

Monday - 9 Dec 68 - Camp Eagle

Today for the first time I met Major General Melvin Zais, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division. He is an impressive man. His radio Call Sign is Lucky Eagle. He says that the day he § assumed command of the 101st Airborne, he became the Luckiest Man Alive.

Thursday - 12 Dec 68 - Charlie Company

The French.

The angelus bells ring from all the catholic churches here in Viet Nam, and whenever I hear the bells, I pray the Angelus. The Church is probably the best contribution the French have left in Viet Nam, at least out here in the countryside. A lot of education, and care for orphans ~~comes~~ comes from nuns, and the church buildings themselves are the most permanent in the little villages. The French built six-sided concrete bunkers which we still use sometimes at our Fire Support Bases, and the U.S. Marines used them before we did. The French G.I.'s have left their mark in the faces of some of the Vietnamese orphans.

The touring cars and buses running between Hue and DaNang are French. The steam locomotive railroad running parallel to highway One must be French, Too. The French transliterated the Vietnamese language into Latin letters and left us many diacritical marks.

Monday - 23 Dec 68 - Camp Eagle

O Virgin of Virgins, how shall this be? (~~Eighth~~ Antiphon)

I think that no matter how the soldiers relate to the Vietnamese women here, they still long for their dear "round eyes", their dear American girls. I think this is good. We go wild at the few USO shows we can see, and the "round eyes" remind us of home. Even my occasional glance at the few Army nurses we have around here reminds me of home. Dear to the heart of many soldiers over here is the "Impossible Dream", and they desire to "love pure and chaste from afar".

I got a Christmas box from Jim and Pauline today. Then went to the little Vietnamese concession where we get our laundry done and get haircuts. I was waiting for a haircut and decided to open my box. I got the brown paper off and a couple of the Vietnamese girls who work in the shop spotted the red ribbon. I unwrapped the package, threw away the white paper, and gave the red ribbon to the girls. I gave them a little piece of the cheese that was in the box and they really liked it. But you should have seen how difficult it was for those girls, about 12 or 14 years old, to say "cheese". They just couldn't seem to wrap their lips, tongue and teeth around the word. But I'm sure one of the girls now wears a pretty red ribbon in her hair.

Friday - 27 Dec 68 - St John's Day - Camp Eagle

Today I participated in a Memorial Service for four soldiers who were killed in service. All the men from one company were assembled. I read the Epistle for a Requiem (I Thess 4:13 and following) and a Prayer. The chaplain assigned to the unit preached about Death. Then the company commander asked the men who had personally known the dead soldiers to write to their families. Then taps.

A soldier's most important tools stood as monuments. In front of the company, four clean M-16 rifles had been stuck in the dirt. Two clean jungle boots stood on the dirt where each rifle stuck. Each rifle butt sticking up in the air wore a steel pot with a clean camouflage cover. Silent clean monuments.