

Monday - 5 May 69 - In the jungle with Alpha

I am suffering from "méd-touritis" -- thinking more about going home than about the job I have to do here. I am now in the jungle with Alpha Company, a superb cure for the above mentioned disease. Today we walked for a couple of hours, wading in the clear, running water of a stream. As we walked up-stream, there came a cooling tropical rain storm. The jungle lightning and thunder put on quite a display, the crashing explosion of the thunder sounding like a massive display of aerial rocket artillery.

Today one of our platoon sergeants was killed by a sniper. One bullet. He had given me a can of beer about three hours before.

Tuesday - 6 May 69 - Alpha

By every power by heart and tongue
By act and deed thy praise be sung
Inflame with perfect love each sense
That others' souls may kindle thence. (office hymn)

I just sling my rucksack onto my back and walk thru the jungle like everybody else. Part of my job is to be here so that, because I am here, the men will remember to smile.

Thursday - 12 June 69 - In the jungle with Delta Company

This morning as we stopped for a rest along the trail, a soldier told me about his Korean wife. She and their four children live in Reno, Nevada. She is Buddhist. Each evening, she lights six sticks of incense and prays for each of her family and for herself.

This afternoon we got to our NDP (night defensive perimeter) about two o'clock and had plenty of time to set up our hooches. Today is the first time I have ever really used jungle vines to assist in tying my hooch up (a hooch is a little tent made with a poncho). I tied the ridgepole of my hooch to the two uprights with vines. They really work great!

Friday - 13 June 69 - In the jungle with Delta Company

It is a good thing I put up a good hooch last night. Because from about eight to nine o'clock, we got heavy rain. I had been carrying my usual six quarts of water from the day before, but was pretty short by this time. I gathered plenty of water and filled my canteens with a C-ration can just from the run-off from my poncho.

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Wednesday - 18 June 69 - TK

Long ago, Saint Benedict started communities of men who lived together for a purpose. Their purpose was a serious one -- work and worship. Each group of men, each monastery, was a self-sufficient unit. The men did everything together. They worked, studied, prayed, and ate together. Each man knew that many other men depended upon him to do his own work to the very best of his ability. Each man knew that if he did a sloppy job on his own part, he would not only insult himself, but also fail in his responsibility to others. Saint Benedict's motto for this whole way of life was: "To work is to pray."

We are here on serious business. This is not a game. At this moment, we are doing the most important job we have ever done in our lives. Like Saint Benedict's monks, each of us depends on each other soldier to do his job perfectly. I give you for your motto in this task, "To Soldier is to pray."

Thursday - 19 June - TK

Today is the first anniversary of one of the three greatest events in my life (the other being my wedding and my ordination as a priest). I graduated from Jump School one year ago today, making my fifth and qualifying jump with equipment. As I recall, I did not hit hard at all (I got dragged a ways on number four) on the fifth jump and got up yelling and screaming AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY like a blithering idiot. At the end of the ceremony, I recited the Blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you . . ." and I invited the 832 men in the graduating class to respond with a loud and thunderous airborne AMEN, which they did.

I am quite certain that I would not be here today in the 101st if I had not graduated from Jump School a year ago today.