



Letters by Ernest Kuhn. 1968

Kuhn, Ernest
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Pha Hany 15205
14 Jan 68

Dear Mom Dad & Jim,

Well, it doesn't seem possible but I left home exactly 10 days ago today. Time really goes fast. Guess I will be home again before I know it.

[REDACTED] and I [REDACTED] had a great time in Chicago. Although I am glad I had a nice time at home as I did, I wish I could have stayed a couple more days. Actually, I probably could have because no one here really expected me until the 15th. In fact they were sure I had gotten married. Well they weren't too far wrong! The stay with the Systrom's was real nice. They are a tremendous family. After a few minutes or hours they make you feel as if everyone had been friends for years. They really didn't say much about Don - however his father and I were together alone the first afternoon and he did talk a lot. We and drove to the cemetery. It is a beautiful location on a hill looking out towards a snow capped mountain that his father said was one of Don's favorite hiking places. I was until I was back at the airport waiting for the plane to leave when Don's father sort of broke up. He kept telling me to be careful and then he started to cry. It really made me feel bad. Don's brother may be here in a few weeks on business for Racing and Pop is going to have him visit Sam Shong.

The situation here is not as bad as I thought. We have lost the 220-228 area but there are supposed to be plans to move back in soon. Yesterday morning we lost #127 and 259. We immediately retook #127 and will probably have 259 back in a day or so. There are all on the map. #203 is in real bad trouble and is expected to go anytime but that is not in my area. Every thing around Sam Thong is quiet although the PL did attack #15 when the French priest was killed that Harriet called me about.

Dear old Senator Young of Ohio visited Sam Thong yesterday. His condition still he could hardly walk. His mind seems fairly good but it is hard to think of old duffers like him running the country. He is sort of a "dove". But he seemed unimpressed with Laos and the fact the Vietnamese have been attacking LAO for years. In fact he made a speech strongly condemned US support for LAO and US plan to stop the Vietnam. Then two Pontaço men met him who said that 2 weeks ago Young would never have said that!

I guess the highlight of the week happened 2 days ago when 4 biplanes attacked #85. I don't know if this will be publicized or not but if it isn't don't tell anyone. No Americans were hurt

but one was hit. The planes were not really
bombers but Russian cargo planes and the guy tried
had to drop the bomb out. Only 2 planes attacked #25
and didn't do too much damage. Both were shot
down - one from the ground and the other by a chopper
used a man shooting an AK like mine! The planes
are very slow - 65 knots p/h! One plane burned up & the
the crashed intact and the bodies were gotten out -
I retroman I understand. They plan to put up the whole
plane tomorrow and fly it out.

I am writing this by candlelight. Probably
won't write much more as everyone else has gone to bed -
It is now 8 o'clock! I got here about 3 and they
brought in some wounded who had stepped on mines.
I got a plane in here about 5:30 and it was getting
dark and foggy. We sent 3 out but one died before
they got him on the plane.

Pops is looking pretty good although his
face is a little more wrinkled. I am still planning
on coming back here - although Pitsavari is trying to
talk me out of it. He wants me to go to graduate
school. I told I was in 2 more years but he
doesn't like the idea of me working up here so soon.
I don't know - That's about all I can say on that
situation for now anyway. It is really a tremendous
effort. He'll be coming to Newark for a visit when I
return in September.

Well, guess I will go to bed now. Things are pretty quiet now.ough hours ago there was a lot of firing but it didn't amount to anything. If I have anything else printed tomorrow I'll add it. Otherwise I'll close now.

Needless to say I really had a good time at home. Wish I could have stayed longer. I'll try to get a line off to Bob soon. When to be now? Guess I'll send it to the house and Ruth can deliver it.

Well, bye for now.

Love,
Ernie.

P.S. Phoned up 2 brothers in Chicago. Just what [redacted] got married on 4 Dec and is living in Los Angeles (about April). Thought that was good news.

P.S. Where are the important books from the Post? I thought when I left them!

etc.

2/19/67

15 Feb 68

Dear Mom Dad Jim -

Sorry I haven't written sooner or more often - but things are really going bad now. We are getting hit at most of areas. The area in Savoy Province where I worked when I was on contract is now all gone - sites 121, 169, 176, 203, 138, 131, 137; 217 - all lost in a matter of few days. We don't have a single airstrip in northern Savoy Province now.

In my area in Pan Nuea we have lost 3 airstrips and several more are threatened daily. Pop, Dr. Welden, (Head of USMD Public Health), Don Daegan (USMD PH medic name), Doctor Becker (USMD Dentist) were all at 48A on 22 Jan for a discussion of a new dispensary. I landed at 5 and Pop wanted to know if I was staying for the party that night. I said no because I wanted to go to 36 where I could keep track of events on the radio all night because we had lost some territory that morning and the situation was bad. Besides, those ports always have local booze and I didn't feel like drinking. I was lucky. The enemy attacked that night at 0200 and the Americans had to pull out! We picked them up the next morning by chopper several miles south of the village. No Americans were hurt but 12 soldiers were killed and one woman. Among the soldiers were 2 majors - one killed and one captured. We took the

PJS/MS

country and resettle the next day. However we are having to relocate about 1500 people because the security in the old village is not too good. I've spent several days with them giving out blanket, pot, pan, clothes, knives etc.

Things are not looking too good with AID. Our budget was cut and then Washington said 10% reduction of all AID mission overseas. In addition rumors are that USAID is slowing withdrawing from the counter insurgency program in the north. This would mean the type of job that I'm in. However it appears that the Dept. of Defense (DOD) will step into the gap. Apparently they have indicated that if or when they take over they would like many of the present personnel to remain to carry out the program. I don't know if this would be staying as an AID employee or switching over to DOD or CAF. I assume that we will find out more soon, even the proposed switch over and phase out by AID may take a year or so. I just hope the US doesn't pull out completely. I don't think they will; however, - rumors are also around that overall US policy is to slow down our program in the north because Washington State Dept thinks that recent friendly pressure in the north is provoking the Vietnamese to attack.

Under in Saigon and Saum Vietnam! I think
this is crazy, but it seems that DC seem to think
this.

The area around Sam Thony is not too good.
A week ago Bon Nai, sch 15 - (when the cathedral priest
was killed the time Harriet called me at home)
was attacked. They held ok but the situation is not
so good - although the enemy has not really
attacked for 2 nights now. The only thing that I
am really concerned about is that if there
ever is a guerrilla attack on Sam Thony my house
might get burned and I would lose all my
books and things that I have bought here in
hos. My books alone are worth \$500-600! I've
been thinking of shipping everything to Vietnam
but haven't yet. I don't sleep at Sam Thony
everything might be lost while I'm not here.

I never f what happened in Vietnam the
embassy here is housing all Americans or constant
lost with increased security in certain areas.
I don't seem too concerned - maybe we should be
'don't know. Got a letter from [REDACTED] last week.
haven't had time to answer her yet. Wish we had
one of the real heavy snow when I was home.

I'm sort of waiting to see of anything happens

to me and the draft board. - Don't call them or anything! Blaine Jensen - who is a year older than I am was just redesignated 1-A and the board have hinted he would or might soon be drafted as his term ends in 1 month and he was going to quit. Now AID says if he stays in Lao (he's already been here nearly 8 years) or goes to Vietnam he wouldn't be drafted. He's not really too happy about the whole thing, & I have said I'll return - if AID is still here or if DOA takes over. - However Peterson is not very happy about me coming back to Lao. She wants me to go to grad school in the states. We are not engaged nor have any plans been made, but the possibility has been raised extremely with no decision one way or the other. I'll tell you know as in case anything should happen it won't be too sudden a shock. Since she is Presbyterian religion would be no problem at all.

Finally that. Here's Bob. I'm writing him a lengthy short note. Hope got them as I had no zip code number. Well so long for now. Will try to write more often but can't promise.

Lam

ps How - Jim and the draft now - Times
mayh well be together - Hal!

July 25-68

✓

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim -

~~You forgot that Jim is not home. Things~~
are about normal around here now. We
just started a new offensive to attempt
to recapture my old area of Sam Nua.
Things are going pretty good. We are all around
Muong Son - (L59) and should take Pha Bony (L37G)
in a day or so. We captured ^{L3 215} Hau Pa 2 days
ago. I flew in today in the first helo. The side
had cleared the strip of any mines. One of the
soldiers gave me some North Vietnamese money
they had gotten.

The situation around Sam Thong is quite
good now. We have had no problems for
couple of months.

I'm going to Vientiane tomorrow for
a party for Blaine Jensen who is leaving on
Sunday. It is the last of the old times at S.T.
He is 29 but has been here 5 years. I'm going
to miss him because we worked pretty closely
when he was here. He was sent to Hau Pa
(L25) for a year and a half but has been back
to Sam Thong since March. I went over to Hau

Dai last weekend. He had returned to get the
rest of his things packed. I flew over one night
to Chiangrai in Thailand to see Tom Ward -
another guy that used to work at San Thong
several years ago. Blaine and I both have
applied for jobs in Thailand with USM(USAID)
There is supposed to be a new program starting
in Thailand called Village Security Force.
It consists of taking villages from grey
areas (Red areas = heavy Communist terror), (grey
area = proxy area of Red terrorist action) (white
area = OK) and training them as home defense
units with weapons, salary uniforms etc.

However, I'll probably come back to Laos!

On June Blaine and I went to Thailand
for 3 weeks. We spent a week in Bangkok -
mostly seeing about this new program -
and then we went to Sukhothai, Tak, Chiangmai
Langkun, Chiangrai, Mai Sai and Chiangsan. We
really had a blast! (although we came home
a little poorer!!) Afterward we said that
we should have taken out stock in the

Singhe Beer Brewery because we consumed quite a bit. Remember Coral Mills - you met her at Harriet. - she is now in Borzoh and we saw her there. I bought some antique figures in Chincinno. I don't know what to do with all the stuff I have here. I guess I'll just store it here until I come back.

~~I received the new pipe wrench and~~
~~the bus pass yesterday. They seem to fit~~
~~now OK.~~

~~I don't understand the government figures~~
~~by the way to cut inflation by 10%~~
~~several employee got an automatic raise this~~
~~year. I was 7-7 FSR. with a new salary of \$9,750-~~
~~plus this is ridiculous!! (plus 25% laundry etc.)~~
~~The last month I received a promotion to~~
~~a grade of 6-^{FSR} - I don't know if I'll be a 6-2~~
~~or 6-3. - a 6-2 is \$10,045 and a 6-3 is \$10,365!!~~
~~plus 25%!! Right now I just cannot afford~~
~~not to stay with AIA. I figure one more~~
~~tour and then back to school.~~

~~I was surprised to learn that I had that much money in my savings and checking account.~~

~~I still would like to get some fruit trees.~~

How much do they cost for tree saplings,
~~new year and apple~~ and maybe plum? If
autumn is a good time I should still have
time to plant them in late September or
October mariage? I'm really looking
forward to being home in the Fall.

I got a letter card from Sally A., the
time I announced I was afraid that she may
have come home for the summer so maybe she
never received it. ~~Sally Howard~~? Haven't
written Potowmuk in a long time. In jail,
as usual, except a week of girl. Will real
see little big jail - I opened up the village
a year ago - we lost the show several times and
now her family is relocated south of S.T. ~~was~~
~~really interested until I found out she was~~
~~of 15!!~~ I nearly died. I slowed down -
today I heard that she may get married in
a few weeks. Probably good for both. Great
girl - the niece of off the governor's wife here.
She is ~~Dropout~~ and really has begin, face -
and dark almost black hair. Haven't
seen her around her much. She is about

to a later - I'll speak to you and in the light
of my life experience I would say that
as the government have (which I do) had it's too
~~short~~!! The friend you mention is a really beautiful
girl. Her father was a land worker for W.H.D. The
mother is Mai (28) - a serving girl in Vietnam.
Her speech is French, French Vietnamese. Her father
is really, really, the they are some of the
American Great Sons. They, I went to Washington
on July 14 for Found Double Day. I took her -
(her name is Jacqueline) to the Double Day Dance
at the French Mission. Only Blaine and a few
others who knew me can believe this but I
danced until 0430 in the morning. (There were
after ample bottles of Champagne) I guess I got on the
dance floor and jumped around like all the
other fools! Have to admit I had a good time!!

Well, you did come for now. Good to
see in the last letter that Dad is feeling better
and back at work. Not very promising - much
less. I never used to get this along. I just
always put off writing.

I should leave Las Sept 2 - I'll probably spend out a week or 10 days at the most away home. I hope to spend a couple of days in Burma - if I can get a visa - and then a day or so maybe in Beira & Cairo - 2 days in London and home -

I didn't you know for sure when I'll be home.

will write you soon

love

esme

~~Hong Kong next 10 days~~ I'm so awfully ~~put off~~
~~wanting~~ I have almost forgotten her!!

PSS - Please send me ~~check~~
~~monahab~~!!

PSS - just found out I was promoted to a
6-4 (10, 673) - also found out I have to be in
Washington Sept 23-Oct 4 - ^{home} plan to leave Las Sept 2 -
haven't decided which route to come yet -

1 Sept 68

Dear Mom & Dad -

2 p.m. Well, here it is, Sunday morning - the first of Sept. My original orders were to leave for the U.S. tomorrow. However, I have had to change my plans. No use beating around the bush. On Friday I intended for 30 days here in Laos. Everything is finally moving up north and we are getting more work than the past few months. So I have asked to stay on one month. Might as well explain the whole thing. Got a letter from Blaine Jensen 4 or 5 days ago. He has separated from AID now and was in Washington for 2 weeks. He found out that the operation officers were going to be transferred to Viet Nam - anyone going to the states would be sent to Viet Nam, and not back to Laos and those staying, I mean not going home to the states on leave would be transferred at mid term to Viet Nam. Ambassador Sullivan supposedly sent a cable to Washington saying that it would be impossible to transfer all the ops officers. However things are steady in Washington - So people here are advising me to extend here for several more months. You see, I will be the first operation officer in Laos to return on home leave. If they are thinking of ~~sending~~ ^{second} all ops officers to Viet Nam, I would be the first bid gone - of course I would immediately quit AID - but Washington would

not care - all they ²⁾ think about is "bodies"
filling a position. All my friends here advise
me to wait a few months for maybe 5-6 months
until 2 or 3 people go home and see what
happens to them - then remember is that we
should let someone else be the guinea pig and
go home first - and I'll sit back here and watch
and wait and see what happens to everyone
else. This will mean that I probably will
not be home for 4 or 5 more months - but I'm not
sure. I might be home in October. I have
received a very rare permission to visit Burma
on Oct 2. If I return to the US then I'll stop off in
Burma on the way home. If I don't go home I
may have to take a 10 day vacation to Burma
and return to Sam Thong because to get the visa
for Burma was very difficult and it took much
help from the US Embassy to get the visa. They
are still not definite about when I'll home -
so better not plan on any definite time -
Sorry to foul things up like this. Have to go
now quickly - heading north now.

Love
Ernest

Hope everyone is feeling ok - Will explain more
in a few days

1/193/68

~~9/13/68~~ 9/13/68

10 Sept. 1968

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim -

Excuse the paper but I am out in the field
at Phu Pha Luan - site 220 on that map. It is very near
Route 6 - east of Nakhang, site 36. I hope maybe that I
can make up a new of map and send you. I have
some news - bad I guess - I have agreed with Pop
to stay here until Feb 1, 1968. I was supposed to leave
Lao Sept 3 but the visa for Burma had not
come through yet. As I waited a few days. In the mean-
time General Vang Pao has launched a fairly extensive
campaign to take back our old areas of Sam Nua
which we had lost in March. As a result, the next
3 or 4 months - the beginning and middle of - the dry
season - is an hard time. We are short one man
at Sam Thong now. If I left there would be only 2 -
Win and Jerry - Paul White, or TTS u, is due to return
to Sam Thong on Sept 23 - I could have left Oct 1, but
there is really no one who could work - or at least
know - Sam Nua except 'Pop'. Pop just called & said it
physically plus he is too busy at Sam Thong area to spend
fall time up here. Then there is another reason, I think
I mentioned in my last letter. Blaine Jensen, who has
just returned to the US a month and a half ago, wrote me
that there is a declassified plan under way in Washington
to transfer the Operation Officer from Laos to Vietnam. I
would have been the first ops officer to have returned to the
US and the prospect of being sent to Vietnam made a

about 50-50 (or maybe 99.9%!) Mr. Mendenhall,
 who was former USAID Director in Laos is now some
 Deputy Administrator of Vietnam in Washington. I suspect
 that he has told Washington that, "I know as and so it
 is for and they're doing a good job so let's transfer them
 to Vietnam". I just feel this is the case. Naturally, I
 wanted not go to Vietnam because everyone I've talked
 to from there says that the AID program is a real
MESS with of course the military running the show
 and AID just tagging along. Waste and corruption are
 common with aid money and supplies. So when you
 work with aid you either go where they tell you or
 quit. The same thing happened to Blaine. I suspect that
 this year I should have taken the year off and gone to grad
 school and then I could have returned to continue
 working. I still could go the second semester of next
 year - I'll just wait and see. On this I would need
 of course in a foreign language - German I read, German
 I could brush up on without too much trouble. But I
 hope to learn French here in Laos. I really good - or, maybe
 not, I just remembered - B10 has language courses in S. C.
 I could study French when I come back home in Feb. Home!

Our Secretary told me something interesting last
 night. I didn't know it but apparently every year the Lao
 government asks AID to name a candidate for some award
 as being the outstanding AID employee in Laos or maybe having
 done something unusual and extraordinary ~~or something~~
 anyway Anne said that my name had been submitted

3

(3)

to the Sas government and accepted by them for the work I did in Sam Neua when the whole area was under attack and site was fallible, and I guess also for the evacuation of the refugee from Sam Neua. I have not been satisfied but I suppose Anne knows what she is talking about as she said she got the info from the Director's secretary. Roy & pays to have secretaries on your side. — A report just came to the village where I am moving people out of saying that 50 enemy soldiers were seen about 8 miles north of here - no problem yet.

Well, I really feel bad about not coming down this month, especially as no one had any advance notice of any change in plans. However even I didn't know I wasn't coming until last week. I was really looking forward to being down at the cabin in the fall. However I still want to put in some fruit trees. Is there any way you could order them from a nursery and then let them have someone go down and get some day and plant them for me - I don't know what it would cost, or even if the nursery have anyone. I thought maybe I could get several and plant them at both cabins - peach, apple and plum and pear especially. Maybe get about a dozen and plant one or two of each kind at both cabins - how much does a tree cost? Do any of those types take special soil or anything. If we could get some planted now instead of later it would be better because who knows when I might get home again in the fall. esp if it is too much trouble, never mind - but it would be

need to have some trees there which would bear in a few years. I'm trying to think of some other news. Roy is back now - he had malaria in early August and that kept him out of work for about a month. He also ^{had} a couple of leg & heart problems but nothing serious. Better not tell Harriet because I don't know if she told her or not. I have been unusually healthy. I just ^{had} a physical 2 weeks ago. I have Lookworn again but that is nothing serious. No malaria for 1½ years now. I don't feel tired or anything like I used to feel last year. I thought I had lost weight but I weighed 143 which is about what I've weighed right along. My arms and wrists are shaking but that I think is mostly due to lack of exercise - lifting weight etc. I hope to get into a program soon - if I can ever get started - to do perhaps etc every morning and the then "spring things" I got at Sears last year. It just takes will power to get started. Got a letter from Bob Campbell last week but I lost the envelope with his address so I can't answer her.

Keep your eye open for the December Geographic. Bill Garrett, our editor was in Laos for a month doing a story on the Mekong River. He came to Sam Thong for 2 days. One day he flew up and met me at Hoaie Tong Kho - site 184 - where I was distributing refugee supplies. Then we went out in a Porter and filmed at C-46 dropping rice to some refugees. Since he was here primarily to do a story on the Mekong I don't know if he will mention Sam Thong or not. I understand that a man from Life is coming tomorrow but don't know if he is here yet.

5

(5)

Since I plan to stay until February I am going to take a 10 day vacation the first part of October. I mentioned the Burma visa. I have been reading a lot on the history of Thailand and Laos and really for the first time discovered how tied in Burma was - mostly was between Thailand and Burma. I read a couple of books on Burma and got all excited about going to Burma. However they don't like people to visit the country much, mostly because there is a fairly serious war going on in the country side, somewhat similar to Vietnam a few years ago, except that in Burma there are several ethnic groups - Shan, Kachins and Karen who form part of the Union of Burma. These different groups used to end up in their own countries - the Chinese Communists have backed some of the dissident groups. Some like the Kachins, were supported by the US in the 2nd world war, and then when Burma became independent, the US backed the Central junct. Many of the Karen, though it really wasn't US backing, but since we didn't help them, many turned to the Red Chinese.

Hey - sorry ~~so far~~ but I'd better stop - it's 2 days late since I started this. I'll continue later but I want to get this in the mail.

Anne

anne

9/25/68

9/25/68
23 Sept 68

Dear Dad,

Please excuse the page. At I am at Huie Hein Sa. Ls 215 on the map. The offensive to retake Sam Nuea Province is moving along pretty well. I have been spending most of my time up here to check on what is happening - also we have now about 731 refugees who have walked or been brought in by helicopter. Today we are going to distribute refugee supplies to them. Last week I went up about 2 miles from the North Vietnamese border to bury out 200 mes. If things can return to normal, it the way it was say before Jan 68. I hope to walk to walk into North Vietnam for a few minutes to say that I have been there! - Plane just landed with more refugee stuff.

I hope everyone understands why I did not come home when I was supposed to. One, Vietnam. Blaine Jensen was in D.C. last month and sent back some bad news. It is a sad fact that AID Vietnam is so screwed up that no one wants to go there and those people there who do try to do their jobs well are getting a sizable number. As a result, Viet nam is almost despondent (?) for qualified people. Joe Mendenhall, our former AID/Los Director is now a Head of some Vietnam section in D.C. Now, Blaine saw a lot of people in Los who were scheduled to be transferred to Vietnam after their present tour.

(2)

were up. My name was on the list for transport to V.N. The choice goes like this - either go to Vietnam or you can quit! They apparently don't care how bad they foul up someone else's program. In the past the liaison could demand a person's return to post, or guarantee a return - now they can't do this anymore. Even an acting director told "Pop" last week that he - the director - might have to go to Vietnam. So, I decided to stick around for a while and let 2 or 3 other guys go home first and test the situation! I have officially requested home leave for 3rd November. - Afraid that it won't be as nice as autumn but - Then the second reason is the present military situation in Sam Nuea. As you know when Dan was killed I took over Sam Nuea for USAID. I frankly just didn't want to leave Laos now when things were just beginning to get "hot" again. Then too, we were short one man at Sam Thong and there is no one who could take over up here, plus no one who knew Sam Nuea very well. "Pop" of course was up here, but that was a few years ago - Now he doesn't have the time to spend up here - I am up here most of the time, plus I don't know if he could physically stand it for a long period of time. In effect, I now have more time and experience, recently, in Sam Nuea, than anyone else - including the CBS people (2 of the 3 guys here have been in P.N. less than 6 months). So I just decided that work wise I must stay here.

About the money for Jon - Of course there is no problem. I said a long time ago I wanted help anytime. I have no idea now how much money I have anymore - I think the Park bonds are \$4000 is that correct? My savings in the Park and Treast are unknown to me - My checking account is probably overdrawn by now. I had a vacation in July plus some expenses in Vancouver last month. That is no problem but if you called I would like all total on what money, bonds etc I have as of now. Also, what are my monthly cheques now from \$10? I don't know how much you need or how soon or what amount. If possible I think the easiest they would be to just take my pay cheques and cash them when they come. This wouldn't involve taking any money out of the bank. If he needs a big lump sum - let's say \$1000 or so, draw it out. But I should think that the check or possibly even should hold ^{nm} equally if he has \$1000 from the summer to get started with. Before you might need any money in a pinch don't hesitate to use it for anything. Although Mom always denied it, when I entered college I thought it was the understanding that in return for all the money you and mother gave me, I would help you when he started. Don't think there should be any problem involved.

Send me a cheque for \$100. I will pay

and myself have to rent a house in Ventronne
 since ADL took our house away from us. We all
 have houses in Som Thong but ADL, under the table,
 gave 4 of us a house to stay in in Ventronne which we
 go down. Now, we have to rent our own house but
 ADL will provide the furniture, appliances, air conditioner etc
 for us free. It's a new little bungalow style house modified.
 A nice little lawn with flower trees etc. We had
 to ~~put~~ take a 6 month rent in advance. \$360 rent
 for 6 month (\$60 per month) - It's quite cheap by Ventronne
 American standards or the last real scalp American
 for rent. I wrote the total cheaper and the other 2 just
 an average one. So please deposit the check in my
 clearly account. Thanks.

Well I'm going to have to get to work now -
 its 0935 now. Will write again soon.

Love

Ernie.

P.S. give my love to everyone. I'll try to get some
 letter off as soon as soon. Sorry to hear about
 Grandad and Uncle John. They don't sound too
 good.

ernie.

OL
10/14/68
10 Oct 68

Dear Mom, : Dad.

Got a letter yesterday and decided I'd better write while I have a little time. I'm up at Hauk Hui Sa, (is 215 on the map) and the weather is bad. Damp, cold and foggy. It is 0830 and 2 planes have tried to land but couldn't due to the fog. One helicopter did get in but the weather was to bad to do any work any place so he left.

Not too much to write about that has happened lately. The Embassy called me Monday and said that Burma has finally approved my visit there. I am going to Ventiane tonight or tomorrow morning, I hope, to give them my passport to put the visa in. I'm real excited about going, but I don't know yet how long they will let me stay - nor do I know where the Burmese will let me go. There is a very quiet Communist-led war going on inside Burma which isn't much is said about. Their primary problem is much like ours - the country is one half non-Burman. The others are Karen, Kachins, Chins, Shans etc. When the British left Burma at the end of the 2nd War, the Union of Burma was formed comprising all these different groups. The Constitution said that any group would have the right to secede - but now these groups want autonomy and the govt says "No". The Communists have taken advantage of the ^{and Northern} situation as these groups are in the W-North East, close to

th than, less Red Chinese border. It's too bad because during WWII, when the OSS 101 group jumped into Burma they got their greatest supplies from the Kachins and Karsus. Now, when these groups asked the US to help them against Burma, we said no, and the only other place for them to appeal to was Red China. I can explain better when I get home.

I figure that my tour should end in Feb or March of 69. which would be too bad - I'll be home in late spring or early summer. Last week I got to thinking about school - I need French to continue as I asked to study French when I come home. That, would mean, if BIB approves, that I would get my home leave and then 6 weeks language training before returning to Lao. It wouldn't cost me anything and it would be a quick and very efficient way to learn French. The courses are run by the Foreign Service Institute and you have native French speakers as teachers - I think, as they are still the same, that each class has 6-8 students and you study 6-8 hours per day. I'd wait and see how things go.

I've been feeling pretty good lately. I did have some excepts last month - I spent the greater part of the past 3 weeks here at Hauai Hin Da. We have 2700 refugees who have moved in here. As the troops of Gen Vang Pao move into Sam Neua, the civilians start coming out. I'm trying to stop them or we want the civilians to stay where they are

so that the soldiers will have people to support them and also to help gather information on the enemy. We are trying to fight a guerilla war here and it can't be done if the civilians evacuate large areas. I've had to take choppers into some real bad areas to pick up people who had walked out of their original areas. Gen Vang Pao is now in the U.S. on a tour ~~but~~ when he comes back at the end of Oct I'm sure he is going to be mad that so many people have come into here. The week has been pretty quiet, but the 2 previous weeks were better. The enemy was attacking our position east of here and most of the neighbors ~~were~~ interrupted by an 105 howitzer (which is only a couple hundred feet from where I sleep?) and the planes bombing at night. Even though I wanted to come home in the autumn, I still feel that I made the correct decision to stay here. It would have been real tough for a new man to come to San Nua and work for the first time the way things are going. A year ago, no problem. But now when we are trying to recapture all that we lost in March - it would have been quite a job to try to learn the area and the people, especially as the CBS guys are brand new also.

Pop and I got together Sunday afternoon for the first time in maybe 2 years. I had gone to San Tham to rest for a day. Pop returned from Vientiane about noon and came down to my house about 2.

We sat around drinking beer until 6 - it was one the few times Pop has drunk much in the past 2-3 months. At 6 we went to Col. Chansom's house for dinner (and beer). That night we had a full eclipse of the moon. The Lao say a frog eats the moon so everyone has to fire a gun until the moon reappears. Well, a full eclipse takes a long time --. Pop was really awed by the eclipse. I was trying to eat and every 2 minutes Pop would drag me outside to see the eclipse. It was really smacked. There was a big Budakors festival that night so about 9 I decided to go to the festival. I had to follow Lin because he was too drunk to trust by himself. Finally got him to bed at mid night and my day of rest and relaxation was ruined.

I got a couple of good souvenirs. First was from some refugees. One is a Communist school book - the writing is bad but they took Lin and the Lao letters to write Mes. It has pictures etc. The second thing I was really pleased with was a Mao button that some Vietnamese soldier had given a refugee I've been trying to find one of them for over a year. It is really a good souvenir because I know it is really an original!

When we were near many refugee. Lot would our old Mes man came up and said he had run me 2 or 3 months before. I said I didn't think he

could have - He said yes, he saw one at Phatthalung
Then the plan that fell on March 10 I went to go
aboard. What he saw he was a Russian. We had had
reports before that 3 Russians and 3 Chinese, - notably,
a woman, had been in the area. I guess to him all
westerners look the same!'

Well, you did better than for now - Well
mail this in Vietnam.

Love

Steve

PS - POCs just was
called back from Vietnam -
They're not reported very bad
Am leaving now love

10/21/68 21 Oct. 68
10/21/68

Dear Mom & Dad.

Guess I haven't written for a couple of weeks - so here goes. Have been really busy the past month. I think I said before we are attempting to retrace much of the route that we took in March. I have been staying at Hanoi ⁴⁵²¹⁵ Hia Sac almost all the time. We have nearly 3000 refugees who have come in the past month - nearly 2000 arrived in 10 days! We have several hundred more in nearby areas which I am trying to keep in place to provide a base for guerrilla warfare - but I'm not winning: people keep trickling into Laos. General Vang Pao has been in the U.S. for the past month. He returned to Laos yesterday so I hope he can put a stop to the moves.

It's about 7:30 in the evening and things are fairly quiet. We've heard gun fire to the SW but they are too far away to worry anyone. There are a couple of airplanes circling overhead - the night bombing program is going fairly well and those guys are looking for targets. One attack plane is a C-130, while the matting has flares which they drop on the targets for the attack aircraft to see the target. One thing that really worries me is that if they cease bombing in Vietnam, they will stop in Laos also. However the Ambassador said last Thursday night we could expect more bombing here so... -

We had an operations officer meeting last Thursday and Friday in Vietnam. There are 6 or 7 of us. We met with the Ambassador and DCAS Thursday night. Everyone got drunk and it was quite a meeting!

I have been trying to gain weight lately without much success. Spending most of my time up here has been rough because we don't have any old villages to buy food from. Have been able to get small pigs and a few water buffaloes but no fresh vegetable. I have been leaving money at San Thony and our Mrs Secretary buy me vegetables and eggs and send them up by plane every couple of days. Last week Dr. Weldon came up here to Hanoi for the night and we were talking about weight. He suggested I supplement my diet with Metrical. I eat normally 2 meals a day up here - sometimes 3 when I have eggs which we eat at 0600 and 00 in the morning. Then in addition, he suggested I drink a couple of cans, as many as I can drink, each day. Dr said he used this method in the states for people who want to gain weight. I've been trying it about 4 days now. Will see what happens.

My visa for Burma was approved last week. I hope to go sometime in November. I ordered from Japan today a Canon movie camera. I hope it gets here before I leave. I also ordered a pair of binoculars from Japan as didn't get those from Sean. Has an zoom lens, and special gizmos that also help visibility in very dim light. My friends are all fouled up again as usual. Some time ago I asked for a complete list of where I have money - 2 savings account, clerking account and the PNB bonds. If possible please send the info to me. I'll bet Dad thinks I'm nuts. I thought last month was October as you know why I got a birthday card 4 weeks early.

I suppose by now you may have already read me

(3)

the book I ordered. In Vientiane last week a guy at USMMP went down to Thailand scrounged around the bars there and came up with several truck of old military stuff. Included were several pairs of the "Special Forces" type jungle boots used in Vietnam. So I got a pair of them but I can still always see the other if they fit. If not, I guess I can still return them, can't I?

Pop got a letter from the Spectrum last week and they said Pitsawat was marrying a Thai man who is studying in the U.S. Probably the best thing for her. As much as I liked her it would probably have been a mistake since both of us were as close to Dan as we were.

I fooled around this year and never registered for the election. Really make me mad. I'm not exactly crazy about Nixon, but I think Houghly has about as much statesmanship as a dead eel. What a jellyfish - a blah!!

The scare about ops officer maybe being sent to Vietnam has passed. Pop got a letter from Mr. Mendenhall - of Aid Personnel, now Dep. Director AID/Vietnam/Washington, who said that we - and he mentioned Win McCullum and myself - would not be sent to Vietnam, although he wished we would go!

Ok - be sure and check the Dec issue of National Geographic. The lead article is on Laos. Pop got a letter from Bill Garrott, as't editor of the NC. The article is not actually about Laos, but about the entire Mekong River. He said he wished he could do a whole article on Sam Thong - but I guess that's impossible. He went with me a couple of times so maybe!

(4)

might see a place or two that I work at. Also, we got a letter from the life guy. That article will appear the first & second week of November. I took that guy way up here in Sam Nuea while they photographed a pickup of refugees by helicopter. They took a few pictures of me with refugees and I'm sure at least my name will be mentioned somewhere. Any way, please airmail me a couple of copies also of life when the story breaks please. I know my last exploit as a celebrity in Vietnam. In April the BBC made a movie on Laos. The only 2 Americans in the movie were Wm and myself. - Wm talking on the radio to an airplane and an interview with me about the loss of Sam Nuea. We are called "the silent men of the CIA"!! When we met the Ambassador last week Wm and I were late. As we walked into the room we really got biffed. The Ambassador got up to shake hands and said "Well, I'm glad the silent CIA men could make it." There was some concern in Washington about me - in the interview I used the pronoun "WE" and not "THEY", meaning the RLG or "US" from. Of course I have denied & disavowed the attacks and all the trouble and to me it was we - Finally I guess Washington understood and said never mind - No mention of the CIA by, but of course that ^{wr.} struck the BBC and the US gov't couldn't blame us for the narration of the movie. Well - guess I will get ready for bed - I'm trying these new "open blends" they feel up small enough to fit me jocks. Weather is getting cold so I hope they work.

Bye for now
Tom

24 Oct 68

10/24/68

10/24/68

Dear Mom, Dad : Jim -

Is Jim over in Columbus now? If so, maybe you could send me his address. After being on the hills all summer does he ever go to Kingman? I am back up at Homic Hill again. Night before last there was a little attack (?) on the ridge-line east of the Sam Henry airstrip. Three soldiers wounded. It happened at 0300 hrs. I went back to Sam Henry yesterday afternoon in case there was any more trouble last night. Nothing happened and I tried to sleep in and rest because my nose was stopped up and I felt like I was getting a cold and sore throat. I got up about 0900 and about the same time "Pop" came in and said that there was trouble up here again - he didn't know exactly, but that Gen Vang Pao someone had phoned and wanted me back up here ASAP. So, here I am. The weather was very bad all day and we did not get any rice drop or ammos drop. We have enough rounds for the 105 howitzer to last tonight, only one of the enemy attack. Oh - I forgot. The trouble here was that 2 positions were lost to the enemy. They were only a few miles east of the airstrip here. Right now we have a few choppers circling overhead dropping flares. The weather is improving slightly and we can see the sky in some places. Watching the flares is rather scary (ap). The flares are being dropped above the clouds so before we see the flare, we see a faint glow like light filtering through a thin sheet of mother-of-pearl. Then the flare

7

(2)

finally pops through the clouds. I'm at about 4800 feet and there is a deep valley to the east. ground fog is coming up from the valley and when the lights reflect off the ground fog it really makes weird reflection and shadows. It looks like something out of a movie - maybe Shangra-la or something like that. - This is a good one - a young soldier just invited me to a wedding - at 10 tonight. No now 8:30!! I saw the negotiation this afternoon between the 2 families. They have a meddler - man handle the bargaining. Apparently everyone was agreed upon as to amount of silver bars, etc., except for the size of the pig to be killed? This is a Mos wedding. I'm pretty tired plus the fact we are expecting trouble, but I'll probably go down to the village for a little while.

I've been dressing metrical now for about 6 days. Feel pretty good. If I were somewhere stationary, where I could have a hand it would be no problem to have 3 meal per day and a can after each meal - to me it is no more filling than drinking a glass of milk. I've had to loosen my belt a notch, which not really when I was trying - must start some exercise soon. You I told you in the last letter about the life and geographic store.

As far as our other side is doing OK. Saw when they beat Northumb 45-21 last week. How is Newark doing? I was figuring on seeing an NFL game and no Browns game - oh well - what sports are played in March; April? My tour officially ends on 03 March. Pop should be coming home sometime about then also. Win McKeithen, who is also at Lam Hsien

Leave in late November for home leave. He is returning to the state via the Trans-Siberian Railway! It would be a very interesting trip from the Pacific coast to Moscow, has in Dec - It must be crazy. It must be cold as the devil at that time of year. After I go to Burma, my next attempt at travel will be Outer Mongolia - I also want to go to Nepal again and Sikkim and Buttan in Himalaya Mts. I really don't know what prompted the Outer Mongolian kick other than the fact almost no Americans have been there recently except Justice Douglas who had an article in the geographic a couple of years ago.

The AID budget was cut from \$50 million to \$47.3 million. I don't think the cut will hurt our program up here much, if at all. Don't spread this around, but 2 of our big items are airplanes and rice. The Dept of Defense is now buying rice for all paramilitary combatants and their dependents. All AID bags for now are refugees. Also ~~the~~ DOD pay for over 70% of the cost of all our aircraft and drop rice and haul our people and cargo.

Well, it is almost 9 I have to check my radio and the CTS says at No 10 day. Well try to send this down with a pilot tomorrow.

Bye for now

Say, see you.

P.S. Please tell everyone to forget about any ideas for Christmas presents. Essential things like clothes etc can get here cheaper than you'll ever mail them - and little non-essential things get lost, broken or stolen easily. I hate to tell Mary Ann and Joe

the but something happened to the ring they gave me. I finally
 managed to get off the gold band onyx ring I got in Jerusalem
 in 1962. I think in 6 years I had only taken it off twice. I
 started to wear the ring they gave me but then I started
 doing a little more rough field work and I was afraid of
 scratching it so I took it off and put in a small box when
 I was at Hanoi the Man, L3 III. When the enemy attacked us
 there on March 12, I was grabbing up my things as fast
 as possible because the shooting was going on just outside
 my little radio hut. In the confusion I either forgot the
 box or it dropped out of my backpack so I ran over to
 the cemetery because the next day I couldn't find it.
 It just doesn't pay to have a lot of valuable things around.
 If Sam Khay should ever be attacked, everything would
 have to be left behind because we would either be
 walking out or an evacuated with no cargo. Anything
 left in Vietnam runs the risk of getting stolen or destroyed
 if there should ever be any attack there or if there
 fighting in any camp attempt. So, it just doesn't pay to
 keep a lot of things. The only real valuable thing in Vietnam
 was a T228 tape deck and maybe \$100 worth of tapes. I
 have my Thai pottery in storage and I hope to ship them
 home soon. As Sam Khay I have a record player and all my
 records. The biggest loss would be my book collection.
 I have nearly \$1000 worth of books. The you don't remember
 you a certain % for personal belongings lost due to both
 after a natural disaster - flood in Dec in 1967 and Sam
 Khay wouldn't give it. Well must get a little sleep. Just checked on
 our Nakong. Cuz they still quiet. It's really good the

relationship we have in San Neua with the CIA. There are few places in the world - and even in does one or 2 or 3 places - where we can work together. The guys have so many regulations they have to follow. In instance, they are not allowed to RON anywhere in the north outside of Nakhon. Yet, me, as little old 110 man can RON anywhere! I think they appreciate the fact I can stay here and repair anything immediately - and they in turn make sure I have place ships etc up here and can help me out when I don't have a helicopter or plane to go somewhere. We've had very lucky because of the 9 guys who are all have been in San Neua, we have all gotten along pretty well. On the radio they just said they wanted me to come down to Nakhon tomorrow night - One guy sister send him a big box o stuff - odd things like deep strogs, canned corn etc and they have a case of canned French wine! Sometimes it is hard to believe we are out in the boondocks. I get 2 Bangkok newspapers and the Paris edition of the Herald-Tribune send from Vietnam so, late in the afternoon when I'm pretty much finished work and the place have left, here I am sitting on an armchair reading the Herald-Tribune, with maybe the 105 firing 200 feet away and a bunch of people who do not even have an alphabet or any form of written language (Mao) looking over my shoulder looking at the pictures!

Well good night.

ernie.

29 OCT 68

11/1/68

Dear Mom & Dad.

8pm Well, here I am, still at Hanoi Hin Da, the same place I wrote from last week. We are still here - although? The weather has really been bad the past 10 days. We have not had an airstrike in that time and it has been difficult for the choppers and Porters to drop ammo and rice to the outposts. Oh. I just got a letter from the draft board saying that SIC had not yet confirmed for the year that I am still employed by them. I sent the thing down to Vientiane and they are taking care of it. What a joke - to be drafted. I've probably seen more action here than the vast majority of guys in the Armed Forces, excepting many in Vietnam, especially after the Tet Offensive. I suppose someday, in some unforeseen situation today, that I will be accused of being some sort of draft-dodger for never having served during the "Vietnam War". This certainly couldn't have had a better deal than being in Germany when he was in the army. Oh well.

General Vang Pao has just changed his entire plan for Son La. This area up here is no longer the top priority. His new plan is to recapture the Huay Mooney area - on the map L1 #50. Enclosed is a plan of what is "going?" to happen. JP. He brought BV 29 (BV = battalions) - 200 men plus 570 additional SDC's (SDC's = "home guard type") for the planned attack. I think he is nervous, dead nervous, but he is in command.

(2)

The area Laos is going to attack has been held by the enemy for about 3 years. We have no agents or teams in there getting info, and no really friendly, receptive civilians there who might be relatives of any of the soldiers. Up here we have all those. Part of the reason we have been fairly successful up here is because the families of so many of our troops were cut off by the Vietnamese and could not escape. These guys had an incentive to fight. Oh well - I'll just wait and see. Maybe things will work out.

Not much else, really to write about. I keep saying that I will write to everyone, but somehow there don't seem to be enough hours in the day to get all my work down, let alone be able to write letters.

I'm in love again - ~~Actually~~ just since ~~had my eye on~~ for quite a while - ~~has the voice~~ of the government of ~~Xiang Khuan~~ - ~~of the last~~ ~~is the nice~~, ~~anyway~~. Everyone says he is. No teacher school of him though. But I'm not ~~in~~ ~~anyway~~ ~~red~~ ~~anyway~~ until I take ~~look at Burma!!~~

I mean the ~~rest~~ of Burma. I'm really interested in Burma and I hope to investigate possibilities of a "jail" there. If you think no one knows what the U.S. is doing in Laos, well, Burma must be something. Pop has told me to seriously inquire while I am there. Laos looks like a possible dead-end,

depending on how things go in Vietnam. With a definite peace here, we could sort of be out of a jam - a people like me would - so, keep the war going to protect my job!! - just kidding of course. (maths are either the dumbest creatures, or else the most immune to pain. One just flew into my candle, the lit on the candle and walked up to the top and stuck his finger in the flame. Then he lit on the end of my pen while I am still writing. His antenna was a crumpled and singed from the flame. Now ^{is} ~~is~~ flying back through the flame?). I am torn between 2 paths - one, of course to get the war ended ASAP and the other to stick it out until we have clearly won. I'm afraid a quick ending will be worse than Korea. At least then we didn't lose any of South Korea then. In South Vietnam we could lose the entire 9 yards. I just don't trust anything the Communists say or do. All you have to do is read anything written by Ho Chi Minh, Mao etc to realize that they only agree to something if they calculated they will be victorious in the long run. They are very patient people, politically wise, and very ruthless on the short run. I personally feel our bombing of North Vietnam is less brutal, more humane - even if civilians are killed - than the calculated, cold blooded terror the VAs perform. In Vietnam, many cases up

Here in North Laos and in parts of Thailand the Communists pick out village leaders, school teachers, government civilians or the village teacher etc for assassination - often accompanied by deliberate mutilation of the body or systematic torture of the victim. I think this is where the real "war crimes" are committed and not by bombing roads, canals, villages etc because every walking individual in N.VN is contributory to the war effort and the guy who peddles a bag of rice on a bicycle to a road to be picked up and sent to Laos or S. VN is as much an enemy as a soldier with an R.K. I suppose you may be a little upset about my views, I don't know - but if all those protestor in the US, including people like Sen McCathy, lived over here and saw how the Communists operate they might think different. People also forget we could damage N.VN more than we are by bombing the small dams and dykes that control water for the rice paddies. We could virtually wipe out the low lands by hitting the dykes. - & well enough rambling on for now. - (Thomai just came back)
 It is 9 in the evening and I'll think I'll get some sleep - I have 2 big days ahead with rice drops and distribution to 3000 people.

Bye for now., love
 eric

5.

30 OCT 68

Back again. Weather is bad so I thought I'd add a few more lines before a plane comes in. It is 0830 and we are fogged in. The air strip is 4700 ft above sea level and the clouds hang on the tops of the peaks above the strip - about 5300 ft, - and then about this time the valley fog rises and meets the clouds and we really get a mess! Last night was very quiet. I wish I knew what the enemy is up too.

Pop has been pretty good lately. He and I spent the night together at #346, about 2 weeks ago. He mentioned that he and I will be back in the states about the same time. His tour is up in Feb but I thought he had extended until May. I don't know. Rumors were 6 months ago - not rumors, because Pop himself told me - that he was not coming back to Laos after this tour. That time he told me that he wanted to return to Laos as a private citizen and work for Gen. Vang Pao. He said he wanted to be able to stay in any one village a week or two, or however long he wanted to stay. He was real serious - but then I told him that he would not be happy because he would have no power and no authority like he has now. If someone needed blankets or medicine or an airplane

to word a med evac or the soldier needed ammo he couldn't help them. I said I know you could never be happy in a situation like that. He thought awhile and decided I was right. He talks now or if he plans on coming back for 2 more years. Dr. Welden and his wife Dr. Moredy have signed up for 2 more years also. They are really outstanding! Either one will do anything they can to help. When I go to Vientiane I usually end up going to their house at least one evening for dinner and drinks and just sit around talking. Sometimes discussions last so early in the morning that I just stay in their guest room. Dr. is an old ex-Marine - there isn't a subject that he doesn't know something about and if he doesn't know he soon reads up on it. With the Weldens and Pop around for 2 more years things wouldn't be quite so bad. - I hope.

We are getting a new charge of leadership here. The head of CAS left a month ago and his replacement is just the opposite from him. The old guy, Shuck, just about revised the entire program. Wendenall, the old AID director is gone. So far no definite replacement but rumors are Charlie Mann - the director just before I arrived - may return. He has been in the Congo. It is also fairly definite according to Pop that Ambassador Sullivan will be replaced about of December by a former Ambassador to the Congo. (I've heard the CAS guy had also been in the Congo but I'm not sure)

Everyone would be extremely happy if Charlie Mann returned. I shudder just thinking about our policy in other countries if the screwed-up stupid CIA and Embassy officials here are any ~~thing~~ like those in other places. If so, the U.S. is really in a mess!

We are getting 6 rice drops today. I have here now 2844 refugees. Usually we space out the drops over the month. But since we have so many people plus 1100 soldiers, I had all the refugee rice dropped on one day for Oct. Now we are dropping 6 today and 6 tomorrow and that will take care of the refugees for November. After that we can space out the drops for the military. Keeping track of rice is a real headache up here. With the weather bad we often don't get the rice and ammo when we need it.

Can't think of much else now. I'm ~~still~~
~~waiting for the camera I ordered to arrive. Unfort-~~
~~unately, like everything the day, it's a change~~
~~from the old kind - it has a super 8 cartridge.~~
 The treads or something are different and you can't use the old projector like ours. When the camera arrives - if it arrives, as I ordered it from a military PX in Japan - I take some movies real quick to see how it works. I think I can find a projector one here to borrow and then I'll send the film home and you can buy me a

8

projector and see what is going on. Also the binoculars I ordered should be something - I hope they are worth the money - about the same price as those in the Sears catalogue. They have zoom lens from 7 to 12x15 power plus some kind of coated lens that are supposed to be good for dim light. Will have to wait and see.

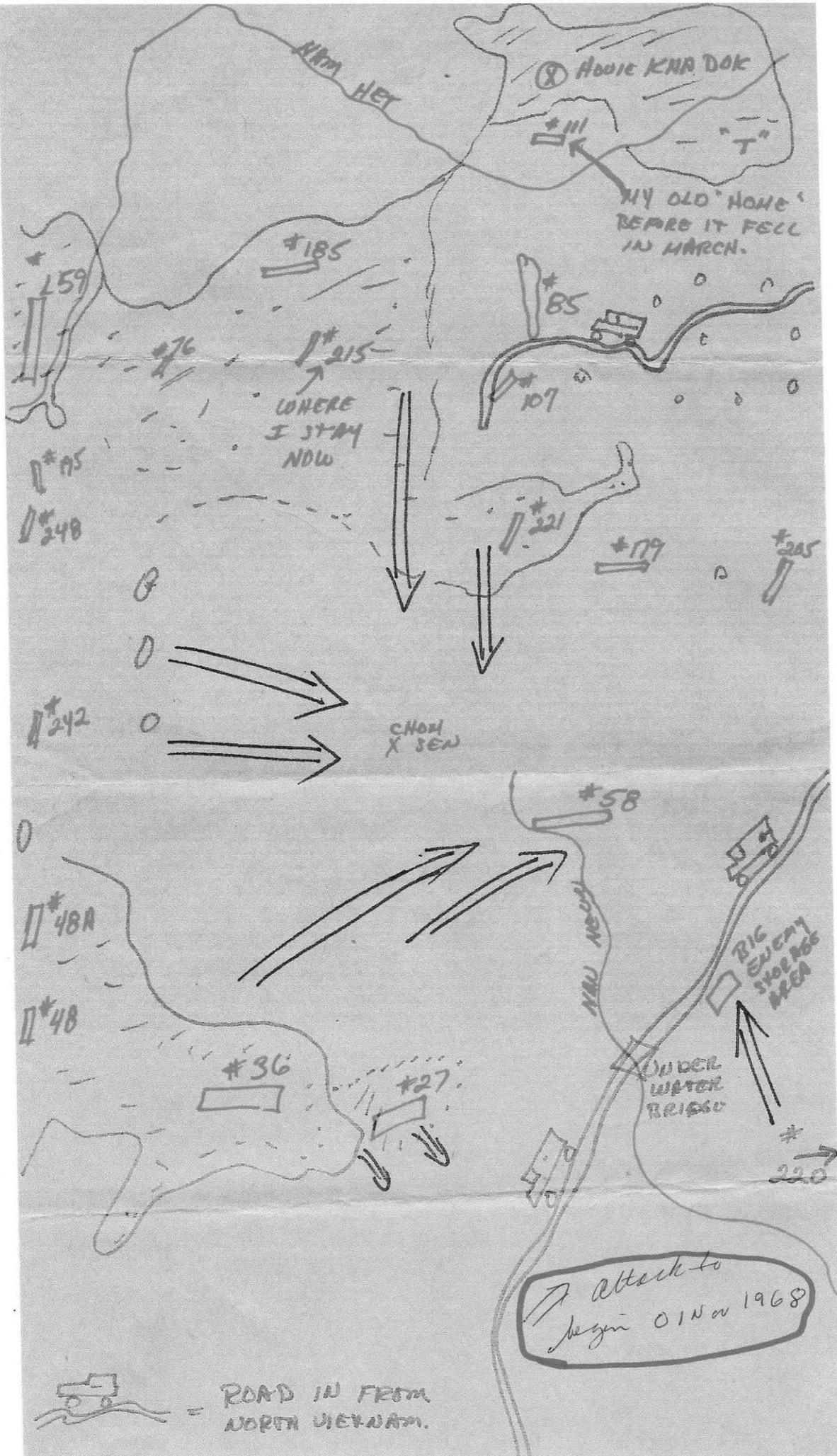
Weather is getting better. We've had 2 nice drops so far and I'm worried that we won't get them all in today.

Well - have to get back to work. Work soon.

Love

Ernie

01
NOV
1968



26 Nov 68

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim.

12/6/68

I'm out in the boondocks again so this is all the paper I have. Since this is the beginning of a couple of days of holiday - Thanksgiving it will probably be a while before you get this (first it has to reach Sam Thay, then on the road to Vientiane and then to the RPS) but I was afraid you might hear about the plane crash in Laos and be afraid I was on it. Anyway - an Air America C-46 crashed yesterday in south Laos, Savannakhet, and killed 22 or 23 people. Among the dead was the wife of our governor of Xiang Khouang Province. At the time I have no idea how many Americans were on board etc. But it did not occur in our area. Pop flew down to Savannakhet this morning and will return tomorrow. Anne, our secretary, wants me to come back in the morning to be with Pop when he returns. He usually goes off the deep end when someone he knows is killed. He usually stays drunk for 4 or 5 days - however Anne said that today he was fairly calm. He was really tragic because the governor had been in France for an operation (their eldest daughter just entered school in Switzerland) France in Oct - although she ~~had~~ spent most of her life in school there). About a week ago his younger, a doctor, died in Savannakhet. His wife went down immediately to arrange the funeral. The ~~governor~~ had just returned from France. Yesterday his wife and his sister - the wife of the governor of Champasak Prov - were on the plane returning to Vientiane when it crashed. She must have been maybe 45 or 50 and it is her wish that

(S)

I mentioned in one of my letters —

Things are moving pretty fast here. Gen Vang Pao has changed all the plan for his area. All the moved Le has been concentrating on the Houa Moony area (Ls. 58) and yesterday he decided on a quick attack on Pha Pha Thi, Ls. "85 - the big rock mountain that we lost in March when we moved out the 10-12,000 refugees. He moved 2 battalions around today and everyone is supposed to be on the attack tomorrow. We have had pretty good bombing coverage the past few days. We are getting what used to go to Vietnam I guess, not least some of it anyway.

Sam Thony is having a big Thanksgiving day dinner at Pop's house on Thursday. The acting director of 510/500 is supposed to be there. Should be quiet - but but of course somewhat subdued due to the crash. I know, however, that no one will have any home made rolls like gran makes.

~~I got the letter back and I'm sorry~~
~~now I've written a dog's ear before I realized they~~
~~were~~ ~~I should have said the last part is not~~
~~but I think they should be ok. What about the meat~~
~~and sweetshirt and glasses. We're~~ ~~for~~ ~~approaching~~
~~here in Nov 11 so~~ ~~and the meat is going to come in Dec~~
~~very soon.~~

~~I found that my son was in Vietnam~~
~~already with the rebels. Don't know if he's going to~~
~~bring him up which comes for Thanksgiving. I am really~~

(3)

angrier to try the movie camera. He is getting here just in time as that maybe I can get some good movie - on the extreme secret I mean - of the big attack at Phe Shie. I hope it's not too complicated. It has a zoom lens which you can use angle to telephoto electrically by merely pushing a small button etc. I am worried now about my trip to Burma. I had planned to go the first week of Dec but now I just can't get away until we either take Phe Shie or the operation comes to a standstill. Oh well -

~~Hey, do you know I'm this adult? Just~~
~~was thinking, what have you and I much in~~
~~as played the first round of golf together at that~~
~~little course we used to play on Twin one long ago.~~

I just found out something recently I didn't know. AIO will pay transportation for someone to return to the states if there is an emergency in the immediate family. I think it applies only to Parents and brother and sister, - grandparents I'm not real about. Anyway if anything should happen to anyone, call AIO/Washgtn or the Red Cross to contact me immediately.

I remembered a theft ring on the SOS about a month ago. If you or anyone sent me anything that I haven't mentioned let me know because many postage letters, etc were stolen.

Don't have much else for now - will write soon

love
ernei