our gear. Saw John today, he walked by our Platoon with his Platoon. He saw Tom but not me. I saw him looking at Tom. We do not have much time to eat, everything is hurry. One D. I. tells one thing and the other another thing, can't do anything right, they say.

Had our physical today, start running real soon. Must break my boots in.  
See ya.

Love

Mark

(D. I. is Drill Instructor)

Monday, June 13, 1966

Hi

I shot 219 at the range, missed expert by one point. I get a sharp shooters medal, it looks like this (drawing). David was here Sunday and we had a real nice visit. We had a hard day today, a lot of P.T. and hand to hand combat (biting, kicking anywhere). David said something about you and Dad coming out for graduation. I don't think it would be worth it for such a short visit. I'll be able to go home about 6 weeks from now--we only have 14 days left. It's the 29 at 10:30--I can't wait!

I got a letter from Bob Cooley and he said they can go to the PX and drink Coke and smoke just about every night. I had 1/2 a Coke yesterday, first in 6 weeks.

We talked to Dick at church Sunday for about three minutes. He's okay.

I hope things get easier the next two days because everybody is worn out.

Better go.

P.S. Tell Bill the Pepsi man that I want a Pepsi so bad!

Love

Mark

Mark and his Father in  
their Barber Shop



CLOWNING!  
Cutting Tom's hair  
just before they  
enlisted in the Marines



GRADUATION DAY  
Brother David & Mom & Dad  
June 29, 1966



Sunday, June 19

Not much time. I'm glad that you are coming out for my graduation. Sunday when you come to visit me get here at 1:00 if you can because if you don't we might be out on a 3 mile run like we were today and you won't be able to get ahold of me.

I may or may not get to make a phone call. The D. I's. tell us we can do one thing and then do another.

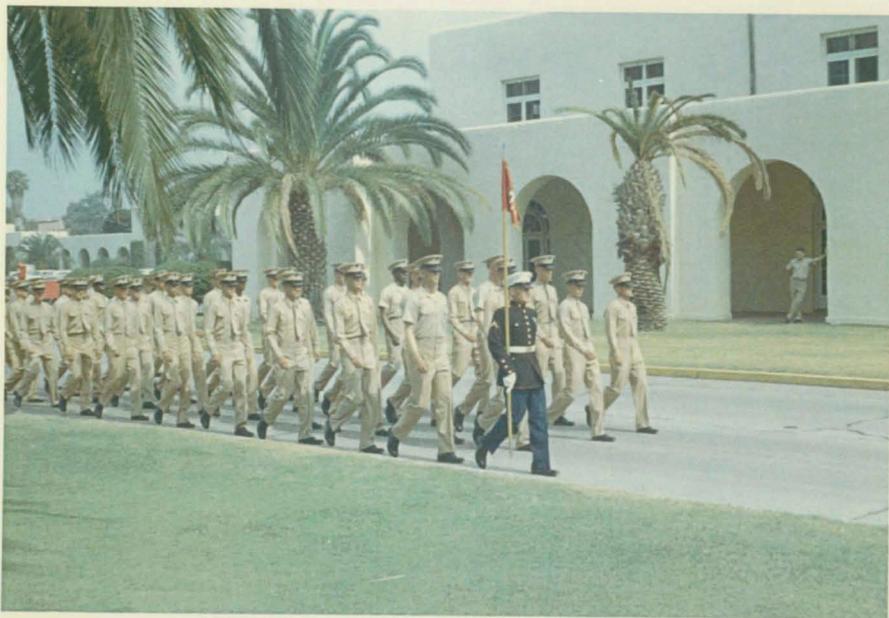
You can bring the clothes with you. You won't have to let out any of my clothes. I think I have held my own. Bring one of my gas cigarette lighters with my clothes.

We got fitted for our uniforms Friday. They are real nice.

Better go, See ya Sunday.

Love

Mark



Friday, July 1

Hi

Well, I finally made it out of Boot Camp and to Camp Pendleton, but there is nothing to do. Tom & I are not together anymore. There are only 30 men in my Company right now. We are waiting for 200 more men to get here and we start training next Friday. In the meantime all we do is sit around and clean the place up all the time.

We get up at 6:00 and are done at 5:00 or 6:00 at night. I think it will be like that all the time. We get good food and we can go back for more if we want it.

We went to the show last night (outdoors). We can have radios and cameras and we have a lot of freedom. It beats boot camp, but anything would do that. We get liberty in 2 weeks of ITR and 20 working days of B.I.T. (basic individual training). We only work 5 days a week.

I just moved over to another hut to write--they have a radio. We can make a phone call at night if we want to. I'll call before long.

I got my watch out last night for the first time and I think it is broken. All the huts were a mess when we got here, it looked like they had a party in all of them, so we had to clean them up. But we have that done so I don't know what we will do until next Friday. That's about it.

Love

Mark

P.S. We are at Camp San

November 1, 1966

Tuesday

(22)

Hi

I finally got to my unit after setting around all day. We leave here around the last of the month and we go aboard ship for another month or until they need us, but when we do go there it's to the D.M.Z. They said we might spend Christmas in the Philippines.

This whole unit has been to Viet Nam and back here just for a rest and to regroup so most of them are veterans. All of them say it's not as bad over there as you see on the news. They said not too many get shot--if you do get hurt it's from a booby trap.

We are having a typhoon here and it's been raining all day.

I think I told you I was down to four cents. Well, not anymore. Today I was throwing some paper away and I found a dollar in the waste paper basket. It's the first lucky thing since I've been in this thing.

The living quarters are real nice. They are divided into little rooms and two men to a room and you have two wall lockers and I don't have enough stuff to fill one of them.

That's it for now. One more thing, you can put my new address in the paper now with my picture if you want to.

Love

Mark

October 31, 1966

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Monday

Hi

We are on Okinawa, they said we'll be here for about a month for more training. I don't know what kind. They don't even know what to do with us right now. There are 13 of us from my unit and they have moved us two times today. We are just sleeping in this place for tonight, with no sheets or blankets. That's how organized this thing is.

The camp I am at now is right on the ocean. I could throw a rock out the window and hit the water. The natives are something else, they are real short. They live in grass huts or oriental homes, no doors, just a big opening and the place looks like a big pin. I thought Tijuana, Mexico was bad. It reminds me of the movies I've seen of Japan by the way they dress and with the women working in the fields. The fields look like Viet Nam with jungle around them but it's not jungle.

I went to the P.X. today. I couldn't believe the prices, things are so cheap and me with only four cents! I think we get paid tomorrow. I saw Tom and Mike at breakfast. He doesn't know anything either.

The plane ride was real nice. We flew over Iwo Jima. I can't believe we lost so many men there. There's nothing on it. It's not very wide and about 10 miles long--it's flat except for that big hill on one end of it. I took a picture of it.

Have you ever seen about 20 hours of daylight? We did yesterday, it's a funny feeling.

It gets dark here about 6:00, the weather is real nice day and night. They said it would be about 12 days before we would get any mail.

That's all for now, think I'll hit the rack.

Love

Mark

November 1, 1966

Tuesday

Hi

I finally got to my unit after setting around all day. We leave here around the last of the month and we go aboard ship for another month or until they need us, but when we do go there it's to the D.M.Z. They said we might spend Christmas in the Philippines.

This whole unit has been to Viet Nam and back here just for a rest and to regroup so most of them are veterans. All of them say it's not as bad over there as you see on the news. They said not too many get shot--if you do get hurt it's from a booby trap.

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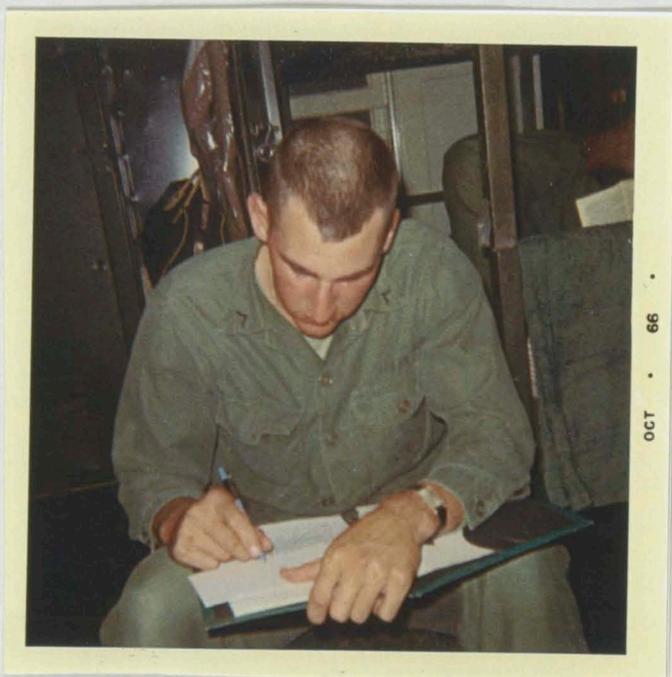
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That's it for now. One more thing, you can put my new address in the paper now with my picture if you want to.

Love

Mark



November 29, 1966

Tuesday

[24]

Hi

Excuse the paper, it's all I have. I got a letter from David today with some clippings of the USC-UCLA game. Mike was named the lineman of the game.

We haven't done anything for the last two days, just packing and getting ready to leave. The mess men go aboard ship tomorrow. I get out of that, thank goodness.

We got our teeth cleaned today, a fluoride treatment. My gums are all right now and I'm still taking the vitamin pills.

Our Thanksgiving dinner was the same one that was in the paper. But it wasn't as good as it sounded. Better than they usually have. By the time I got through the line they were out of some of the things, but I got all I wanted.

I have started sending Christmas cards with a 5¢ stamp so it will take some time to get where they're going.

The weather is getting hot again, it was in the 80's today.

I hope you aren't getting tired of me asking you to send me so many things. Some of the things I guess I don't really need but I just enjoy getting things and I haven't got money to buy things sometimes. I'm finding out what it's like not having money and not able to run around when I can. We get off-base liberty every night if you can afford it. So I hope I'm not causing you too much trouble by asking you to send me things. I think I have just about everything now. The way I was going I would have all my money out of my account in no time, so I'm going to cut down on my spending. I want to say, "not spend it." That's about it for now. Write me soon.

Love, Mark

P.S. Here I go again, asking for something. I just remembered this. I need some film mailers for 126 color 12 exposure. They don't have them at the P.X. and from now on I might not be in any one place long enough to get it developed so I'll have to send it back State side.

December 4, 1966

(leaving Okinawa)

Sunday

Hi

We've been aboard ship for a day and a half now. It's a troop ship, the kind with the small landing boats all over it. There's nothing to do, if there was there's no room to do it in. They have room for about 800 men and there are 1,360 on here. Some of them have to sleep on the decks, life boats, landing boats, and on tables in the mess hall. The compartments we are in are something else. They are a little bigger than our living room and there are 300 men in it and not much light. The racks are 8 high, about 2 feet between each one and all they are is a piece of canvas, no blankets. No place to put your gear and we have all of it with us. Rifles, machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers, radios, and our sea bags. It is tied on racks from the ceiling or laying on the rack and you have to sleep on it. Sea bags are all over the floor so in order to walk you have to straddle the aisle and walk on the edge of the racks about the fourth one up.

Another thing, they have six showers--that's just the showers for two compartments. That's about 600 men and you can only use water two times a day which amounts to four hours.

The chow is real good and you get a lot but the line is just about all the way around the ship. It's our own little mess hall with our own Marine cooks.

It's hard to walk on board. The ship is rocking back and forth all the time. Sometimes if you're not careful you will lose your balance and fall down when it rocks. It hasn't bothered me at all and I haven't seen hardly anybody sick.

We just had church services on the main deck by two Chaplains. Last night they had a movie on the main deck but I didn't watch it. We came aboard Friday and left Friday night and they say we will get to the Philippines Monday morning. That's about it for now. It sounds kind of bad but I think it's fun aboard ship like this--for awhile anyway.

Love, Mark

P.S. You can tell we are going South because it is getting hotter all the time and we can see part of the Philippines now.

December 6, 1966

Tuesday

Hi

We've been here in Subic Bay for a day now. I don't know when we are getting off the ship. All day yesterday they unloaded trucks, amo and everything. The Bay is full of ships. The carrier Midway is here, about two submarines, six troop ships with troops, (I don't know where they're going), one destroyer and a lot of civilian cargo ships. There are small landing boats running all over between ships like taxis.

us  
Yesterday some of/went to Grand Island at the entrance of the bay. It's run by the Navy and it's just like a big park (everything free), baseball, basketball, beach, swimming pool, pool hall, Par 3 golf course and a snack bar and bar with a band. Today I am on mess duty so another guy could go. I work in the Officers mess and talk about a plush mess! It's just like a restaurant. All I do is wash the pots. That's about it for now. Take care.

Love, Mark

P.S. On the island there is a big concrete fort with two 10 inch guns. The island is in the middle of the entrance to the bay. It is hot here and real hot in the galley where I work.

December 6, 1966

Tuesday

Hi

Boy, is it hot here. We just had P.T. and after it was over I sat here and the sweat dripped off me for about an hour. I don't think I ever sweat so much. Answering your question--I didn't get wrote-up by the Lieutenant, the other guys from another Company that started it did. Wrote-up is when you are put on report or in otherwords, you are in trouble. I wasn't in the fight. I run from those things (if I can). I cut hair all morning, 20 heads and I have 11 more to do. That's the whole Platoon. 25¢ is about all I can get, they can get it cut for 35¢ at the barber shop. There are about two other guys in the Company that cut hair, too. But you should see the hair cuts! We get paid Saturday. We have about four days of training here and then we move again. I know where but I can't say now. We will be moving around for about two months.

I am glad you got 3 inch tape recorders. I will need around 40 or 50 dollars

to get one. I don't know when I can get one though, we will be on the move for awhile. The guy that had the recorder sent his home, it was a big one. I think I can get one here if I get paid enough Saturday.

It sounds like you are getting a lot of snow back there, sure wish I could see it. That's about it for now. When you send that tape find out how much it costs and send me some stamps for that much.

Love

Mark



December 14, 1966

Wednesday

U. S. NAVAL STATION Subio Bay, Philippine Islands

Hi

We finished training today. We climbed aboard a ship with nets this morning and this afternoon we rode around the bay in 16 ft. fiberglass boats with 30 H.P. motors on them. We had different formations and then they let everybody drive them. One guy drove our boat into the side of another boat.

Yesterday we went across the bay to fire our weapons. We were done at 2:00 but the Navy forgot to send someone after us. At 5:30 there just happened to be a landing boat going by so we flagged it down and they brought us back. The tide was low and the boat couldn't get in very far so we had to wade in water up to our waist to get to it.

We were out in the middle of no where firing and some natives followed us there to sell us soda and beer.

We have guard duty for the next two days and I have it Friday. I hope I can lay around tomorrow.

I got a card from Zack Way and one from Rita Tyner. Monday I got the cookies and yesterday I got the Sports Illustrated and paper.

My hair cuts have gone up to 50¢.

That's about all for now.

Love

Mark



January 3, 1967

On board ship off the coast of Viet Nam

Hi

I'm still on the ship and we go in tomorrow for ten to fourteen days. They just told us what and where we are going. It is in the Delta and it is one of the biggest supplies center the V. C. have. If we destroy 70% of it it will set them back three years in supplies. They make just about all their weapons there and a lot of hospitals. There are a lot of mangrove swamps all around.

We will have Naval gunfire and air support. There are about 1,200 V.C. in the area. The name of the operation is "Deckhouse #5."

I cut more hair yesterday. I forgot to tell you that they have Osters you can use with 000 and #1 blades and white barber jackets.

We just put some stuff on our feet that is supposed to keep us from getting emulsion foot--that's when your feet swell up from being wet all the time. It is in a big tube and it is just like glue. You put it on once a day--the whole tube. It's all kind of fun trying to get your socks on afterwards.

I just met a boy that is in this Company that is from Southwood, "Class of '64." He knows a lot of people that I know.

There are all kinds of people on the ship: Army, Air Force, Viet Nam Marines, Viet Nam Advisors from the Marines and newspaper people.

I could use the tape recorder but it is at the bottom of my sea bag and it is in a real little room that is full of sea bags, not very easy to get to. There's not room to do much of anything here.

That's about all for now.

Love  
Mark

(Philippino money 1/4 of a paso, about 5¢)

January 3, 1967

Wednesday

Hi

This is the second letter today.

We just had mail call and I got your candy, Sports Illustrated, a paper, a letter from Roy Weaver, a card from Lanie Bovie, Roy Haskells, Jim and Marilyn, a letter from you (Dec. 24) and a letter from Kenny Carl's mother.

I didn't know there was a school in Indianapolis named Kennedy.

Everybody is running around getting ready for tomorrow. They are bringing up ammo from below and the hangar deck is covered with boxes of it. Everything-- even T.N.T. They closed the big doors on the hangar deck facing the coast because they were shooting at us.

We leave in the morning at 6:00. Our Company is going to be the blocking force, we just set in one place and wait for the V.C. to walk into us.

Not much else to say for now, write more later.

Love

Mark

P.S. The ship is rocking a lot again.

Tell Roy Weaver I'll write him when I have time.

I also got the Oct. 24 Oak Bark.

February 3, 1967

(On board ship)

Hi

I am still a P.F.C. They told me that I made L/CPL but when promotions came out I didn't make it. Maybe next month.

We are still on ship and won't get off until Sunday. As far as I know we are still going to Phu Bai but I don't know what we are going to do. You better not send any more tapes. I hate to say that because you have spent so much money on the recorders and Davids haven't had much of a chance to use theirs but I can't take mine into the field with me.

You can start sending the food I told you I would like to have. You can send a little box about every two weeks or ten days. Better make that every two weeks. I don't want to get too much and not be able to eat it.

The ship is just like the one we went to the Philippines on. It was built in 1943 and it got a purple heart in WW II, so it has just about seen its days.

Terry made L/CPL but he's been in longer than I have.

I don't think I'll be able to write like I have been because we are going to be in country from now on, so tell Grandma and Gordons that I won't be able to write like I have been.

I am sending this tax form home because I don't know what it's for.

When the new "Upper Rooms" come out send me one. I really enjoy reading them.

That's about all for now.

Love  
Mark



February 6, 1967

(Note: He does not tell us the date this letter was taped but we received a written letter dated Friday, the 3rd, stating they would be getting off ship on Sunday, the 5th. This letter states they arrived yesterday, so we assume that this was taped on Monday, February 6.)

Ninth taped letter.

Well, hello! Here I am again using the tape recorder. Seems like every time I record a tape I tell you this will probably be the last one I'll be able to make, but--I don't know--seems like I always get another one in somehow. But time's getting pretty short before we go out in the field again--this may be the last one for sure. They said within two or three days we'd get a tent to store our sea bags in and I think we have to leave them there.

We're at Phu Bai now at the air base. We got here yesterday afternoon. We got off ship yesterday morning and came in by boats. The boat ride was really beautiful coming into Hue. We came up a channel, or river. When we first got into the channel (which was pretty wide) there were a lot of small fishing boats all around (Vietnamese fishing) and a lot of sand dunes and pine trees. As we came on up the channel farther there were still fishing boats all along. They had big nets sticking up out of the water. I guess they let 'em down when high tide came in to catch fish.

There were some larger boats on the river that people lived in, they had those little rounded roofs on them for shelter. Every once in awhile a channel boat would come along with people just "jam packed" on it, hanging out of the windows and doors, and all kinds of bicycles stuck on top, and when it'd go by the people would wave and yell at us.

All along the river there were homes and they weren't just "hooches" either. A lot of them were nice stucco homes. There were all kinds of vines and big green plants--Mother, I think you'd like to have a lot of those plants in your living room, they were really beautiful.

Every once in awhile there would be a sea wall along the canal, and all along

the canal they had steps that came right down into the water and there were always people out there washing their clothes on the steps.

You see a lot of men around here and there's a lot of kids--especially real little kids, I imagine maybe one or two years old. They are running all over the place, and they don't wear any pants or anything, just a shirt. They're bare from the waist down.

And the girls!!! They are really good lookin' down here, I tell you! -- They sure got some good lookin' girls.

When we came into Hue it looked just like an American town. They have light poles all over the place, electric wires strung, all stucco houses, no thatched hooches or anything like that--not until you get outside of town and into the country.

We got off the boats at a little city park. It had a little fountain in the middle of it, and we waited around there for about two hours for trucks. Just across the street from where we were there were big apartment buildings. I don't know whether American service men lived in them or what, but they were sure beautiful. There were sailors walking up and down the street all the time. I guess they just got off work, they were drinking beer and everything. They sure got it rough over here, boy, I tell you! They get as much money as we do and they drink beer every day and live in nice homes, it's just hard to believe!

There was a lot of traffic going up and down the street beside the park where we were. Some cars and a lot of bicycles--just about everybody rides a bicycle or motor bike. We got a big kick watching "all the girls" go by. Like I said, they got some beautiful girls over here. They have real long black hair, nice figures, and every once in awhile you'd see a girl dressed in American clothes--a short skirt--but most of them wear Vietnamese costume. That's white slacks with a dress clear to the ground, slit all the way up the side, and some of them are really beautiful. All the men dress American style; trousers, shirts, sweaters, suits. Once in awhile you'll see a girl with a long sweater on but underneath she will still have the Vietnamese costume. They wear

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sunglasses and a little make-up. They didn't like to have their pictures taken. They'd be riding along on their bicycles and we'd flash the cameras at them and they'd turn their heads away. Like I said, they're really beautiful, boy!!! All of these white "flicks" kind of give us a "charge" and remind us of American girls.

When the trucks came we loaded on them and drove through the outskirts of Phu Bai. Like I said, it's just like an American town, blacktop streets--awful rough, bumpy, and dusty. They have curbs and the houses are all stucco.

One time we drove by a big house, I reckon where American servicemen stayed, (must be nice). They had barbed wire strung all around it and had it all sandbagged. Had a gun position on top of one of the corners all sandbagged up.

Then we came out here to the Air Base. This is a BIG base--must be three or four square miles. Mountains all around it. It's all sand, just like a beach--real sandy. No permanent buildings, really, they're all temporary. Most of them are just a frame building, with canvas around the sides for the siding, with tin roofs, and built up off the ground a little for protection from the water. They have a lot of rain up here during the Monsoon season but I think it has just ended.

We live in tents, tents big enough for about 15 men. And we have a mess hall here. We have to use our own mess gear and we have pretty decent chow. We have an Officer's Club, Staff NCO Club, and an Enlisted Men's Club here. They also have a small PX and a couple of barber shops, and a laundry. I don't know what else they've got all over the base. I'm just here in this one area and that's all the farther we can go.

Here off to one side of me, off towards the side of the base, they've got a big area which is all radio antennas--big towers like WBAT. Must be about 15 of them, and mountains in the background. They've got big guard towers out there in the distance that you can see and a lot of fences and barbed wire strung.

As we were coming in you could see a lot of artillery pieces--tanks and the big guns. These are for security, and a lot of these buildings have sandbags all around them--a lot of bunkers in case they get mortared. I don't know, but I think we're about a mile or so from the runway--the airstrip itself. It's

mostly helicopters, I believe, not too many planes.

We get paid tomorrow, just about everybody is broke. We don't have any money and we're hurtin' for cigarettes and everything, so tomorrow we get paid and we get to make a PX call. We get paid in MPC's (Military Payment Certificates) and Vietnamese "peinya"--or whatever it is--that's all we can use over here, no American money at all.

We had mail call last night. I got one letter from you, and I got your can of cookies and caramel corn, your Sports Illustrated and the adaptor for the tape recorder. I don't think I'll be able to use that, I just won't be around electricity. They have electricity on base but we don't have any in our tents, so I think I'll just keep that in my sea bag. I got one of your tapes that described the "snow storm" you had. You said it was cold back there. Boy! You'd ought to be here, you just roast during the day but at night you get cold. You really get cold at night but the day is something else!

You said on your tape something about the "milk shake" you sent. I haven't gotten it yet so I don't know what it is. It may be awhile before I get it.

And my watch--you said to describe it. It's a Westclock, it's round and is gold, the face has no numbers on it--just those little marks, and it keeps excellent time. I got a pretty big crack in the crystal the other day and I don't think it's waterproof. It's not self-winding but it keeps real good time and that's all I want--something that keeps good time.

The 2nd platoon here (my platoon) is on "sparrow hawk." I told you that's when someone gets in trouble then we have to go out and help 'em. Right now, we've got all of our gear--that is our cartridge belts, packs, flak jackets, helmets and rifles--on a truck. When they need us, all we've got to do is go jump on that truck (just like firemen) and "take off." I reckon we go to the airstrip and get on helicopters, and we put on our gear on the way to the airstrip. So we can't go anywhere--we have to stay right here in the area. We're on a five minute standby ALL the time.

You asked about Terry Rennaker. He did not get shot in the leg, I'll

verify that for sure. He got shot in the arm and finger. He's not with us any more, I don't know where his company went.

They say we will be here at the airbase for about seven to ten days and then we go on an operation somewhere--I don't know for how long. I think they said 30 days or so or until we finish, and then they don't know where we go from there. It might be back here, we don't know.

I got a tax form while we were on ship. It was a form for how much money we made and how much we took out for taxes and everything, and I sent it home to you while <sup>we</sup> were on board ship----and let's see, what else----I got to stop and think what else to tell you. Oh yes, they are going to send me to a mine warfare school. I don't know when I go and I don't know how long it's for, probably two or three days. I don't know what I'm going to learn there, either. That's why I'm going, I guess! Should be kind of interesting--I ought to learn what we're going to be up against--a lot of mines, probably! So, I'm kind of looking forward to going to that.

I'll tell you, these "guys" that have "permanent personnel" here in these towns like DaNang, Saigon, Hue, and Phu Bai, --they really disturb us "grunts" 'cause, like I said, they get to live in houses, sleep in beds, get three square meals a day, showers and shaves every day--they really have it nice! They're making the same amount of money we are, and we have to go out and live in the mud, get shot at, two meals a day, no beds to sleep in,--it really "honks" us grunts off to think that someone's making the same amount of money we are and we're out there getting all the dirty work while they're back here living like "kings." I guess there's nothing that we can do about it though, but we sure "bitch" a lot about it.

Dad, go ahead and send those Mad magazines, we sure do get a big kick out of them. Everybody enjoys reading my Playboys when I get them. I have to pass them all around--everybody wants to look at them. Everybody asks, "Where's your Playboy, Black, Where's your Playboy?"

I haven't had a chance to read the newspaper or Sports Illustrated yet, I'll

do that later on this afternoon. I just hope they don't send me to that mine warfare school for a few days yet so I can read that magazine stuff and get my gear squared away.

Here, we're sleeping on our "rubber ladies," "rubber bitches," whatever you want to call them--some guys call them a "rubber whore." (That's our air mattresses we sleep on.)

And like I said, it's all sand here and it's pretty messy,--All our gear-- a lot of our gear right now is laying on the ground all full of sand and everything. But it's better than living out in the field, we can't complain!

Oh, and our "heads"--we've got a little "head" out here in back of our tents. It's just a little frame building. There're no showers--it's just a "head." And you sit on it just like an outhouse--well, that's what it is--"an outhouse," you sit on a little "hole." They've got little barrels in here--little half a barrel--they call them honeybuckets. And we have to carry those, I don't know how far--but we have to empty them every day. I just hope I don't get that job-- might be kind of a "hairy" job.

We have showers around here somewhere. We didn't get to use them last night 'cause we weren't organized enough yet. They say we have them around here somewhere though--we have hot water, too. This morning we had to shave out here with no mirrors or anything, using our helmets to put water in and stuff, but I think that from now on we'll be able to use the showers and stuff that they have for us.

Just right behind our tents (we've got two rows of tents here) no more than 100 meters away is the headquarters for the General of this base. He's a Major General--a two star General--and he doesn't have it much better than we do. He lives in a little "hut" about like we do--one of those little frame huts with canvas around it. So he "roughs" it a little, but I doubt if he roughs it any more than he has to!

There's a lot of guys out here playing football all the time, so all these "pogues" we call them, "permanent personnel,"--they've got time to play football

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and stuff and they make sixty-five bucks a month for it, extra!

In the tent beside us is my old team leader, Corporal Ski, I told you about-- he has a record player. It plays with batteries and he's got all the latest records that he plays all the time, which helps a lot. We can't get a radio station here. We can get some, but they're all "Gook" stations. We can't get that Armed Forces station here, I guess they're too far north. Once in awhile a Vietnamese station will play some American music, but no rock and roll--it's all that "mood" music, you might say, which I like, but a lot of the guys don't.

You asked me what I thought about getting switched from squads. They rearranged the whole platoon about a day after I got switched, so they changed the whole platoon around. Everybody is in different squads.

Got a break now, going to chow, be back in a little bit!

Well, here I am again! Two of the guys in my platoon shipped for six months, (they extended for six more months in Vietnam) and when they do that they get a 30 day leave. They go back home for 30 days and then they come back here for six more months. My squad leader is one of them and the other guy is the one I told you was going to be a preacher. I don't know why they did it, everybody thinks they are "fools" for doing it! They'd get 30 days leave when their tour of duty is over, but they want to come back here for six more months.

They're crazy, I guess!

Right now I'm standing outside the tent here, everybody's just sitting around inside the tents. We had to dig trenches all around the tents--drain trenches in case it rains. It's 2:30 in the afternoon, I read Sports Illustrated and the newspaper, and I was reading in the back of the Sports Illustrated that 19th hole where the readers take over, about that January 16th issue. A lot of people wrote in--they didn't "like" that issue. It had something about a "bare girl" in it and I haven't gotten that issue. I was wondering if you had seen it. I'm kind of curious to know what their "gripes" are about.

The mountains are all around here and you can see them a lot better now in the afternoon. The haze is all gone and they look like the Smokey Mountains.

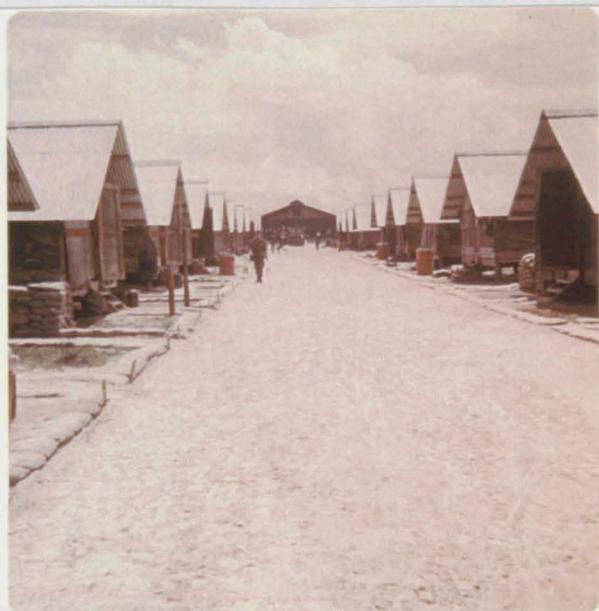
They're not too big, they're all green--I don't know if it's all trees or vegetation, probably mostly jungle. Over to my left is a real big one, it's even above the clouds. Over to one side there's no mountains at all--that must be the side where the ocean is.---(Noise in the background)---That was a tank taking off.

"Hi Mom and Dad Black, how are you?" ---that was one of my buddies talking to you.

This is about all I have to say right now--I guess I'll sign off.

There's another guy here that wants to use my recorder to make a tape to send home. So unless I get another tape from you before I store this away in my sea bag this will be the last time you'll be hearing from me until after I get back from the Operation. So until then, I'll be seeing you.

Bye bye



February 16, 1967

Thursday

Hi

We leave the air base tomorrow, looks like we are going to get the best job again. Security for the Battalion C. P. I don't know how long the operation will last but I think after it is over we are coming back here. I hope.

It finally stopped raining and the sun is out today. It rained for seven days and was it cold or it seemed like it.

I got some pictures of the ice storm from Davids and also a tape from them. I had to send it back though because my recorder is in the sea bag. They didn't get to use theirs much to talk to me. If we come back here I'll have it again. We aren't getting much mail, I think they're playing games again. Nobody got any letters today but my Platoon did get a package from the Tri-Hi-Y Club in N.Y. They sent ball point pens, playing cards, life savers and razor blades. I needed blades and they don't have any at the P.X.--now you don't have to send me any. Yesterday I got a military catalog from the company you got my new address labels from.

Dad, tell Steve Weaver thanks for his letter. That's about all for now.

Love,  
Mark

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February 17, 1967

Friday

Hi

I got your Sports Illustrated and newspapers today and the Knight. The guys sure go crazy over the Knight, we really enjoy it. I got that Sports Illustrated with the girl on the cover about one day after I asked you about it. The carmel corn was real good, I sure liked it. Could you send me one carton of Viceroy cigarettes? I am almost out and by the time I noticed it tonight the P.X. was closed. We are going on an operation tomorrow so I can't buy any. We were supposed to go today but tomorrow we are going for sure. We already have two C rations and ammo. The area we are going to--there was a book written about it about five years ago. "The Street Without Joy." Terry's Company is not with us (the Battalion). They are somewhere else doing something. I don't have anymore tapes, and we are getting mail while we are in the field this time. We might be out for a long time so my writing will taper off. The reason this letter is so messie is because I'm writing this on my knee and by candle light. That's about it for not.

P.S. I don't know the name of the operation.

Love, Mark

February 18, 1967

Saturday

Hi

Another big day in the Marine Corps. They fell through there--again today. As I said in the letter yeaterday, we were going on the operation today. Well, we started to but it was raining again and overcast. Yesterday it was sunshine and hot but not today.

To start it off this morning, the trucks we were on didn't know how to get to the "helo" port and when we did get there we stood in the rain for two hours. They finally called it off and we had to walk back to our huts, about one mile. Tomorrow they say we are going no matter what. If the weather is good we go by "helo" and if not, we have a two hour truck ride and walk about six miles with all that gear and over wet ground and through rivers. Sounds like fun!

Don't send me any barber clippers, I can't use them in the field and no place to carry them. My others and the rest of my tools are in my sea bag and they are all right. I'll send my old clippers home when I get a chance to, it'll be awhile. The P.X. doesn't have clippers.

You can start sending goodies now.

That's all for now.

Love

Mark

February 24, 1967

Friday

Hi

We've been on the move for the last three days and I mean moving. It's been walking all day long. When we left the church we walked about seven miles and it was all sand. Just like the Dunes. There were big grave yards all the way, some of them about a mile long. The graves are mounds of sand with no markers and some of them are big mounds. You have to zig zag all over the place.

When we got to where we were going, we (that's the whole Company) took off again on a sweep, over the Dunes again, and spent the night out there. We didn't have any chow so we went for 34 hours without food. After we got out of the sand it was all rice paddies and mud. We can't walk on the dikes because some of them are mined.

When we got back to the Battalion C.P. yesterday we moved out again at 2:00 last night. Out through the Dunes again. When we got to the rice paddies my squad was walking point for the Company and we walked into an ambush and all hell broke loose. It lasted for about 15 minutes and believe me I was laying low in the water. Nobody got hit and I don't see how because we were in the middle of the paddy and the V.C. were in the tree lines on both sides. We have had nine W.I.A. from mines. To put it all together, we have been walking for the last three days in the sand, mud and water and we are tired and mad.

The name of the Operation is "Chinook" and we are north of Phu Bai.

I got your apples last night and they were all right, send some more. I ate the last one when we were in the ambush watching them call in artillery on the V.C. I also got your Playboy calendar. That's about all for now, I better get some sleep. Make sure you don't send the barber clippers, the gear I'm carrying now is about to do me in. Send some Lipton Instant Tea with lemon and more food. (canned fruit).

Love

Mark

(Editors note: This was all useless and a waste.)

February 26, 1967

Sunday

Hi

This morning we walked back to the place where we first got off the trucks a week ago. We are now dug in just out side of a town. It has stores and everything. I don't know how long we'll be here.

I got your potato chips yesterday and they were all right. Today I got your Hostess Cup Cakes and the pictures, too. The carmel corn was very good.

I sent some slides in to be developed, you don't need to send them back for me to see. You don't need to send me any of the pictures anymore. I hate to throw them away and sometimes it's a problem to send them back so just don't send them.

Last night two V.C. dropped three mortar rounds into our position. Nobody was hurt.

We are going up into the mountains in a few days, I think.

It's another cold day. Yesterday was hot. I don't know about this weather.

That's about all I can think of for now.

Love,

Mark

P.S. Send a ball point pen, mine ran out of ink and I am using someone elses.

Black ink if you can find it.

March 8, 1967

Wednesday

Hi

We are standing lines here at Dong Ha living in sand bag bunkers. I am writing this by candle light. It is wet and cold but at least we are dry. I don't know how long we will be here. Tomorrow we are going on a road sweep and coming back here at night. Today my squad went on a patrol outside the lines. All we did was play around. We walked up the main road and stopped at about every house and bought sodas, and talked to a lot of Arvines--Viet Nameese Soldiers. One of the guys in my squad used to work with the civilian people and he can talk their language pretty good.

We eat our meals at the Air Wings mess hall, that's the Marines who have the choppers here, and the chow is out of this world. I told you about the food at El Toro just before I came over, well, it's just as good and they even have music. Tom Lobsinger is in the Air Wing so you know he eats good. I don't know why all we Marines don't eat like the Air Wing does. For example, this morning we had blueberry pancakes and all kinds of other good stuff.

That operation we just came off of was Prairie II. They said we killed more V.C. in 48 hours than anyone has yet. Most of them were from air strikes and artillery. Just about every night we were out there the sky was lit up with flashes of light and a big bang and some of them were real close. It didn't bother me though because it was ours. I sure have seen some bad things in the last week. You just can't imagine what the war is like over here. It is "hell" at times. I just can't tell you what it's like in a letter. Other times it's not bad though. We haven't gotten any mail since that first night here. It's all at Phu Bai and somebody has to bring it up here if they ever get around to it.

That's about all I have for now. Write more later.

Love  
Mark

P.S. The other night I got another "Upper Room" and a nice letter from Roy Weaver. I get Stevie's letter back at Phu Bai. I also get your new Sports Illustrated.

together last night.

The last two days we were in the field we didn't have any chow so besides being cold we were starved. I don't know when we are going out again but I think we are going back to the area we came from with all the sand and rice paddies and that's all right with me. Anything is better than this place.

I got that canned orange juice and it sure was good. Last night we got our first mail for a week. I didn't care for the cream of wheat so don't send any more. Send that soup you can heat without using water and the hot chocolate. We have heat tabs to heat it with.

I also got a letter from Davids last night and I was sure surprised to hear that they are buying a house and I'm sure happy for them. I can't wait until I can get back to see them again.

That's about all for now, write more later.

Love,

Mark

March 10, 1967

Friday

Hi

My platoon is guarding an artillery battery now about 15 miles from Dong Ha. It is right outside of a town so there are people running all over the place trying to sell things. It is still raining but it has stopped for the past hour so I am trying to dry my things out.

Last night there was an Army guy that stayed in the hole with me. He works at the air base and just came out here to help us stand lines. I couldn't believe all the stuff he had. All kinds of candy that he got in some kind of a care package--it's like a care package for service men. The Marines don't get them. He had the new Army flak jacket that the Army has that only weighs about 3 lbs. Ours is real heavy. He also had a little gas cooking stove that we cooked our food on and keep warm with it. He is from Chicago and is 28 years old with five kids. He is a body guard for the big wheels in the underworld. That's what he said anyway. He even looks like that kind (big and Italian).

I sure need a hair cut and a shave, it's been about three weeks now. I'm going to let the beard go until they tell me to shave it off.

I got your hot chocolate the other day. It's good but not that much better than the hot chocolate we get in C rations sometime. Don't send anymore, since I get it in C rations it's just extra stuff for me to carry and I have enough of that now. Tell Helen thanks anyway, it is real good but there's no sense in sending something I already have.

This is the last envelope I have. I told Grandma and Gordons to send me some. I wrote Grandma a letter about a week ago and told her to give it to Gordons too. Two birds with one stone.

That's about all I have for now.

Love

Mark

March 15, 1967

Wednesday

[37]

Hi

We are leaving the artillery battery today and going on another operation, as much as I hate to. They just set up a mess tent and we were getting hot chow, now we have to leave it.

I got more mail yesterday, and a lot more goodies from you: soup, apples, ice tea and I can't remember what else. I have eaten most of it already and was it good. I also got the Playboy. I sure am crazy about that house in it. I don't think mine will look like that but I want that kind of furniture and maybe that kind of rug. It's sure nice.

The envelopes you sent me aren't any good anymore. They are stuck together already. I got some from Catherines yesterday, too. The same thing happened to them. Next time send the ready seal kind. The ones that you don't have to lick.

I finally shaved off my beard yesterday after two weeks and it's been three weeks since I've had a bath or hair cut so I'm looking pretty bad.

I don't know where or how long this operation will last. I'll write every chance I get which probably won't be very much until we get back.

We have a new Lieutenant now, our old one rotates back so we have a "boot" Lt. now. Not much else to say so better go.

Love

Mark

P.S. I got a letter from Terry's mother.

March 18, 1967

Saturday

Hi

We are out in the hills again, my whole Battalion along with about four others someplace. I think it is still operation Prairie II. Yesterday we walked about 6,000 meters to where we are now, up on top of a big hill. It just had to be the hottest day we've had so far and we were carrying all our gear. For awhile I didn't think I was going to make it. My body felt like it was burning up.

Two days ago my Company was set up along a river. It wasn't too deep and it was fast moving and the water was clean. I got my first bath in three weeks and washed my clothes. I think the whole Company was swimming in the river. That area was pretty secure.

Like I said, it is getting hot. The sun doesn't come out until about 12:30 noon, it is cloudy all morning.

There must be something around us because they are shooting artillery all around us.

You had better send me another carton of Viceroy's if you haven't already. I am still carrying the Playboy magazine with me. I love to look at that house and try to figure out how I can have my living room look like his. Maybe I'll have to put the fireplace in the wall instead of having it out in the middle. I've got a long time for that though but it helps pass the time thinking about it.

I said it's getting hot here now. I would rather it be hot than cold, rainy and muddy because you can beat the heat and it's not hot at night. When it's raining you are cold and miserable all the time.

That's about all for now. Try to get me those envelopes as soon as possible.

Love

Mark

March 20, 1967

Monday

Hi

We're out here in the field now. We had to do it the hard way, by the trucks.

Yesterday morning while we were waiting for the trucks I was looking at Knight magazine and a photographer with a movie camera took my picture. He took my name, rank and serial number and said the film was going to Headquarters Marine Corps to make a movie out of it. Maybe I'll be a star.

After we got off the trucks we had to walk about 10 miles with all our gear and were we hurting when we got here. The area we walked across was just like a desert, all sand, but it wasn't hot. There was a trail to walk on but I had to walk out to the side in the sand all the way. I was flank security, and was it hard going.

We are set up around a church. It's an old Catholic church and is it big. It's not being used anymore but it still has a beautiful altar in it. There must have been missionaries here at one time because there're also three other buildings around it. One of them was a hospital at one time because it has a red cross on it.

Don't forget to start sending things to eat now because we only get two meals a day and I sure get hungry. (A lot of canned fruit.)

We have Viet Nameese soldiers with us, too, and they have American advisers with them. When we were on our way here two guys stepped in a pungie pit but didn't get hurt too bad. That's about it for now.

Love  
Mark

P.S. The general of the 3rd Marine Div. just flew out here from Phu Bai. They came down by my hole and I could hear them talking. We are dug in right along a trail and they said it is the "Street Without Joy"--the book was written about this trail. I guess the missionaries that were here wrote it. It's about how every year the V.C. came down out of the hills and took all the people's rice and just about everything, the young men also. We have a chaplain out here with us and they are having Mass in the church now.

March 22, 1967

Wednesday

Hi

We just got back to the river last night, this is where we started out from. I don't know if I told you or not that everybody took baths in the river the last time we were here. It was something to see all those Marines out in the water with no clothes on, washing themselves and their clothes.

All we have been doing the last few days is walking the hills with all our gear and has it been hot. There are guys passing out all the time from the heat and most of the time we don't have any water, let alone food. We usually go about a day on one meal and sometimes two days with no food. Believe me, I have lost some weight.

I am squad radio man now so I am carrying about 28 more pounds on my back. Sometimes I don't think I am going to make it up some of those hills.

The operation has been changed to "Prairie III" now. About two nights ago we got mortared real bad again. Delta Company had 27 W.I.A. and 4 K.I.A. The Battalion lost 34 altogether. Right now 1-9 is the smallest Battalion in the 3rd Marine Division and Delta Company is the smallest Company in the Battalion. When Delta hit "the Nam" we had 208 men in the Company. Now we are down to 104. We didn't see a single V.C. while we were out this last time. To tell you something else, I have never seen a live V.C. except the ones we have captured. When we do get hit all we can do is shoot where we think they are.

When we got in last night they had hot chow out here for us. We had to eat it out of our helmets with our fingers (just like animals) but it was good. The first food in two days. We are hoping to get a rest since we are in such bad shape but we don't know.

I got your letter with the list of things you have sent me and I have gotten all of them. And this morning I got your March 12-14 letters and one from Aunt Catherine. We don't get packages while we are in the field but keep sending them anyway, I'll get them sometime. Last night when we got in here it started raining and did it rain. It only lasted for about 1/2 hour but when it was over it was nothing but a big lake around here. The sun is out today and we are drying out. That's about all I have for now. I am fine and all right, just tired, but I'm going to make it

March 29, 1967 Wednesday

(The letter showed the 28th- Wed.)

Hi

Well, it's me again. We just got back from the D.M.Z. again. We went up to the same place where we got hit hard when we had the tanks. And this time A Company got hit. They had 47 W.I.A. and 5 K.I.A. They walked into an ambush and had to retreat. So for 1 1/2 days we set back and watched them pound it with artillery and air strikes, after that we went in and you should have seen the place. There was gear left behind by the Marines and we found all kinds of V.C. gear, and bodies. We found mortar rounds, all kinds of gear, food and 35 dead V.C. They were dug in, they carried out a lot of dead because we found one tied to a piece of bamboo but they didn't get him out. We even found three V.C. women. We also found one wounded V.C. and they say he talked his head off. He said there were 400 V.C. there. It's just hard to believe what it was like.

Right now our Battalion has two ex-V.C. for guides. Today we came back to Camp Carrol, it's about 15 miles from Dong Ha. It's a big artillery battery. We will be here for about four days and then back down by Hue. They say we are going back on Operation Chinook, that's the one with all the sand and rice paddies. That's all right with me because up here they don't play games. Tomorrow we get our M16 rifles.

We got mail today and I got 21 packages from you, none of the guys could believe it. I can't begin to tell you all I got. You don't need to send anymore Kool-Aid for awhile and when you do, send some of that Pillsbury stuff. I don't need any toothbrush because we don't have water to brush them most of the time. And I don't need socks because we got new ones today and also took a shower which was great! When we're out in the field sometimes they get good to us and send out hot sauce for our C rations and cans of orange juice and apples, but when they do that you can stand by for trouble because they're going to send us out on a big hike or something. I asked Davids to send me some peach brandy and he said he would if I could have it here. Tell him to send it, what we get over here we keep, I don't care what they say, but it's all right to have it. I'm writing this fast because it's getting dark. I'll write more tomorrow or the next day.

Love, Mark

March 31, 1967

Friday

Hi

We are supposed to move out tomorrow if not today. Last night they put us on a 30 minute stand-by to go up to Kha Sand or to the place we just came from.

I finally got all the food eaten that you sent and it was all good. We never get anything like that. Maybe sometimes when we're out in the field we might get one candy bar for the whole squad. It is really something to get something cold to drink over here, too. We get beer and soda but it is warm. At the mess hall they have Kool-Aid with ice in it but you only get one glass. Believe me, you really learn to appreciate the better things. Like a shower and shave, brushing your teeth, ice, something to sleep on besides the ground, and I'm<sup>still</sup> looking for clean clothes, I have clean socks.

We got our new rifles yesterday, the AR 15 and they sure are nice. We call them our "toys" because that's what they look like.

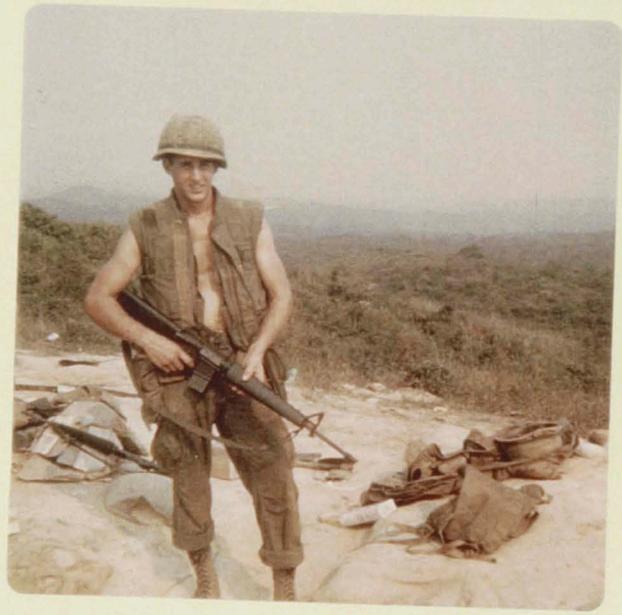
I haven't been writing too many letters lately because I don't have the time to and all I have to write about is the war, so tell Grandma and everybody else not to worry. I'll try to write you as much as I can.

I cut some hair yesterday but not<sup>too</sup>/much because the clippers didn't work half the time and it is so hot over here. This camp is up on a big hill and they have the biggest guns in Nam here. You should see how long the barrel is and it makes the biggest bang I have ever heard and the ground shakes. We are about 500 meters away from it and you can feel the shake from it. It shoots 27 miles.

That's about all I have for now.

Love

Mark



Feb 24 letter

Apr. 15 letter



Feb 28<sup>th</sup> letter

April 11, 1967

Tuesday

Hi

We are back off another operation, the name of it was operation "Big Horn." That's the fifth operation we have been on this year and we have been on every major operation this year except one. We are out in the white sand and rice paddies just like the last time but the paddies didn't have water in them this time. I didn't fire a single shot with my new toy and I am thankful for that. It wouldn't bother me in the least if I never fire it again. We did run into some trouble though. The battalion had five K.I.A. and 27 W.I.A. Before we went out they told us that when we got back we would be standing lines at this new camp for about two months--never happened. 1-26 just got off a five day operation and said they were tired so they gave it to them and we are going back up to Dong Ha. I don't know what for or how long. On this last operation I had tonsillitis. I had a fever of 102 and couldn't eat for about two days. The Senior Corpsman said there's a war going on and they couldn't get me out of the field.

The other day in the field I got a letter from you, Davids, and from Jane Jones. David asked me some questions so I'll answer them and you can tell him, because I probably won't have time to write him. We don't have any ammo shortage that I know of and once in awhile we get the "Stars and Stripes," a military newspaper and they really let you know what's going on over here. It's too bad you can't get it back there.

The other night while I was on an ambush I redesigned my house. I think it is a lot better this way.

We just got more mail but not packages. I eat most of them myself. The way things look I won't be able to use my tape recorder until i get R. & R. and that'll be a long time. I can just see Dad out there trying to fix that rose bush and then cutting it down!

I got a letter from Linda Tribbett, and one from Gordons. Tell them I'll try to write if I can. I want to but I just don't have time. I'm never in one place long enough. That's all for now.

Love  
Mark

April 14, 1967

Friday

Hi

Well, 1-9 finally has a home here at Dong Ha. This will be where we will be working out of from now on. As far back in the rear as Okinawa they were starting to call us the "homeless maggots" because we didn't have a home and we lived like animals. I think I have received all your envelopes now. I have enough to last for awhile and I got another roll of film last night so don't send anymore of that for awhile. David told me about Tom and Karen Irby.

Here comes my big news!!!! I'm getting transferred to 3-26 along with all the guys I came over with in November. Just about everybody in the Battalion that came over when I did is going to 3-26. We have all our gear (that's sea bags, too) and are waiting to go down to Phu Bai. That's where 3-26 is. They are standing lines there, I think, so maybe it's a good thing I'm getting transferred. I might be able to use my tape recorder but I won't know until I get there. Everything in my sea bag is all wet but the recorder and radio still work. Don't send any tapes unless you get one from me, I have one. I should have my new address in the next two days. It will probably mess up my mail getting to me for awhile so I'll be getting back mail for a long time. That's about all for that.

I got moved up to platoon radio man two days ago, just to fill in for the one who was sick. The Battalion went back out to the field today for about ten days. They are going out as a blocking force, that means no walking. But I didn't have to go. I sure hated to see them leave. I had a lot of friends here and it was my home but I think I'll like 3-26 too. That's about all for now, write more later.

Love  
Mark

P.S. The Battalion mail clerk just came up to me and said I would get all my mail all right. I came over with him but he's not leaving. He said I should get about four of those little round packages today. He couldn't believe all the little round packages I get and all the other guys can't either, but keep them coming. The guys helped me eat my birthday cake, said it was very good. Better go.

Love  
Mark

April 15, 1967

Tenth taped letter

The account of his eight weeks in the field.....

Well, hello! This is Saturday, the 15th. I'm back here at Phu Bai now with my new company, and I hope this tape works (it's a little damp), I just dug it out of my sea bag. I'll give you the address to my Company right now. The first line is the same--my name and serial number and everything. The second line would be: Third Battalion, 26 Marines. Third line would be: Mike Company, First Platoon. The last line is still the same: FPO San Francisco, 96602.

I'm settin' outside on some sand bags recording this and it's startin' to rain a little bit right now. It's been drizzling here all morning...."heck with it," I'll set out here through it!

There were about nine guys they transferred to my Company down here to 3-26, and right now there's three of us together in Mike Company. They split the rest of us up in different Companies. They say they are going to take us back up in "Chinook" where we just came from, and we might be going out tomorrow, but Mike Company is supposed to come back in here Monday or Tuesday so they don't know whether they'll take us out or not. I may be "skatin'" for awhile, I sure hope so.

We're sleeping here in "hard-backs" (in wood buildings, on cots). They've got a real nice chow hall. We got a club we can go to, a PX, a laundry--sure looking forward to gettin' to that laundry. I've been wearing the same utility jacket for four months now, it's never been washed yet--just in rivers when we went swimming--my skivvies are about the same. I need a shower pretty bad, too, so I'm looking forward to getting that done this afternoon.

You'd never guess who I met when I got off the plane here in Phu Bai. By the way, we flew from Dong Ha to Phu Bai by military plane (it's about a 20 minute flight). Soon as I got off the plane Lobsiger was there at the airport--Tom Lobsiger. He came up from--where's he at?--Chu Lai! He and some other guys came up to take a "cultural tour" of Hue, of all things! We had a nice talk for

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about a half hour. It's amazing who you meet over here.

He tried to tell me how much he hated being a cook, he wanted out of it so "durn bad" and I tried to tell him how crazy he was. I told him some of the things we'd been through and he said they got mortared up there where he was once, and he said they had a mortar land a "hundred yards" from them one time and he thought that was "really hair-raising." I told him, "You ought'a have 'em land three feet from you!"

I don't know--those guys--guys like Lobsiger, they just don't realize there's a war going on. We got two guys back in my old company, Delta, that had extended over here for six months. They went home on 30 days leave and then came back to start their six more months. They said the people back home--they just don't realize there's a war going on over here, they could care less, except for the people that have kids over here or people they know over here--they keep up on what's going on. But everybody else, they could just "give a durn" about what's going on over here. But let me tell you, it's no picnic over here! I'm going to try to tell you now what the war is like over here.

Where I first got in real action was when we went up to Dong Ha and got on those helicopters and flew out in the mountains. The first day we got there..... by the way, that picture you sent me out of the newspaper of us up on hill 162, that was the hill we got heli-lifted in on. Well, the next day we started "humpin'" it across the hills, all our gear on--and those hills almost straight up and down--and it's just the thickest jungle you could ever see. We had to chop our way through all the time. I was on point onetime for the company choppin' my way through, and I just "cut the heck" out of my hands--it's all vines and most of it are "sticker" bushes.

There's no trails, you have to make your own trails--and that first evening we got ambushed. We were just about to our objective where we were going. We came out of the hills down in this little valley, and up on the side of the hill there's a bunch of bomb craters. You couldn't believe some of these bomb craters--they're enormous things. Some of them are, oh my gosh, I'd say about

thirty feet deep and about fifty feet wide--you could set out house in 'em, some of them are so deep. I don't see "how in the heck" a bomb could make such a big hole in such hard ground, but they do. Anyway, there was a bunch of "gooks" up there. They were above us on the side of a hill shootin' down at us in the valley. It was<sup>a</sup> pretty big fire fight and we didn't have any cover at all--we just had to lay down in the grass, and to shoot at 'em we had to stand up and look out over the top of the grass to see what we were shooting at. There was a guy about five feet from me, and about half way during the fire-fight he was up on his knees trying to shoot a LAW and he got hit, right between the eyes--all you could hear was a "thud" and just heard him hit the ground.

While this was going on the rest of the company was still up in the hills following us down in a column, so part of the company was in position coming out of the hills but they were kinda' behind the "gooks." They sent a platoon in behind the "gooks" to sweep through them down the hill. Well, they started doing that, but somehow our own men started shooting down the valley at us and there were rounds going all around us--rounds hittin', oh my gosh, just inches from me, and about twenty feet behind me an M-79 round went off (that's that real sawed off shotgun like thing that shoots grenades). After it was all over, we had killed one of our own guys and seriously wounded another. So we came out of that with two KIAs. Our whole battalion was up there and my company alone took 20 WIAs and one KIA in that mortar attack.

After we got that taken care of we went on up to our objective on top of another hill and stayed there for two or three days, and that's where I got that picture of the dead gook.

Every night we'd have to dig a hole because of mortars, and I'm so sick of diggin' holes, but it pays off, and most of the time we have to dig in solid rock, almost. It's "harder than heck" diggin' but believe me, you want a hole to get in when those mortars start comin' in!

When we got to this hill we noticed a big stake stickin' in the ground with a bunch of sticks or branches or something tied on the end of it, it looked

like a broom. We noticed it but we didn't think anything about it. But, after we got mortared once real bad we discovered that stake was an "aiming stake" for mortars. The V C had put that up there just hoping that maybe we would camp up on top of that hill and they would have a stake to aim on. We had to go out and take that stake down and after that we didn't get mortared there any more. There's nothing you can do when those mortars start coming in...just get down in your hole and "hope and pray." You can hear those things coming in--you can hear a whistle just before they hit the ground. They just come in "sh u u u u m m m m" and then "phu m m m m"--and the dirt starts flyin' all over the place. I don't know how the gooks pin-pointed us all the time but they sure did. We'd call in artillery on 'em, we'd have a general idea where they were shooting from, but not really, --we'd just call in artillery and saturate the whole area all around us.

Then one day when we were up there we saw some gooks about a mile from us down in the valley. They were movin' around, so we called in artillery on 'em and later in the afternoon they called in air strikes on 'em--and that went on all day. The next day, somehow, they got a body count--I think by these little spotter planes, these little piper cubs that fly around. They counted 700 and some odd V C bodies. Our battalion got a record kill that day, we were accredited for those kills, the most V C killed in one day. But we actually didn't do it ourselves, artillery and air strikes did it.

That one dead gook I got a picture of--him and another one started walking up the hill toward us when that air strike was going on. I guess they got scared, and I don't know if they knew we were up there or not, but third platoon picked 'em off. That one was dead and the other one was still alive and we medivaced him out so I didn't get him in the picture.

We moved out of there and started humpin' again. That afternoon we came across this wooded area and some one in the wooded area started yelling, "Hey, Richardson, are you lost? ..Answer up if you are!" .....and they'd say "We're over here!" It wasn't one of our guys, and we were the only Marines out there!

So we just came to the conclusion it was some of the V C --he could speak perfect English--and he was trying to get us in an ambush. But we didn't fall for it, we just kept on going.

Later on that afternoon about four o'clock, our point element got hit again--that was first platoon, they got hit by controlled mines. You'd be walkin' along and the V C would be hiding off in the bushes somewhere, and when you'd get to a certain spot, they'd push a button and the mine would go off. We lost three or four men that way. We lost one platoon commander, a lieutenant, he got shot in the back by a sniper and it killed him.

We stayed there that night, got up the next morning and moved out. It started raining--it rained all day--and we were just soakin' wet and freezin' to death and everything! And that's the day we got hit real hard! We had tanks with us that day--and after havin' tanks with us I don't want to be with tanks any more 'cause they attract too much attention. It was real slow movin' that day, my platoon was in the rear of the column, so fortunately, I didn't fire a single shot--thank goodness! But up towards the front of the column--what it amounted to was a seven hour fire fight. We'd just walk awhile and we'd get hit by snipers, and we'd just have to "search 'em out"--the tanks, they'd "blow heck" out of everything.

We were just walking down this real narrow road and all along the sides were big tall hedge rows--real thick--you can't see through 'em--you can't walk through 'em or anything, and the V C hid behind these. When they're hiding behind them they're really only about four or five feet from you, and they lob grenades over the top of the hedge rows on you. You can't see them, you don't know where they're at, you just have to shoot where you think they are. They're dug in little holes and everything. You just have to spray the whole area and hope you get 'em. We don't have any cover to hide behind or anything.

Later on that evening is when we got hit real hard, especially first platoon. The whole battalion was with us--I don't know where the other company's were at

this time. But we started gettin' mortared. We were out in this open field, without any cover. We had to lay down on the ground, and the "gooks" really had us pinpointed for the mortars. They also ambushed us--we couldn't see 'em-- they were hiding in the hedge rows again and we just had to spray the area where they were. One gook even ran out in front of the tank. He had a rocket launcher-- it was one of our weapons. I don't know where he got it, but he was gonna' "square away" that tank, but the machine gunner on the tank saw him in time and "blew him away." So, that's the night the "mighty Marines" had to retreat. We were gettin' hit so bad we called in artillery on the gooks and it was coming in so close it was almost gettin' us so we had to stop that.

We started retreatin'--we started carrying back our wounded. I was helpin' a wounded guy back to our perimeter and all this time it was rainin' and we were all wet and had to sleep out there that night.

We had about twenty WIAs--and we had nine KIAs. We couldn't get a helicopter in that night to medivac them so the wounded had to stay out in the field that night along with the dead. The next morning we got one chopper in, we medivaced the wounded and all their gear, and we had to throw the nine KIAs on the tank-- we had to take 'em all the way in on the tanks--and it was still rainin' and was all muddy. We had a few sniper rounds on the way in and this was the day that Ottie's battalion was coming out to get us.

We walked all day, and by the way, we hadn't had any food for two days. We were tired and worn out, wet and miserable, and the bodies on those tanks were just wrapped in ponchos and half of them were about ready to fall off the tanks and they were coming out of their ponchos! It was really a terrible sight..... really sickening! By the time we got to the artillery battery the guys that had to unload the bodies said they were stiff as boards, and they had started to stink and everything. This is when we went back to Dong Ha and that evening Ottie and I had a nice chat.

The next day we started standin' lines. A couple days later my platoon went out to the artillery battery and my position was on top of a grave in a grave yard.

I had a little Vietnamese boy help me build my hootch.

About four days after that we moved out again--back up in the hills and it started gettin' hot then. These hills had paths on 'em--some one had been up there before us so we had paths to follow--but it was so hot that we had guys passin' out from heat exhaustion all the time. All we did was just "walk!... walk!...walk!"--that's all we did. I don't know what we were trying to accomplish!

The second hill we were set up on, we got mortared again. I don't know "how the heck" the V C knew we were there. I mean- yeah, they knew we were in the area but I don't know how they knew exactly where we were. They had us pinpointed to a "T" on those mortars. We didn't know "where in the heck" they were comin' from, so we couldn't even call in the artillery on these. In this attack the whole battalion was there but it seems like Delta Company always gets hit the hardest. All together we had fifty some casualties. We had four KIAs out of the deal--two of 'em didn't need to die, they were just wounded. It was at night and we called in medivacs. About an hour after the attack we had flare ships flying over our positions dropping flares, lighting up the sky and everything so the choppers could see. It was a little hazey but not much. The choppers flew around over us for about an hour then they said they couldn't land, it was too bad, so they left. We had to leave all the wounded there, and during the night two guys died because the choppers wouldn't come in--and I guess those chopper pilots are in kinda' hot water now because of that. But that was really needless--the choppers could have come in but they didn't.

We moved out the day after that and started on our way in. It was "hotter than heck" again, sometimes we'd go all day without water--we'd just have to get water out of a mountain stream. We walked down the side of this one hill and saw a dead helicopter layin' there that had been shot down (by the way, they called this valley we walked through "Helicopter Valley" 'cause so many chopper have been shot down there).

We got back in to the place where we started the operation and they had hot chow waitin' there for us. (This is where we had to eat out of our helmets).

They said, "We got hot chow, take your helmets with you, you'll have to eat out of 'em." But heck! We didn't care! We hadn't eaten in a day! So we grabbed our helmets and went over there where they were servin' chow--they had chicken, potato chips and cake, and soon as we got our chow it started rainin', and I mean it rained. It's the hardest rain storm I've ever been in--it was just like some one was pouring it out of a bucket--and the wind was blowin'--oh! it about blew you down! All of a sudden they yelled "seconds" on chow, and you never saw such a mob, specially after that cake--everybody just ran out there and grabbed a hand full of that cake, just like a bunch of animals reachin' and grabbin' hands full of it, and threw it in their helmets. We stood out in the rain and watched our helmets fill up with water, eatin' soggy potato chips and wet cake, but it was good!

We stayed out there that night and the next day it cleared up so we all went down to the river and took a bath. It was a nice big river, real clear and swift moving. We took a bath and shaved--tried to wash our utilities the best we could. All this time there were Vietnamese women and children around tryin' to sell us bananas and sodas and gook candy and bread and stuff--and we all just walked around there "stark naked"--just like a nudist camp, you know. I hope all those Vietnamese women were gettin' a charge out of it! I wish I had gotten a picture of it but I never thought of it, durn't--I wish I had of.

What'd we do after that? Oh yeah! After that we went back up to the DMZ. We went up to the same place where we had come from before with the tanks and Alpha Company was leading that day. They got to this same vill that we had gotten sniper fire from and they got ambushed, and I mean ambushed bad--they got "the heck" mortared out of 'em. The gooks were dug in all around 'em, they had machine guns and they just cut Alpha to pieces and Alpha even had a "heck of a time" gettin' out of there. All that day and half the next day we called in artillery and air strikes on that village. Then we went in there a day and a half later and Delta Company swept through the vill to see what they could find and we found every thing! We found forty dead V C--all kinds of gear--even

found our own gear the Marines had left there--they couldn't get it out, it was really a mess. It was all burnt up, trees layin' all over the place, it was just blown to shreds. We found all kinds of V C bunkers, V C gear, mortars, mortar rounds, grenades, cartridge belts, packs--you name it--it was there! They found one V C that was still alive and they took him and got him to talk, and he said there were four hundred V C there when Alpha Company got hit.

We don't know how many we killed for sure. We know we got forty of them 'cause we found that many bodies. We don't know how many they carried out--they carried a lot of them out because we found a lot of bodies wrapped up in cloth or hammocks (or whatever they were) tied to pieces of bamboo that they were trying to carry out but never made it.

That was the day before Easter, and Easter Sunday we set in about a couple miles from that vill--nothing happened, but we found two Vietnamese Catholic Nuns that had been hiding out from the V C and we flew them out by helicopters. They were dressed in their regular Nun attire and they were clean clothed, too--they weren't dirty--they were really nice looking Nuns for livin' out there in the boonies. Anyway, we got them out of there, then we started comin' back in. Let's see, where in the heck did we come back in to? Oh! Then we went up to Camp Carrol (up there with all the big guns) and stayed up there awhile. Those big guns are really something. When they shoot, the whole ground shakes all around. You've probably seen 'em on TV. We stayed there awhile then we took this truck convoy up to Khe Sanh. That was about an all day truck ride, and it was rough! We passed some engineers workin' on bridges and stuff, and when people back in the States see what's going on over here (how the war's bein' fought) you probably see people like the engineers. They were workin' on a bridge over a river only none of them were working at the time, they were all swimmin' in the river on their "rubber ladies", drinkin' beer--just havin' a heck of a time! That's how they fight the war--and that's how most people back home think "WE" fight the war--but they don't get the true picture of "us grunts."

Khe Sanh is just<sup>a</sup> little ol' air strip on top of a hill and it's way up in

the mountains. It's right on the "Ho Chin Min trail" they said. Terry wasn't up there, it was during the time when he was wounded and in the hospital but Bravo Company was still there. We stayed up there one night and came back to Dong Ha and then on down to the "Chinook" area all in the same day by trucks. We set up on "Chinook Hill" there at that big camp for one night then we started out on operation "Big Horn"--out in that same area--out in the sand dunes and the rice paddies. We moved out at seven thirty one night--out in the dark--across the sand dunes, and it was so dark you couldn't see the man in front of you. You had to hold on to his "U tool" so you wouldn't lose him, and when he'd stop you'd just run right smack in the back of him and it was just a big ol' chain reaction, everybody runnin' in the back of each other. Once in awhile you'd get separated two or three feet and you'd get lost so we'd have to hold up the whole column (that was the whole battalion) to find out where the rest of the guys were. There was a few places we had to jump across the paddy dike--from paddy dike to paddy dike--and I was carrying the radio plus my pack, and believe me that is heavy--and this one guy said, "Hey, you gotta' jump this place" and he said, "It's a pretty far jump." He didn't tell me where I was jumpin' from, he didn't tell me I was jumpin' from one dike to another, so I just give a "big healthy jump"--SPLASH!... I landed in the water. I jumped clear over the dike I was supposed to jump on and landed in the rice paddy. So I crawled out of the rice paddy, walked a couple more feet and there was another paddy I had to jump. I made this one all right but the trouble is I fell down on the dike and I couldn't get up--I couldn't get up to save myself! I had this radio on, this pack on and this gear on and I couldn't get up at all and after I finally did get up I'd lost the rest of the column. I got on the radio and called up ahead to my lieutenant and said, "Delta 2 Delta 2 to Alpha 2 Alpha over." They answered and said, "2 Alpha, this is 2." I said, "2, be advised to hold up the column, 2 Alpha is separated--over." They said, "Roger, we are straight up the trail to the left, just keep comin' and you will meet up with the tail end element--you copy? over." I said, "Roger, will do." So I "gitty bopped" along and fell

in a couple more holes and finally met up with 'em.

We spent the night out in the middle of the sand dunes and the next day we started sweepin'. That's where you get all in line and you walk and walk and walk through the rice paddies--and we were sweepin' through the same area we had swept once before when we were down there on "Chinook", but there wasn't any water in the paddies this time. They were dry, thank goodness! We were walking right along the "Street Without Joy" again--part of the company was on one side and part of the company was on the other side of the street, and we started gettin' a few sniper rounds right in front of us--(cough, cough, I'm gettin' the sore throat from talkin' so much). We didn't pay any attention to 'em though 'cause it was gettin' late in the evening and we were looking for a place to set up. We set up in this vill off to our right flank, and that evening they were supposed to bring some otters (armor personnel carriers) in to resupply.

The otters were starting to come in and they got ambushed about 300 meters from us, right where we were gettin' the sniper fire from. What that sniper fire was for--it was tryin' to lure us into that ambush but we didn't go that far--we decided to set up in this vill. The otters got ambushed so they sent the 1st and 3rd platoon out to help 'em--thank goodness they left 2nd platoon behind! Charlie Company was over on the other side of the ambush tryin' to get the "gooks"--and Delta was on the other side--so what it was, Delta couldn't shoot at the "gooks" because if we would, we'd be shooting at Charlie and Charlie couldn't shoot because they'd be shootin' at Delta. So it was all messed up.

1st and 3rd platoons got right up on top of the "gooks" and we were getting hit pretty bad. We were so close that they were throwin' grenades at us and one guy got hit in the mouth with a gook grenade--I mean it didn't go off, it just hit him in the mouth and bounced off. Another guy got hit in the back of the head with one and it bounced off. It was almost hand to hand combat. We had two KIAs out of it and about five WIAs, I think.

It was getting dark when all this happened and we had a "heck of a time" getting our men back in 'cause we were out in the rice paddies again with no

cover and the "gooks" were all dug in.

First platoon had two guys that were wounded and they couldn't get to 'em-- I don't think they knew exactly where they were at but they knew they were wounded and they couldn't get to 'em--so they had to pull out and leave 'em out there all night. The next morning they went back out after 'em and they found 'em both--one was still alive, thank goodness--and the other one--he was dead. Some one said that the "gooks" had come back during the night and found him, and shot him in the head--but I don't know--any way, he was dead!

That day we moved out and my platoon swept through that area where the fighting was going on the night before. We were looking for gear. We found a lot of our own gear. We also found a lot of gook grenades. We didn't find any weapons-- the gooks don't leave weapons behind very often. They leave a lot of ammo behind but no weapons. We found grenades and a couple mines and cartridge belts and stuff like that. We had some "Chu Hoies" with us. They are ex V Cs that have given up or we've captured them and brain washed them. They're guides for the Marines--they tell us where the "booby traps" are and they act as interpreters for us. They don't speak English. They always have one guy along with 'em that can speak English though so they can interpret to them. These Chu Hoies saw some of this V C gear layin' there on the ground and they just went "bananas." They said, "Ah h h h!! V C, V C!!"--you know--they were "jumpin' with joy" 'cause it meant that we had had to kill some V C or something during the night. Anyway, these Chu Hoies come in pretty handy once in awhile. Lots of times they tell us where the "booby traps" are, and some times they're not worth "two hoots" though.

After that nothing else happened, we just "humped around" out there for a few more days. We came back in to Chinook Hill (this big new camp) and they told us before we went out on "Operation Bighorn" that when we got back there they were going to give us a break and let us stand lines here at Chinook Hill-- but it just happened that some other battalion came in off a five day operation (first one they've had in a long time). They took five KIAs, and they said they

were tired and worn out--so they said, "All right, we'll let you have the line."

So "they" got the line!

The next day we moved up to Dong Ha and they finally gave us a permanent position there. We moved everything up that the Marines had and they were starting to build their own area. They were setting up tents and soon they're going to start building hard-backs.

Thursday we started to move out to this vill (not too far from Dong Ha) that the V C were tryin' to take and there were three phases to the operation. The first was to attack the town and take prisoners and hold them for 24 hours--and the V C did that. The second phase was to mortar the city--and the V C did that. The third phase was to come into the city, capture it and hold it for 24 hours and get out. That's what moving out was for--1-9 was to start that phase of it, 'cause the V C had already done the other two phases. This is all for a morale booster for the V C, I think, 'cause they need a victory real bad. There are "Arvins" guarding all these towns but the V C just kick the heck out of the Arvins. These "Arvins" over here are Vietnamese soldiers. I've never seen any of them do anything--all they <sup>do</sup> is just run around in the vills in uniforms like Marines. They stay in the vills all the time and the Marines go out in the "boon docks" and do all the fighting and the dirty work. We're fightin' this war and the "Arvins" aren't doin' a thing. The newspapers say they are but the Marines capture the area and the Arvins come in and secure it and try to keep it secure, but they don't.

They say this battalion I'm with is supposed to go down to Da Nang in a couple months, I don't know what for though. I don't know what all us "grunts" are going to be doin' here--I think it's gonna' be better than 1-9 though. I think I'm gonna' like it pretty well.

(Cough, cough) When I was out on "Operation Bighorn" they thought I had tonsillitis. I told you I had a fever a couple days and both sides of my throat were sore and all swollen, I could hardly eat and talk. They wouldn't let me get out of the field--they wouldn't let anybody get out of the field for anything.

When I got back to the rear I think half of the company went to sick bay. The doctor said I had a virus and my throat still is a little sore. A lot of the doctors were pretty mad at our battalion 'cause they wouldn't let any of the guys come out of the field and our battalion was pretty bad off. Half of them were sick or something was wrong with them.

Dad, in this letter I got from you yesterday you said something about you thought we'd get the M-16 instead of the AR-15. They're both the same rifle. The AR-15 is the civilian name for it and the M-16 is the military name for it. Both names are stamped on the rifle. It's made by Colt and really out in the sand dunes it's proven to be not a very good weapon 'cause sand gets in it and it jams real easy. It fires about like the kick of a 22. You can always set it on the jaw and shoot it, and when you put it on automatic and fire it, it doesn't climb at all, you can just hold it in one spot. It's real light weight, the rounds are small. You can't believe how big the rejector is on it when the rounds are so small. It doesn't look like it's much bigger than a 22 but it sure blows a hole in you though.

I got a box from Grandma yesterday with some raisins and peanuts in it and a letter from Jan. I've been getting your packages all the time. All the guys can't believe I get so "durn many" little packages. And that birthday cake--that sure was good! It was sure fresh and moist and all the guys went crazy over it!

You don't need to send any more Kool Aid, I've got "boo koo" Kool Aid. I've gotten all your envelopes and I got your writing tablet, and I'm pretty well fixed on film for awhile. You can go ahead and start sending me tapes now. You can send this tape on to Davids and maybe they can send me a few tapes, too. I hope I have access to my sea bag for quite awhile now 'cause I've been without it for so long.

Well, I think I'll sign off here. So until the next time I'll be seeing you now. Good Bye.

April 22, 1967

Saturday

Hi

We're still sitting around doing nothing and I love it. Today our Platoon went on "Sparrow Hawk." We'll be on it for about three days so we can't go anyplace. Thursday we rode a convoy up to Dong Ha and came back Friday. We stayed at 1-9's area right beside "D" Company. They are out in the field on Prairie II. Some of the guys were there though--"the Walking Wounded."

I got four of my packages and when I got back four more were here, no letters yet. I got the brownies and some other goodies.

On our way back Friday one of the trucks hit a mine on the road. It was a controlled mine. A V.C. set it off when a truck, with four .50 caliber machine guns on it, was on top of it. It blew the front of the truck off but none of the men on it were hurt. It blew a big hole in the road so they had to build a bridge over it so the rest of the trucks could cross it. Every convoy carries portable bridges with it and in 30 minutes they had it all put up and the trucks rolling across it. The truck I was on had already gone over the mine along with a lot of other trucks, too. The V.C. just wanted the truck with the 50's on it. The 50's are protection for the convoy and are set up so one man can fire all four at the same time. (That's a lot of fire power). There are ARVINS all around that place and the V.C. still put a mine in the road right under their nose. That's how good the ARVINS are.

That's about all for now. I hope you got my tape. I think it's a good one. Let people listen to it so they can find out what is really going on over here.

Tell Davids my new address. I haven't told them yet. Better go.

Love

Mark

April 23, 1967

Sunday

Hi

It's been a long boring day. No working parties, I just laid around all day. I think I'm getting lazy. Tomorrow we are going to the field. It's just our platoon so it's hard to tell what we're going to be doing. It won't be any operation, I don't think. We are taking eight meals with us.

It rained again today for about half an hour. It's so it rains just about every day. But it's still hot.

I am sending another roll of film to be developed. If all of them don't come out it's because sometimes the button gets pushed somehow when it is in the pouch on my belt. So a lot of them are blank. I took a picture of Tom and me. I hope it comes out. You don't need to send so much stuff to eat now because I eat so much at the mess hall, I'm not too hungry between meals. You can send some but not as much. Before, I never had chow like this, and I could eat it.

I told Gordons to send me a carton of cigarettes because they don't have Viceroy's here. Sometimes they do but not lately. In about another week I'll be ready for another roll of 126-20 EX film. That is, send it in a week. I just put a new roll in today.

I haven't gotten any letters yet but I should any day. I don't know how long we'll be in the field this time, not too long, I hope. That's about all for now. Tell Max and Steve and everybody else "hi." Tell all the customers I'll be back there before long. By the way, how is Cal Jacob? Ask Louis if any doors have hit him in the butt lately.

Love

Mark

P.S. That tape isn't very "pretty" to listen to but I hope a lot of people hear it. After hearing the tape you know how we feel about people like Clay and all these Anti-Vietnam marches. Myself, I would like to get my hands on some of them.

May 28, 1967

Sunday

Hi

Not much going on here. Friday and Saturday I went on patrols and I am off the next four days. We do a lot of visiting when we are on patrol. We stopped at two homes and had tea. Other than going on patrol, I haven't done much, just work as little as possible.

I went to Dang Ha today and they don't have any 104 cameras at the P.X. so could you buy me one with my money and send it.

I got another letter from Mrs. Ditmire and one from Dick. It seems like I haven't been writing very many letters lately, maybe it's because there's nothing to write about. I read your letter that you wrote to the paper and also the one about the cartoons. That lady doesn't know what she is talking about.

A lot of guys here have Sgt. Mike cartoons up on their bulletin boards.

It's been hot here, today I saw a thermometer and the temperature was 98° in the shade. It is about 5:00 now and it is getting cool. I think it is going to rain.

The way I got to Dang Ha was by thumbing, it's not hard to get a ride.

I think I'll go take a shower and get ready for chow.

Love

Mark

P.S. You might as well send that rain jacket when you send the camera.



*Visiting the people when on patrols*



May 31, 1967

Fifteenth taped letter

Hello, this is the 31st, Wednesday (I believe it is). I didn't know yesterday was Memorial Day until I got my calendar out and looked at it. I wrote a few letters. I wrote one to Dick and one to Grandma. I haven't been doing much here lately, just more of the same stuff, just stringing barbed wire, filling sandbags, and carrying sandbags. The engineers came out two days ago and built us some pre-fab bunkers. There's four of them. They are just wooden framed bunkers, 8 x 8 and 7' tall. They are made out of 2 x 8 and 6 x 6's. They are pretty sturdy things. It is just the framework, and we build the sandbags around them. (That sound you just heard was a jet going over, it's really moving out, too. It's headin' south, I imagine it's going back to Da Nang. It's just coming from the DMZ.) We put sandbags all around them, and on top, and put a little watch tower up on top, so it makes a real good observation post and it would take a heck of an explosion to hurt anybody inside.

This afternoon me and another marine went into Cam Lo to buy some ice (we've got an ice chest here). About every day somebody here makes an ice run into Cam Lo, buys a couple blocks of ice for about three bucks, while we're in there we drink a few Cokes ourselves.

Today the PX truck came out here and they had some Dr. Pepper on it, so we bought ten cases of Dr. Pepper. We're going to be stocked up on soda for awhile. We went through one case today--it might last at least ten or maybe eleven days.

Our chow hall, like I said, got torn up pretty bad when the compound got hit and it's been pretty dirty since then. They can't keep it clean because one whole side is all blown out, so we've only been eating one meal a day in there, (the evening meal) because a few of the guys came down with dysentery (had the runs, you might call it). So we're going to quit eating in there altogether until they get some facilities to clean it up. But we don't like eating C-rations so we'll eat one meal in there a day and we'll just put up with what we got.

I got your tape here two days ago. It's about the only mail I've gotten

besides a few letters; I got a newspaper and a couple of cans of candy from you. Like I said, the mail situation here is pretty bad, nobody gets much mail out here because it's all messed up, I don't know why. I got one big package the other day, a pretty good sized one, it's from Bob Cooley. I didn't have the slightest idea what he'd be sending me, but Kenny Carl's mother (she writes me once in awhile) said in a letter that her sorority was going to send a package of goodies to one of the men over here, and they sent it to Bob Cooley. Bob received it and decided that I needed it more than he did so he sent it on to me, which is very thoughtful of him. I have to get a letter right off to him and thank him for sending it.

Right now he is in Hong Kong. He's on the Ticonderoga Aircraft Carrier, and they're on their way home now. He should be home on leave around the 5th of September sometime. Maybe he might make it up to the barbershop and you can talk to him.

Remember, I told you in the last letter I wrote that on one of our patrols we made quite a few house calls? We get kind of tired just walking around out here on patrols, so when we get thirsty we stop in to a house and have something to drink, hot tea usually. The people are very friendly to us. We just walk up to the house and they ask us in and start serving us tea. The PF's go for that, too, because they're kind of lazy, they don't like to get out and look for VC's. They're usually scared to go into an area where there are VC's. Some of them are all right, and some of them aren't.

I said there's not much going on around here to write about so I find it's much easier to sit down and record a letter because I can say much more on tape, and if I rely on writing letters I wouldn't get anything written. So I'll just start sending quite a few tapes.

I'll try to answer some of your questions you put in this last tape I got. That rifle Tom had in that picture was his rifle, M-14. He carried it with him down to Hue. Everywhere you go over here you have to take a rifle, no matter what kind of work you do--if you work in an office, you take it to work

with you. Even walking around on the base, like at Dong Ha or Phu Bai, some outfits make you carry a rifle, but "the grunts," they don't, because we're "hard" you know, nothing can hurt us inside the base like that!

That church in one of the pictures is the Protestant and Catholic chapel at Dong Ha. It's an all thatched church, just like one of these huts that the natives line in. It's a beautiful church. It's right behind the mess hall. The sign beside it is a dedication sign, I guess you could call it; it's dedicated to sailors, or marines and sailors that died in "operation Prarie."

The picture of the marine in front of the sandbag bunker--I believe that bunker is a bunker at Camp Carroll up on a hill, where I stood watch while we were at Camp Carroll (I believe that's the picture). If it is on the same roll with one or two other pictures taken from high up on a hill looking way down in the valley, why that's taken from right beside the bunker, so we're up there pretty high.

They also had a few tanks up there on that hill. Had 40 mm cannons that they fired during the night for harassment. That was not part of the lines, the perimeter of Camp Carroll is about 200 meters beyond out in front of the lines of Camp Carroll. It's called an OP, out-post. We were out there more or less by ourselves, as an early warning, but it's pretty easy duty up there. We stood watch all night and slept all during the day.

I'm going to gripe a little more on these M-16's they said the Pentagon is starting to investigate. I also read that clipping you sent me about--I forget what general it was--who said the only trouble with the M-16's is with the marines because they don't keep them clean. Well, if this general was out here in the front lines I would like to see him keep that rifle immaculate, and to keep it from jamming it has to be immaculate because you get just a little grain of sand or dirt in the chamber and that round won't eject. Over here, in the conditions we have, it's impossible to keep it clean! Like I said, out there on the operation Chinook and Big Horn when we were in sand constantly, sleeping in it and everything, the wind blowing sand in our faces, it's impossible to keep a

weapon clean out there. You "sure in heck" can't stop every ten minutes to run a ramrod down in the bore to clean the thing. Down in the delta we were in water all the time, sometimes over our heads. You "sure in heck" can't keep a rifle clean there, and out in the brush, in the boonies, it's impossible in combat conditions to keep a rifle clean. That M-14 we had you could do anything to it and it would fire! I've never seen a marine over here have a malfunction with his M-14. You can do anything with the old M-14, you can throw it down in the mud, sand, water, leave it there all night and take it out the next day and it would fire!

Now the Army has the M-16's, they've had it for quite awhile but I believe it's a different version. The M-16's we have is a new model, different from the old ones that the Army first had. By now the Army might have the kind that we have, but I don't know. There is just a very small difference in the two rifles, but that might be the difference that makes them malfunction, I don't know. But anyway, they'd better get it taken care of or give us our old M-14's back. The M-14's are heavier than the M-16's, more cumbersome but a "heck of a lot" safer and all the marines want them back, I tell you!

-- Vietnamese conversation --

I'm kind of running out of things to say--I'll figure out something here just to use up the other side.

I was carrying sandbags all day and I got kind of red, seems like I never get real brown, just red. I had my shirt off all day.

-- Vietnamese conversation and singing --

That was a few of the PF sergeants here having a little fun with the tape recorder, singing a little, and one of them said in English, "Tomorrow you souvenir me corn and boocoo rice," that means he's going to give me corn and a lot of rice.

The other night we had an Army guy out here, he had a tape recorder and a loud speaker system. He broadcast some propaganda to the VC's trying to get them to surrender and give up and come into this "Choo Hoi"\* program. They had it

---

\*Choo Hoi -- open arms

setting out back here and you should have heard it, it'd really blast you out! It will broadcast for 3,000 meters and it's really a loud thing. One time we got kind of tired listening to all that propoganda in Vietnamese, we couldn't understand it, so one of the other fellas here had a tape of American songs and we put that on and turned it up full blast and played that for about half an hour. If that didn't make the VC's throw down their weapons and surrender, I don't know what will!

Right now the PF's are out in front, they are having their nightly formation. Like I said, I wish I could get a picture sometime. They're a sorry looking bunch but they get the job done.

I hope you got that straight in that last letter I wrote, to buy me a new camera with my money and send it to me, another 104. Also my rain jacket, you don't need to put any elastic in the sleeves, I think I told you that in a letter once before.

This is about all I have to say, it's getting kind of dark. I'd better cut this off and get this addressed while I still have some light. I guess I'll be seeing you now. Take care.

Bye bye.

June 3, 1967

Saturday

Hi

More sand bags today.

Last night I went out on an all night ambush so I'm kind of tired today.

We finally got all our back mail today. I got seven packages and about seven letters and three tapes. It was sure good to hear from Louie, I really enjoyed it.

I hope you have my address now, it's been changed a lot in the last month.

Today I was thinking about my camera and wondered if you could send me the Argus C-3 camera if you haven't already got me a 104. A lot of times it is too dark or not enough light to take a picture with the 104. There's always a chance something could happen to it but I could take better care of it here. If you do send it, give me directions on how to use the light meter. Also when I go on R & R I would like to have a good camera to take pictures with. If you have already got the 104 that's all right.

I heard the "500" race yesterday on Armed Forces radio.

It's a little later now and I have listened to all three of the tapes, one was from Davids. The more I think about it the more I would like to have the Argus C-3, if you think it would be all right.

I'd better go now.

Love

Mark

June 4, 1967

Sunday 6:00

Hi

The Chaplain was just here and gave services. It's the first time I've been to church in a long time.

We worked this morning and I slept all afternoon. We rebuilt the mess hall. Some of the wood wasn't any good so we had to make it half as big.

The last two days it's been raining off and on but not enough to hurt anything.

This letter isn't going to be very long because I have nothing to say. Matter of fact, I think this is about it. Next time I'll try to write more.

Love

Mark

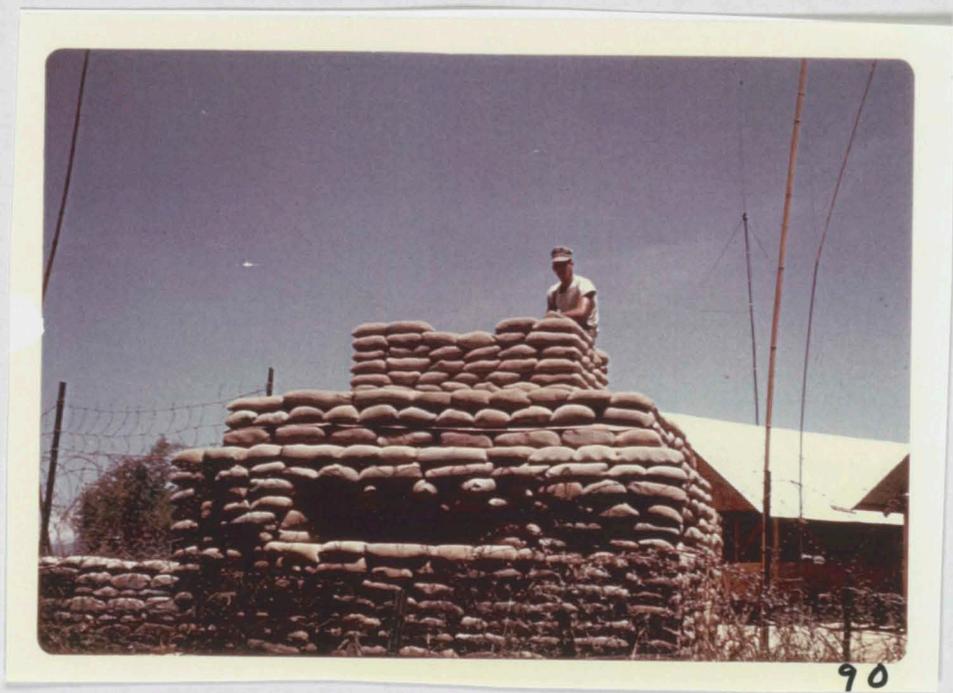


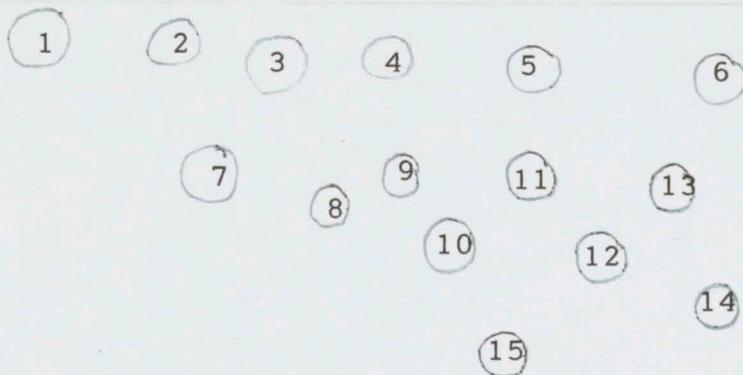


May 28 - June 3 letters 78



May 28 - June 3 letters





- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. L/Cpl. Eades   | 9. Corpsman HN. Albright |
| 2. L/Cpl. Pauling | 10. Cpl. Lane            |
| 3. L/Cpl. Boarman | 11. Cpl. Commerford      |
| 4. L/Cpl. Willey  | 12. L/Cpl. Black         |
| 5. Cpl. Hogaboom  | 13. Cpl. Leitch          |
| 6. Cpl. Weidinger | 14. L/Cpl. Windham       |
| 7. L/Cpl. Hein    | 15. Sgt. Yohe            |
| 8. L/Cpl. MacVane |                          |

The Marines of "Papa 3" Compound beside the Village of Cam Hue, probably in June or July of 1967.

August 10, 1967 (Thursday)

Twenty-sixth taped letter

Well, hello, this is August 10th over here. Kind of a dreary day. It's about 11 o'clock and we're taking an early lunch break. It's been sprinkling like all morning and last night it rained. It just happened to rain while I was on watch. It really poured, too, so I got kind of wet. I had my rain jacket on but my legs got a little wet, so from now on, I guess I'll have to take my poncho out (wear my rain jacket and put the poncho on over that) and stay a little drier. I hate to see these monsoons come, but yet I hate to have this hot weather. I don't know which is worse, I think I'd rather have the hot weather than the monsoons.

I started to write you a letter, I got two pages done, and decided the heck with it, I'll make a tape. First I didn't think I had enough to make a tape, and then I sat down and started writing and I found out I had quite a bit to say. Most of it was just notes, but then I guess I got kind of lengthy after I started writing. I guess I'll just start going down here through the notes.

In today's mail I got the pictures of David's house. Also I got the letter telling about the letter you got, Dad. I don't know what feelings you had about it but it kind of perturbed me, but there's nothing we can do about it! We don't know who it came from. It's just more or less a "harassing" letter, probably. I hope nothing else comes of it. It's probably some union guy in Marion trying to give you a little trouble, and it'll probably end at that. Like we say over here, "maintain your cool." I know you will!

Yesterday I got that "New Home Guide," and I'm going to cut out those two order blanks and send them back to you, Mom, and you can get those catalogs--there's about three of them I want. About a week ago I got more film mailers, and today I got another writing tablet, so I'm pretty well fixed on writing paper now, I won't need anymore for a long time. I think maybe I might be getting low on envelopes so in two and a half or three more weeks you can start sending a few envelopes at a time. I just remembered another thing, in the last tape I made I

I mentioned about you buying a little coffee percolator, that wouldn't be too much trouble for you to send through the mail, would it? And maybe a can of coffee.

Oh yes, another thing, this boy who's going to buy my rings thinks he might buy them now. He sent the pictures home to his mother, and his mother is going to show them to his girl's mother. He said you wouldn't need to send them over here, you could send them to his home address in the States, in Oklahoma.

About four days ago I got a letter from you that was postmarked June 16. I'm just getting it now, I don't know why, it must have gotten lost along the line. It had a lot of questions in it about the vill and compound here. I think I've already answered those for you. If you want to know more about them just let me know. You said something about drawing a picture of the compound. Well, today I'm going to try to do that, and I'll send it in a letter with these order blanks for those house plans. I'll attempt to draw a picture of the compound, and if there is anymore you want to know about it, or the vill, well go ahead and ask and I'll answer it for you.

You asked about Bill Heath. As far as I know he's still with Delta 1-9. The last word I got, they are up at Camp Carroll, that's just on the other side of Cam Lo, up on top of the mountain where all the big guns are. They are up there trying to regroup, and get back up to size, so they can go back out in the field. As you know, they got torn apart pretty bad, but as far as I know he's still all right.

Three days ago we had a platoon of "grunts" come out here to the compound and stay with us. We were supposed to have gotten hit in that three day period so they came out to help us, but nothing happened! I really enjoyed having them here, "it felt like old times," having the grunts around, "listening to their sea stories." They went out on ambushes of their own and ran patrol. Mostly they went out here on the other side of Highway 9, that's out of our territory, we don't go over there. It's just up in the foothills, and that's where the VC were supposed to be that were going to hit us.

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One night they were up there on ambush and they heard some noises, so they sent four men to check it out, and they spotted "three bushes" running across the hill. Everybody on the ambush saw them, said they were really "making their hat." The four men that went up to check them out opened up on them. Everyone of the men fired one shot, and his rifle jammed. Every one of the four men that went up there, his rifle jammed. One of the CAC guys went along with them as a guide and he said you should have heard the language. They were swearing, yelling, cussing, and everything because of those rifles. One guy even threw his, I can't blame them though, I would really get "honked off" if my rifle jammed on me when I had something to shoot at! But the rest of them couldn't open up at the "bushes making their hat" because of the four guys in front of them. At this same time we were on a regular CAC ambush with the neiquins. We went across the river here, which we rarely do on ambush because there are supposed to be VC over there. We don't like to go over there, the PF's especially, they're scared to death! Anyway, we were over there and one of the PF's thought he saw something, so he opened up, and I opened up, emptied a full magazine, --I didn't know "what the heck" I was shooting at, but that's what we're supposed to do! If anybody springs an ambush, we're supposed to just spray the area, whether you see anything or not. We threw a couple of grenades and just had a "heck of a time" shootin' up the area. The neiquins said they saw something out there but I don't believe them. I think they just sprung the ambush so we could get back in here. But anyway, our dumb team leader wouldn't come in, you know this little "lifer" guy I can't stand, the one that's always bucking for rank. He's bucking for sergeant now like it's going out of style and he's just walking right over us doing it, but there's nothing we can do about it. We didn't have radio contact while we were out there, something was wrong with the radio, and he stayed right out there, he wouldn't come in. He wanted to get some "gooks," he's crazy, man, I'm not kiddin'! He's never been in a real fire fight, he's never had a real round shot at him, he doesn't know what it's like! One of these days he's going to get hit and I hope it's good, teach him a lesson! So that's the excitement we had while the grunts

were here. By the way, these grunts were a part of 2-9 that got ambushed up here by the DMZ, and they were part of this 2-9 that you send me the clipping about.

Boy, these "big wigs" over here, they've got two different stories on what happened during that ambush. I didn't know anything about it until I got that clipping the day after they left, so I didn't know they were in an ambush and got hit real hard. I did hear them talking about an ambush, and the battalion got hit real hard, but not their particular company.

Well, I'm going to take a break here now. I just saw the PX truck coming and it's full of soda, so I'll be right back!

- - - - -

Well, I'm back again, I bought a case of soda, box of soap and a pack of razor blades (Gillette Stainless Steel). About one half hour ago two of our guys went into Dong Ha to the PX to buy some things because it's the first time the truck's been out here in three weeks. But that's all right because the truck doesn't always have everything we want anyway. They had all kinds of sodas on the truck today, but they have a new man running it and he wouldn't let us have but one case per man. It made some of us a little unhappy, me too, I would have bought two cases, but one case is good enough.

Back to that incident about 2-9, I can't remember whether I covered everything or not, but like I was saying, I heard some of the guys talking about being in some action just recently, but I didn't talk to them too much about it to find out what it really was. I didn't know anything about what was going on until you sent that clipping, so that just goes to show how messed up this war is over here, and the "big wigs" don't know what they're doing. One of these times they're really going to get some one really wiped out because they don't know what they're doing, they're not together over here, so somebody had better get together and start working over here and clean this mess up before we really lose a lot of guys.

I don't know whether I told you about this or not, but another thing that really makes it bad about living over here is the flies. The flies are just

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terrible over here! You can't believe how many there are! You try to lay down to sleep and you can't sleep because of the flies, they're just all over you! They crawl over your face, fly around your ears, they land in your eyes, they try to get in your mouth, it's just sickening. You're swattin' 'em all the time and they just drive you crazy. You can't do anything at all! You go out in these vills and you see the little kids sleeping, or just walking around, and the flies are all over them, crawling in their eyes, all around the edges of their mouth, almost in their mouths, it's just sickening. These people are just used to it, I guess. I, myself, I can't stand it! Nobody else over here can stand it either, it just drives you "buggy." You get a little sore on you, which you have quite a bit of over here, and the flies, they're just on that thing like "flies on honey." They have a feast on that sore! That's why there's so much infection and sickness over here. The people, they don't cover their sores or wash them and take care of them. One of their favorite medications over here is putting buffalo manure on a cut or something, they think that heals it. You should hear the doc when people come in with that stuff on them. It's "harder than heck" to get off once it dries on there, it's hard and crusty, and when you try to wash it off--oh--it has the most terrible stink to it. And the flies are just all over sores and infections, it's harder than heck to keep them off, that's why it takes so long for a sore or a scratch or something to heal. You just get a little scratch on you, you don't think it'll be anything, but the flies will get to it and it'll get infected just big as heck.

I don't know whether you know this or not, but about three weeks ago they issued everybody gas masks over here. All the grunts carry gas masks with them now, and we have them here. I don't know whether the VC have used gas against us or not, but they must be expecting them to use it. They're for tear gas but if the gooks use gas they'll probably use nerve gas (I'm not too much up on my gases, we had classes back in the States on it). Nerve gas will kill you, and a few other deadly gases, so we have gas masks and we also have "Anthropene injections" (that's a little "surette" that you give yourself a shot with) which is supposed to help

you against nerve gas.

Well, just about an hour ago we lost another boy here. He rotates to his home back in the states. It was one of the colored boys, the 27 year old boy that is a school teacher. He is the one I told you they messed up on--he was supposed to go home by ship and they didn't tell him, and he missed the ship. But he finally went home today. I'm sure glad to see him get out of this place! He hasn't got much more time to do in the Corps. So he'll soon be back teaching school and all the luck to him, he's really a nice guy!

I haven't yet got my watch back. I'm going to have to write them a letter and tell them to hurry up on that because I'm just about lost without a watch over here. I'm always having to ask what time it is. So I guess I'll have to get on the stick and get them on the stick to get it back to me.

David, I don't know whether you got sunglasses in the mail yet but I've been waiting on them. Like I said, maybe the monsoons are here now, but we don't know for sure. When the sun is out it's awful bright, and I would like to have some "shades," I sure need some over here (hint, hint). I did have a pair of sunglasses, but they were Vietnamese sunglasses and they didn't last too long, they broke about the second day I had them.

Well, I'm getting down to the "end of the wire" here now, I've run out of things to say. Oh yes, I got another letter from Mrs. Ditmire, in Fulton, I'm going to have to answer hers now. She doesn't really tell me a whole lot in her letters, but I really enjoy getting them from her, just to know someone else back home cares for us guys over here and wants to know what we're doing and what's going on. I enjoy hearing from her and I enjoy writing to her. She likes to know what's going on over here, so I like to keep her filled in as much as I can. I wrote Grandma a letter yesterday, and I wrote Kathy one the other day. Here I noticed since school got out I haven't been getting too many letters from kids, like Kathy or Patty. Nan said she would write back, said she wasn't dating anyone special this summer so she would have a lot of time to write. I wrote her back and I haven't gotten an answer from her yet. I guess it's just because summer's

here and they're doing a lot of running around and everything. Maybe they'll start writing again when school starts, if they don't, it's all right, it's just one of those things. So that's just about the end of it, I guess I'll be signing off now. I hope this tape comes out all right. I've been watching this needle down here and it doesn't register very high unless I get my mouth real close to the mike and I've got it turned up all the way to 7, it didn't used to do that. I hope it comes out all right. But I'll soon find out here when I play it back. So until next time now. I'll be seeing you now.

Bye, bye.

Editor's Note:

This time there wasn't any next time -- four days later he was killed --

Monday, August 14, 1967

We received this letter on Thursday after we were notified of his death on Monday.

Our little family gathered together and listened to it, knowing all the time he would never again, in this life, be talking to us.

(64)

CLASS OF SERVICE  
This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.

# WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

W. P. MARSHALL  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

R. W. McFALL  
PRESIDENT

SYMBOLS  
DL=Day Letter  
NL=Night Letter  
LT=International Letter Telegram

The filing time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination

DEA408 SSL180 (37)

DE WA075 RX GOVT PD=WASHINGTON DC 15 NFT=  
MR AND MRS PAUL L BLACK= REPORT DELIVERY=  
401 N GREENBEERY ST SWEETSER IND=

1967 AUG 15 PM 1 19

I DEEPLY REGRET TO CONFIRM THAT YOUR SON LANCE CORPORAL MARK R BLACK USMC DIED 14 AUGUST 1967 IN THE VICINITY OF QUANG TRI REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. HE SUSTAINED A GUNSHOT WOUND TO THE CHEST AS THE RESULT OF HOSTILE RIFLE FIRE WHILE ON PATROL. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

*This is incorrect. Letters from his comrades confirmed the actual result of his death, as stated on the bottom of page 132.*

IS PROVIDED TO ASSIST IN MAKING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS. HIS REMAINS WILL BE PREPARED ENCASED AND SHIPPED AT NO EXPENSE TO YOU ACCOMPANIED BY AN ESCORT EITHER TO A FUNERAL HOME OR TO A NATIONAL CEMETERY SELECTED BY YOU. IN ADDITION YOU WILL BE REIMBURSED AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS TOWARD FUNERAL AND INTERMENT EXPENSES IF INTERMENT IS IN A PRIVATE CEMETERY ONE HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS IF REMAINS ARE CONSIGNED TO A FUNERAL HOME PRIOR TO INTERMENT IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY OR SEVENTY FIVE DOLLARS IF REMAINS ARE CONSIGNED DIRECTLY TO A NATIONAL CEMETERY. PLEASE WIRE COLLECT HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS YOUR DESIRES IN THIS RESPECT INDICATING THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE FUNERAL HOME OR NATIONAL CEMETERY TO WHICH YOU WISH THE REMAINS SENT.

THE CAMP BUTLER NATIONAL CEMETERY SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS

IS NEAREST YOUR HOME. LETTER WILL FOLLOW CONCERNING CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH. I WISH TO ASSURE YOU OF EVERY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE AND TO EXTEND THE HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES OF THE MARINE CORPS IN YOUR BEREAVEMENT.

WALLACE M GREENE JR GENERAL USMC COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.

August 24, 1967

Dear Mr. and Mrs, Black,

I knew your son Mark and we were close friends.

What happened as I know was on the 14th at 4:15 a.m. we were hit by a company of N.V.A. Mark was on radio watch at the time and was running to bunker #1 when he was shot in the chest. He was killed instantly. As being corpman I reached your son within minutes, but could do nothing. I don't think he realized what hit him. For one reason there was so much dust and dirt flying around you could not see more than 4 to 6 feet in front of you.

The attack lasted one hour and twenty minutes. It took a little over an hour before help arrived.

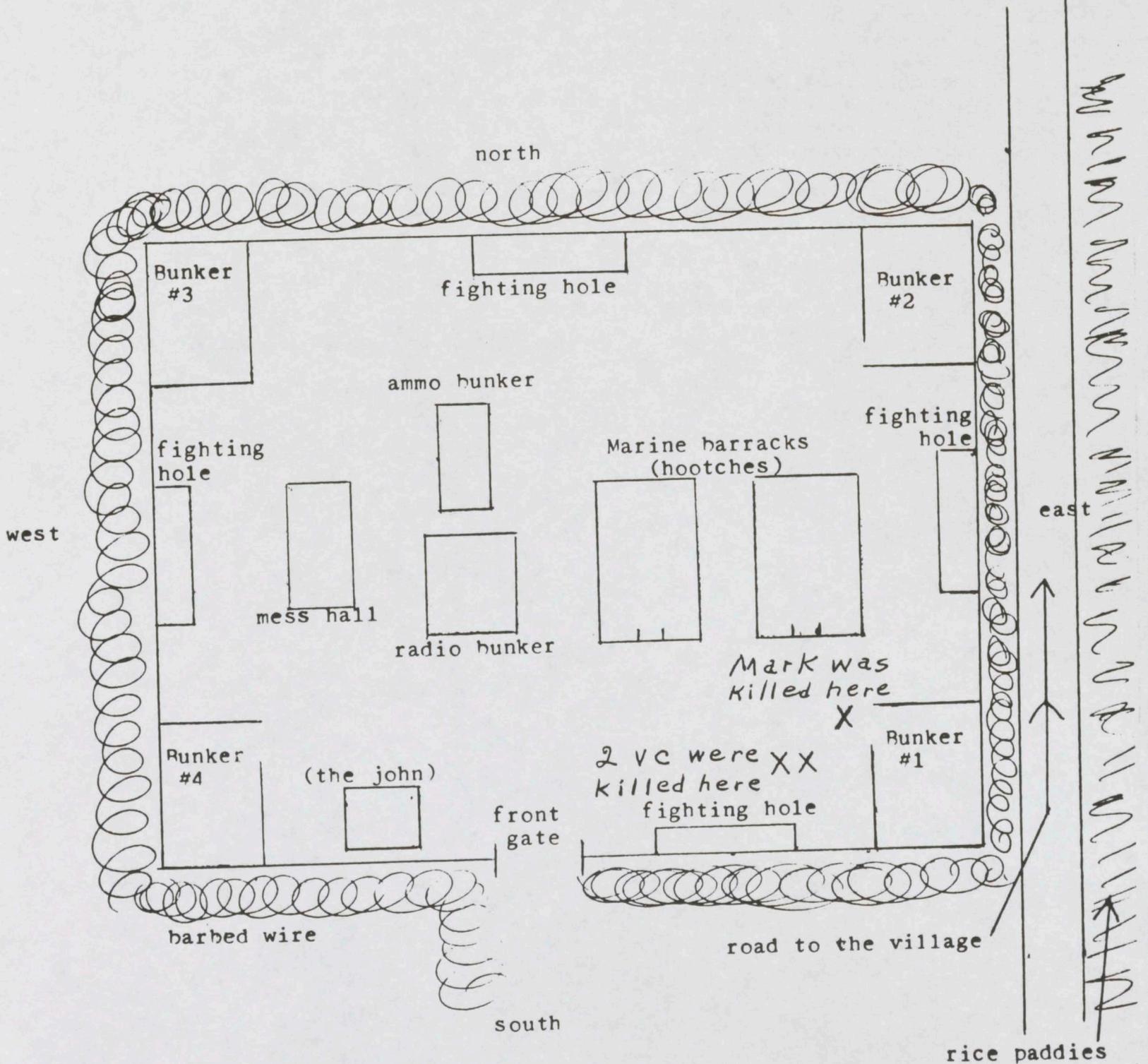
I am very sorry as all of us are. He gave one of the best "civilian haircuts" that I ever had. When I finish my tour of duty here, I will stop and see you.

My love goes with your son.

Michael Albright

2007

DIAGRAM OF COMPOUND



Cam Lo

August 25, 1967

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Black,

I'm sorry about your son Mark. He was a great man. I really don't know what to say but I'll try my best to let you know what happened.

Myself and Mark went on watch at 01:30 August 14. I was standing hole watch and Mark was in the radio bunker standing radio watch. About two o'clock I fired the shotgun about four times and Mark came out to see what was the matter. I told him everything was OK and asked him to get me a few pop ups and shot gun shells. He got them for me. He checked lines every half hour. About 4:20 Mark came out and told me he was going to wake up our relief. As soon as he left a trip flare went off in front of my bunker. I couldn't see anything as the wind was blowing hard and the flare was blowing my way. After it went out I shot a pop up and saw a man lying in the barbed wire. I called Mark over and he saw him too. I put seven rounds of buckshot in "Charlie" and Mark went to get Sgt. Yohe.

The next thing I knew the V.C. were throwing everything they had at us. I didn't see Mark again until it was all over. I know he got killed by one of the V.C. that got into the compound.

Mark didn't have his rifle with him because he was on radio watch. Everybody that stands radio watch never takes their rifle with them as they think if we get hit they will stay on the radio trying to get help. We radioed for help and it took almost an hour and a half for help to get to us.

I was on bunker three and Mark got killed near bunker one. I think Mark was coming over to bunker three with shot gun shells as they found three boxes (30 shells) next to him when it was over. I think I had the only shot gun on watch that night.

We killed two V.C. between bunker one and <sup>the</sup> fighting hole. Mark got it point blank and was next to both of the dead V.C.

Everybody liked Mark and they couldn't get over what happened. It seems like a dream, but I'm sorry to say it isn't. If I can help you in any let me know. I know how you must feel and all I can say is I'M sorry. Take care of yourselves and may God bless you always.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin C. Hogaboom

28 August '67

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Black,

Mark wasn't on a patrol. Our compound was attacked by better than a company of N.V.A. Mark was on the radio when the attack started. About fifteen minutes later he left the radio bunker to assist with the fighting from one of the bunkers. On his way to the bunker he was shot in the chest by an AK 47 which is an N.V.A. rifle. Mark didn't suffer. It was quick and fast. The enemy that shot him was inside the compound right by the bunker where they shot Mark. There was another marine wounded pretty bad. He should be back in the states in about two weeks. His name is James Borman. Tom Willey had a head wound which wasn't too bad. Robert Wiedinger was wounded in the right leg and hip plus one arm. He received shrapnel from a grenade.

The above are the men who were wounded bad enough to medivac. The rest of the marines received minor wounds and were treated by our corpsman and remained in the field.

The two N.V.A. who got inside the compound were killed by one of our P F's who was also wounded. We had one PF killed and five wounded.

The attack started at 4:15 a.m. and lasted until 5:30 a.m. We killed 11 N.V.A. by body count. Plus the villagers said they carried 20 bodies off. The reactionary force captured one N.V.A. as they came in to reinforce us. That is how we learned the size of the unit that hit us. We also captured 10 N.V.A. rifles.

The V.C. have told the villagers that they are going to wipe out this compound between now and the elections which is the 3rd of Sept.

Mark was the barber in our compound. He did a real good job. People from the other compounds, when they had the chance, would stop by to have him cut their hair.

I hope I've fulfilled your request. If there is anything else I can do just let me know and I'll do my best to do it. for you.

Love,  
Sgt. Bentley J. Yohe

28 Aug. 67

Dear Mr. + Mrs. BLACK.

Mark wasn't on a patrol.  
Our Compound was attacked by  
better than a company of N.V.A.  
Mark was on the Radio when the  
attack started about 15 minutes  
later he left the Radio Bunker  
to assist in the fighting from one  
of the bunkers. On his way to  
the bunker he was shot in  
the chest by an AK 47 which  
is an NVA rifle. Mark didn't  
suffer it was quick and fact.  
The enemy that shot him was  
inside the compound right by  
the Bunker where ~~they~~<sup>they</sup> shot  
Mark. There was another Marine  
wounded at the same time.  
His name is James Borman.

He was wounded pretty bad but he is now coming along pretty good. He should be back in the states in about two weeks. I think you will be able to get in touch with Jim at his sisters address which is Mrs. Kelly R. Beck.

714 Biddle Road.

Glen Burnie, Maryland

Another name who was wounded was Thomas Willey he had a head wound which wasn't too bad. He was short enough over here that he gets to stay in Okinawa until his tour is up.

Robert Weidinger who everyone

3

calls Red. Was wounded in the right leg and hip plus a his one ~~of~~ arm. He received shrapnel from a Grenade. He is also going home due to the fact that he is to rotate next month anyway.

The above are the men who were wounded had enough to medivac. The rest of the Marine received minor wounds and were treated by our corpsman and remained in the field.

I don't have Willey and Wiedinger home address but some of the other men who are writing to you do and they will be giving it to you.

(4)

The two N.V.A. who got inside the compound were killed by one of our PF's who was also wounded. We had one PF killed and five wounded.

The attack started at 4:15 A.M. and lasted until 5:30 A.M. We killed 11 N.V.A. by body count. Plus the villagers said they carried 20 bodies off. The reactionary force captured on N.V.A. as they came in to reinforce us. That is how we learned the size of the unit that hit us. We also captured 10 N.V.A. rifles.

The Negro school teacher whose name is William E

5.

Windham. He is from  
Bullocka Mississippi But  
I don't know his exact  
address.

Our corpsman MICHAEL  
Albright and Allen Heir said  
they would be willing to  
correspond regularly with  
you. Plus I'll correspond  
with you as much as  
possible. I'm due to rotate  
the end of next month or the  
first of Oct.

One of the men said they  
have Jim Brewers address  
and they are sending it to  
you in this letter.

I'm sorry it has taken me

6

so long to write you a letter but I've been pretty busy.

The V.C. have told the villagers that they are going to wipe this compound out between now and the elections ~~which~~ which is on the 3rd of Sept.

Mark was the Barber in our compound. And he did a real good job people from the other compounds when they had the chance would stop by to have him cut their hair.

I hope I've fulfilled your request. If there is anything else I can do just let me know and I'll do my best

7

~~to do it for you and I hope  
and I hope you will  
also do it for all of them~~

Sgt. Bentley J. Galt 9278225  
Reg. 9th Marine CAP-P-3  
Flt. San Francisco, Calif  
96602

Compound Commander  
CAP-P-3

P.S. The two new address is  
the same as mine. They will  
be happy to correspond with you.

Sgt. Allen R. Hein 9286629  
H.W. MICHAEL H. Albright. ●  
6746150 ~~6746150~~

Ent. 1. 14 b.

(5)

H/cpl. Albin Kim  
Co. "P" 3

Mr. + Mrs. Black.

The following letter is a statement of the situation as well as I know it to be true. The morning before the compound was hit I left for business in Phu-Bia. The day before that I remember very distinct that I was sitting on Marks rack and we were talking about things I remember him asking me about which picture should he send to his girl he had three color ones. That was the last time I ever saw him. I was in Marks team there were four of us, Cpl. Leach team leader, P.F.C. Willy your son and myself. I want you folks to know something right now Willy and Mark and I were really tight. We all fought the Marine corp way we all talk about bring civilians. Mark used to cut

Our hair civilian <sup>(7)</sup> style. We were the  
closest of friends.

The attack started at 4.15 A.M.  
in the morning Mark was on Radio  
watch in the com. bunker. letter (A) on the  
diagram. As soon as they were hit he  
came out of the bunker to see what  
was going on cause we always shoot  
alot at night. He didn't realize what was  
happening until he went to Bunker 3,  
(B). There was a Maurice on watch there  
at the time by the name of Cpl. Thomathorn <sup>(SP)</sup>  
He thought he seen a geek when a trip  
flair went off and puceded to fire his  
skook shotgun. ~~He was run~~ As soon as  
he open fire all hell broke loose the  
hole compound was surround by a reinforced  
company of N.Y.C. Mark knew Cpl.  
Thomathorn was low on shells so he  
started for bunker one to get some shells.  
- There is where your son was shot by

on MVA. Not <sup>(3)</sup> more than ten feet ~~away~~<sup>away</sup>.  
 Mark had no weapon he left it over  
 his rack when he went on Radio  
 watch. A P.F. killed the guy who killed  
 your son along with another in  
 the same area when your son was  
 killed two P.F. were killed and two  
 Mauns were wounded bad enough to  
 send to the states Names James A. Bowman  
 (2) Red <sup>(S.P.)</sup> Wungding. From what the copman  
 said he didn't know what hit him he  
 died instantly. I return a few days later  
 finding all of my friends gone I felt  
 like a man a way Bendickow. I will  
 be coming home in March or maybe  
 sooner depending I will promise you  
 folks I will come and see you. Cause  
 a friend like Mark is hard to come by. may  
 God rest and keep his soul.

Sincerely  
 7/cpl. Allen Hair



Sept. 3, '67

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Black,

There was no patrol run that night. I believe Mark was hit right at the beginning of the attack by an AK-47 which is a weapon more superior to ours. It holds the same round as our M-14 (7.62 mm) except it is a shorter round. We had gotten word that we were going to go anytime between the 1st and the 15th. We had even gotten intelligence reports that we were being observed by a 7 man Recon. team. But yet, there was nothing we could do. Because how were we supposed to know from where they were watching us. I can say one thing for sure, all the men were tired.

When we ran day and night patrols they were both 4 hours each. The trouble with this is that the Sgt. expected you to go out on a 4 hour ambush then come in and stand 2 and a half hours guard. Then get up at 7:00 the next morning and work all day. This means if you have an ambush from 10 to 2 then when you come in you have to stand guard from 3 to 5:30. That only gives one, at the most, 2 hours sleep.

Three days after we got hit they were sending us back out on ambushes. The N.V.A. around our compound (C.A.C.#3) don't run in 6 or 7; they run in 100 to 150. And believe me, 4 marines and 6 P.F.'s are no match for that kind of action. They say the reason they are sending out night ambushes now is so maybe we can spot them and give the compound a warning that they are coming. But tell me, just what can the compound do with 10 marines, let alone the 4 other marines out on the ambush, against such a big force?

There is no doubt in my mind that God was on our side that morning. To me, C.A.C. 3 is nothing but a combat outpost. You asked why no help sooner? Well, Uncle Sam values his helicopters too damn much. Unless you are actually getting run over you can't get air support. They couldn't shoot artillery because they would have hit us also. I believe the whole battle lasted at least an hour. Just as the sun started coming up the tanks and reactionary forces came in. A lot of good that did! Would you believe they had the nerve to bring us a M-60 machine gun 3 days after we got hit, plus a 60 mortar which will now stay in the compound at all times.

I only have about 25 days left in the Nam. Then, I should be on my way state side, Lord willing! I will put a drawing of the compound inside this letter so you will have some kind of idea of what the compound looks like. By the way, we were hit by a N.V.A. company reinforced (150 men). It's hard to believe 13 to 15 (what ever it was) marines held them off.

I do hope I have helped you in some way. May God bless and watch over you. If you have any more questions please feel free to write me because I will tell you no lies. My ears are still a little messed up from sachel charges. Out side of that I am well and fine. Take care!

Love,  
Cpl. Dave Lane

Thursday, 15 Sept., 1967

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Black,

Please allow me to offer my belated sympathy and condolences on Mark's untimely death. I am so sad that it happened.

I don't exactly know where to begin, so forgive me if I stumble. First, the reason I have been so long in writing is because I have been kept moving around since I was discharged from the hospital and haven't been able to answer. And your letter didn't catch up with me till a week ago. Since then I have learned your questions have been answered by the corpsman, Mike Albright, and others. However if there is any way I can help I shall be glad to offer all the assistance I can.

I was in Mark's fire team. Mark and I were very good friends. Normally he and I stuck together but somehow on that night we were seperated. I was knocked unconscious by the concussion of a satchel charge. It fractured a couple of bones in my head but I have recovered nicely.

Once again, I am so sorry for you, his parents. He was a wonderful man. I am proud to call him friend and it shall be a long time before I forget him. Please feel free to contact me about anything at all.

Thomas Willey

January 8, 1968

Dear Mr. Black,

In answer to your recent letter. Mark was shot in the entrance to bunker 1. Wiedinger was wounded by a grenade at bunker 3 after which he went to bunker 1. Borman was shot at the fighting hole next to bunker 1. Kevin was in bunker 3 during the whole attack.

I received a letter from Col. Keller inquiring about this incident. I told him to the best of my knowledge that the investigation which was held right after the attack was correct but he should get in contact with the rest of the personal and see if they know any differant.

I hope this helps explain things more clearly to you.

Yours truly,

Sgt. Bently J. Yohe

On the battle field of South Vietnam Mark courageously and patriotically gave his life.

He was a member of a pacification team called "Combined Action Company" composed of fourteen Marines and fifteen to thirty South Vietnamese soldiers. They lived together in a small, fortified compound beside the village of Cam Hieu, Cam Lo District, Quang Tri Province.

About 4:20 A.M. on the morning of August 14, 1967, the compound was assaulted by some one hundred fifty North Vietnamese soldiers. Early in the course of attack, Mark was mortally wounded by small arms fire, which struck him in the chest. Death was instantaneous.

Born April 10, 1945, he lived a full and happy, but short life. He became a dedicated athlete, a graduate of Oak Hill High School, and a Master Barber. His cheerful, friendly, attitude won him many friends.

He entered the Marine Corps April 29, 1966, and departed for Vietnam October 29, 1966. Before joining the C.A.C. forces in May 1967, he was engaged in five major combat operations.

His love of action and his dedication to God and to his country, made him a competent person and Marine, who put forth his best effort in all that he did. Throughout all the experiences of the hell of combat, in such areas as swamps, rice paddies, sand dunes, and sweltering, dense, mountainous jungle, until the end of his life, he continued to display the trait that was so undeniably his, "*He gave his all.*" His Chaplain said of him, "He lived as a Christian man through all the hell of jungle and fighting, and I am proud to say, died a Christian man." In Christ, Mark is not dead, but lives in the eternal presence of God, while his body rests in Grant Memorial Park, Marion, Indiana.

*Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. John 11:26*

### Oak Hill Graduate

# Pfc. Black Killed in War



PFC. MARK BLACK

Marine Pfc. Mark Black, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Black, 401 N. Greenberry Street, Sweetser, was killed in action Sunday (Monday in Vietnam) about 15 miles north of Quang Tri in South Vietnam.

The 22-year-old Sweetser man thus becomes the 12th Grant County resident to be killed in the Vietnam war.

Black was reportedly shot in the chest while on patrol from Cam Hu, the village in which he was stationed.

Black, who was on his high school football and track teams, graduated from Oak Hill High

School in 1963. He graduated from the International Barber School, Indianapolis, in 1965. He was a member of the Sweetser Methodist Church.

Black entered the Marine Corps on April 29, 1966, and was ordered to Vietnam last Oct. 29.

Since he reported to Vietnam, Black had participated in five major operations, Deckhouse "5," Chinook, Prairie II, Prairie III and Big Horn.

At the time of his death Black was serving with a Combined Action Company (CAC) in Cam Hu, near the Demilitarized

Zone. Combined Action Companies are used in the pacification program, with the men of the company living in the village to give it security.

According to his parents, Black felt that the pacification program was not working well. He felt that the people did not care about the form of government they had and that they were not willing to cooperate with the Marines in the village. He even felt, his parents said,

that in one attack, in which one Marine was killed, the people of the village let the Viet

Monday, August 21, 1967 PERU (Ind.) TRIBUNE 2

## Vietnam Victim's Funeral Set Thursday At Marion

Funeral services will be in Marion Thursday for Cpl. Mark Ryan Black, 22, Sweetser, killed in Vietnam. He had relatives in Miami County.

Military services will be in the First Methodist Church there at 2 p.m. The Rev. Ralph Karstedt and the Rev. J. Morris will officiate and burial will be in Grant Memorial Park, Marion.

The body is at the Diggs Funeral Home, Marion where friends may call after 6 p.m., Tuesday. It will be taken to the church at noon Thursday.

Cpl. Black was killed Aug. 14 about 15 miles north of Quang Tri while on patrol duty. He had been stationed at Cam Hu. He was shot in the chest at close range.

He was with the Marine Corps serving with a combined Action Company (CAC.) He enlisted in the Marine Corps April 29, 1966

and was sent to Vietnam Oct. 29.

While attending Oak Hill High School he was a member of the track and football teams. He graduated in 1963. In 1965 he was graduated from International Barber School, Indianapolis. He was a member of the Methodist Church, Sweetser.

He was born in Sweetser April 10, 1945, the son of Paul and Carol Baldwin Black. His mother was formerly of Miami County.

Surviving with his parents are a brother, David, Westminster, Calif., and his grandmother, Carrie Baldwin, Macy.

The family has requested that instead of flowers those who wish may donate to the Oak Hill High School Memorial fund. Donations may be left at the Diggs Funeral Home or the Oak Hill High School, R. R. 1, Converse.

### ★ Pfc. Black Dies in War

(Continued From Page One)

Cong into the village compound. Funeral arrangements are pending at the Diggs Funeral Home, 504 W. Third St., Marion.

Friends will be asked to contribute to a memorial to Oak Hill High School graduates who have been killed in Vietnam instead of sending flowers. Mr. and Mrs. Black said they hope that the memorial can be placed in the Oak Hill High School building. The other Oak Hill High School graduate killed in Vietnam was Cpl. Edmund "Bill" Travis, killed in action on June 27, 1967.

In addition to his parents, Black is survived by one brother, David, Westminster, Calif., and a grandmother, Mrs. Carrie Baldwin, Macy, Ind.

We got a call Thursday afternoon from a lady with an interesting question . . .

She had just come from Lance Cpl. Mark Black's funeral . . . On the way home from the funeral she and some other people in the car were discussing the war that took the Sweetser man's life . . .

The lady called to find out how far the American troops have advanced — in terms of miles — in Vietnam . . .

She said she remembered World War II when the Allies moved through Europe and the Pacific and the war could be followed on a map . . .

We couldn't really give her an answer to her question, either . . . 259

During the time the United States was in Vietnam there were 1,215 Indiana Service men killed there.

### 374th Hoosier Dies In War

The death of Marine PFC Mark Black, 22 years old, Sweetser, has raised to 374 the number of Indiana servicemen who have died in the war in Vietnam. Details on Page 7.

[77]

REGIMENTAL CHAPLAIN'S OFFICE  
12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division  
FPO, San Francisco, 96002

1 September 1967

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Black  
Box 262  
Sweetser, Indiana 46987

My dear friends,

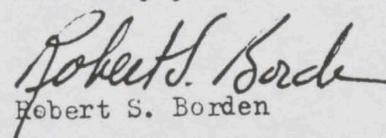
I am sorry that I did not write sooner, but I was unable to get your address until this past Wednesday when I returned to Vietnam, and work has slowed me down. I received Mrs. Black's letter this afternoon, and once again my heart went out to you fine people, as it did on the day that Mark was brought into the hospital, and again, when I read the letters that you sent to the CAC unit. I thank God that He has strengthened you in these hours of sorrow, for when all is said and done, He is all that we have.

I am happy to say that Mark was a friend of mine. This made his loss difficult, but at the same time I can speak with assurance of your son's faith. So many men out here face this terrible experience with regret or bitterness, using the war to justify a loss of faith or flagrant violation of all that they have learned. Not your son! He lived as a christian man through all the hell of jungle and fighting, and I am proud to say, died a christian man. He never missed a church service at the CAC unit, where I held services about once a week. Once, when I had not been there in over a week, he met me with the words, "we thought you'd forgotten us, chaplain." One meets so few truly fine men as your son, my friends, that he can never forget them. These are the feelings of loss which I trust I may share with you.

You ask for information concerning the circumstances of Mark's death. I am sure that his friends at the CAC unit have written them. Most importantly, you may be proud that he was doing what his comrades expected of him right up to the moment that he was killed. Death was immediate. In the certainty of faith I know that at that instant our Father's mansion welcomed another of the faithful. With this thought those of us remaining must continue. I worry not one bit about Mark, he is at home now; but the void in the lives of those remaining will take time to heal. God be with us all during the time, with His healing grace.

The only tribute that I could pay to Mark was to be at the airport that evening when he began his journey home - not to say goodbye, but to say a silent prayer for you folks. My prayer was then and still is, that God will heal the wounds of loss and allow them to be replaced by the knowledge that you raised, in the few years allotted to you, a fine witness to our common faith. We remembered Mark and you the next week at a special memorial service at the CAC unit. You are still in our prayers. God bless you both.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Robert S. Borden

# Black Memorial Athletic Award Established At OHS

A memorial athletic award has been established at Oak Hill High School in memory of Marine Lance Corporal Mark R. Black a 1963 graduate, killed in Vietnam August 14, 1967.

The award will be presented annually to a graduating senior athlete displaying the qualities which Black was noted for in his high school participation of sports which were; outstanding dedication, courage, desire and competitive spirit.

The recipient of the "Mark Ryan Black Memorial Award" will be chosen by the Athletic Committee and presented on Senior Honors Day.

During his junior and senior years he received the following awards and honors: The Glenn Smith Track Award, twice Mid-Indiana Conference Outstanding Trackman, North Manchester Relays Outstanding Athlete, All State Honorable Mention Quarterback, Outstanding Back of football team, Defensive Award in football, Honorary Co-Captain of football

team, vice-president of senior class, and student council member.

He was graduated from Oak Hill in 1963 and from International Barber School in 1965, enlisted in the Marine Corps April 29, 1966, was ordered to Vietnam October 29, 1966, and was killed in combat by enemy rifle fire August 14, 1967, near Cam Lo, South Vietnam. Burial was held in Grant Memorial Park, Marion, Indiana. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul L. Black, Sweetser, Indiana, donors of the award.

## Oak Hill award set in memory of Black

An athletic award has been established at Oak Hill High School in memory of Mark Ryan Black, a lance corporal in the United States Marine Corps killed in Vietnam Aug. 14, 1967, officials have reported.

Black was a 1963 graduate of Oak Hill, where he participated in four sports — football, basketball, baseball and track.

The award, donated by his parents, will be presented annually to a graduating senior athlete displaying the qualities for which Black was noted in his high school career: dedication, courage, desire and competitive spirit, officials said.

Known as the "Mark Ryan Black Memorial Athletic Award," it will be presented annually at Oak Hill's "Honors' Day" program. The recipient will be chosen by Oak Hill's athletic committee.

Oak Hill will stage its Honors'

Day program for the current term May 17.

A certificate accompanying the plaque will read as follows:

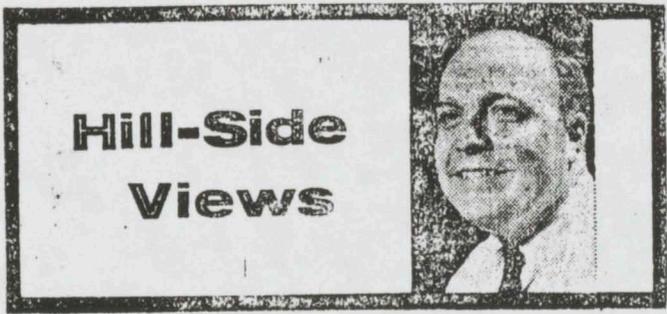
"Presented annually to a graduating senior athlete in memory of Mark Ryan Black, lance corporal, United States Marine Corps.

"A friendly, congenial personality and a dedicated and courageous athlete with great desire and competitive spirit, he participated in football, basketball, baseball and track at Oak Hill High School.

"During his junior and senior years, he received the following awards and honors: The Glenn Smith Track Award; twice Mid-Indiana Conference's outstanding trackman; North Manchester Relays' outstanding athlete; all-state honorable mention at quarterback in football; outstanding back on football team; vice president of senior class, and student council member.

"He was graduated from Oak Hill in 1963 and from International Barber School in 1965; enlisted in the Marine Corps April 29, 1966; was ordered to Vietnam Oct. 29, 1966, and was killed in combat by enemy rifle fire Aug. 14, 1967, near Cam Lo, South Vietnam.

"Burial was in Grant Memorial Park, Marion, Ind. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul L. Black, Sweetser, Ind., donors of the award."



By KEN HILL

Leader-Tribune Sports Editor

Mark Black, former star athlete at Oak Hill High School, recently gave his life for this country in Vietnam.

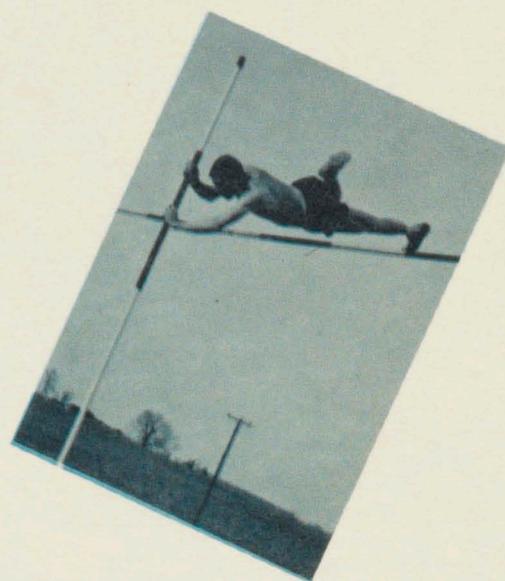
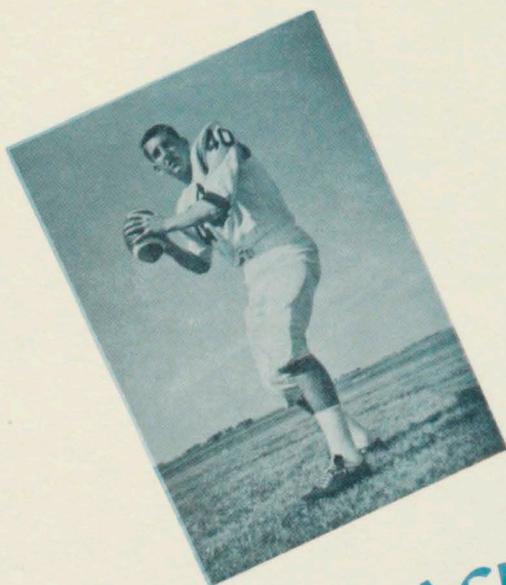
Black is remembered by sports fans in the Converse area as a top-flight trackman and footballer before graduating in 1963.

Although not knowing him personally, we understand Mark was an outstanding young man, too.

In honor to him, a memorial fund has been set up. Mark's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Black, have requested that money be donated to the memorial fund instead of for flowers.

Checks can be made payable to "Memorial Fund" in care of either Oak Hill High School, Rt. 1, Converse, or Diggs Funeral Home, 504 West Third, Marion.

Funeral services are pending upon the arrival of the



## MARK RYAN BLACK MEMORIAL ATHLETIC AWARD of Oak Hill High School

Presented annually to a graduating senior athlete in memory of Mark Ryan Black, Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps. A friendly, congenial personality and a dedicated and courageous athlete with great desire and competitive spirit, he participated in football, basketball, baseball and track at Oak Hill High School.

*During his junior and senior years he received the following awards and honors: The Glenn Smith Track Award, twice Mid-Indiana Conference Outstanding Trackman, North Manchester Relays Outstanding Athlete, All State Honorable Mention Quarterback, Outstanding Back of football team, Defensive Award in football, Honorary Co-Captain of football team, vice-president of senior class, and student council member.*

He was graduated from Oak Hill in 1963 and from International Barber School in 1965, enlisted in the Marine Corps April 29, 1966, was ordered to Vietnam October 29, 1966, and was killed in combat by enemy rifle fire August 14, 1967, near Cam Lo, South Vietnam. Burial was held in Grant Memorial Park, Marion, Indiana. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul L. Black, Sweetser, Indiana, donors of the award.

SOUTH BEND COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

THE JOHN ADAMS HIGH SCHOOL

808 S. TWYCKENHAM DR.  
SOUTH BEND, INDIANA 46615

Office of the Principal

August 15, 1967

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Black  
David Black  
Sweetser, Indiana

Dear Friends:

I write to you with a heavy heart. One hardly knows what to say at a time of such great loss. Somehow my family and I feel a great loss too; you know Mark was one of my favorite athletes in all my years of coaching. I guess I've coached more talented boys and faster and bigger boys, but no one was more dedicated or had more courage than your son. I have treasured and will continue to treasure the pictures of Mark in my coaching scrapbook. You know we have many of him - undoubtedly more than any other one person in my memory book. I feel pretty certain, too, that Greg always kind of put Mark on a pedestal and wanted to play ball like he did. Greg is now in junior high and is a quarterback. I would be most proud for him to perform and conduct himself as Mark did.

I have asked the men at Oak Hill to notify me in regards to a possible memorial for Mark. I so much want to contribute to it.

With deepest sympathy from Anita, Greg, Roger, and myself.

Sincerely,

*Virgil*  
Virgil L. Landry  
Principal

VLL:sk

In Deepest  
Sympathy

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Black,

When Jack came home & told me about Mark, the world stopped for a little while. He was one of my last eighth graders & was so diligent & careful in his learning. As Rob says, he was a man's man - all that was good & desirable in a son.

We weep with you.

Sincerely,  
Lelia Sawalt  
& family

Mark's 8<sup>th</sup>  
grade  
teacher



These are just 2 of the 250 touching notes and letters received

A DEDICATION  
May 26, 1968

A beautiful, lighted display case is now hanging in the northeast corner of the foyer in our educational unit. It stands as a memorial to L/CPL Mark Black who lost his life in Vietnam last August. One side of case will be used to display the many trophies that our various athletic teams have won. The other side will be use for displaying a wide array of Christian concerns and activities of our local Congregation. We are proud to accept and to dedicate this MEMORIAL which has been presented by his parents Mr.& Mrs. Paul L. Black. Below is the text on the bronze plate of the center section of the MEMORIAL.

DEDICATED  
In Loving Memory of  
MARK RYAN BLACK  
Lance Corporal  
U.S. Marine Corps  
Born April 10, 1945  
Killed August 14, 1967

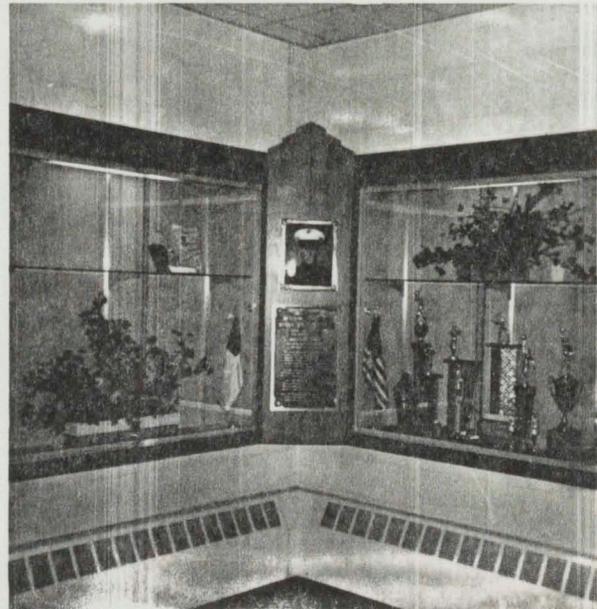
Mark was dedicated to God, by his parents, April 14, 1946, under the ministry of Rev. James Wilkins. He was baptized April 6, 1952, and recieved into membership May 10, 1953, by Rev. J.E. Lawshe.

In the History of the Sweetser Methodist Church he was the first member to give his life in combat.

The marker he used in his New Testament, which he read in VIETNAM, was placed at II Timothy 2:3,5, which reads, "Take your part in suffering, as a loyal soldier of Christ Jesus. An athlete who runs a race cannot win a prize unless he obeys the rules." (This is also on the bronze plate).

THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION

In memory of a strong and loving life which Thou didst share with us, in awareness that memory summons faith and calls for courage, with the prayer that this Memorial may ever be a focus for our fellowship and a source of mutual encouragement, we make this dedication, O GOD, in the name of CHRIST, our LORD, Amen.



DEDICATION OF OAK HILL  
HIGH SCHOOL  
MEMORIAL  
Sunday May 30, 1971  
Time 2:30

PROGRAM

- Presentation of Colors.....Amboy American Legion  
Post No. 429
- The Star Spangled Banner.....Oak Hill High School Band
- Invocation.....Reverend Bruce Mughmaw  
(Oak Hill Graduate)
- Recognition of Veterans.....O. L. Wilson
- Introduction of Speaker.....O. L. Wilson
- Address.....Congressman Elwood H. Bud Hillis  
Fifth District Representative  
Washington, D. C.
- Dedication of Monument.....Reverend Marshall Hayden  
President Oak Hill Ministerial Assoc.
- Remarks.....Phil McCarter, Prin.  
Oak Hill High School
- Laying of Wreath.....Amboy American Legion  
Post No. 429
- America the Beautiful.....Oak Hill High School Band
- Benediction.....Reverend Bruce Mughmaw

\*\*\*\*\*

Oak Hill Memorial Committee: Phil McCarter, chairman; Mrs. Henry Williamson, secretary; Jesse Cates, Orval Wilson, Loren Winger, James Law, Maurice Mark, Mrs. Tom Pearson and Paul Black.

The Memorial was made possible by the contributions from relatives and friends of these young men who sacrificed their lives in the Vietnam War.

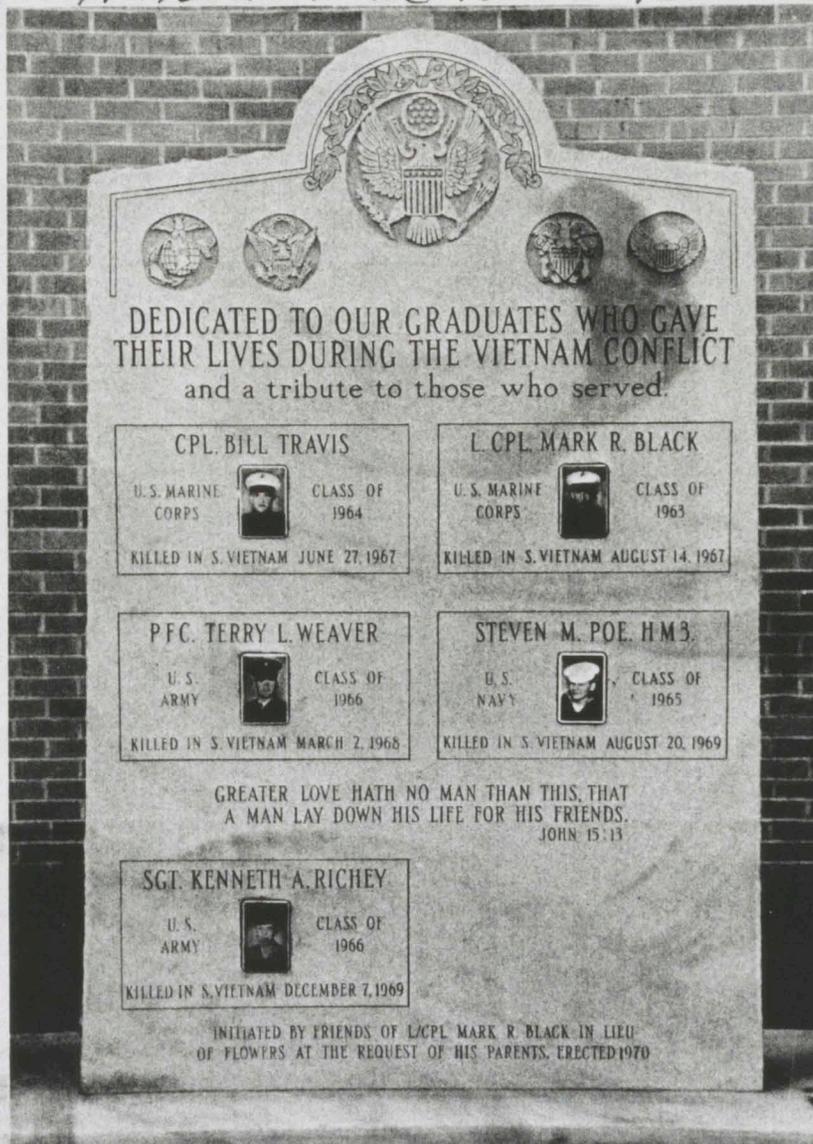
Acknowledgments:

- Monument by Brandon Monument Company Marion, Indiana
- Landscaping by Tenth Street Garden Shop Marion, Indiana
- Lights donated by the Hyre Electric Company Wabash, Indiana
- Sidewalk donated by the Glenroy Construction Company Indianapolis, Indiana
- Time Switch Clock donated by the Ralph David Electrical Equipment Company Marion, Indiana

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*Taken from the Sept., 1971 issue of the Monumental News-Review Magazine*



**WAR MEMORIAL, MARION, INDIANA:** Manufactured by Coggins Granite Industries, Elberton, Georgia for Brandon Monument Co., Marion, Ind. and erected on the grounds of the Oak Hill High School, Grant County, Indiana.

COMMENT: The 4-6x0-8x7-0 steeled monument was made possible through contributions from some 400 friends and families of the deceased servicemen. All five soldiers were graduates of Oak Hill High School in Grant County, Indiana, and all died in Viet Nam.

The monument, located in front of the school, is lettered with the name of each serviceman plus his branch of the service, the year he graduated and when he was killed. The memorial also bears a color, ceramic picture of each man.

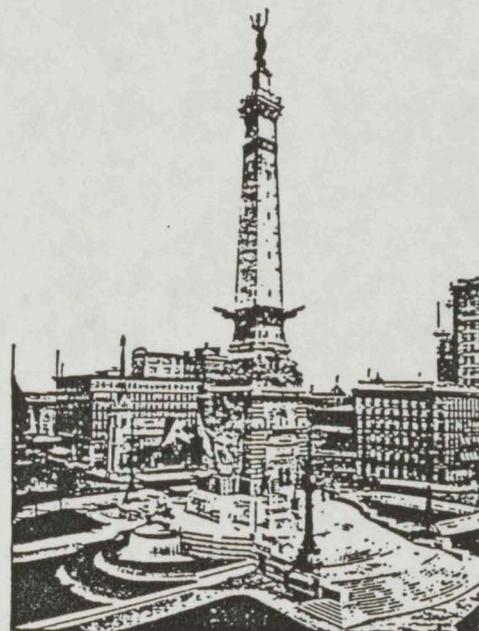
The idea for the memorial was initiated in 1970 by the parents of the second boy from Oak Hill to die in Viet Nam. Donations were received from all segments of the Oak Hill School community. Coggins Granite Industries of Elberton, Georgia, was the supplier for the granite.

Dedication of the memorial took place on Sunday, May 30, 1971, with many dignitaries, friends and relatives in attendance for the impressive ceremony.



FRANK O'BANNON  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

STATE OF INDIANA  
STATE CAPITOL  
INDIANAPOLIS 46204



SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MONUMENT  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

August 20, 1992

Mr. and Mrs. Paul L. Black  
Wesley Manor Village  
1555 N. Main Street, Box 227  
Frankfort, IN 46041

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Black:

On behalf of the State of Indiana and the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Restoration Project staff, it is my honor to inform you of your son's permanent place in Indiana history.

As a Lance Corporal in the United States Marine Corp, your son, Mark, made the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam in 1967 while fighting for his country. Tom Lobsiger, along with a few friends, believed Mark should be honored with a step inside one of our State's most treasured landmarks that honors soldiers and sailors who initially fought for our freedom--the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in downtown Indianapolis.

They chose Step #140 to immortalize Mark's name and memory forever. This step has special meaning, as the numbers signify the following:

- 1 - because Mark will always be first in his friends' hearts
- 40 - to commemorate Oak Hill High School's first All-State athlete in football--#40 - Mark Black.

It is obvious to me, Mr. and Mrs. Black, that this one small town boy from Sweetser, Indiana, has certainly touched the lives of many people. You should be very proud of your son, Mark, and the accomplishments he attained in such a short period of time.

As Lieutenant Governor of Indiana and Chairman of the Monument Restoration Project, I again, salute your son on becoming a deserving, permanent part of Indiana history.

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Governor Frank O'Bannon  
Chairman, Monument Restoration Project



### THE MARINE'S PRAYER

Almighty Father, whose command is over all and whose love never fails, make me aware of Thy presence and obedient to Thy will. Keep me true to my best self, guarding me against dishonesty in purpose and deed and helping me to live so that I can face my fellow Marines, my loved ones and Thee without shame or fear. Protect my family. Give me the will to do the work of a Marine and to accept my share of responsibilities with vigor and enthusiasm. Grant me the courage to be proficient in my daily performance. Keep me loyal and faithful to my superiors and to the duties my country and the Marine Corps have entrusted to me. Make me considerate of those committed to my leadership. Help me to wear my uniform with dignity, and let it remind me daily of the traditions which I must uphold.

If I am inclined to doubt, steady my faith; if I am tempted, make me strong to resist; if I should miss the mark, give me courage to try again.

Guide me with the light of truth and grant me wisdom by which I may understand the answer to my prayer.

Amen

A Marine recently sent a letter to Headquarters, Marine Corps, urging the adoption of a prayer for general use. After considerable review, the Chaplains' Division, Bureau of Naval Personnel, recommended a prayer for use by members of all faiths. This prayer is to be known as "The Marine's Prayer." The Commandant has authorized its use and has urged that all Marines participate. Marine Corps Bulletin 1730 states that use of the prayer will be governed by individual commanding officers.

Readers who desire extra copies of The Marine's Prayer may write Leatherneck, Box 1918, Washington, D.C. 20013. Please enclose ten cents per copy for handling.

## MARK RYAN BLACK

MARK RYAN BLACK was born on April 10, 1945 and joined the Armed Forces while in SWEETSER, IN.

He served as a 0311 in the Marine Corps. In 1 year of service, he attained the rank of LCPL/E3.

On August 14, 1967, at the age of 22, MARK RYAN BLACK perished in the service of our country in South Vietnam, Quang Tri.



You can find MARK RYAN BLACK honored on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Panel 24E, Row 108.

Two Vietnam War websites contain tributes to Mark from his friends and relatives. You may view the tributes and add your own at:

[www.thevirtualwall.org](http://www.thevirtualwall.org)  
[www.thewall-usa.com](http://www.thewall-usa.com)

THE WAR AMERICA DID NOT WIN

It was a war that was never declared; a living room war 10,000 miles away. Of the 58,200 Americans killed, 40% were 19 years of age or younger.

When American shells fell on our troops their deaths were attributed to friendly fire. Our daily measure of military victories was a rather gruelish yard stick called the body count. The war was as difficult to understand as it was to fight; it was not a situation that was easy winable.

In April 1985 -- the 10th Anniversary after loosing the war I heard retired Army General Bruce Palmer say on TV that when he went over to Vietnam in the spring of 1967 he realized that we were loosing the war and expressed it as to "bailing out the ocean with a teaspoon." (unquote)

Our government did not know what was going on over there. The telegram we received from the government informing us of Mark's death stated that he was killed while on patrol. This was far from the truth and we would never have known the truth if we had not found out for ourselves. His fellow comrades in the compound, that was attacked by the Viet Cong, gave us specific facts.

# 'Vietnam': Meaning of war to the soldiers who fought it

Like a dog worrying a bone, Americans are still chewing over Vietnam and the war that ended there 10 years ago this month.

What happened and whether it had any meaning has been a national debate for a decade. Most of the arguments put forth are those of academics, politicians and generals. Little if any has been heard from those who fought the battles in Southeast Asia.

Now, newsman Walter Cronkite allows these men a voice in a CBS Reports documentary hour, *Honor, Duty, and A War Called Vietnam*, tonight at 10 on channels 8 and 15.

And out of the memories of the veterans appearing on the show comes an image of a conflict increasingly without aim and increasingly frustrating to the men fighting. "Our strategy was flawed, our tactics were flawed and there was no way we could win," a retired Marine colonel says.

Many of the veterans inter-



**Walter Cronkite returns to Vietnam to reflect on the war in *Honor, Duty, and a War Called Vietnam*.**

viewed say their aim became surviving Vietnam.

Rep. John McCain, R-Ariz., is one of the survivors. On the show,

he accompanies Cronkite back to the cell where he spent two of his five years in solitary confinement in a prisoner-of-war camp outside Hanoi. "There was a great deal of pain here, a great deal of suffering, a great deal of loneliness, but there was also a lot of courage displayed," McCain said in recalling his experience.

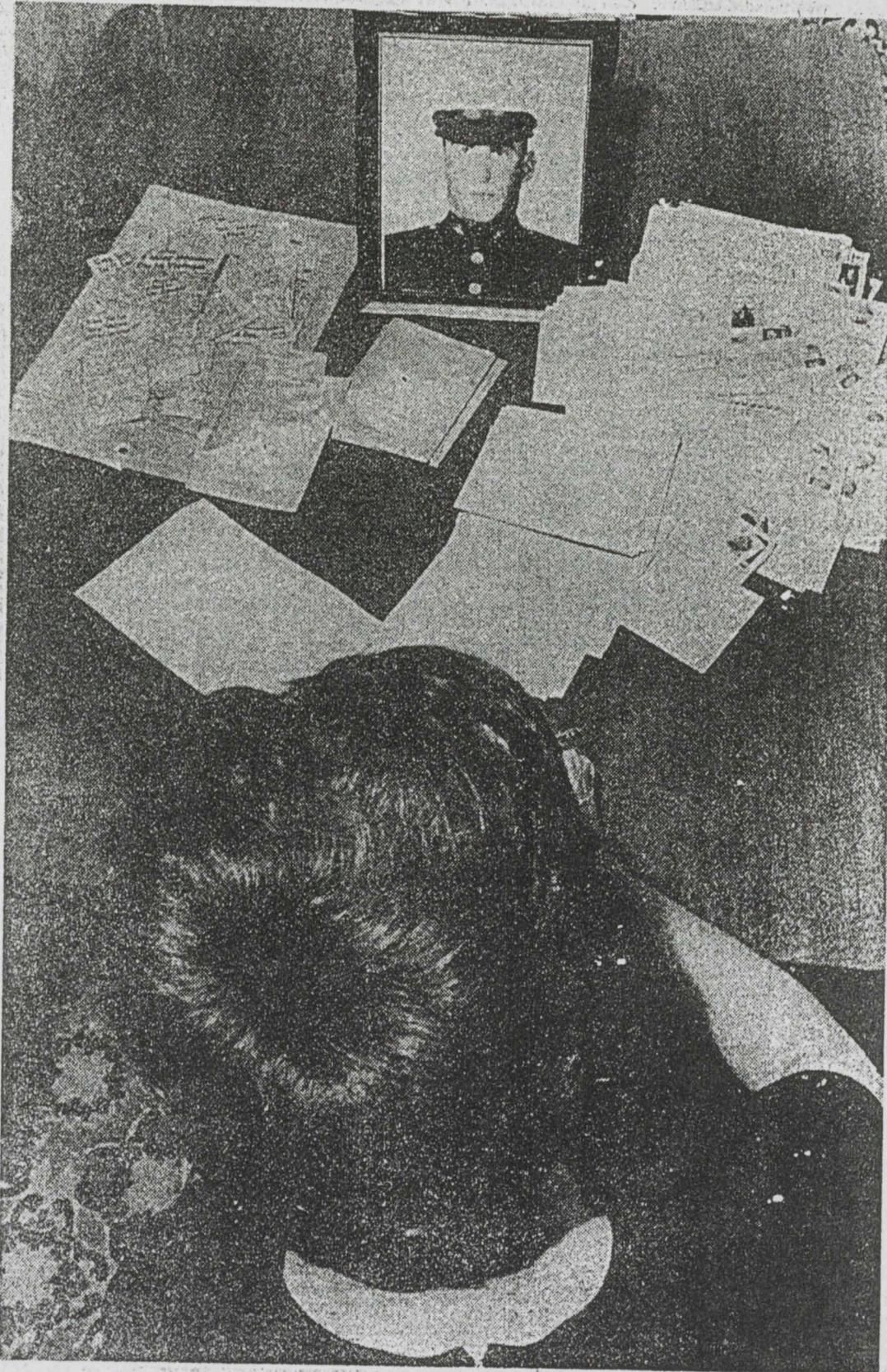
There's a good deal of the past in the documentary, film footage of soldiers in action, of presidential assertions and of the destructiveness of war. There's also a great deal of the present, of Vietnam as it is now and of the veterans of that undeclared war, with their faces and tones of voice often saying more than their words.

It's been 10 years since the end of the only war the United States lost and, Cronkite notes, it is now just another chapter in basic training military history for the military. "Today's Marine responds more to those who lost their lives in Beirut than to those who fought a losing war in Southeast Asia," he said.

# ET Tribune

RDAY, AUGUST 23, 1969

1 News Section, 16 Pages, TV & Radio Section, 16 Pages PRICE FIFTEEN CENTS



Son's picture provides inspiration

# *Her letters aim to ease pain for grieving kin*

By LEE AMOS  
C-T Staff Writer

Since that hot day in August two years ago when they came to tell her that her youngest son, Marine L-Cpl. Mark Black was dead, killed by a sniper's bullet in an unknown Vietnamese village 12,000 miles from his home in Sweetser, Carol Black was determined not to become bitter.

She was just as determined that the kindness and the inspiration that touched her should be shared with other parents who knew the same grief.

In the many letters of condolence she and her husband, Paul, received she found the means to carry her faith to other grieving families — in newspaper articles she found the addresses.

To date, she has sent over 625 letters to families of Indiana servicemen killed in Vietnam. The letters include a booklet by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled," a verse of Scripture and a poem by Edgar Guest, "To All Parents."

There was so much hope for their 22-year-old son, and so many plans. He was to begin a partnership in his father's barbershop in Sweetser when he returned from Vietnam. That all ended on Aug. 14, 1967.

"When our son was killed two years ago last Aug. 14, Mrs. Black said, "I was determined, that for me, he did not die in vain, in the Vietnam cause, I was not sure . . ."

"When Mark was killed the letters were such an inspiration and such a comforting



MRS. CAROL BLACK

"I know their grief . . ."

thing, I had a desire to help someone else. Although I have not known them, I know their grief as one who has suffered the same thing."

The letters go out three, four, sometimes eight, in one day.

Each day, Mrs. Black searches newspapers to find the addresses of families of Hoosier servicemen who have died in the Vietnam conflict.

A few of the letters have gone to families of servicemen who were not from Indiana. She mailed letters to the parents of two brothers from Oregon who were killed on a destroyer, to the parents of Fireman I-C Duane Hodges of Oregon who was killed when the intelligence ship Pueblo was captured in Korea and to the

family of Lt. Sharon Lane of Ohio, the first Army nurse to die in action in Vietnam.

Sometimes the letters are answered. The families of the Pueblo crewman and the Army nurse replied along with about a fourth of the Indiana families who get her letters.

"I keep them all," she said. "And re-read them often. I've gotten many letters back — wonderful letters. When I get a letter from someone I've helped, it's worth all I write."

"Letters like these give meaning to our son's death and I feel that the giving of his life could not have been used for a greater purpose."

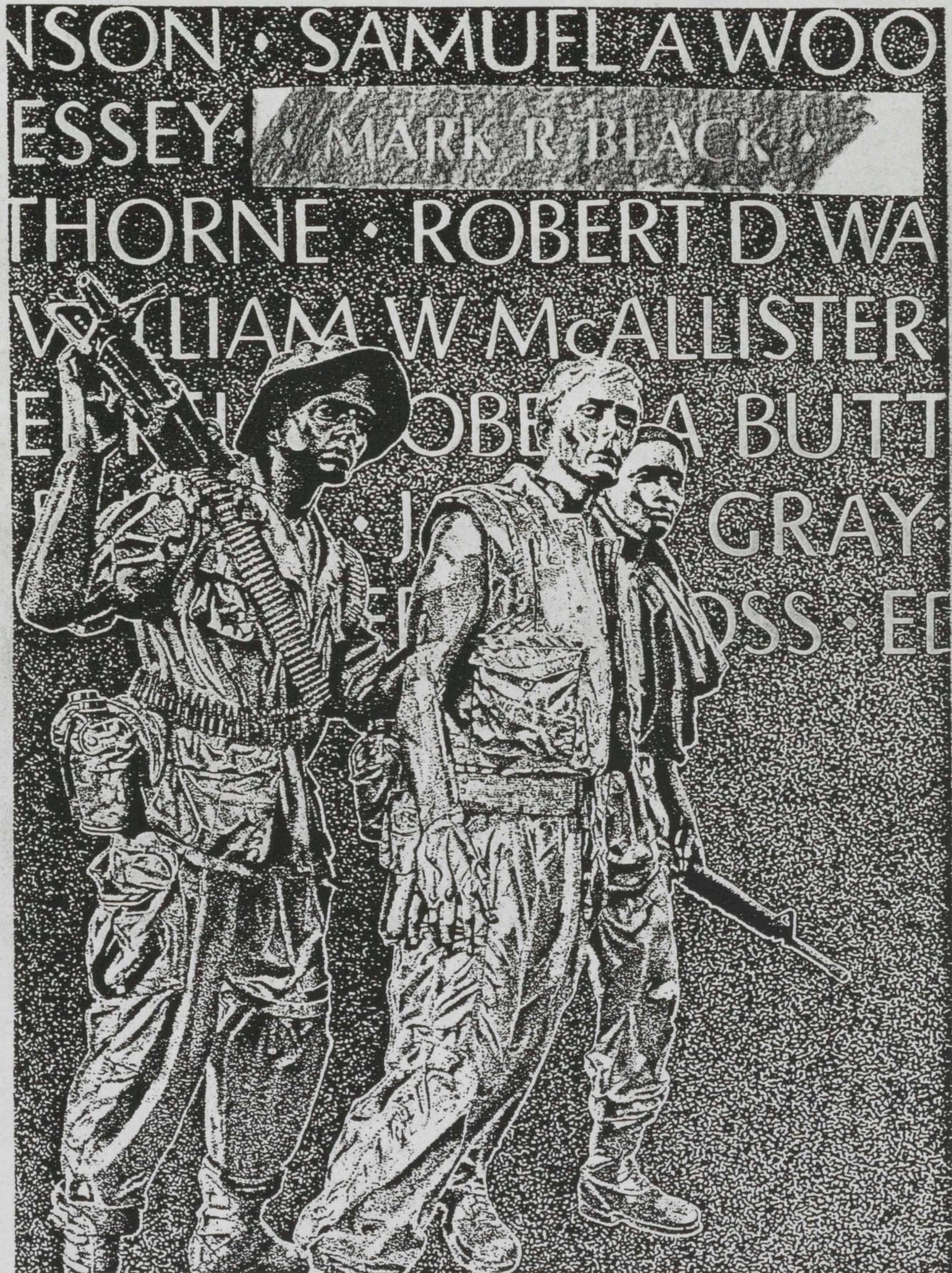
All her letters are handwritten and extend the Blacks' "deepest heartfelt sympathy" and the hope that faith will "give you courage for the days ahead."

Sometimes, because of insufficient address or incorrect information, a letter is returned — but not often. Mrs. Black praised the work of the often chastized Post Office Department for delivering letters with incomplete addresses. Some arrived at their destinations without street addresses and a few with the wrong names of cities.

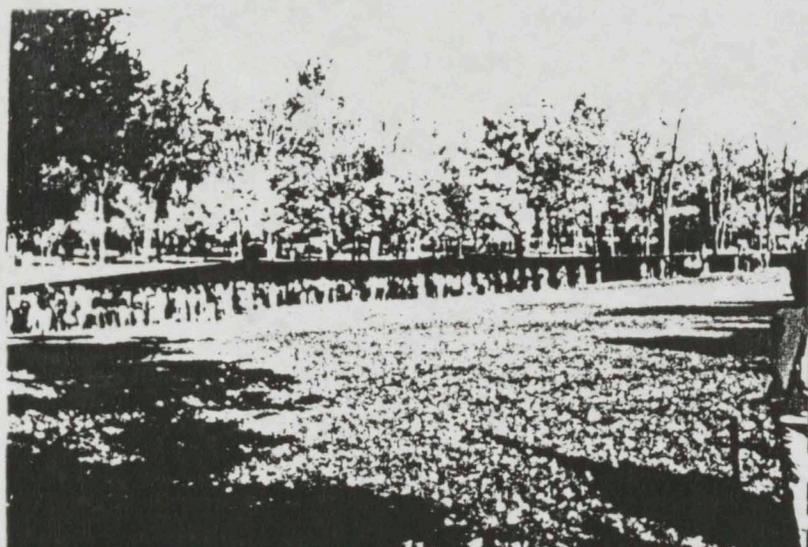
"I find there are a lot of people with a lot of troubles. Some women lose their husbands — some their only sons."

"I will continue to send letters as long as our young men are being killed in Vietnam," she said. "After that there will be something else that I can do."

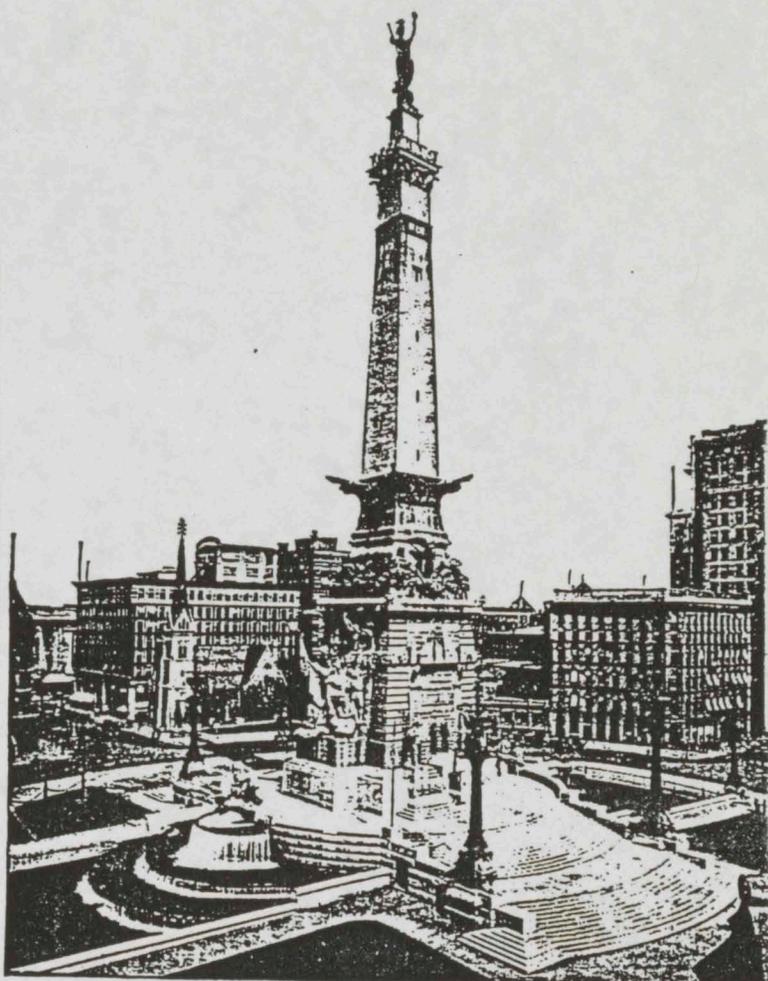
I have a writing tablet filled with 950 names and addresses of service men, mostly Indiana men, killed in Vietnam. From September 4, 1967 through September 1971 I sent letters of sympathy to the wives and parents of these men. I have kept all of the letters that I received, in response to mine.



VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND WALL SOUTH MEMORIAL



• MARK R BLACK • FRANK M BOZZELLO  
PS • ALEXANDER JACKSON • ERSKIN D L  
RAPTIS Jr • THOMAS J CARSTENS • GEO  
WILLIAM E BAKER • LARRY E BOWMAN • CLIFF



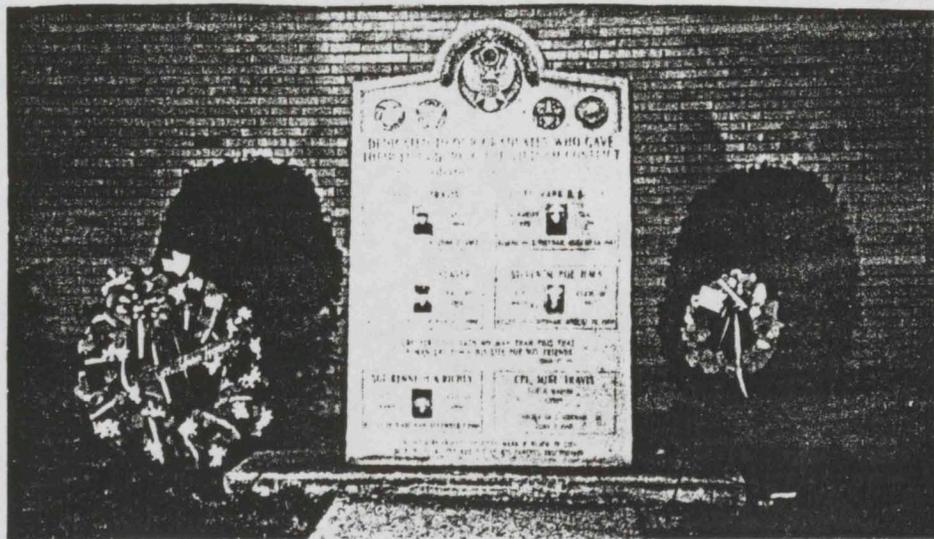
SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MONUMENT  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

*Mark Ryan Black  
is Remembered*

AMANDA REID MEMORIAL CHAPEL  
THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
AUGUST 23, 1992  
THE ORDER OF MORNING WORSHIP

The flowers on the altar are in memory of L/Cpl.  
Mark R. Black, U.S. Marine Corps, by Mr. & Mrs.  
Paul Black and son, David.

1. On Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall, Washington, D.C.
2. On Step Number 140 in Soldiers & Sailors Monument
3. By Flowers in Chapel Service
4. On Memorial, Oak Hill H.S., Converse, Indiana
5. (Over) Memorial Athletic Award, Oak Hill H.S.





DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20380

IN REPLY REFER TO  
DNA-wcw

03 OCT 16 PM 1:34

DEATH REPORT

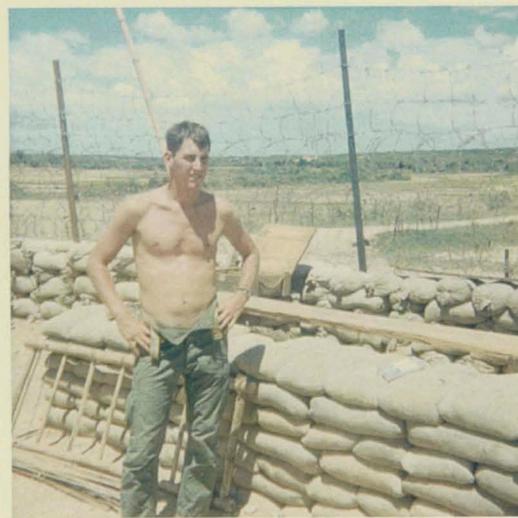
THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the records of Headquarters, Marine Corps show that Lance Corporal Mark R. Black, 2210392, U. S. Marine Corps, died 14 August 1967 in the vicinity of Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam as the result of a gunshot wound sustained from hostile rifle fire while engaged in action against hostile forces.

Given under my hand at Washington, D. C., this 21st day of August, 1967.

*M. L. Sebens*  
M. L. SEBENS

Second Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps  
Assistant to Head, Casualty Section  
Personal Affairs Branch

[93]



**Service Units**  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 26<sup>th</sup> Marines  
 Company M, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon  
  
 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines  
 Company D, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon

**Lance Corporal Mark R. Black U.S.M.C.**  
**Headquarters 9<sup>th</sup> Marines**  
**C.A.C. Papa 3**  
**April 10, 1945 – August 14, 1967**  
**Sweetser, IN - Grant Co.**

**Major Campaigns**  
 Deckhouse IV  
 Deckhouse V  
 Prairie 1  
 Prairie 2