

Wife, Shirley (517) 849-9044

SECOND LIEUTENANT JOHN E. STRAIT, INFANTRY
Executive Office USASF Detachment A-424
Civilian Irregular Defense Group Camp Dan-Nam
An-Phu District, Chau-Doc Province
Republic of South Vitenam
March 1966 thru 2 August 1966

John Strait was born in Jonesville, Michigan on 6 April 1935. He had 1 brother and 2 sisters. His family was lower middle class and lived in the country. He never got in a fistfight before he was in the Army. He enjoyed fishing, hunting, baseball & football. His greatest influence during his youth was Mr. Spotts, his High School Agriculture Teacher. He joined the Army in September 1953 and went thru basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

He went thru jump school at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in June 1954.

The adventure and challenge of Special Forces led him to volunteer, completing the NCO course in June 1962.

He graduated from Infantry OCS in February 1965.

He completed the Special Forces Officer Courses in March 1965

Prior to coming to An-Phu he was Asst Intel Sgt, 5th SFGA; Intel Sgt, 6th SFGA; and CO of A Det, 3rd SFGA.

He came from Co. C, 3rd SFGA to An-Phu.

=====

NEW POOP FOR BOOK

NUMBER TWO

[Taken from a tape cassette recorded by retired U.S. Army Major John E. Strait, of 3551 East Sterling Road, Jonesville, Michigan, 49250 {tel: (517) 849-9044} for the specific purpose of providing me with his recollections for use as I saw fit in my book "Dangerous Dan & The Bassac Bastards". Tape was received by me on 26 May 1988. *now lives at 668 Langes Drive, JONESVILLE MI 49250*

Note: Comments or clarification added by me (Dan Marvin) are printed in bold print

=====

My first impression of An-Phu in Mar 66 when I came in there - it was late in the afternoon - came from Chau-Doc the B Team - came up the Bassac by boat - as I came into the team area - nobody in the immediate house there and outside the house I heard a "clunk-clunk" and looked around and here's a Quartermaster Captain [Marvin] and a bunch of guys [team members] playing horseshoes.

You came around with a nice smile on your face and said

"How ya doing there?" I said "Good" and you said "Do you play horseshoes?" and I said "Well, a little bit", which I hadn't played too damn much - anyway - I got my ass beat.

I thought this can't be too bad an area here if they got time to play horseshoes and stuff. Then, not too long and you took me around the perimeter, showed me the positions and so forth and I was quite impressed with the way it was laid out and the claymores and firing sectors and so forth. Then we came back and there was the first realization that we were in a world of shit there... You took me in the command bunker and started showing me where all the demolitions switches are and how this one destroys the right one [corner machine gun bunker] and this one the left one and this destroys the command bunker and this one destroys every other damn thing. I took it right then that we was in a pretty damn rough spot and that maybe my first impression was kinda wrong.

Anyway, that night I had the honor of being the guard for the night. I didn't know what was I was supposed to do - you told me to go over [to the LLDB quarters] sometime during the night and get one of the LLDB people and have him go around the perimeter with me. So - I don't know what time it was - it was quite late at nite and I went out and grabbed a shotgun from the sergeant's wall and started around the perimeter. and I made it - no problem. Got the LLDB to go around - Lt Hahn went with me - the XO of the LLDB team. Everybody seemed to be awake and everything [alert] and I came back and went to put the shotgun in and checked the safety and everything and put it back up there on the nails and the damn thing fired right over into the dispensary - Normally there was a guy sleeping in that portion of the dispensary and the first thing - I went over there and looked to see if anybody was over there and to see who I'd killed you know and luckily nobody was in there.

So - I don't know how many damn thousand dollars worth of medicine I'd just blew to hell over there. Anyway, pretty soon you came over out there with a smile on your face and I thought "Jesus Christ, what am I gonna do now? You checked the weapon and found out that it had a faulty safety on it there - so I breathed a little easier after that.

But - that was my first impression of Dangerous Dan.

I have a lot of fond memories of An-Phu, especially the enlisted people there. I figured that we had the best in the whole Army - the cream of the crop! Some of their names I remember - like Woolley - I think he was a Spec 4 I believe he was a radio operator - I'm not sure and then Sgt Eleam - John Eleam - He was a commo man also - outstanding individual; and Sergeant Sirois - the medic there. They called him Bac-Si [Vietnamese for Doctor] One thing I remember about him, other than being an outstanding NCO - I think he was a buck Sergeant [actually a Sp5] at the time - that he was always talking about "God Damned Clitoris" here. Everytime you'd see him he'd be talking about one - I don't know if he ever got one or not, but he should.

Some of the outstanding Vietnamese that was there was - of course Major Phoi - which I later saw him in Can-Tho and it was 68 when I came thru and he was the IG there and we had quite a long chat and I always had a high regard for him and I will agree with you, Dan, that he probably was one of the most courageous Vietnamese and probably the most loyal Vietnamese over there. It was quite evident for that - what we could do every month on the payroll, where you could more or less give him the payroll and he'd pay the troops and what was left he brought back and you could figure it would be right to the damn penny and I would be awfully surprised if he did skim anything off - which you'd normally expect the Vietnamese to do. But I had all the confidence in the world in him. And I'm sorry to hear that he may be a prisoner of war in North Vietnam now.

The whole situation kinda saddened me the way that the Americans tried so long to get these people to be loyal to 'em and then - the ones that were - we turned our back on 'em and just left 'em there and you don't know how many really have been slaughtered - or what worse happened to 'em, and I just can't hardly have too much respect for God Damn politicians and the stratiticians that planned and conducted the withdrawl of the whole damn war like. And - I'll agree with you there - it was a pretty screwed up situation there. The way they - Johnson and some of the other politicians - that never cocked a cannon, but they called all the shots there. So much for that - I'm getting a little bit over my head - I'm still a grunt infantryman] at heart!

Another outstanding Vietnamese [interpreter] that I met over there - and he was up at the Phu-Hiep FOB most of the time there, I think he spent three weeks out of a month up there and we'd bring him in [to camp] and give him a week off. He was an extremely loyal and honest individual. "E" was his name - just "E" - He was a Hoa Hao and when I left An-Phu - he went to Tan-Chau [Another Special Forces CIDG Camp east of An-Phu] with me and spent a few months with me there. He'd go out on operations with me and was just like a shadow to me and when I left Tan-Chau I lost track of him. But I was talking to somebody at Tri-Ton the last time I was over there [1968] and said he'd went to ARVN and that he was an NCO and an interpreter there. I have no way of knowing this - one way or another - other than I was told that.

At the Phu-Hiep FOB that I talked about, it was less than a thousand meters from the Cambodian border and there was a pagoda there that the VC usually used as a forward operational base to attack us from. And we'd go up there - two Americans would go up and spend a week up there. The facilities weren't too bad there - they had cement bunker type things which you could get away from the elements. We had outstanding CIDG people and they had their families up there and got along real well and we had a little action up there every now and then. We had a 81 [mortar] up there and I'd scrounge whatever ammunition I could get with VT fuses - variable time - and I just loved those things and we'd fire H&I [harrassment & interdiction] fire throughout the nite with 'em.

At Phu-Hiep there's one incident I can remember - I'm not sure if it was John Eleam or Woolley or Sirois - I'm not sure - Anyway, one nite I went to fire H&Is there and I set the fuzes, dropped one down and the damn thing no more than cleared the muzzle and it fired off and whoever it was came out there like a God-darned mad bull and shouted "What the hell you trying to do, kill me?" I couldn't let on I was as scared as he was - I made an excuse about faulty ammunition and let it go at that. I don't know if it helped the situation anyway but that's the excuse I used.

Another incident I can remember in the camp there which is kinda hilarious now - but wasn't at the time - when we got an air drop of supplies and we went out there [to our drop zone - the smallest one in Vietnam - 60 x 180 meters] and we was waiting for it and they kicked the bundles out and one went right thru one of the Vietnamese barracks there. I guess it was ammunition. It's funny now thinking about it, but at the time it wasn't. [fortunately noone was hurt]

Another person that I worked quite close with was Mr Duc. He was the Ag agent [District Agricultural Chief]. He was an outstanding and hard working individual and tryed to get the farmers to use fertilizers and plant different crops besides the old sorry strain of rice there. And we finally got some IR8 rice in - I believe it came from the Phillipines - I'm not sure on that - it was pretty much standard thruout Vietnam, but we finally got him to raise some of it there. Another thing - probably the first in the area [actually the first corn crop in the Delta area] - from Guatemala - we got some corn seed and he got a farmer to plant corn up there, probably three quarters of an acre, and it came out fairly well. Nothing like in the States - we sure didn't get 150 bushels per acre or anything like that, but for the first crop, I think it was outstanding. At least we got something out of it.

Another incident I remember - I wrote home to my High School in Jonesville [Michigan] - to my Ag teacher and got a soil testing kit. I got the interpreters to translate it into Vietnamese and I took it over and gave it to Mr. Duc and he used it. I was talking with him a few months later and he had pretty good results from it. He was an outstanding individual and most of the people in An-Phu District were.

[29 May 66] Another incident that I remember. As a result of an H&I fire mission with the four deuce mortar one nite a short round hit a house in a village west of the camp and we got word that it'd killed a boy up there. Sirois and I went to the village and sure enough the darn round had hit the corner of a house and it blew this kid's head off and the mother wasn't too concerned about the kid - I mean - their belief is that if a body is detached from the head that the head will be wandering in eternity trying to get back to the body. If they don't have the whole body they don't have much respect for any of it. But it was awful hard to go and sympathize or empathize with a Mother that'd just lost her kid,

knowing that you had kids back in the States about the same age, and try to put yourself in their place and feel the pain as they would. And it's kinda hard to separate your personal feelings from your professional feelings when you can relate so closely as that. Which, on several incidents we had to.

[Apr 66] Another incident I remember - a small girl up at the Phu-Hiep FOB - You always favor a child - particularly there - that is kinda partial to you - you know - and this little girl was. She was the one, that everytime I'd come up there, she'd be the first one out to the boat to greet me and the last one to wave goodbye. She was probably 4, 5, 6 years old. Hard to tell the age of some of those little kids up there - but anyway, one day, back at the main camp, after they'd been mortared up there, they brought this girl in to camp dead. There wasn't a mark on her because she'd been killed by a concussion. Which, to me was worse, seeing that little girl there, with not a mark on her, than it'd been if I'd seen her tore up real badly. I took that kinda personal but nobody ever knew that.

Other incidences, out there which are kinda humorous. We were out there on an operation along the Cambodian border, maybe across - I'm not sure, but anyway - we was going across there and the Hoa Hao - I assume it's most of the Vietnamese custom - If they like you they show their affection by putting their arms around you or holding hands with you. Anyway, we was walking along the rice paddy on an operation, coming in, and this Vietnamese carrying a machine gun across his shoulder, which he was not much bigger than the machine gun, he came up and grabbed me by the hand and we was walking across the rice paddies hand-in-hand and boy, what if the people could see me now - walking across, fighting the war here, holding hands with one another here. There were several incidents like that and it was just their way of showing friendship.

Getting back to Phu-Hiep again at the Cambodian border. Several operations that we run from the FOB to and across the border and around our defensive area, we were constantly firing at the pagoda over there and we had intelligence reports that we caused quite a few casualties from up in there. Most of the incidents that we went across the border there - it was never reported - except as a routine operation, so anything official we never gave 'em the directions or anything like that. I believe the border violations at that time was called a code word "Nantucket". I don't know how damn many "Nantuckets" we had on us there but we was always in and out of the border and firing across the border.

As far as that assassination operation that you had, Dan, I was never officially told about anything like that. I know you'd mentioned once - I can't give you any time frame when it was - that you'd had a classified mission there and that's just about the end of it and I knew when you said that, I didn't want to get too damn involved in it. Like all things, if I was told to do something, I'd of done it. Maybe I'd given you a little hassle at first, but I'd always end up doing it.

I always figured that something like that was coming down - due to the fact you kept some intelligence from me, there was a change in training and some of the other things that were going on, but I didn't wanta get involved in it or question people too damn much because I didn't think it really involved me at the time. I'm not sure when you got the mission. But these people can doubt you, but my experience with you, damn it, if you said you had a mission you did. I don't doubt it - not one minute, which I don't know if it's any consolation to you. But I'm sure if you'd decided to carry it out, it would have gone and it would have been a success.

One thing, after thinking over, we sure as hell did a lot with very few people. I never realized that we never had a full team all the time I was there. And, now I can see why we were always meeting ourselves coming and going there. You was either going up to the FOB or you was coming back. And then, it was twice as bad when we manned two of 'em. That took 4 people away, so you maybe had 2 or 3 back at the main camp there, which was putting everthing pretty damn thin. You probably have the records of the miles of roads that we built up there in the District and also the number of schools and aid stations that was built there, which I think it was pretty darn good and the number that was accomplished. You know, basing that on other areas I was in, I don't know if you can say it was similar to that, but Tan-Chau was about as similar as you could get, we never accomplished as much civic action as we did in An-Phu District - and most the times we had more people on the other A Teams than we did at An-Phu on 424.

Another incident, which is kinda humorous now to think about it, is we had one sergeant there, I don't know what his name was, but anyway, it was reported back to his wife that he'd was killed in action and she almost passed out when she kept getting letters from him and finally she got the Red Cross to confirm that he was still breathing.

[SFC James A. Taylor - Our Team Sergeant]

Another incident with a guys wife - I believe it was a Spec 4 that was having trouble with his wife in Fayetteville and she wouldn't write to him and his morale was pretty damn low. So I told him - you go on and write a letter and I'll send it to my wife and have my wife personally take it to her. Anyway she did and I guess my wife got into all kind of trouble there about minding her own business and like that when she give it to the guy's wife. So, I don't know whatever happened to him. He wasn't in the team very long after that. He transferred somewhere else. I forgot what his name was now.

[Most likely SGT Didion, Medic - Only in camp 5+ weeks : 10 Mar thru 17 Apr 66]

I remember another incident. We had a team sergeant and like I say he wasn't there very long. He was drinking quite a little bit and he was drinking about any damn thing he could get his hands on there. Medical alcohol and what have you and one nite we needed him real bad and we couldn't get him [he was passed out and we

couldn't waken him]. I believe we had discussion about relieving him or not and you came up with the idea - which I thought was outstanding - that we just send him back to the B Team there because he was one of the old NCOs - He was just like a damn calvary horse - he'd been rid as far as he could ride there. He'd been in Vietnam I guess 5 years straight and he was just worn out. He was just at the end of his rope and he needed some time off. He needed to go back to the States and I'm not sure if he went back to the States or not - you may know more about that than I do. I remember you sent him back, without any derogatory remarks or anything like that, to get some rest.

[MSG Fox. Came as Team Sgt. I never used him in that capacity as I felt he'd seen too many days in country and had nerve problems.]

[June 66] I'm aware of that 9th Division Regiment that was going to come in and take the camp. I doubted at the time that they could. Those six companies we had - I think they'd be a match for that Vietnamese Regiment that didn't have any incentive to do anything. Our people did and they were well organized and trained and everything. So I had my doubts at the time that that regiment or even a division would have taking us. They'd had a heck of a time anyway. I'm just glad we never had to find out. General Quang - I remember when he came down and give 'em amnesty. It took the situation, which was gettin' kinda hairy all over - you could feel it within the troops there, and kinda eased things down for us.

An incident I remember about you - Two things that I remember. The first operation that I went on. You had your hat - we always called it the Dangerous Dan hat [Looked more like a Marine Corps camouflage cap with a medium length bill on it]. You had it made for you over there. Anyway, every operation I got the Dangerous Dan hat and put it on and wore it. Damned if it didn't work because I never did get a hole in it. So I figured that was a pretty lucky hat. I assume that you brought it back with you. [I donated it, along with a complete camouflage uniform to the Parachute Rigger Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia]

About the only time that I could get over on you there is, you being a Captain, Quartermaster, and I was a Lieutenant, Infantry, the Geneva Convention said that the senior combat officer would be in charge of prisoners - so I always made it a point to let you know - if we ever got captured - that I would be in charge and I think that's about the only way that I could ever get over on you. I don't think you lost too much sleep over it - I know I didn't.

Gettin' back to the politics and stuff - My definition of the CIA and the politicians versus the Special Forces missions and people are just like a damn condom - They use 'em and when they get thru using 'em they throw the damn things away. It's just about like they did on your operation [CIA assassination mission]. When they seen they couldn't use you or you balked, they discarded you and you'd play one heck of a time trying to prove it. Another example of that is what they're trying to do now with Ollie North which is just about similar to your situation.

[18 May 66] I remember one time when I believe we'd just got back from staying up at the Phu-Hiep FOB, and normally we'd come in and get cleaned up, and if we had time we'd go down to Chau-Doc for a coupla hours - a little I&I [intoxication & intercourse]. But anyway, that time it was different. We'd been getting quite a few intelligence reports about the VC buildup over in Cambodia, that they were building caskets and what have you. So we knew something was coming down pretty damn quick, but we didn't know exactly when. Anyway, I came back from the FOB and was getting ready to go down for an hour or so to Chau-Doc, and I'd no more than got in and you came out and says, "Get your stuff. You and Woolley's going out on ambush tonite." I said I'd just got back and you said, "That's all right, you can go down there when you come back." Anyway, I couldn't convince you that my sperm count was pretty high, and I got my stuff and we went up there and they trucked us up so far [Just above Phuoc-My Vvillage] and then we walked probably 3 or 4 miles across rice paddies getting to the ambush site [Phouc-Hoa Village], protecting a bridge there. You'd said that we'd had intelligence that they were going to attack Khanh-Binh and they were going to blow that bridge [at Phuoc-Hoa] to prevent the relief column from getting up there [to Khanh-Binh]. So anyway, we set up in position, and I don't know what time of nite it was, it was pretty damn late, and then all hell broke loose.

It was my first firefight and I was so God damned scared there I couldn't talk on the radio for a while. All of a sudden I started smelling shit, and I thought - Oh my God, I've shit my pants! Anyway, what had happened is some asshole, probably a VC, had taken a shit there and I'd set that radio right in it, and I had shit all over me. And if that wasn't one heck of a mess for the rest of the nite - smelling that, not knowing whose it was.

But, anyway the ambush went off successful. We killed 1 and captured 1 weapon. The weapon, for a while, was up at main headquarters in Nha-Trang. It was a BAR type weapon and one way to identify it was it had a scar where the round had hit right above the receiver and put a pretty damn good mark in it. And - I went thru the museum up at Fort Bragg a few years ago and I seen they had the same weapon up there, which I thought was quite amusing to see, knowing where it'd come from. Course we didn't get credit for it, like a lot of stuff we did we never got credit - whether it was good or whether it was bad.

But, anyway, at the ambush site after we chased them [VC Demolition Squad] off - we captured a weapon, killed one VC and got a pair of Goodyear sandals that somebody had run out of. Then we got a bunch of lanterns from the local population and put them all around the bridge so that we had it illuminated for the rest of the nite and we sat on it for the rest of the night and nothing more happened.

It was pretty close to that time - maybe a little later that we could hear all hell breaking loose up at Khanh-Binh. And there was green tracers and red tracers all over the place. First light we were on our way up there with the ambush platoon, I think it was a platoon, maybe a little better'n a platoon, but we were up there on foot. And then I remember you coming with the relief column. Don't know how close you come up on truck there, I believe it was a little bit beyond the bridge there, so we accomplished our mission and held the bridge for you.

And then you came in on the right side and I came in with the company that'd joined us on the left side into Khanh-Binh as the relief force, and I know by the time we hit there all hell was breaking loose again. They was getting recoilless rifle fire and mortar fire from the Cambodian outpost across the river from 'em. And I remember I had the radio and I was talking to the air support and you came up there and all of a sudden you grabbed me and pulled my ass down and just about that time a mortar round hit just a few feet away from us there - so I credit you with saving my ass right then. [0700 - 19 May 66] I didn't know at the time, as I was on the way down what was happening, but it didn't take me long to realize that one time you'd kicked my feet out from under me and I appreciate it.

After the attack on Khanh-Binh - I think they sustained 3 attacks [actually five attacks] by over a battalion of VC and those guys fought pretty damn valiantly up there and you could see in the trenches just how far the VC had come because that was where the bodies were laying. And there was incidents where the wives, when their husbands would get wounded or killed, just like the revolutionary war, the wife would pick up the weapon and by Golly they stayed right there and held the positions. I don't have the figures right now but I know they killed an awful lot of the VC out there. One thing that always astonished me, and I always figured the VC may've been doped up pretty good, on the southeast corner - was a machine gun position - and they had dead VC out in front of 'em and there were damn dead VC in back of 'em so you know they had to shoot 'em on the way back and they'd run right past the firing machine gun and just never pay any attention to it. I always figured they was just so damn doped up and they were instructed to go and fire until they dropped, and most of 'em did! And this is probably one of the first incidents in An-Phu when we were hit by both NVA and VC.

One picture I sent you is of a school that we built and it was such a nice school and after the third wave of attack it was pretty much in shambles. But I think right after the attack they started building it back and I guess they held school in it within just a few weeks after the attack.

Now I think from the school you could look across at the Cambodian Outpost.

During the attacks at Khanh-Binh we had armed helicopters and

I believe we had spooky up there. And we was trying to get them to fire at the outpost that we was getting fire from and I could not get them to fire across the border. They said that was in Cambodia and they couldn't violate the border. I tried to convince them we were getting the shit shot out of us from there. And, they said, "sorry." So I called the pilot a sonofabitch - I don't know if he was or not, but at that time I was pretty damn sure he was. And, it's just another incident where they [the VC] could fire across the darn border and all the politicians thought it was all right - but as soon as we wanted to go across [in self-defense or to retaliate] there they'd nix it. And I could never understand that, but we got our revenges little by little after that. Shortly after the attacks we established a full FOB there, depleting the team's strength in camp a little more because we had 2 Americans up there. So that's where we established residence for Lt Strait.

So I alternated from Khanh-Binh to Phu-Hiep to somewhere else, but I spent a lot of time up there. Just thinking back - it wasn't too bad, had good people up there and I had all the confidence in the world in the companies we had in all the FOBs. During the same time of the attack - just north of An-Phu - they hit an outpost pretty bad and the VIS cadre fought pretty bravely and they had a few casualties up there - of course they killed quite a few VC too and they let their number be counted. Just kinda shows you the loyalty and the kinda support we had from all the people in An-Phu District.

We had the VIS which did an outstanding job, both getting the information out to people - propaganda and what have you [med-evac and behind the lines help for trapped villagers]. We had excellent intelligence up there. One of the best organized intelligence network in all of Special Forces. Course - there'd be a lot of arguments on that. The National Police Chief at the time was quite instrumental in keeping the VC infiltration down. [in the Bassac & Chau-Doc river crossing areas] I worked quite close with him and he was very loyal. Like I said before - everybody was loyal.

The only one that I figured that shammed us pretty good was the VIS Chief. He was an intelligent guy. It seemed like every month we'd get the same number of leaflets dropped & I reported to the B Team that we were getting shammed and I was told "Mind your own business Lieutenant" and that's what I did. Everything he wanted he got with no questions. All I needed was receipts to cover my ass. [I was not informed of this problem initially]

The few times that I could count on being in camp would be about a week before payday and then for a few days afterwards because I'd have to go into Chau-Doc and get a whole darned mail bag full of piasters to pay the CIDG and to run the camp. Pay the cooks and the interpreters and what have you. At the end of every month I'd have to account for everything. I remember the first time I tried to reconcile the monthly funds I came out 1 piaster short so I went over and over it and I couldn't find it so I put a piaster in there like most good accountants would do and I went to

the B Team and they had a Chinese accountant there. He was one of those that used an abacus. I told him I was a piaster short and what I'd done and he went thru the whole thing. I was amazed at the speed he went thru the accounts with his abacus and it didn't take him long to find and show me the mistake I'd made. He zipped along and I thought even a calculator can't go that fast. Anytime I had a problem after that I'd go to him and he'd help me out.

Getting back to Khanh-Binh again - We kept the 81 mortar zeroed in on that Cambodian outpost and kept about a dozen rounds cut special and laying there so anytime they'd fire from there we'd just dump 'em on them - we never had to. We managed to get a few in near it before that but never hit the main outpost - just wanted them to know we were there.

Sirois was always talking about those eggs he ate. One time we were on an operation and I was hungrier than heck and I was ready for groceries. He gave me one and I thought I'd try one and I broke it open and the damn thing was rotten and that ended my trying to eat those damned hatched eggs.

They'd take an egg that was just about ready to hatch and they'd cook it and then slice the top off, peel it down and eat 'em with a little salt.

There was another Sergeant on the team that I just remembered - he was a commo sergeant - Johnson - and he went to Vinh-Gia I believe - south of Tri-ton in the mountains. [on 31 Jul 66 when he left An-Phu]

One thing - after the battles at Khanh-Binh in May - at the victory celebration - Woolley and I were awarded 2 of the 3 Vietnamese Cross of Gallantrys ever awarded in the history of the camp. I consider that one the higher honors of any medal that I'd got in Vietnam. I figured that was quite an honor for anybody and I appreciated it. [I was awarded the other one earlier in the year]

The father and son team that took care of all the maintenance were outstanding. They kept the generators, boat motors, water - everything going all the time. They were always there whenever we needed them and we never had anything broke down for long. The cook was another outstanding Vietnamese woman and an excellent cook.

Another individual I remember is the Cambodian houseboy we had. [his name was Win] Took care of barracks and everything. Old guy [72 years old] He was probably older than dirt - but worked every day - same time - always did an excellent job. One day we came back with some Chicom carbines and I handed him one and I asked him if he'd like me to take a picture and he got right down with the carbine and he knew what the hell to do with it so - he'd been around. Just kinda wonder what happened to people like that.

Another incident - one day coming back from Chau-Doc in

the boats. We had the VIS girl with us and she was a pretty good looking girl and I tried to get some of that - but I never did, but always thought I should - I gave it a boy scout try - anyway I was trying to impress her so I told her to run the boat and we was in the middle of the river and she hit that sonofabitch and it slipped out of her hand and all of us damn near went in the river. I never did tell you that incident but you damned near had an incident report on your hands.

Another thing was the way the rains would come up during the rainy season. All of a sudden it'd come and you couldn't see your hand in front of your face - it'd come down in buckets - and you couldn't see 3 or 4 feet in front of you and then it'd last just a few minutes and then it'd clear all up just like it'd never rained.

Sure glad I got a letter and a telephone call from you.

The NCOs we had there kind of screwed up my entire military career because they were so damned good - you didn't have to check on 'em and they did a good job. If the whole Army was like that there'd be no disciplinary problems whatsoever.

Sure be nice if we could get a hold of all of them.

That was an excellent foreword that Col Maggie wrote for you. I can see why you are damned proud of it. They were really choice words.

That newspaper article was a pretty good report on your book. It didn't say anything for you or against you I guess.

[end of tape]

ADDED ON 10 JUNE 88 - EXTRACTED FROM JOHN'S 6 JUNE TAPE

Glad to get your letter the other day with the order of battle on the map of An-Phu. They sure came after our asses - didn't they? I didn't realize there was that many elements there. I knew there was a couple, three battalions up to Khanh-Binh, but looks like there was four battalions plus in all those places up there. Almost unbelievable. We was lucky we didn't take any more casualties than we took.

Looking at the battle - do you realize - If we'd been in the 1st Division or something - we'd of got all kinds of medals, instead of just getting the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, which I considered quite great. I met quite a few fellows from the 1st Div and I think they'd just sneeze their damned head once and they'd get a Silver Star for it. And all we did was do our job and thats what we were expected to do. I'm not complaining.

Having such a small team I realized why I had to spend so much time in the FOBs. I was the best qualified and don't regret it.

[19 May] I remember some of the cross training Sirois used to give us in the team house. I spent quite a bit of time with him in the dispensary and picked up an awful lot of stuff [knowledge]. I was able to give IVs to people at Khanh-Binh - blood expander. I don't know how many pulled thru with that [all that he treated!], but I know the training he gave us was extra good and it helped me a lot in my other tours - in other camps - and even now I use it once in a while.

[10 Jun] About the CIA visit in June. I thought it was kind of a flimsy cover, because he [CIA man] came in [accompanied by a woman] and left her with me and said "You can talk to her - she's a radio reporter." But she never asked a damn thing - She just sat there and BS'd with us. I thought that was kinda crazy for a reporter. I kinda figured something was up there - but just kinda let it go. If you need somebody to back your story - damn it - I guess I could do it.

[Chapter 6] One thing that's important in any Special Forces operations is that CA and self-help and Psy Ops. Each team should have an officer and an enlisted man to do just that job. There's enough work to keep them going. It helps to keep rapport with the population. It really paid off for us in An-Phu. Self help was very important. Everything that was done by self help [the people doing it themselves - with assistance & funding by our team] would last because the people did it and they cared. If outsiders come in and just do it - it doesn't last because the people aren't involved and don't care about it.

[April] Another thing about going into an area like we were in - is respecting the people's customs and getting along with them. You knew how to get along with the Hoa Haos. If you're supposed to bow - or kneel - or whatever - you should do it. I remember one of our company commanders coming up to me and saying he liked me because I'd take my hat off when I went into the pagoda. He told me other Americans had not done that. Those things are really important.

[March] Another thing that was very important was preventative medicine and also not allowing anybody to mess around with any of the local females. I don't remember if you had it down as a policy - but I know that nobody on our team messed around. They all sowed their wild oats in Chau-Doc when they had a chance.

[March] Remembered relieving of the Mormon XO - didn't drink, didn't do anything.

[Chapt 6] One of the things that I did to establish rapport with the people was to, especially up to the FOBs, carry my camera and take lots of pictures of the kids, the families and stuff and the next time I'd go up to that FOB I'd take the pictures up and give 'em to them. They really enjoyed having their pictures taken and were really happy to have the pictures. They didn't have any cameras - so it was real special to them.

[27 Mar] About the second nite I was there we got word the VIS had killed a VC that was on the other side of the river and I asked if I could go with you and sure enough he was there and he sure didn't look very damn dangerous to me at the time - but I learned that alive they sure are!

You mentioned the other day about using a fictitious name for me. You sure got my permission to use my name and any incidents that you want. One thing about using real names it adds a little more authenticity to the story. I sure don't want any monetary reward for your books or anything like that. The only thing is I want you to become rich and famous so you can buy me a damn drink or two. Even if you don't get so rich and famous - you can still do that.

I can't think of anything else right now. I'll see you at the convention.

If I think of anything else I'll throw 'er on tape and send it to you.

Well, Dangerous Purple Perriwinkle Dan - I will see you.
(laughter) I like that - Purple Perriwinkle - I think it's appropriate.