

Dear Maxie

Love Letters from Vietnam

by Gary Canant

Experience Vietnam One Day at a Time
Reading instructions included

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Preface

I left Maxie to go to Vietnam on April 25, 1968. We had been married for 18 days; we are still married today and are still very much in love.

I arrived in Vietnam on May 19, 1968 (Ho Chi Minh's birthday) and returned to the world on January 14, 1969. I spent 240 days in Vietnam; it felt like an eternity.

Maxie experienced the war through my letters one day at a time until January 1969. On good days she would get a letter from me, on better days a couple of letters or pictures or some other tidbit from me. On bad days, no letter would arrive due to mail foul-ups, weather, or just luck. Sometimes the letters would get mixed up; I didn't date the letters and it would be difficult to sort out if the letters arrived out of order.

Unfortunately, her letters to me did not survive the war. The letters will not be in any particular order since I didn't date the letters; but that's ok since my tour in Vietnam did not have a story line: just a beginning and an end - the rest was a muddle in the middle.

Join us as we journey through a difficult time for our nation through the eyes of a Marine and his beautiful new wife. Somehow Maxie and I survived. Unfortunately, too many good people did not; this project is dedicated to the ones that never came home.

Semper Fi

Gary Canant

Dear Maxie
Love Letters from Vietnam



April 7th, 1968. I left for Vietnam 18 days later.

Dear Maxie Letters From Vietnam

The Letters



Dear Maxie
Love Letters from Vietnam
The Letters

Today

Dear Maxie,

. . . . There's a full moon out tonight. Seems funny that the moon shines the same over here as it does back in the states. Only lonelier. It's still beautiful and makes me miss you because I like to see beautiful things with you. No matter how much men fight, the moon still comes up and goes down, it still rains, the sun still shines only some guys don't get to see it anymore. It seems so useless – war in man made and peace is God made. Why do men fight? It really changes nothing. . . .

Love,

Gary

I want all the good things in life at once. I'm tired of being a nomad. Travel is ok, but not under these conditions. I sleep anywhere I can find, sometimes on the floor if I can't find anywhere else. Now I'll have a home to come home to, and a wife to look after me as a member of society. Wearing decent clothes and riding in a car with doors, having a bathroom in the house and eating what I want to – it all seems so unreal.

Day 0, Going Over 140 Days Left

Letter from Okinawa. Last letter before Vietnam

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

It's been quite a trip and quite a day. We arrived here in Okinawa after a 14 1/2 hour flight with a boring 2 hour layover in Hawaii. Did manage to get some sleep on the flights, and completely missed the 17th; it didn't exist.

We arrived here at 4 AM local time and started immediately on the paperwork. The rest of the day has been pretty useless. I am scheduled to leave for DaNang at 5:15 in the morning, which doesn't give me any time here to see the island - we can't leave the base anyway.

I stored some of my uniforms and probably won't use what I'm taking with me. They must be terribly hard up for people - they're rushing us through everything and shipping us out as soon as possible with the sergeants going first. Seems so fast that I left the States on the 16th and will be in Viet Nam on the 19th. That isn't giving us much time to fool around - especially when the 17th didn't exist. Should know my address and have my assignment within a couple of days so you can write me without having to worry about my mail being forwarded.

Let me know if you get your allotment check around the first of the month – if not I'll have to check on the paperwork.

I miss you, Maxie. I miss life and everything and yet I can't think about being away from you or the states too much or I won't be able to do my job. In a way, it's a lot easier when I'm busy like I have been for the past couple of days because I don't have time to really think and time seems to pass just a little faster. Hope that I'm kept busy in V.N. so that time will pass very fast till I can be with you.

I love you

Gary

P.S. The next letter I write will be from Viet Nam



Me reading **Catch 22**.
Good book to read
before going off to a
war.

Day 1
139 Days Left
First Letter from Vietnam

May 20
Dear Maxie,

Well, I got my desk job. Am working in a company office at Dong Ha, which is pretty close to the DMZ but behind the lines. It's pretty safe here, so don't worry about me. The only danger I have here is incoming artillery every now and then and we have pretty good trenches for that. Still beats being out in the bush with the rest and getting shot at.

The only thing that really bothers me here is the heat – it is HOT. It will take me quite a while to get used to the heat. I exist with a cup of warm water to sip on nearby. I don't know how hot it gets, but, I'm sweating how just sitting here writing a letter.

It's a little hard for me to eat much – I'll have to get used to being hot first and then I can start eating again. What I crave most is something cold – and it's almost impossible to find. Ice is worth more than money around here.

The outfit I'm working for has had quite a time out in the field. They've had a lot of guys killed or wounded in the past couple of days. I'm thankful that I get to stay back here which is pretty great compared to the front. There is a club which has cold beer and cokes if you get there first. There is also a P.X. that doesn't have much more than cigarettes. The guys out don't get anything and have a pretty hard time out there. It's a hot, dirty, mean war. Marines get hurt and some get killed. Seems like an awful place to die – halfway around the world from home but I guess it has to be done.



Home sweet home

Continued

Day 1
Continued
First Letter from Vietnam

I live in a tent with six other guys which is also the company office. They have bunkers dug to sleep in so we don't have to worry about incoming at night. Anyway I look at it, it beats the shit out of being up front and I'm thankful for that.

My Address is

L Company, 3rd Bn 4 Marines

3d Mar Div

FPO San Francisco 96602

All I can tell you now is that I miss you very much and that I love you. Hope the time will pass quickly so I can be home with you and out of here. I love you.

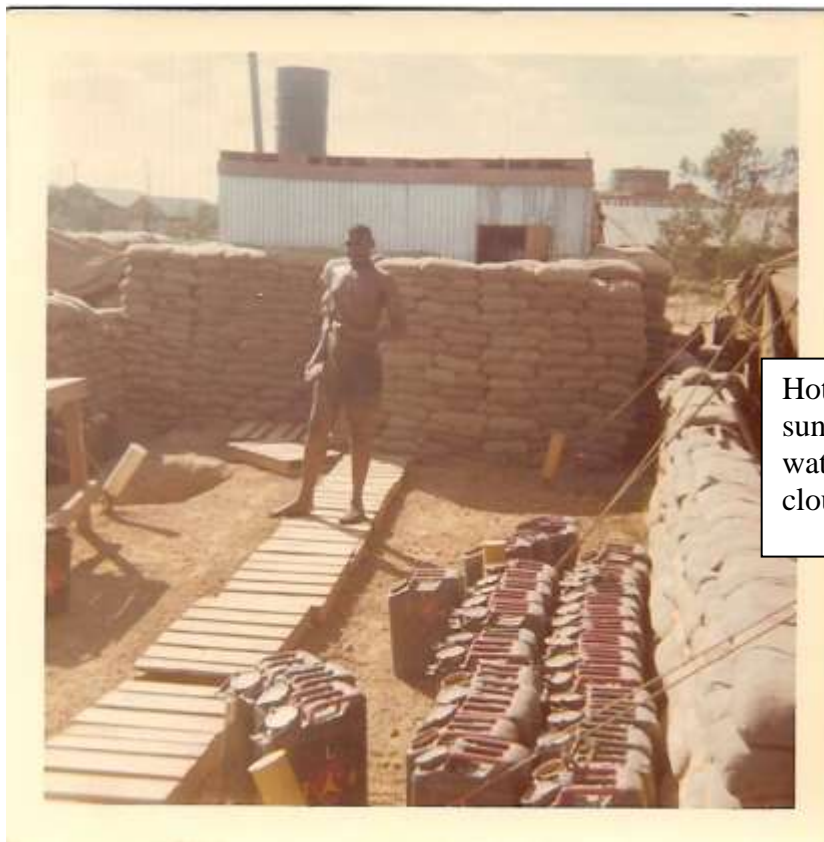
Yours

Gary

Day 2
138 Days Left
Taking shower and cooling off at night

May 20
Dear Maxie,

It's 9 P.M. now and this is the first time that I've been comfortable since I've been here. It's pretty nice at night after the sun goes down and it cools off. I just took a shower – you have to pour water in the barrel on the roof for water. You can't use too much water but just washing off feels so great. It's almost useless to take a shower before the sun goes down because I'd just get sweated up again. Am almost started getting used to the heat, not quite though. Doing the slightest chore or even walking during the day almost makes me sick it's so hot. Guess it'll take me a while and then I'll be ok.



Have been talking to some of the guys back from up front and they're having a hell of a time up there. They're on the DMZ near Khe Sanh. One thing I have to respect is that if a Marine gets killed or wounded they bring him back which sometimes takes some doing. It's amazing what they'll do just to get one guy back. I wonder if the Army does that.

As for what I need – I don't know what or where to begin. I could use a sheet to keep from sleeping on a blanket as hot as it is. I could also use some scotch or bourbon – but if you do send any put it in a plastic container so it won't get broken.

Continued

Day 2
Continued
Taking shower and cooling off at night

If you send any packages at all, make sure you pack them well in cans or something that won't break because sometimes they take a hell of a beating getting here. You could send a little thou to help my morale, but you might get kinda messed up in the mail.

Really, honey, I'm pretty lucky – maybe your praying helped out in getting me the desk job. Somebody's looking out for me. You don't have to worry about me too much cause I'll be staying here. Just keep praying and keep loving me. I love you and can't wait to be with you again. I miss you. This is no great life and I wouldn't want you to be here for anything. I just want to come home to you. Knowing that you are waiting makes it a lot easier. I love you.

Yours,

Gary

Day 3
137 Days Left
What am I doing here?

May 23

Dear Maxie,

What am I doing here?

I would have put down the day of the week instead of the day of the month except I'm not exactly sure what day of the week it is. Days run together here – everyday is the same, a working day, seven days a week. The only difference in days is that on Sunday we get a malaria pill. I hate to sound so depressed, but I am. It all seems so useless, such a bunch of crap. The guys seem so young and so gullible.

Have been looking at your wedding picture – I can't get over how beautiful you look. Sometimes it's hard to believe that I could be married to someone like you. It seems like a dream almost unreal. You look too fresh, like something from another world. I want to be with you so bad that I can almost taste it. I miss you, Maxie, more than anything or anyone that I've ever missed in my life. You know that it's hard for me to say what I feel, but this is one thing that I can say – I love you. It seems so simple but it says what I want to say. Just 3 words to express a flood of emotion. Seems almost trite – just three words, but they say so much and say exactly what I want to say. I know of no better way to say it. I love you. I love you. My cup runneth over with love. The song's playing on the radio and it says how I feel. It's unfair that two people could be so happy and then be taken apart. Yet it gives me so much to live for – to come back to – just to be with you is all the reason I need and more. I'll come back to you. I have to. I wonder if you feel the same way I do – no I don't wonder, I know you do. I love you.



My Maxie

Continued

Day 3
Continued
What am I doing here?

Today has been another day just like yesterday and just like tomorrow. I think that's the hardest thing to take, the sameness of the days. The heat, the same people with the same bull shit stories. Guys coming with problems – and some of them have some real problems, too. I have been thinking about becoming a lawyer just to help out some of these poor bastards. We had a guy come in today who lost the sight in one of his eyes and they're keeping him in the Corps and in Vietnam. I almost went buggy when I found out about it. What right do they have to keep a man here who has given one of his eyes to this green mother fucker. My G-d what else to expect him to do. If I have one aim in life, it would be to help guys like that to stand up for themselves and let someone know when they've done enough or more than their share. If I sound mad, I am, I'm burned up. I think it is the greatest injustice in the world to make a guy like that stay here when there are people in the States sitting on their fat asses who don't even go in the service and who could care less about the guys over here. It's a rotten war and a useless one in a way, but if we're going to fight it we should either be behind it or quit completely. Pardon me for getting so excited about it but I think it's such a waste and I hate it.

Really, hon, all I need is to be with you again and I'll be OK. It's just that being here gets me down. I can imagine how horrible my letters sound, but I have to tell someone how I feel. You're my wife and you should know my every thought and action whether good or bad.

I love you.
Gary

P.S. Read this letter over and it sounds horrible. Am going to send it anyway because it does express some of my feeling and I have to express them. In a way I hate to tell you things like this but I think it best that you should know. Forgive me if I've said anything to bother you. I love you and want you to share everything with me because you are me. Just never stop loving me.

Day 4
136 Days Left
Glad that we are married

23 May

Dear Maxie,

Forgive me if the letter I wrote earlier today sounds too depressing. At times I can't help it, hon. I get to thinking about being away from you and life and it's pretty hard to take. I was so happy being with you, especially after we were married, and leaving was like leaving everything. All I want now is to find some way to make the time pass faster so I can be back with you again.

One favor that I ask of you is call mom and let her know that I'm all right and working in an office. I will write to her later, but now you are the only one I feel that I can write to and say how I feel. I wouldn't want to write to her now as depressed as I am. I feel so much closer to you and feel that you are the only person that I can write to and say exactly what I feel. I do feel close to you – even though we're thousands of miles apart; I still feel that somehow we're together and that we're together in spirit if not in body. It's amazing how much I think about you now – seems like all the time. Could it be that I love you? Guess so.

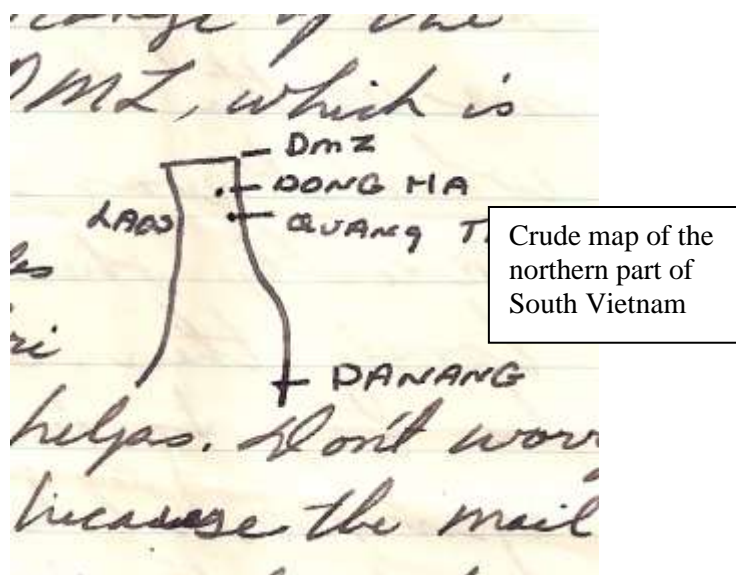
I so glad that that we got married before I came over here. I feel so much better knowing that I left a wife behind instead of a girl friend or even a fiancé. I feel good every time I say "I'm married" or "My Wife". I also feel good every time I tell someone that I'm Jewish. No matter what some people say – I think we did the right thing getting married when we did instead of waiting until I got back. For some reason I like the idea of going home to a wife.

Now it's nice and cool again. Everyone else has gone to the movie and it's quiet here for a change. It's kind of ironic that we even have movies here – war and all.

Maxie, I miss you terribly. I miss your kisses, your pulling the blanket off me, your being late and your love most of all. One thing that will never change while I'm away is my love for you – it can only grow. I'll love you for the rest of my life.

Yours,

Gary



Day 5
135 Days Left
Jets bombing near DMZ, The Club

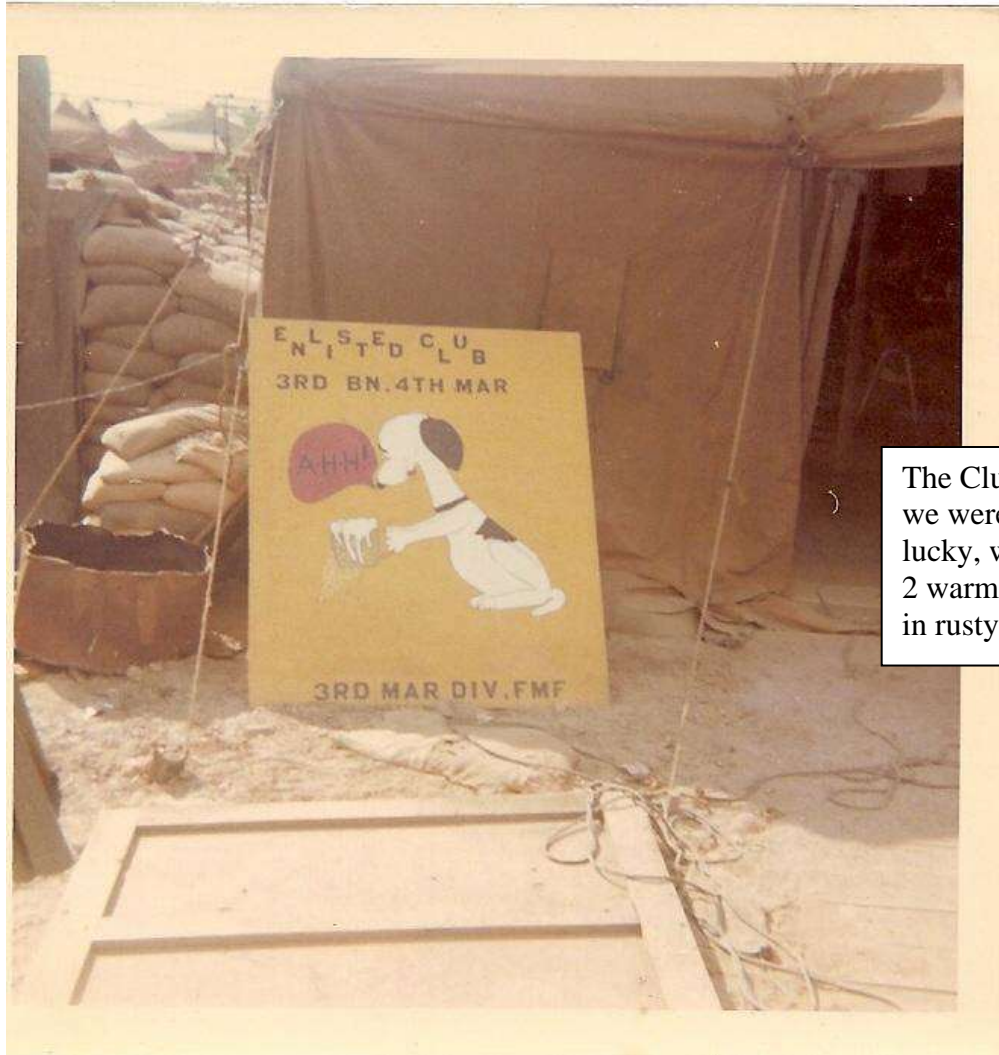
Sunday nite

Dear Maxie,

Today hasn't been too bad, we had the afternoon off. What a great place where we get one afternoon a week off. Still it was nice just to have a couple of extra hours. Didn't do too much because it was too hot to move this afternoon. I wonder if it'll get any hotter – don't see how it can.

Got together with another Florida boy and wrote Kath a letter. He's single and pretty decent and might be able to have a good time down there when he gets back from V.N. Besides I think Kath would kinda enjoy writing someone over here. What do you think?

Got to the club too late tonite to get any beer – guess it's all right to skip one night a week – even if it is Sunday. Did get to see a move but don't even remember the name of it. It isn't important anyway – just something to take my mind away from this place.



The Club. If we were lucky, we got 2 warm beers in rusty cans.

Continued

Day 5
Continued
Jets bombing near DMZ, The Club

Watched some jets bombing what must have been some NVA north toward the DMZ. They really dropped some stuff, but I don't think they knocked everything out because they were still shooting back when the jets quit. Seems funny that we can sit here and watch part of the war going on and even take pictures of it. What about the guys out there? With all the air, artillery and other things we have, this should have been over years ago instead of dragging on. Somebody's not doing something right.

I'm lonely, hon. I miss you very much. It's terribly hard being away from you just after I was starting to really get to love being with you. We've been together so little and in the last month I was home, I was really starting to get used to being with you. Is it as hard on you as it is on me? I know that I can't wait until this tour is over so I can get out of the Marine Corps and be back with you. I'll never leave again – if I go anywhere; you'll be going with me. That's a promise.

How are you doing with the car? Don't wreck and hurt yourself. I don't care so much about the car – I just don't want to see you get hurt. You're too pretty to bang up. Take care of yourself while I'm gone and look good when I get back. I can't promise that I won't lose weight over here because it's hard to eat much in this heat. Even if I do lose a little, you can put it back on me in short order. If you lose weight too, we can both put it back on – not too much, though, I don't want either of us to get fat. I could probably do it around you – you give me an appetite. Can't figure out why.

Still haven't gotten a letter from you yet and am about to go buggy. Please write me as often as possible, and I'll write you everyday. Have you been getting my letters pretty often now? I'll write.

Good nite – it's getting late. Wish that I could go to bed with you instead of by myself. I need someone to cuddle up to. I miss sleeping with you. I don't have anyone to pull the covers off me. (I don't use any, it's too hot here) Still I miss that almost most of all. By the way, I'm horny. Guess I will be for a while – about seven months yet. I'll wait. I love you.

Yours

Gary

P.S. Received any checks yet? They should be there by now.

Day 6
134 Days Left
Getting used to the heat

Wed.

Dear Maxie,

I'm starting to get used to the heat. At least I don't feel like I'm going to pass out all the time. The first couple of days really got to me here; now I've gotten my appetite back and can stand the heat pretty well. Still drink a lot of water, but not as much as before.

Am thankful that I have the job that I have. It's a lot better than what most of the guys have and now I'm started to get straightened out and used to the life here and it isn't too bad. It's still not like being with you, but it could be worse. I think your prayers could have helped a little, someone looked after me.

If there is anything you need or think we could use later on – let me know. I can either buy or order things pretty cheaply from here to send to you. I have been looking in a catalogue and seen some pretty nice things but can't decide what we need. As far as what I need – anything that won't get too messed up in the mail. Things like soups or other canned things would be great.

In case you wonder what the spots are – it's rain. We've just had a little shower and I sat out here though it. It really feels nice and cool. The nicest times here are the evenings when it's cool and quiet. It's funny – I'm one of the only guys in the office who's married and who has that much to look forward to back in the states. One of the guys even wants to go back up to the front and fight. I think he's crazy as hell. Having you to come home to, I could care if I never see combat as long as I see you again. You are what I live for and seeing you is my goal and what keeps me going. I think and talk about you a lot. You are me and for you I'll come home and live. I could want nothing more than to be with you now. I could be happy anywhere with you as long as you are happy. Even here except that you wouldn't like it and I wouldn't want you to be here anyway. Still knowing that you care makes this place a little more livable. Thank you.

It's so peaceful and quiet now that it's hard to realize that there's a war going on. Every now and then there's a helicopter or outgoing artillery to keep me from forgetting. War or no war the sun still rises and sets, the clouds still pass and the world goes on. Sometimes it seems so useless. What a waste. Guess I shouldn't think about it and do my job; but it's hard at times like this.

Better close before I get too depressed.

No matter what happens, I still love you with all my heart and live just for the time that we can be one again.

Love

Gary

Day 7
133 Days Left
Have been apart for a month. Just another boring day

Wed

Dear Maxie,

We've been apart for over a month. Seems like a lot longer than that. Seven more to go – I hope that they'll pass a lot faster than the past month. I miss you, Maxie. It's been a long time since I've kissed you, held you, been able to be myself.

Today has been a quiet day today. Just another boring day. A letter from you would make it so much better, but my mail hasn't started coming in yet. Wonder how long it takes for me to get mail here. Seems like it's been a lifetime since I've heard from you. Surely I should get a letter soon – real soon.

Nothing new today – except that I still miss you very much. Wrote mother and dad last night and told them what it's like here. Guess I should write them more, but most of the time you're the only one I feel like writing to. Usually I'm so depressed over here that you are the only person I think about and can write to. It was a little better last night because I had gotten back from the road sweep – it rained and was a little cooler.

Better close before I get too depressed. Everything's ok. Will write regularly – I promise. Please write.

I love you.

Yours

Gary

Sometimes it was just another boring day. There too many of them.

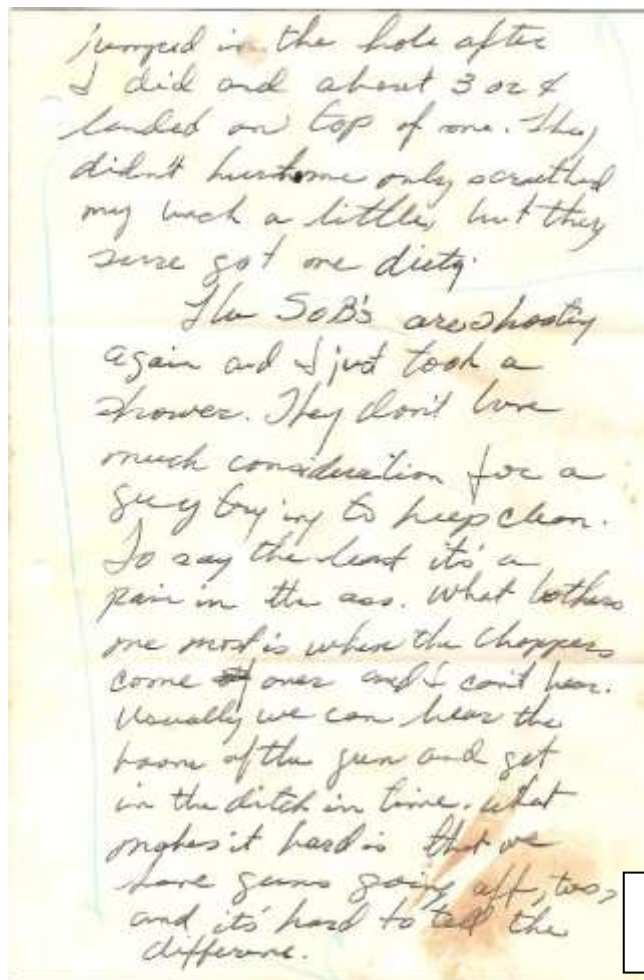
Day 8
132 Days Left
New guys and incoming, FNG

Monday

Dear Maxie,

It's early yet, but I'd better write now because I probably won't have a chance later. I've got reactionary tonight and road sweep in the morning and will probably be busy. Hope that we don't run into anything tomorrow – it's supposed to be a pretty safe run.

Had quite an exciting day today. Went over to pick up some new guys when some incoming came in – the first we've had in about a week. The first couple of rounds were pretty close – they got an oil dump. The new guys jumped in the hole after I did and about 3 or 4 landed on top of me. They didn't hurt me only scratched my back a little but they sure got me dirty.



Genuine
Vietnam dirt

The SOB's are shooting again and I just took a shower. They don't have much consideration for a guy trying to keep clean. To say the least it's a pain in the ass. What bothers me most is when the choppers come over and I can't hear. Usually we can hear the boom of the gun and get in the ditch in time. What makes it hard is that we have guns going off, too, and it's hard to tell the difference.

Continued

Day 8
Continued
New guys and incoming, FNG

I'll be glad when this tour's over. I'm pretty calm now but if they keep doing this when I start getting short, it could make me nervous. One of the new guys was shaking like crazy and saying his hail-marys – I don't blame him if this is his welcome.

Don't worry about me, hon. This doesn't happen that much and we're pretty well protected here. There are rumors that we'd be leaving soon to go on ships and maybe to Okinawa for a while. Even though I hate ships, it'll be a relief.

Damn I miss you, Maxie. This place gets me down. I'd much rather be with you – wow!. What an understatement. Sleeping with you certainly beats being alone. I'll be so happy when I can be with you again.

Still haven't gotten a letter from you yet – this damn mail service. Would be nice to bet some mail. Hope everything's all right back there. I think that's about the hardest part now – not getting mail. It's been almost a week and a half since I got a letter from you – since I left Calif. That's a long time not to hear anything. Will be so glad when I hear from you so I'll know if everything's ok.

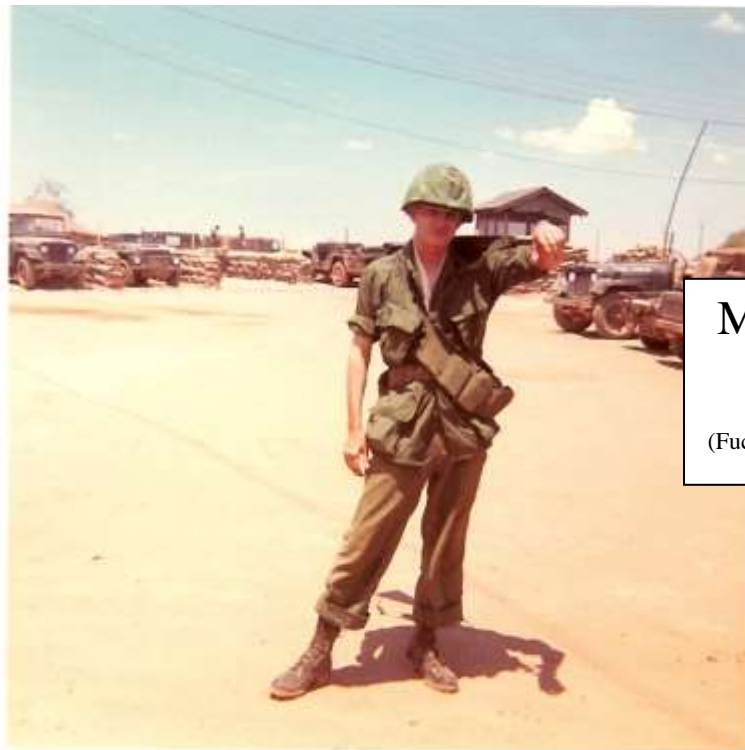
Gotta to – it's almost time to go on duty.

I love you –forever.

Gary

PS. Sorry the paper's dirty. Damn Gooks

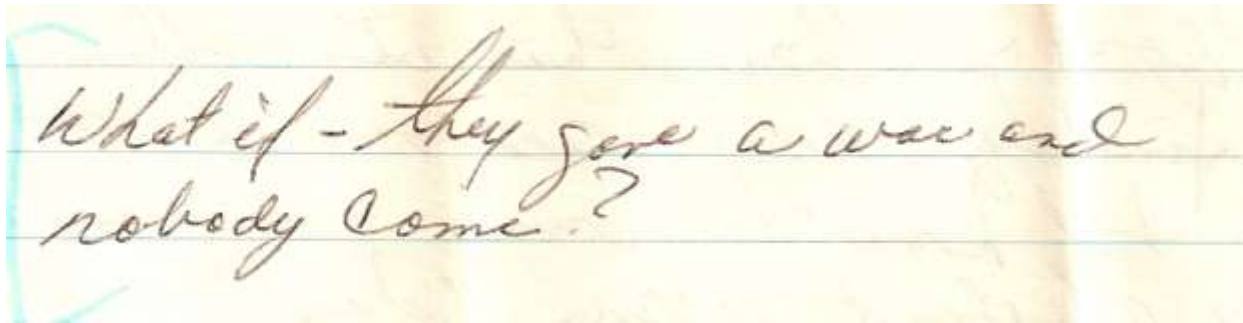
Send some baggies to put my wallet in and some film for an instamatic 104.



Me as an
FNG

(Fucking New Guy)

Day 9
131 Days Left
What if they gave a war and nobody came?



What if - they gave a war and nobody came?

To me, war was the sound of an artillery round tearing the air as it went over. It was the bushes that began to move in my mind on a dark night during guard duty. It was chain smoking in the trenches while the ammo dump blew for hours. It was the rocket that missed us and hit a tent near ours and killed four guys whose only crime was walking around in the wrong place. It was a random, impersonal thing that went on all around me until my tour was over and I could go home. It was one of my friends who never came back, and I had to type a condolence letter to his parents. It was heat and cold, dust and mud, anger and loneliness, and always wondering why we were there in the first place.

Day 10
130 Days Left
Road Sweep

Tuesday (I think)

Dear Maxie,

Had quite a day today. Went on two road sweeps and didn't get back until about 2 PM. What we do is go open up a road, checking for mines and enemy in the area. Our first one was to Cam Lo, we didn't find anything but did a hell of a lot of walking. The second one was up north through a pretty bombed out area. They found a couple of mines, one pretty big. Wonder what it would have done to one of the tanks if it had hit it. Didn't see any enemy troops which I'm thankful for. Did get to see a lot of Vietnamese and how they live. They're real friendly and seem unconcerned that there's a war going. Our artillery would go off and they wouldn't even bat an eye. Guess they get used to this sort of thing. I'm a little jumpy and would jump anytime I heard a boom. One thing – when there are plenty of civilians out, there usually isn't too much danger. When they're not out is the time to start worrying. They know when something will happen and get the hell out of the area. I don't blame them.



The kids rode on the backs of the water buffalo and treated them like family pets. The buffalo had a reputation for attacking Americans. The common explanation was that the natives ate fish and we ate meat, and the water buffalo could tell the difference by smell. For whatever reason, we were very afraid of the water buffalo.

Haven't gotten any mail yet and am starting to get worried. I guess it's normal to have to wait this long for the first letter – but I'd sure like to hear from you soon. I'd feel a lot better just to hear that you're ok and still love me. I love you, hon, and need to hear from you to keep my morale up. I need to hear you say that you're still there.

It's raining now. It started just after I got back this afternoon and has been raining ever since. It rained hard at first and I took a shower in it. It felt so good and cool. I was pretty dirty and hot from the road sweep and being clean and cool really felt good.

Continued

Day 10
Continued
Road Sweep

Do you miss you like I miss you? I miss you, Maxie, more than I ever have. I would like to just hold you now. Just to touch you and be with you is all that I long for.

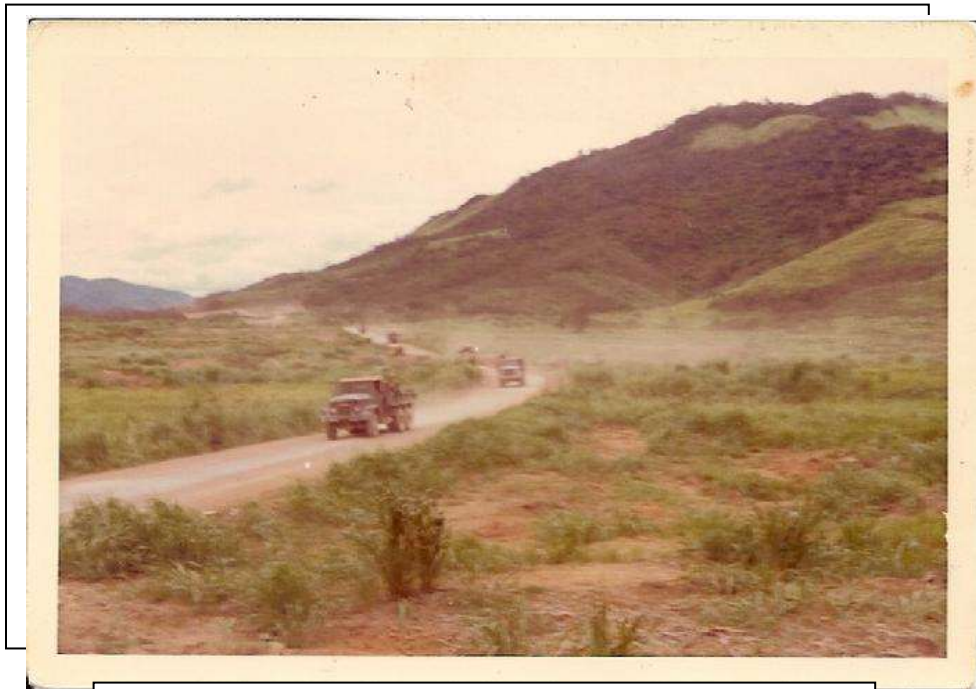
I love you.

Did I tell you that I wrote to Jax State about the school cut. I should get an answer back in a couple of weeks and may need for you to send the Permit to Register in, but don't unless I write and tell you to because they may not need it. If all goes through, I should be leaving here by Dec 20 – I hope – I hope. Can't wait to be with you again.

Write – please. My Love

Yours

Gary



This road looks like it needs a good sweeping. Highway 9 somewhere between Cam Lo and the Rock Pile

Day 11
129 Days Left
NVA's not Jewish, incoming on the Sabbath

June 7

Dear Maxie,

Today makes exactly two months that we've been married. It seems so unfair that we should be apart now – it's too soon. We should be together and happy instead of half a world away from each other because of war that no one wants. A young bride should be with her husband instead of sitting home at her parents' house by herself. We should be starting a home now and planning for the future and having our little fights and making up and getting to know each other, and laughing and crying and trying to decide what color the toilet paper should be. Writing letters is no way to start a life together. At least now the sharp pain is almost gone – now it's just a dull ache that won't go away. It's like I'm not all here, like I left part of me behind – and I did. You have my heart – I'm here in body but not in spirit. I left my heart and love with you and I feel empty now. I'm just here. You are my love.

It's a bad night – it was hot all day – and humid – and now it's starting to rain so there's no movie to pass the time. Didn't even go to the club – have only been there one time this week and had only about three beers then. I don't even feel like eating now. Time is just here – without a calendar, I wouldn't even know what day of the week it is. In a way it's good to forget the time because then it sneaks up on me and before I know it; it's the end of a week again – for what it's worth. So what if it's Friday night, it makes no difference. It's the Sabbath, but I still have to work. I wish that there was another Jew around – at least then we'd have 1/5 of a minion. It's hard and lonely being the only Jew. The one I met has already gone back to his unit. Wish I

Got incoming – can't later.

Am down in a hole now – writing by candlelight. It started getting a little too close to suit me. Still pretty far away – about ½ mile, but I don't like to take chances. It's a good night for it – real cloudy. Hope they stop that madness. Guess I'll sleep in a bunker tonite, even though I hate to because it's so cramped. It's safer. One thing for sure – they're not Jewish – they don't have any respect for the Sabbath.

You asked me if I pray – yes. Not Long. All I ask for is to come back to you safe and sound. We have so much to live for and I ask so little. Just to be with you again. When I get back I want to go to services, but more than that, I want to make a good Jewish home. I believe that a good home is worth more than anything else. We'll have a good one – because we have love. We need other things, too, but that's the basis.

Guess I'll go to sleep now. I'll think about you as I fall asleep and dream of you and long to be with you. I love you.

Forever,

Gary

Day 12
128 Days Left
Vietnamese. K Company hit, Cookout

Wed

Dear Maxie,

Gee the mail service is funny here. Yesterday I got three letters from you and today I got none. I don't know how they work it, but I with they'd get it straightened out. Still haven't gotten that back mail – was talking to one guy in the office who said that it took 6 weeks for his to catch up with him. It's a bad day when I don't hear. If it seem like I live for your letters – I do. It's the only thing I have to live for here. Knowing that you're waiting for me and love me makes me keep going because I know that I have someone great to come home to.

Today was another normal day. Took a trip to Quang Tri – about 10 miles south of here to try to do some paper work and accomplished exactly nothing. At least it was a break from the routine even if it was dirty and hot. Trips are pretty slow over here because the roads are bad and the traffic is weird. The Vietnamese travel around in funny looking, small busses with people packed in and hanging out the back. I got a picture of one – hope it turns out. Every one up here seems so poor. They all farm, but I haven't seen anything like a tractor here. They all plow with water buffalo and work the paddies by hand. So many of the buildings are shacks and a lot of the ones that aren't are bombed out. The U.S. is going to be so beautiful when I get back. It's going to be so great to talk to someone who really understands English and isn't in the service. The people in the ville – where I get my laundry speak a sort of English that sounds like a parrot talking. Gee, I'll be glad to get back.

The movie tonight was horrible – I left halfway through it. I don't even know what the name of it was and don't even care.

We had a cook out tonight. We got some dehydrated steaks and cooked them out back. They were pretty good and I ate about 6. It's a shame we don't have anything to go with them. I'm dying for a green salad, fresh fruit and vegetables. Such things are impossible to get over here unless you're a General. Have been talking to some of the guys that have been down to Da Nang. They live like kings down there. It's almost like being in the states there. They have air conditioning, ice cream, good chow, no incoming and decent living quarters and even USO shows. They're afraid to come up here – I guess. Anyway, I haven't seen one up here or even heard of one. Guess it's hard being away anywhere a person is. It still seems unfair for some people – our people in the bush – to do all of the fighting and for others to do nothing and still bitch. Guess it just the way it goes. The next company – K – really got it bad today out in the field. They went almost to the border of Laos and ran into a bunch of dug in NVA. They had 5 killed, 2 missing and good many wounded. Seems such a waste. Does anyone back in the states really care about this war? I know I don't as far as I'm concerned they could pull everyone out of this country and leave. It seems such a waste to have guys killed and messed up for life over such a stinking war that nobody wants.

Continued

Day 12
Continued
Vietnamese. K Company hit, Cookout

Enough of that – how's everything going back there? I feel like I'm missing so much. I'd love to be able to talk to you without having to wait 10 days for an answer. Just talking to you will be great. I miss you. I love you.

Yours,

Gary

Excuse the paper being dirty. It's humid and I'm sweating. I'll go take a shower and see if that helps. I shouldn't sweat at night but I am.



Full at last! Full at last!
We had to steal food to
get full at last.

Day 13
127 Days Left
Patio and Spa. Numb.

Friday
Dear Maxie,

Good Shabos. Tonite's been a pretty quiet nite. We're building a patio and played dominos there until it got dark. You know, hon, I'm pretty lucky to have this job. There are only four of us living in this tent where 20 live in other tents the same size. It's nice to be able to have a little peace and quiet in the evenings. It's even nicer not to be in the field. Guess someone was looking out for me. Your prayers helped, hon. Thank you for caring – I'll be home with you on my side, how could anything happen to me?



Patio and
sometimes Spa
(when it rained).
Luxury is in the
eye of the
beholder.

Got 5 letters from you today – two recent ones and three from May – they're finally starting to drift in. Glad to hear that we're coming along with our savings. I figure on saving about \$4000 by the time I get home. That will be enough to keep us going for a while and pay off the car. I was just thinking that we should try to keep as much as we can in the bank while I'm going to school so we can have a little to fall back on – like maybe buying a house after I graduate. We should be able to live on what we both make because I'll be working full time in the summers.

Glad to hear that you're looking good, but am not exactly wild about you getting whistled at. About _____'s spastic eye, maybe I want to punch it a couple of times when I get home and see if it looks any better. He knows that we're married and I'm over here. He's just asking for trouble.

Continued

Day 13
Continued
Patio and Spa. Numb.

I don't know if I'm getting used to being lonely or not – I guess I'm just getting numb. It's not the sharp pain that it was, now it's a dull ache, something that won't go away. I've learned to live for the future and hope for better days and to just watch each slow day go by. Every day puts me one day closer to you. I don't know exactly how I'll be when I get home because I'm getting pretty settled down and not used to not going anywhere or doing anything. I know that there are so many things that I want to do when I get home and the main one is to just be with you. If I were still single, I would probably become very wild when I get back and try to cram everything I've missed in as short of time as possible. Now that I'm married to you, there's no need to be wild because you are what I want to catch up on. I still want to go places and enjoy life, but I don't want to do anything that you can't enjoy with me. In other words, I miss you, and want to be with you terribly. I love you completely. There could never be another.

Love
Gary

When I met you I never dreamed that we would be married – honest, I'm glad.

Day 14
126 Days Left
Drinking. Incoming – into the trench naked

Monday

Dear Maxie,

Your last letter has depressed me terribly – not the whole letter just your comments about my drinking. Have I changed that much or have you changed? Do I seem like I'm that bad; that you have to worry constantly about my becoming a drunk or getting so stoned that I don't know what I'm doing? If I gave you that impression, I'm sorry, because I'm not like that and you should know it. I'll admit that I do drink about 3 or 4 beers some nights but I've got enough sense to look after myself – don't you believe that? I know that you're concerned about my safety and for that I'm grateful, but I think that you're worrying about nothing and upsetting me very much in the process. You should worry more about my smoking because I have been smoking a lot since I've been here. I might slow down here but I won't stop now – I have to have something to pass the time. That's one of the main reasons that I drink a couple of beers every night because I'm lonely as hell and enjoy the company of the rest of the guys who also drink a couple of beers in the evening. I hate this place and the war and being away from you and need some way to try to pass the time. Still, hon, if you really want me to quit drinking, I'll stop and not drink another drop for as long as I live. I've not had anything tonight because I had work to do and it wouldn't be too hard to quit completely. I wait for your reply.

I met another Jewish Marine today – believe it or not. He's a Sgt and going to the same school I'm going to. He saw the mezuzah and said "You're Jewish?, so am I". We had quite a talk. He's from Calif, a little young, but a good guy. Made me feel good to find another Jew around here. It's hard to keep my identity here as a Jew alone and a definite responsibility to set a good image for the other people. The class lasts for another 3 days, so I get to talk with him for a while. It's hard to imagine how good it was to talk to someone who knows about the High Holidays, bagels, Passover, etc.



Mezuzah
that I wore
in Vietnam

The school's a good relief from the routine here. It's nothing special, but I'm learning some things that I hadn't known. It's the fine points that I'm picking up now – I already knew the basic stuff. Have noticed that I've developed the tendency to speak up quickly in class if I think the teacher is wrong or could use some help. Wonder how that'll affect me in college. Hope I don't get kicked out of any classes for disagreeing with the teachers. I'm not that bad.

Continued

Day 14
Continued
Drinking. Incoming – into the trench naked

Am doing a regular job now. Am doing what's called the "Unit Diary" which is a record of everything that happens to each of the 200 people in the company and entails a bit of work. I kinda enjoy it because it is personal work and if I do good I'm the only one to get credit (I won't do bad). One thing about it – unit diary clerks are hard to find and I intend to be one of the best. I will be. They're pretty much in demand, so there isn't much of a chance of me being sent to the field. The diary has to be sent in every day – which means 7 days a week over here so I'll be busy enough.

I miss you very much, Maxie. I want to hold you. I love you. Please keep writing and don't ever stop loving me.

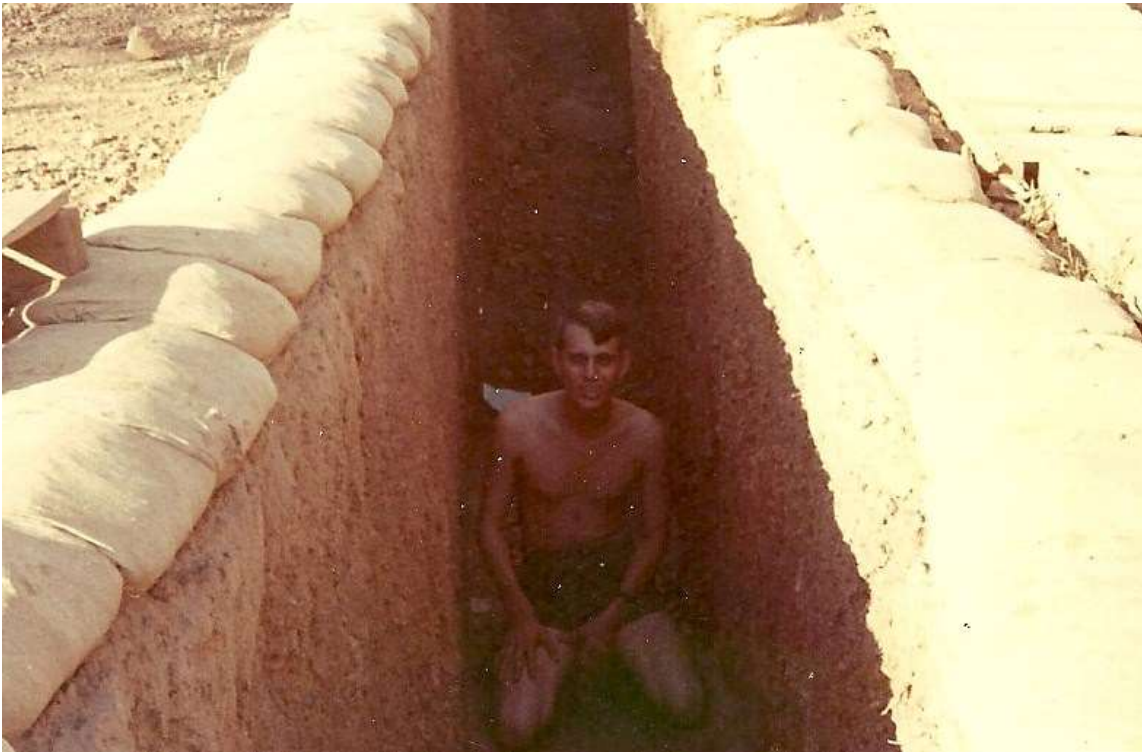
Yours,

Gary

P.S. We had incoming last night about 2 AM. I was sleeping naked and had a hell of a time trying to get my pants on in the dark, so I jumped in a hole without any clothes on. From now on, I'll keep my pants or something on. The trenches are cold. At least when I'm back with you, I won't have to worry about incoming and can sleep naked again. It'll be great. Can't wait. I miss you.

I love you

Really.



Me almost naked in a trench on a warm day

Day 15
125 Days Left
Telling Maxie I'm safe

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I got a beautiful letter from you today – last Monday's after you got 4 letters from me that stopped you from worrying. About that, hon, I would feel kinda bad if you didn't worry about me every now and then. I just don't want you getting too worried. Actually I am pretty safe here. Dong Ha is a big base and we don't have incoming that often. We're lucky where we have the office too, we're at the bottom of a small hill and all of the rounds coming this way usually hit on the hill past us. It's just weird to hear them going by. There's not much chance of this place being invaded because it's a pretty important place. If you could see our jets working out and hear the B-52's dropping bombs, you wouldn't worry too much. It's so safe here that we had jets bombing something on the other side of the base and we could stand on top of the sandbags and watch it from here. It must be terribly discouraging for the NVA to know that they can be attacking one side of a base and people on the other side will be writing letters and listening to music. What gets me is that we have all of this power and it's going to waste. If Israel had what we've got, the war would be over in 6 hours instead of six days. I'm convinced that we don't really want to win this war and that the US just wants to force a stalemate for political reasons. It's terribly dis-hearting to know that people are not fighting to win but just to stall for time.

I did not tell Maxie that our mess hall was on the hill where most of the incoming rounds hit.

How did I get off on that subject, I was talking about your letter? I am very lucky to have found you (or did you find me) and will never let you go or stop loving you. I intend to grow old with you and watch our children and grand children grow up beautiful like their mother and grandmother. They're going to have brown eyes and raven black hair like their mother – just wait and see. And if any of our sons ever want to join the Marine Corps, I'll make it so they won't be able to sit down for a week. I hope that they'll be smarter than I was in that respect.

Dreams, yes, but in the not too distant future it will be reality and great. I love you, hon, and we're going to have a great life together. Together with the love we have we can do anything that we set our minds to. I love you, Maxie. Just a day or two over 5 months and I'll be holding you again.

I love you

Love,

Gary

Our son's first letters from Iraq in 2003 tried to reassure us that he was safe. Some things never change.

Day 16
124 Days Left
Canned steaks. Maxie looking for apartment for us. The office

Sat. Nite

Dear Maxie,

It was a good day, mail wise. I got a letter from your (the best) with Billy's letter inside. Hope you're feeling better – sorry about your neck. I promise it will be easier when you have a real shoulder to sleep on. I think I miss that most of all, your head on my shoulder.

Not much has happened here lately. Rearranged the office and now I have a permanent place to stay and put my stuff. Used your tin foil to make a reflector for a candle to give me a little light at night. There's no movie tonite – don't know why. A nite is pretty dull without a movie or something. Did cook some canned steaks out tonite, they were pretty good.



Office. My space was in the back to the right. Just enough space for a cot and a wooden ammo box for a locker.

They had a flic after all. It was about a cowboy in Africa. It wasn't that great but did pass the night. Will be so glad when I'm with you and don't have to worry about passing the time – then I'll want it to go slower.

Do you think you'll be going up to Ala. Before I get back? If you do, it might be a good idea for you to try and get an apartment just in case I can't get back in time. Places are kinda hard to find there sometimes if you don't get a bid in early. If you don't get a chance to go up, you might ask my parents to be on the lookout for something. It could even be as far away as north Anniston, I don't want to live in Bynum. Jacksonville or Anniston. Seems so funny to be talking about us getting an apartment together and I like the idea. I only wish that I could be with you so we could look together. The only thing that I'm afraid that if we wait till I get back, we may have trouble finding something. One thing – I trust your judgment if you decide to pick something out. What you like, I'll like.

Continued

Day 16
Continued

Canned steaks. Maxie looking for apartment for us. The office

Damn I miss you. We should be in our own place now and starting a life together. I love you. Can't wait to start living with you. Wow.

Have been getting your mail almost every day and it sure makes it a lot easier. Have you been getting mine? I've been writing every day. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Mr and Mrs Gary Canant. I like it, too. Gary and Maxie Canant. Yea.

Day 17
123 Days Left
Mosquito net

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

No mail came in today, so I didn't get a letter from you today. It's not so bad because nobody else got mail. Still I hate for a day to go by without hearing from you – a letter from you makes a day just a little better.

We put up mosquito nets over our cots today – not one day too soon. Tonight we had an invasion of bugs. It's nice to be able to sleep or write a letter without fighting the bugs. The only thing is that it's a little hotter because I can't get as much breeze but I'd rather be a little warm than have bugs swarm around my light. I did some horse trading and got an extra large net, so I have lots of room. I just looked at the top of the net and there are lots of bugs out there but none in here. Feels good.

Today was terribly hot and humid. Wonder when it will start cooling off. Soon, I hope, this constant heat is oppressive. It may take me a while to get used to the cold in January, so I'm depending on you to keep me warm.

I love you and need to be with you to make my life complete. You are my life.

I love you

Gary

Day 18
122 Days Left
Military Payment Certificates. MPC

Wed
Dear Maxie,

Didn't get a letter today – guess it's the mail system. It's a wasted day when I don't hear from you – a day is sad enough over here without you and twice as bad when I don't hear from you. I love you.

Today has been a so-so day. Had classes all day but didn't have to run a diary tonite, so I went to the movie here. Went to another exchange today and still couldn't find any film for my camera. Am also sending you a \$5 bill. Greenbacks are hard to find over here and every time I see one I try to buy it so I can send it to you. We have use Military Payment Certificates like the 5 cent I sent over here instead of real money. Looks so good to see real greenbacks.



MPC
Funny
Money

Honey, I miss you. Days seem to run together over here without you. There's nothing to look forward to except the day I'll come home. There's no weekend break, so every day seems the same – even Mondays. Just one great big mass of time with you at the end. There aren't even any services here, the closest Jewish services are in Da Nang which is pretty far away. I can't make Sabbath services, but will make the High Holidays. Let me know when they are so I can be prepared. O.K., like I was saying before I got sidetracked – I miss you.

Love
Gary

Day 19
121 Days Left
Afternoon in the trenches

Today

Dear Maxie,

I didn't get a letter today – it sure is a big letdown when I don't get a letter from you. I miss you, hon, and (not) getting a letter makes a day seem seem bad. As a matter of fact it was pretty bad. After working all day trying to get caught up, we had incoming this afternoon. Nothing too close, just enough to make us spend the afternoon in the trenches. I had just taken my boots off when it started and ran out barefooted and got terribly dirty. What a great life, where else can a person spend an afternoon in the bottom of a trench. I wish this war would end soon; it's so pointless. Even the way they shoot at us is pointless. It seems like they just shoot to harass instead of really hitting something. I don't believe that it would be a bad move to just get out of this country and let them have it – it isn't worth fighting for.

I wish that there was something different and nice that I could write about, hon, but there's really nothing really to write about except how much I love you and miss you. I feel terribly depressed now because my being over here seems like such a waste and I should be home with you and being happy instead of over here with this unwanted war.

I'm sorry that this is such a horrible letter, this makes two in a row. I hope that I'll bet a good letter from you tomorrow that'll cheer me up. Forgive me for not writing a cheery letter.

I love you, Maxie, being with you again is my dream. I love you.

Love
Gary



Missed
us this
time

Day 20
120 Days Left
Lima Company is hit hard, Joyner killed

June 15, 1968. All hell breaks loose. Lima Company is hit hard by the NVA and we have lots of people killed, wounded and missing. At the company office, we are swamped tracking the casualties, sending new cannon fodder into the fray and typing condolence letters. My anger grows and turns into rage over the next few days as I try to understand why good people are killed in a useless war.

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

Our company got hit pretty bad today and we're still having reports come in. So far we have 5 killed and 16 wounded. No telling how many it will be when it's all over because information gets to us last. I know two of the people who were killed. One was an officer, our Executive Officer who's about my age, the other I know was a real nice guy. What makes it bad is that we don't know for sure who else was hurt and can't even do the paperwork on the ones we know because we don't have all the info yet. We've got our work cut out for us for the next couple of days. The less seriously wounded are back here now and say that they were attacked this morning by human waves of NVA. They just kept coming in such numbers that they couldn't kill them all. They get all hopped up on pot before they attack so they're almost crazy before they come to make them extra brave. Our people were mowing them down like grass but they still kept coming. They counted over a hundred known dead and no telling how many other dead or wounded. Where do they all come from? Our company is right up by the border of Laos and it must be the main Headquarters. One thing for sure – the bombing pause has cost the lives of some real decent people – people killed by politics. Since we slacked up on the bombing they almost had a freeway to move men and supplies south. It's making it rough. I wish that we'd either fight this war right or get out completely. This halfway shit is just killing people needlessly. One of the Corpsmen had just gotten married a little over a week ago on R&R in Hawaii and got killed. What a waste. What a waste. Damn it – I'm all for peace and no bombing, too – but if we're going to fight this war we should fight it whole hog – they are. It just makes me sick – and mad to know that guys are being killed over here who shouldn't have been – because we're worried about what someone else will say. Tell it to the guys that are dead. Tell them it's for world opinion. I'm sure they'll understand.

Bet you really look good now. I miss you terribly. It's unfair for everyone else to see you looking so good when your own husband can't see you. I'm going to make up for lost time when I see you again – that's a promise. I'm going to kiss every square inch of your beautiful body when I get back just out of happiness in seeing you again and make sure that it's really you. Just wait – you'll see (and feel)!

I love you, Maxie, more than one person could love another and I'll always will. Nothing will ever stop me from loving you. You are my life – my reason for living. I love you.

Forever,
Gary

Look like we're going to be up pretty late tonight – the reports just came in on our killed. All gun shot wounds in the head or chest. We've got a lot of paperwork. Our company is better off than some. Even one killed is too many.

Day 21
119 Days Left
At the Wall in D.C.

At the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC. My first visit to the wall



"Lieutenant Joyner - killed June 15, 1968
Bullet between the eyes. AK-47."

That's what it says on the back of one of your pictures.
It must be true
Because I wrote it a long time ago.

I always thought your first name was Lieutenant
Until I looked it up in DC one hot, humid day.
It was Stephen.

I didn't find your name on The Wall that day
Because there were too many,
And it was too hot,
And we didn't have much time,
And we would be late for dinner,
And we were tired from looking at colleges for my son,
And it was humid,
And I can't stand the heat since Dong Ha,
And there were just too many.
Too many names.

But it's there
Somewhere.

It doesn't really matter that I didn't find your name that day
It does matter that I didn't find mine.

Continued

Day 21
Continued
At the Wall in D.C.

"Lieutenant Joyner
Killed June 15
AK-47 bullet between eyes."

"Sergeant Canant
Still alive in '95"

Thank you, God.
Take care of Stephen.



Jayner
Killed June 15
AK bullet between eyes.

Day 22
118 Days Left
Typing Condolence letters

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

Today was hectic to say the least. The company is still messed up and we don't know the full story yet on everyone. We have a count of 50 killed or wounded now that we know of. There are also 3 people missing, but nothing is official yet. There is a chance that they are alive – I hope so. It's a pretty bad place where they're missing – they'll need a lot of luck and determination. We finished the condolence letters on the KIA's tonight. It's not my favorite job but it has to be done. On top of the casualties, we have 11 new people to check in and join and will probably get more new ones tomorrow. We even have a general court martial coming up soon for one of our people; the "hearing" for it is tomorrow. Every thing comes at once. We were caught up but it will be a long time before we get that way again. Doesn't look like we get to take tomorrow afternoon off – we've got too much work to catch up on. I wish someone would end this war, we're wasting a lot of money and too many good men over here for nothing. It's not worth it.

I feel terribly lonely and depressed now. It takes something out of me every time the company gets hit. One of my good friends was hit, but came back here – he only had a small wound in the shoulder – a relief. Another good friend of mine – you remember the Sgt I talked about who had a lot in common with me – he didn't get wounded. There were still a lot of good men who didn't fare so well and it really takes something from me every time it happens. I can imagine how it is for the guys out there who are really close to the guys that got killed – it must really hurt. I wish I could be with you now so I wouldn't have to even say anything – just hold you and not be so terribly lonely. I love you, hon, and need you very much – to just be with me and to love me. I need that very much. Living without you isn't living – it's only existing and dreaming. As for your worrying about my ever leaving you, Maxie, I couldn't, I love you too much, hon. You are my life, my love, and leaving you would be like dying. I couldn't do it. I need you too much, Maxie, I love you very much. Our ordeal will be over soon and we'll be together and happy again. I'll love making a home with you and watching our children grow up together. It almost sounds like a dream but it will come true and we'll have a good life together. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Maxie, there's something that has been bothering me about the political scene – Wallace. How many people are for that idiot? If he got elected, I know we'd move to Israel or somewhere. He is insane and a lot of people believe in him

How did I get off on that? I just wonder if you feel like I do about him.

I love you.

Day 23
117 Days Left
Condolence letters

Monday

Dear Maxie,

Sorry I didn't write last night. We've been pretty busy typing up the papers for all the guys that got killed or wounded the last couple of days. Last night I was real tired and passed out. The night before after I had written you I didn't get to bed till late and couldn't sleep for thinking about this war and the guys getting killed over here. It really bothers me to think about the mess over here. We're finally getting the whole count. We had 7 killed and 23 wounded in the last two days plus one guy died from malaria and we just found out about it yesterday. We've got the letters typed to the guys' parents – which is quite a job because they have to be perfect before they are sent. They are all screened before being sent. What bugs me is that it is almost a form letter except for a few details. We have to follow the format before it goes through and it seems kinda bad typing almost the same letter about different people. - - -
details omitted - -

One consolation – they counted 186 NVA bodies around our position – no telling how many more were dragged off or wounded. At least we bring ALL of ours back – at least the Marines do.

I'm sorry that I get so carried away and spout off so much about this mess – no, I'm not sorry. This war really burns me up and I have to get it off my chest or go nuts. I only hope that I don't say too much – that I don't bore you or sound too gruesome. One thing for sure – when I say something, it's true because we handle all the records right here. Our people are getting hurt over here and I can't help but get mad about it. The only thing I wonder about is where do they all come from? How can they afford to lose so many people and still keep fighting? They must have a very low regard for human life.

I need the quiet time when we are one and there is nothing else in the world but us and our love for each other. I need the cigarette after sex – for some reason they taste better then. I need to see you laugh, smile, and even cry. I need to be alive again. I need you. You are my life and my love and without you I am nothing except just a being – not a human. I need to be with you. I need you. You make sense – everything else is madness. This place is not real – it's a horror show. It's a bad dream that I can't wake up from. You are me.

Gary

Condolence Letters

When someone was killed in Viet Nam, one of the first tasks we had was to type a condolence letter to his family. That was the hardest job I have ever had.

Each letter had to be written to give a good description of the person and how he was killed, without going into gory details. There were general outlines for the content of each letter, but each letter was unique. The letters had to be perfectly typed - no typos, white outs, errors or smudges.

Continued

Day 23
Continued
Condolence letters

That level of perfection would be easy today with word processors and laser printers; back then we used manual typewriters and carbon paper. One wrong key at the end of the letter meant starting over from scratch.

It wasn't the requirement to type perfectly that made the job hard. These letters were for guys like me. People I knew who just happened to be in the wrong place. Typing a condolence letter was job that had to be done. The problem was that we never had a chance to grieve. It's like being a pall bearer at a funeral for someone you were close to - you are so busy thinking about how heavy the casket feels and how hot it is in the sun that the person in the casket seems forgotten. The business at hand is more important, and somehow the business of grieving gets lost.

Any details of the contents of the condolence letters or who they were will remain private. That is the property of the families of the guys who were killed over there

Day 24
116 Days Left
Guy Missing, Larry, Good Conduct

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

What a horrible day it's been. It's rained almost all day and it's been terrible gloomy. The lights have been going on and off all night. A "Touch of Blue" was on the outdoor movie tonight and the film kept breaking every five minutes. Just when it started getting good. I left about 2/3's of the way through when started raining again. Seems like a good movie, have you seen it? Also didn't get any mail here today – none at all. A letter from you would have brightened my day so much. Can't tell you how much good receiving a letter from you does. Please write me as often as possible, and I'll write you daily. I miss you very much, and knowing that you're still there loving me like I love you keeps me going over here.

Our company has a guy missing – he's been missing for a couple of days and they don't know if he's alive or not. He's probably not alive, but there is a chance. I think it'd be harder on his family to know that he's missing and not know what happened to him than to have his body. We're writing up a letter to send to his family now – it's not easy. I have typed a letter to send to the guys' families who were killed in action. What can you say to someone whose son or husband is missing and we don't know what happened to him?

Larry says hello. He's the Florida boy who I had write Kath. Know any eligible, decent girls who would interested in writing a guy over here? His name is Larry Houston, a PFC, same address as mine. He's 6'4" tall, 195 lbs and from Florida and a pretty decent guy. Sorry, he's not Jewish! He likes to party and is terribly horny – aren't we all. Oh, by the way, he's got a couple of horses. They're horny too.



Larry (left)
and me

Sure do miss you, hon. This being here and you there just doesn't get it. I'll never leave you again, never. After we get together, nothing will part us. I promise, and I'll never stop loving you so don't worry about that. It'll never happen. You'll be mine forever. I love you.

Continued

Day 24
Continued
Guy Missing, Larry, Good Conduct

Write

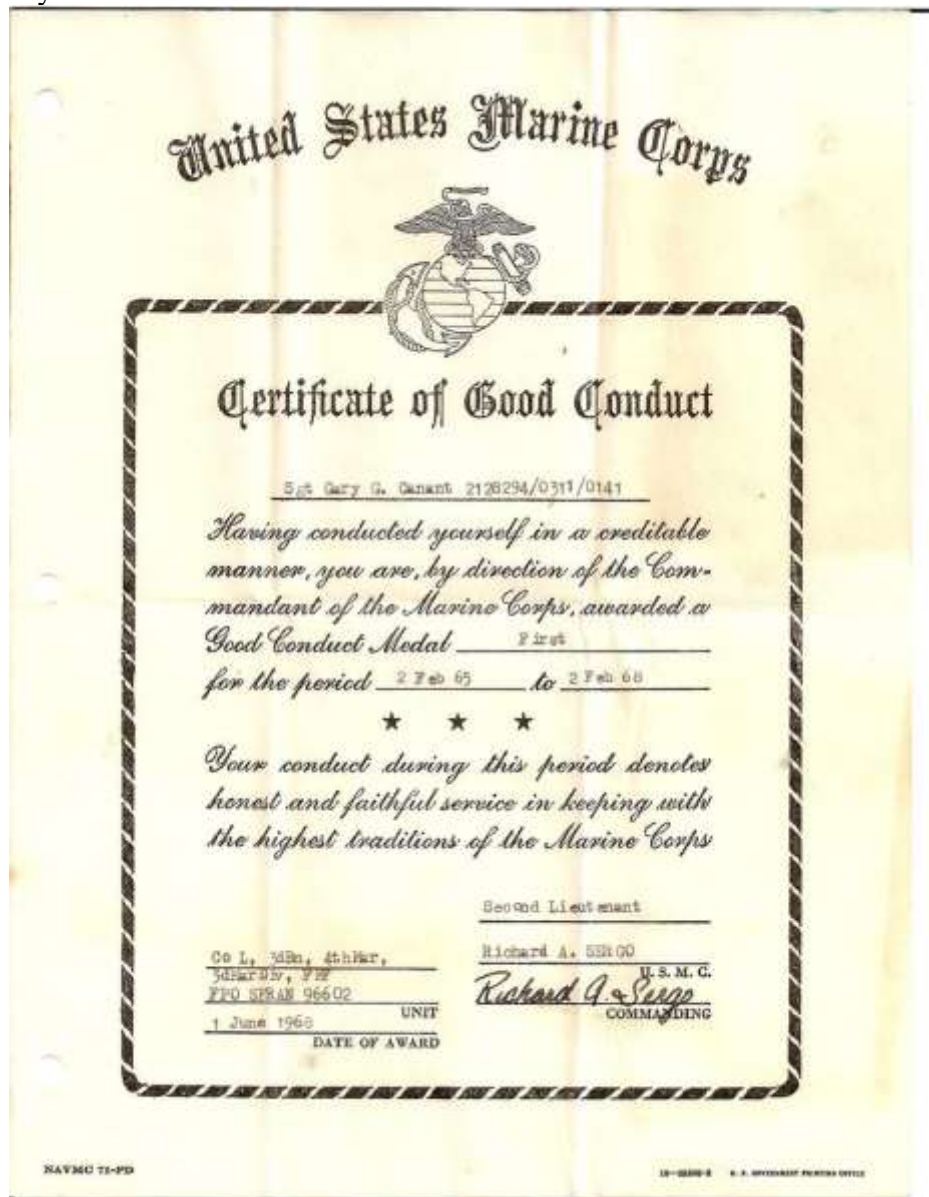
Yours,

Gary

Enclosed is \$10, greenback, which I can't spend over here. Also a good conduct that I got today, only a couple of months late.

If you find any good books, send them. Books are hard to get here. Impossible.

I love you.



Day 25
115 Days Left
We get new people to replace the ones we lost

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I took tonight off and saw a movie – the first one in quite a long time. Saw the “Planet of the Apes” which had a pretty good ending – was better than I thought it’d be.

We’re terribly covered up with work – didn’t get our Sunday afternoon off this week. We’ve gotten 23 new people in two days – wow – and more to come. One good thing – our people that were missing walked back to the company today.

Am going to quit for now – there are a bunch of people from the company talking tonight and making it hard to write, will continue later.

G.

You should hear the war stories – these guys could go on all night. Hope they get tired soon because I’d like to get some sleep.

Forgive me for not writing a decent letter – I can’t with people talking. I promise a better one tomorrow night.

I love you, hon. I miss you.

Love

Gary



They look like us
after being in
Vietnam for a
couple of months

Day 26
114 Days Left
Found missing guy

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

Got a beautiful letter from you today. A letter from you always makes my day easier – it helps to hear you say that you love me like I love you. Still haven't gotten any back mail; wonder where it is. It should be getting here by now.

Have been pretty busy since this school began because I still have to run a diary after I get back and usually don't get finished until around 8 or 9. Don't mind because the busier I am the faster time goes. The school is pretty interesting and I'm learning a little. Have only two more days to go.

Have I ever told you that I love you? I always will. Would love to be with you now. Seems like so long till I see you again. I really miss you, hon. I read your letters over and over again. I love you.

Yours

Gary

P.S. The missing guy was found – alive, not wounded and very happy. They let him call his folks because some of his friends had written his parents. We hadn't mailed our letter yet. He was missing for 5 days.

P.P.S. Send mom a couple of pictures so she can see what it's like. Bev wrote and said that they like you.

How can anyone not like you?

Day 27
113 Days Left
Depressed, more wounded

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

I'm depressed – I haven't gotten a letter from you in two days. A day without a letter for you is hard – two days in a row is unbearable. I hope I get one tomorrow – I need a morale booster.

Maxie, I'm tired. I'm tired of being away from you, I'm tired of the work; I'm mentally tired. I wish that I would wake up on a plane home. It seems like it's taking an eternity for time to pass and like a dream being with you. I want to hold you so badly and need to love and be loved. It's a hard life without love and I'm getting terribly tired of it. I need you. I need to be with you to pep me up. I miss you.

Well it's stopped raining for the past couple of days and the wind has been blowing like a small hurricane – steadily. Now we have dust everywhere. What a miserable place. This place isn't even worth fighting for. I'd never live here even if it was peaceful. It's a hole.

Our company is in it again. We had a couple of guys wounded today but no one killed so far. I hate to see anyone hurt much less killed over here – it's such a waste. At least if they're wounded, they have a chance of going home, which is a hell of a way to leave, but a way. I sure hope that our next president will end this soon. A waste is all it is.

I'm going to cut this short because there are some big booms pretty close and I can't tell if it's ours or theirs. I will write you a better letter tomorrow when I'm not so depressed.

I love you.

Gary

Day 28
112 Days Left
Two more people from L Company killed, my anger explodes
July 8

Dear Maxie,

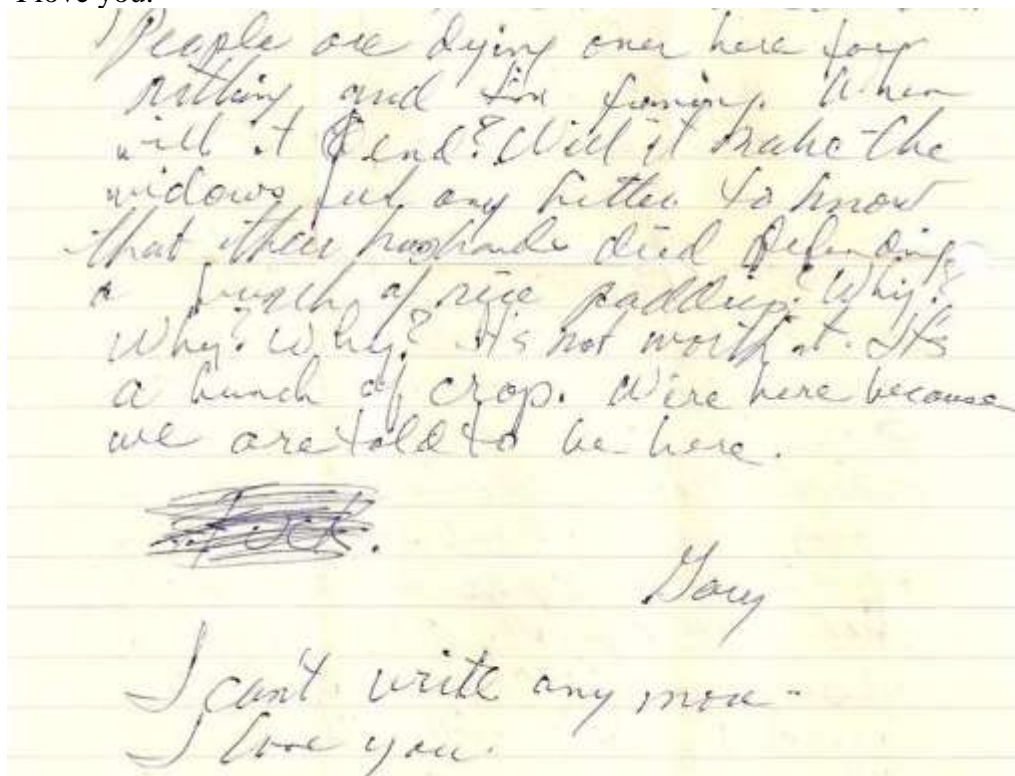
Again we've had more people killed in our company. 2. Two is too many. To have one person killed is much too many. This land is not worth being in, much less worth dying for. For some reason the course of our America and for Freedom seems very remote and very far away from America right now. It still makes me sick to know that our people are being killed over here in this useless war because of stupid general's mistake. Guess you've read about us pulling out of Khe Sanh after so many people died defending it. Who goofed? Jesus fucking Christ what a waste. When will it end? When will someone in power decide that this a useless war and get us out of it? The funny thing about it is that this is not a declared war. What a joke. Forgive me for not writing a decent letter tonight; but I can't – this has got me too mad to settle down. People are dying over her for nothing and I'm fuming. When will it end? Will it make the widows feel any better to know that their husbands died defending a bunch of rice paddies? Why? Why? Why? It's not worth it. It's a bunch of crap. We're here because we are told to be here.

Fuck (crossed out several times)

Gary

I can't write any more.

I love you.

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The handwriting is in cursive and matches the typed text in the document. The letter is written on a piece of paper with horizontal lines. The text is: "People are dying over here for nothing and I'm fuming. When will it end? Will it make the widows feel any better to know that their husbands died defending a bunch of rice paddies? Why? Why? Why? It's not worth it. It's a bunch of crap. We're here because we are told to be here." Below this is a crossed-out signature "Gary" and the name "Gary" written again. At the bottom, it says "I can't write any more - I love you."

People are dying over here for
nothing and I'm fuming. When
will it end? Will it make the
widows feel any better to know
that their husbands died defending
a bunch of rice paddies? Why?
Why? Why? It's not worth it. It's
a bunch of crap. We're here because
we are told to be here.

~~Gary~~

Gary

I can't write any more -
I love you.

Day 29
111 Days Left
How lucky I am. Sorry about angry letter

Fri

Dear Maxie,

Am in the best mood I've been in since I got here. Just saw a movie that let me forget for a while where I am and it was a nice break from the routine. I need something like that to take my mind of being away from you. Otherwise I get to thinking and really get depressed at times – especially at night before I go to sleep. I think that the early evening when it's quiet and a little cool is the hardest time to take because then I get to missing you so much that I can barely stand it. While I'm here the less I think about what I am missing, the easier it will be and the faster the time will pass.

I had been talking to another guy and decided that I'm mostly pretty lucky in my tour. At least I'm a Sgt, have a desk job and have about half a tour to do over here. I can imagine how I would feel if I had a full 13 month tour to do over here. Then I wouldn't be coming home to you until next June and I really go nuts. Any tour over here is bad enough, but I guess I do have a lot to be thankful for, and besides, I have beautiful young wife to come home to. Can't wait.

I haven't gotten a letter from you since I've been here – and it may be another week before I start getting mail. It's hard not hearing from you.

Did you get the package yet? Oh, by the way, I sent you something from Hawaii, let me know if you get it. Am sending a roll of film that you can get developed that has some pictures of the place around here. It'll give you an idea of what a hole it is like here and what some of the guys look like. They're nothing spectacular, just flics of the dull life around here. Hope you enjoy them. Take some pictures of yourself (a good trick) and send them to me so I can see how you're looking. Are you still losing weight? Don't lost too much and blow away. Just look beautiful like my Maxie. I want to recognize you when I get home.

Sorry if I got carried away in yesterday's letter and said a few unnecessary things, but I was upset and it did me good to get it off my chest. There are a lot of things here that really burn one up – but I guess you gathered that from my letter. I can't help it, I hate to see some of these guys who seem so young and so inexperienced in life get such a raw deal here when they could be back in the states leading normal lives. Especially when there are so many people who don't serve at all, it hurts. Everyone I've talked to thinks this is a wasted war and would say either fight whole hog or get out. All we're doing now is waiting for the NVA to come to us, which is a horrible way to fight and hell on nerves.

Hope I don't bore you when I get to talking about the mess over here. If I do, forgive me. I'll be so glad when I get a letter from you so I can hear what you're doing, if you're ok and just to know that you're there. It makes it so much easier to know that you're waiting for me and that coming home will have a meaning. So many of the guys have no one to really go home to and I feel sorry for them. They talk big, but it shows through and it's pretty pathetic. I'm very thankful for you. For caring, for loving and love. I love you very much. Just keep yourself mine and I'll be back.

Love,
Gary

Day 30
110 Days Left

Maxie's upset by the angry letter, my response. Moustache

Wed

Dear Maxie,

Got a letter from you today about the one I wrote our people got killed. Please forgive me for getting so carried away; it won't happen again. It's just that I'm beginning to know the people in the company and when one of them gets killed over here I get so mad I can't see straight – much less think right. From now on when someone gets killed I won't write until I've collected my senses. I'll say one thing, hon, if the time ever comes when I don't get mad or upset when our people get killed – then something is wrong. I don't care if he was the worst Marine ever, nobody should die in this place.

How's the friend with the messed up nose doing? At least he has friends to come and see him, the guys that get hurt over here don't – he's pretty lucky that way.

Everything's going pretty fair over here. We're pretty caught up with the work and don't have to work so hard now. It'll stay that way until they get in another fire fight and someone gets hurt – and I hope that doesn't happen for a long time. It's even a little cool tonight for a change – feels great. The water in the shower tonight was even cold and felt mighty good – and for once everyone's gone to the movie except Larry and me and it's quiet. It's nice to have a little peace and quiet so I can be myself and write you without interruptions every five minutes. Privacy is hard to come by over here – there are no doors to close. Can't wait to be home with you and have a life of our own and when we can shut off the rest of the world then and it'll be me and you joined as one. It still sounds like something I dreamed up – it sounds too good to be true. It will come true. I'll be home and out of the service and we'll live again and be ourselves and laugh and have our worries, have quiet times and have sex and then lie in bed together and not even have to say anything because that certain peace that come from not being two individuals but one will come again. To love and to be loved – it's the ultimate and it will be for our whole life – to be one. I love you, Maxie, and I always will. How I'd love to go to bed with you right now and have you lay your head on my shoulder and put your leg over mine and just be happy to be alive because that contentment from knowing that love is there between us lets us relax and need nothing else. Will that time ever get here? It seems so far away – it's been so long when I'll be that way again – with you. You are my peace. You are my love.

Forever,

Gary

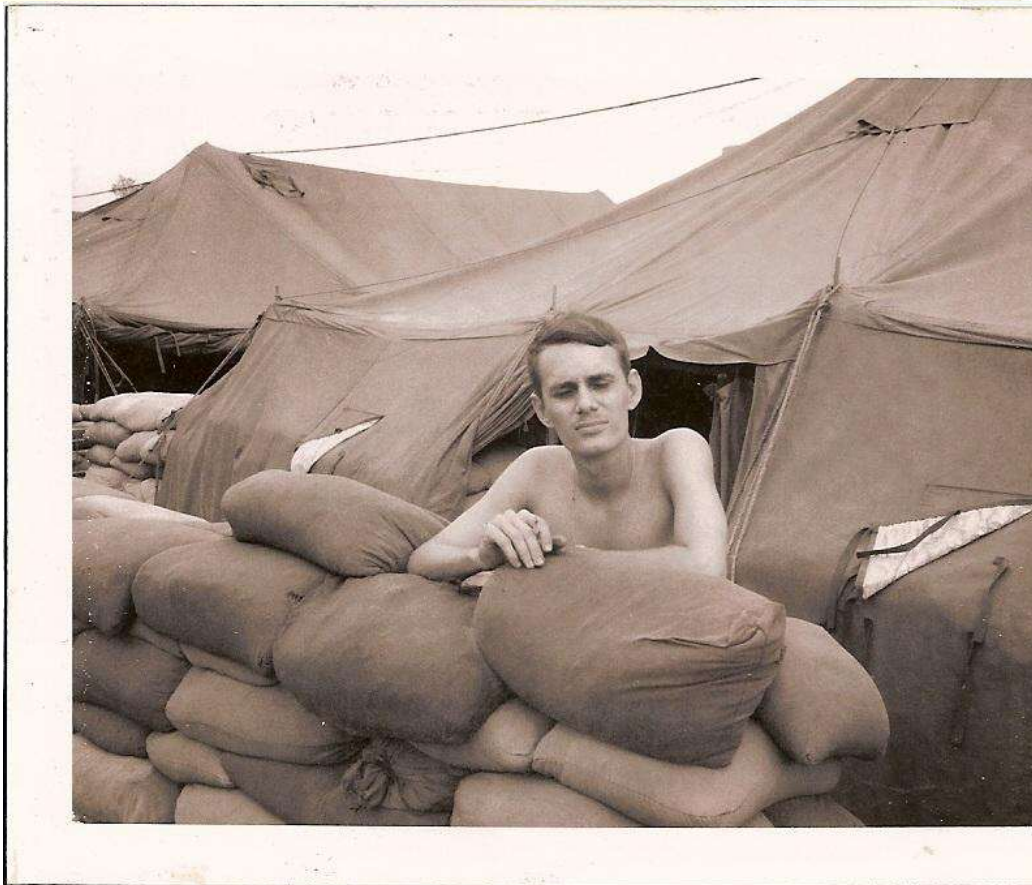
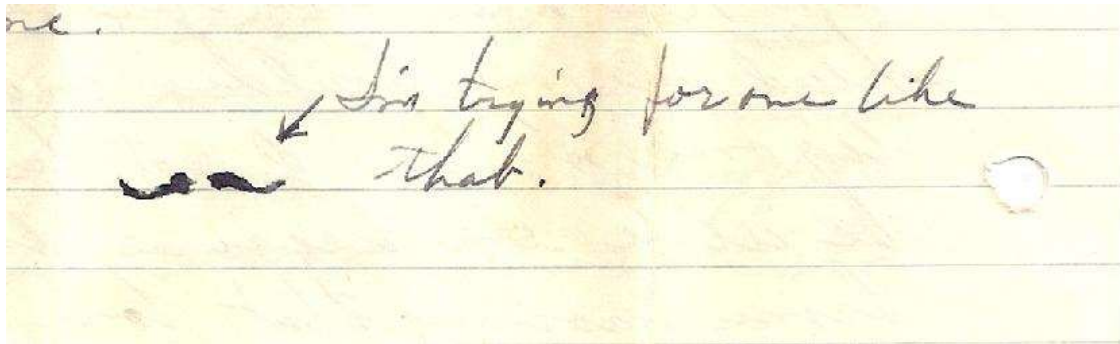
P.S. Did I tell you that I'm growing a moustache? All of us in the office are. I won't cut it till I get ready to come home. I hope to get it long enough to make handlebars. I'll send you a picture when it gets long enough. Think I've got enough time to get a good one.

Continued

Day 30
Continued

Maxie's upset by the angry letter, my response. Moustache

I'm trying for one like that (hand drawn picture).



Maxie,

Sorry I had my eyes closed. I always seem to do that at the wrong time. As you can see, the hair on my lip doesn't grow too fast.

Love

Gary

Day 31
109 Days Left
First food package. Condolence letter.

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

Would you believe that your package finally got here? It arrived this morning along with two letters from you and a birthday card from the McKendries – her birthday is the same day as mine. About your package – needless to say the food didn't last too long. I've eaten almost all – there's a little left. The only thing I gave away was one can of soup to Larry and the applesauce to another guy here in the office. I told you I was hungry. Thank you, hon, it's good to eat something besides that chow we have here.

I noticed that you were wearing my band – do you wear it all the time? It's a good thing that I didn't wear it over here. It would be pretty beat up by now. The mezuzah is taking a beating – it's pretty dirty from my sweating and gets caught in the typewriter every now and then. I had to tie a couple of knots in the chain to keep it from swinging too much.

Everything is pretty quiet around here – I've even got caught up – almost. Caught up some condolence letters tonight – we did them about a week ago and they were returned for petty mistakes – not really mistakes, just that we don't exactly agree with the people who screen them. Am sending a carbon copy of one I typed. - - *details omitted* –

Note: Condolence letter will not be shown. It is private and belongs to the Marine's family.

Some of those pictures really bring back memories. It's hard to believe it's us not too long ago – together, happy, laughing and in a world of our own. I miss it, Maxie. I miss being with you. I miss the good time, the quiet times, going places, and staying at home. I miss you love and loving you. I miss your kisses. I want to be with my wife instead of fighting this never ending war. We'll make up for it, Maxie, by loving each other for a lifetime. And I will love you for a lifetime.

There's so much that I want to say to you but I want to say it in person – not in a letter. I want to talk to you, a letter just isn't the same as being with you and seeing your expressions and not having to wait 10 days for an answer. I need to be with you – not spending my nites writing letters and working and sleeping by myself. I love you.

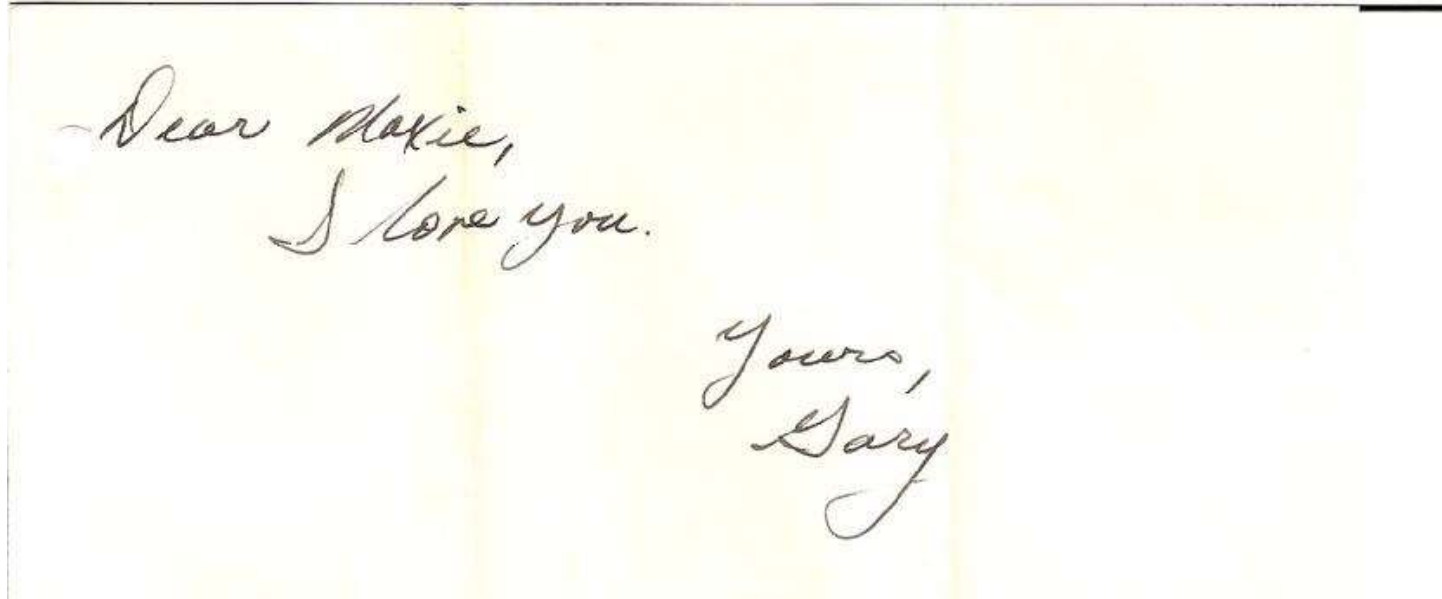
Forever,

Gary

P.S. By the way, we'll both have to get almost a complete new wardrobe when I get home. I can stand some good civilian clothes. Do you want to surprise me with yours or shop together? I love you.

Day 32
108 Days Left
A short Letter

Dear Maxie,
I love you.
Yours,
Gary



Day 33
107 Days Left
June stats, mess hall, skinny

Today

Dear Maxie,

Today has been pretty hectic – we got six new people in today with really weird paperwork and I’ve had a hell of a time joining them. A joining entry in the diary is the longest of all and these guys are really a pain. We counted up today – we got 65 new people in the month of June and only two were transferred back to the states with completed tours. How does that sound – for 65 people only 2 made it the full 13 months over here without being transferred by being hospitalized. Maybe this was just an odd month, but the odds sound weird. At least I’ve got one consolation, 50% of the people transferred last month was an office worker – 1. Those odds sound a little better.

Got a short but good letter from you today. So your panty hose won’t stay up. Are you getting that slim? Damn I’d love to see you now – bet you’re looking great. Looks like you’re going to have to practice your good cooking on me when I get home and fatten me up. It’s not that I’m not hungry – the food is just so lousy that it’s hard to eat. I seriously think that we have the worst mess hall on the base. It has to be. I ate at a different one when I went to that school and the food there wasn’t bad at all. What I would give for some good fried chicken or anything good for that matter. I believe I could eat more than I did the night I met you. I could probably eat the whole turkey now. We’ll have a lifetime to catch up and I’ll probably have to go on a diet before long after eating your cooking.

Haven’t had anytime to read more in the book today – I really enjoy it and will make time tomorrow night. We’ve got over 200 people in the company now and there’s so much paper work that we usually end up working some at night and then I fall into bed without having a chance to read. I like working in the office, but it’s a lot of work. One of the clerks who used to work in the office volunteered to go to the field, and he’s only got about a month left to do over here. He’s crazy as hell. He just made Sgt and they put him in charge of a whole platoon out in the field – about 30 men. He doesn’t know beans about being out there and may get himself and a lot of others killed. If I ever pulled something like that, I’d have my head examined. Guess he wants to be a damn hero and tell war stories when he gets home. Who cares – I’m satisfied. I can see all the war I want from right here.

I never did tell you, looks like Larry will be working here for quite a while. When he went to the doc they told him to take it easy for a month and come back. He’s slow yet but a good worker. He’s all mixed up about his girl and I laugh as his beating on the wall when he gets carried away about her. He’s terribly jealous and thinks she’s running around with Jody. Guess I’m luck to have someone like you – damn lucky. I know Jody doesn’t stand a chance, that you’ll wait on me. It keeps me going.

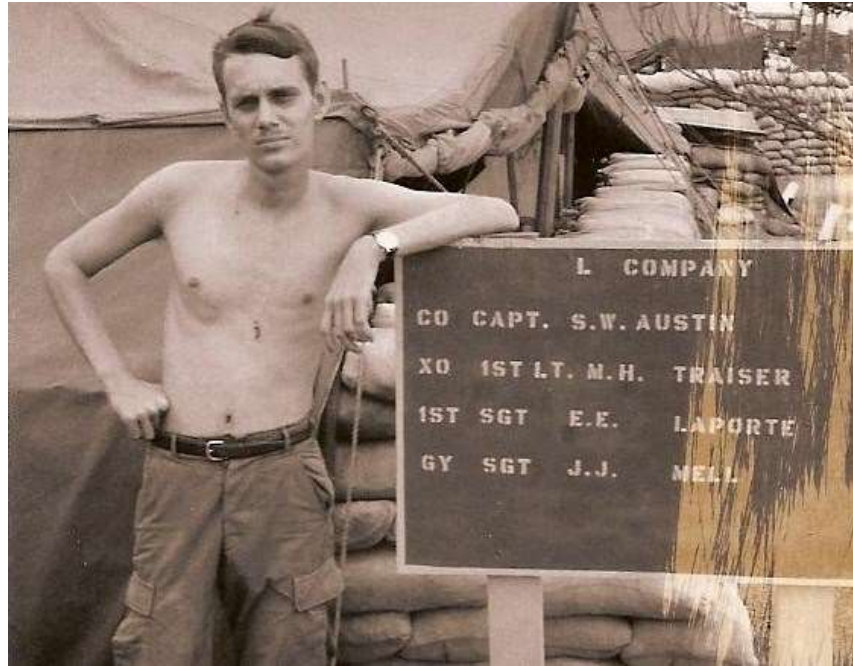
Continued

Day 33 Continued

June stats, mess hall, skinny

Honestly, hon, I don't think I could take this place if I had to worry about you all the time – I'd really go nuts. Knowing that I have a beautiful wife to come home to make it just much easier here. Every letter from you makes a day worth living because then I know that there's still love in the world and a reason for coming home. It really means a lot. Thinking about how great it will be when we're together again makes the time go just a little faster. I love you. We'll make up for all this lost time – promise.

Love
Gary



Maxie

I have I lost much weight. You'll put it back on me in a hurry and more. I love you.

Gary

Look closely and you can see the mezuzah around my neck



The mezuzah has a dent in the back from being caught in the typewriter when I was writing a condolence letter. It stayed with me through my entire Vietnam tour and with my son during his tour in Iraq in 2003. We both survived war and came back safe and sound.

Day 34
106 Days Left
Form letter from all of us to all of our wives and girlfriends

September 11, 1968

Dear Ellen, Maxie, Cindy, Kathy, Lynne, Ann, Phebe, Sam, X,

I just wanted to drop you a line to let you know that everything here is good, great, excellent, boring, going by too slow, going by fast, bad, worse, poor, unbearable, disagreeable, rotten, fine, not so fine, horrible. I am doing fine, not so well, cheerful, lonely, sad, happy, carefree, hungry, sick, well, stubborn, hot cold, clean, dirty, disinterested, hopeful, dismayed, disheartened, hungry, sick of the hole mess, home sick. I can't wait to kiss you, hold you, take you out, leave you at home, cuss you out, see you, talk to you, spank you, kick Jody, shoot Jody, congratulate Jody, get home, leave home, drink some wine, not drink anything, , get away from this mess.

Dont' worry honey, sweet heart, love, lover, darling, you witch, my dear fiend, you fink, my not so dear friend; I'll be home soon and then we can make up for lost time, fight, fight and then make up for lost time, do what ever comes natural. It won't be long now because I will be home in Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May, June, later, soon, never, sometime, maybe, whenever I get there.

I am looking forward from getting a letter from you soon, never, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, whenever you feel like it, when you get back from a date with Jody, whenever Jody gilts you, Oh! forget it.

I am sending my love, regards, hate, dirty laundry, friendship, unfriendship, kisses, hugs, warts, sex?, money, time, anything, nothing.

Love, sincerely, your friend, your enemy,
lover, dear John,

Dick, Larry, Gary, Maurell, Riley, X

Continued

Day 34
Continued

Form letter from all of us to all of our wives and girlfriends



The Group

Day 35
105 Days Left
Still typing condolence letters, lost my pen

Tues

Dear Maxie,

Sorry about the letter last night – it must have been pretty bad. I can't help it, Maxie, I get so mad every time we have people killed over here that I have to let it out or go crazy. I'll never get used to people getting killed in this useless war.

I got a package from your mom yesterday with all kinds of goodies – oysters and kosher (in Hebrew) macaroons – what a combinations. She'd even written me a couple of times on her trip. Wow. Guess I'd better get busy tonight and write her. When is she coming home?

Today has been hectic – it always is when we have casualties. I tried to type some condolence letters tonight but couldn't get them right. Maybe I'll have better luck tomorrow. They're such a pain because they have to be flawless or they come back. And I'm a long way from a perfect typist.

By the way, you said you had a plan to really turn me on when I get home – what have you got up your sleeve? If you're planning to play hard to get, forget it, because I'll be harder to push away – you'll see.

Guess I'll cut this short and write your mom and make a tape or 2 before it gets too late.

I love you completely.

Gary

Forgive the pencil – I lost my pen and can't write with a ballpoint. How about next time you get to the exchange picking up a Parker pen? A \$5 job will cost about \$3 there. Don't get the cartridge type – I can't get cartridges here. A regular point. If you can't get a Parker, don't get me one – I don't like any other

Day 36
104 Days Left
Short Poem: M16 and AK47

M16 and AK47

The M16 makes a fast bup, bup, bup,
It sounds almost like a burp.

The AK47 makes a slower pop, pop, pop,
You can hear each pop clearly.

I learned to tell the two apart,
I learned well.

I don't want to hear either one again.
Ever.

I can never understand why politicians insist on making these guns legal for civilians. These things were designed for one task: killing people. They did that job very well in Viet Nam. I know because I typed the condolence letters to their families



Day 37
103 Days Left
Air show, living quarters, mosquito net

Wed nite

Dear Maxie,

Got your letter today with the pictures you sent back. I looked at them for a long time trying to remember what you look like and see how you'll look when I get home. It seems like it's been such a long time since we were together. I find myself asking if that pretty woman in the picture is really my wife. Maxie, I miss you. I need you. It seems unreal that we could have been so happy just a couple of months ago – I'm so lonely now. I promise you that when I get home, I'm not going to let you go. Never. I'm going to hold you and squeeze you and kiss you and sleep with you and wake up with you and live with you and smoke with you and . . . you're not getting out of my sight for at least a week. I won't let you. I miss you, Maxie, I love you.

Today has been one of those rainy, cool days that would be great to lie in bed with you all day. I'd like that. Hope it stays like this for a while because it's a lot easier then it's not so hot. I can almost breathe now.

Have been watching the air show tonight. Our jets have been working on something close to here. Whatever it was – there couldn't be much left. I'd sure hate to be on the receiving end. It's amazing how much stuff one jet can carry – seems like the same jets make pass after pass for hours. The choppers don't do a bad job either, but they don't carry quite as much.

I can hear the rain on the tent now – damn it's a lonesome sound! What a perfect time to be with you so we could listen together. This winter in Alabama when it rains – we're going to bed and have a great affair and then lie awake listening to the rain together and talk of love and our future and our home.

We rearranged our living space in the back of the tent yesterday. I'm still sleeping in the same place, but Larry and Dick moved up out of their bunker. We stole some plywood and built a partition to separate our living area from the rest of the office and it's pretty nice back here now. I even have a lite by my rack (bed) now so I can write and read in bed. We build a swinging door that only swings one way. Our buy Ski kept trying to push when he should pull, so I wrote "Ski, Pull Damnit" on the door. Last night, I was working on something, not paying any attention so now "Gary, Pull Damnit" is on the door. This morning – about 2:30 it started raining and we all got up to roll down the sides of the tent and we now have "Larry, Pull Damnit" on the door. We're keeping a pretty close eye on Dick, just waiting to put his name up too.

You know about the hammock I got? When we remodeled our apartment here, I hung it over my rack and told everyone it was a mosquito net (it has about 3 inch square holes in it) that if the mosquitoes were any smaller that that I didn't care. Last night after we go ready to go to bed, we saw the biggest bug I've ever seen crawling up the side of the tent and now they believe me. Bugs are big over here – you wouldn't like that too much.

Continued

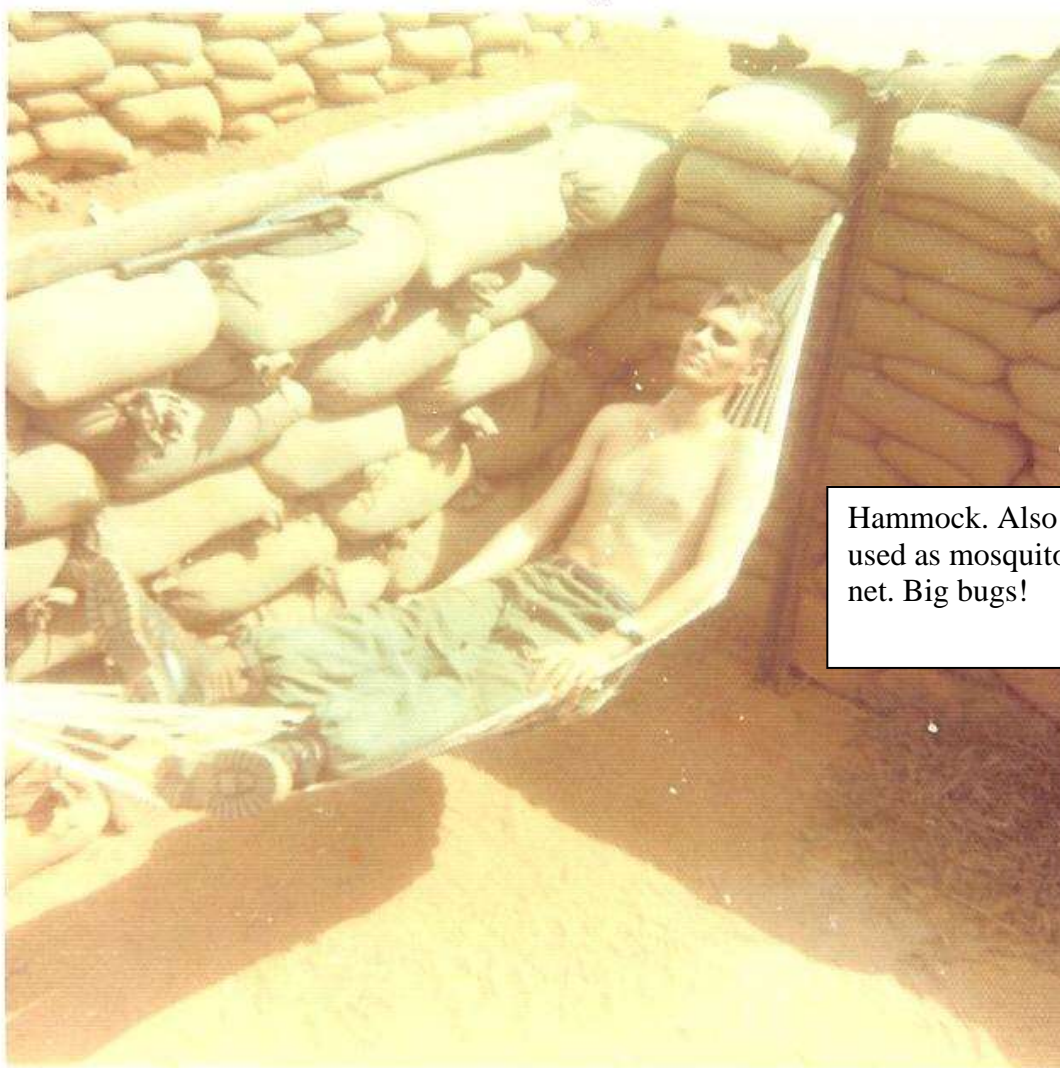
Day 37 Continued

Air show, living quarters, mosquito net

Guess I'd better close and get some sleep – it's getting late. I still wish that I could be going to bed with you instead of alone. I miss you very much, hon, it hurts. I love you. I always will.

Gary

Drink a great big glass of iced tea for me.



Hammock. Also used as mosquito net. Big bugs!

Day 38
102 Days Left
Hot, watch, racial strife

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

G-d was it hot today. Too hot to work – glad we're pretty caught up and could afford not to work this afternoon. It was so hot that a candle I had laying out in the tent melted – and it wasn't even in the sun. We had a little rain this evening and I took a shower and feel pretty good now. It's been so hot that the mezuzah has turned black in spots from my sweating so much. Am getting used to the heat pretty well but a day like today is still hard to take.

My watch finally quit today. It had been stopping off and on for about a week. It's in such bad shape that it's not worth fixing. Do you think you could pick me up a cheap one at the exchange next time you go? It's no use to get a good one over here – it'd probably get ruined as fast as a cheap one. Speaking of watches, did you ever get yours fixed or get a new one? I'm lost without mine because we don't have any clocks over here. Don't worry about a band – I've got that plastic one and it's great over here. Sweat and dirt don't seem to bother it.

No mail came in today. It's a little easier to take not getting a letter from you when no mail at all comes in. Still is hard to go a day without hearing from you. I love you and receiving a letter from you keeps me going while I'm over here.

The club is closed tonight and will be closed until . . . There was a fight over there last night. I think I stayed here last night. Glad I didn't go because I hate to be involved in that sort of thing. There was a little racial bit in it too, and that's all we need over here. The situation is a little touchy over here with the negros. I judge people as individuals but sometimes it's hard not to think in term of groups when they group together and get belligerent. I don't think you've every run up against that sort of thing, but I've seen too much of it. A lot of them are from the big cities where they ran around in gangs as kids and try to do the same thing over here. We've had a lot of trouble with negros refusing to obey orders and refusing to go to the field over here. I think the main problem is that they get in groups like that and get all steamed up and feeling like someone is trying to give them a hard time. The bad part is a good guy will get in the group and go bad with the rest. Integration is a 2 way street and as long as they form their own gangs and isolate themselves there will be prejudice and hard feelings. They as individuals do just as good as anyone else and as individuals I consider anyone just another person. Many are treated as a group because they feel safer in a group and don't want to be individuals. This racial problem will never be solved until people from all sides learn that people are not niggers, whites, splibs, chucks, kikes, wops, polaks, etc., etc, but people. Agree?

Forgive me for giving a sermon but I've seen so much of this sort of thing in the service. I just hope you'll never get to see it. It's not really very nice.

Think I've started to gain my weight back. I made up my mind that I'm not going to be skinny when I see you again. I go to chow and eat whether it's good or not. I weighed the other day and only down about 3 of 4 pounds from what I was when I left you. It sure will be good to come home and eat some of your good cooking instead of this stuff. Then I'll enjoy life again and we'll be together for the rest of our lives – and that's a pretty long time – Do you think you'll be able to stand me for that long?

Love
Gary

Day 39
101 Days Left
Maxie's pictures keep me going. Bugs and more bugs

Thurs.
Dear Maxie,

Today is the second day in a row that I haven't gotten a letter from you and I'm starting to get a little depressed. No letter mail at all came in today and I didn't get one yesterday. It's pretty hard to have a day pass over here without a letter from you, much less two in a row. I hope tomorrow will be better and that I'll get a couple of letters – I need some to cheer me up.

I think that the only thing that keeps me going now is your pictures. I can't express how much good they do me. Just to be able to say that I'll be coming home to the beautiful woman in the pictures makes life over here worth living. It will be all over in a little over 5 months now. It's hard to believe that the month of August is already half over. Where did it go? I hope the rest of the five months will fly by – I need to be home in your arms.

It hasn't rained today but did sprinkle a bit tonite. I don't know where all the bugs came from all of a sudden, but they did. I had planned to do a little work tonite while it's cool, but I got under my mosquito net as quickly as possible because the bugs flocked around the light where I was working. I'm grateful for this net because now I can write letters and not have to worry about them.

It's finally started raining – it took long enough. It's a relief because it has been so humid. I still wish that I could hold you in the rain. Listening to the rain on the tent makes me terribly lonely. I miss you, Maxie. I love you.

Love,
Gary



Re-creation of my
locker in Dong Ha.
Ammo box
compliments of **SLO**
Camp N' Pack of San
Luis Obispo, CA

Day 40
100 Days Left
Busy day, 11 new people. Hungry.

Tues

Dear Maxie,

Another very busy day. I hope this slacks off pretty soon because we're all getting tired. We got 11 new people today and have to work their paperwork up tomorrow. I hope this is the last bunch for a while.

Didn't get a letter from you again today – second day in a row. Hope everything is ok. I'll be so glad when we're together and we won't have to wait 10 days for an answer to a question. It's kinda bad like this because things keep coming up long after they should have been forgotten. I've decided that it's hard being away from you and I miss you very much.

You said something in one of your letters about my having lost weight from the way I looked in one of my pictures. I don't think I'll lose any more, but I won't gain an either. You said for me to eat more – I wish I could but there's not that much to eat here. I eat what I can and usually go to bed hungry. As soon as I get back, I'll gain weight fast because I don't plan to be hungry again. Be prepared for me to eat a lot of midnight snacks. It may take me a while to get used to eating big meals – but I doubt it. Funny that I should be writing about food, but I really look forward to eating your cooking.

We didn't have any incoming today – I heard that they got the guns. Just lots of work and lots of dust and heat. I almost wish that it would start raining again to cool things off. I'm sorry if my letters are a little lifeless now but that's exactly how I feel. School work will be a welcome relief after this. I'll be so glad when it's over and I can be with you again.

I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 41
99 Days Left
We all chipped in \$15 for typewriter for condolence letters

July 1

Dear Maxie,

Forgive the pink paper and my handwriting but the lights are out and I couldn't find any other paper. It's pretty hard to write by candlelight because my hand makes a shadow.

Got two beautiful letters from you today. Gee, it does me good to hear from you and to know that you're still there waiting for me. Knowing that you are waiting gives me that much more reason to get this over with as soon as possible and get home to you where I belong. All I ask is that you wait for me, hon, and never stop loving me because I'll never stop loving you.

About R&R – I'm not going. I'll live when I'm with you again and not until period.

I mailed you a check today for \$672 – wish it could be that big every month. How much will we have saved now? I figure around a thousand - am I right? I came out pretty well on my spending money this month. I drew \$30 cash plus \$10 Larry owed me. We all chipped in \$15 for a new typewriter for work that has to be done well in the office – like condolence letters. It cost \$74 and types great – it's an Underwood portable – but a really good one. I may buy out the other shares and bring it home with me. What do you think? We agreed that whoever wanted to buy it out would pay \$10 a share instead of \$15 which would mean getting it for \$55. I might need it in school. I also spent a couple of dollars and bought a case of orange juice – it's a lot better than cokes. Still I should have enough money to make though the month.

G-d how did I ever get so carried away – I meant to write a nice short letter and go to bed but it just doesn't work that way when I get to thinking about you. Guess you do something to me. I miss you terribly. Damn I'll love to be holding you now instead of sleeping by myself. I love you. I love you, Mrs. Canant.

Hubby

Day 42
98 Days Left
110 pounds of steak!

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

Where do I start? I guess to say that I love you would be a good place. I do, hon, I miss you very much. Seems like January will never hurry up and get here. At least July will be gone soon. Guess we'll look at this time later and laugh, but not now. It's not funny now.

For once tonite I had enough to eat. One of the guys stole 110 pounds of fresh steak and we ate pretty well tonight. As a matter of fact I ate all I could hold. How long has it been since I had enough to eat? It's sure going to be great to get back to your great cooking. I really look forward to that – you're going to have to fatten me up again. Not too fat. After we ate, it rained. Larry and I put on bathing suits and sat out in the rain for about half an hour. It felt good because it was terribly hot today. It got so hot it was almost unbearable. Wonder how long this heat will last.



Grade B Beef to everyone else, a feast for us.

Can't wait to start our own life. I was thinking that we'll be starting in February when it's cold in Alabama and you may even get to see some decent snow. Do you have cold feet in the winter? They won't stay cold too long with me. I may have a little trouble adjusting to the cold after being over here so you'll have to keep me warm at night – think you could do that? I'll need a lot of love and warmth and am depending on you – hot one.

Continued

Day 42
Continued
110 pounds of steak!

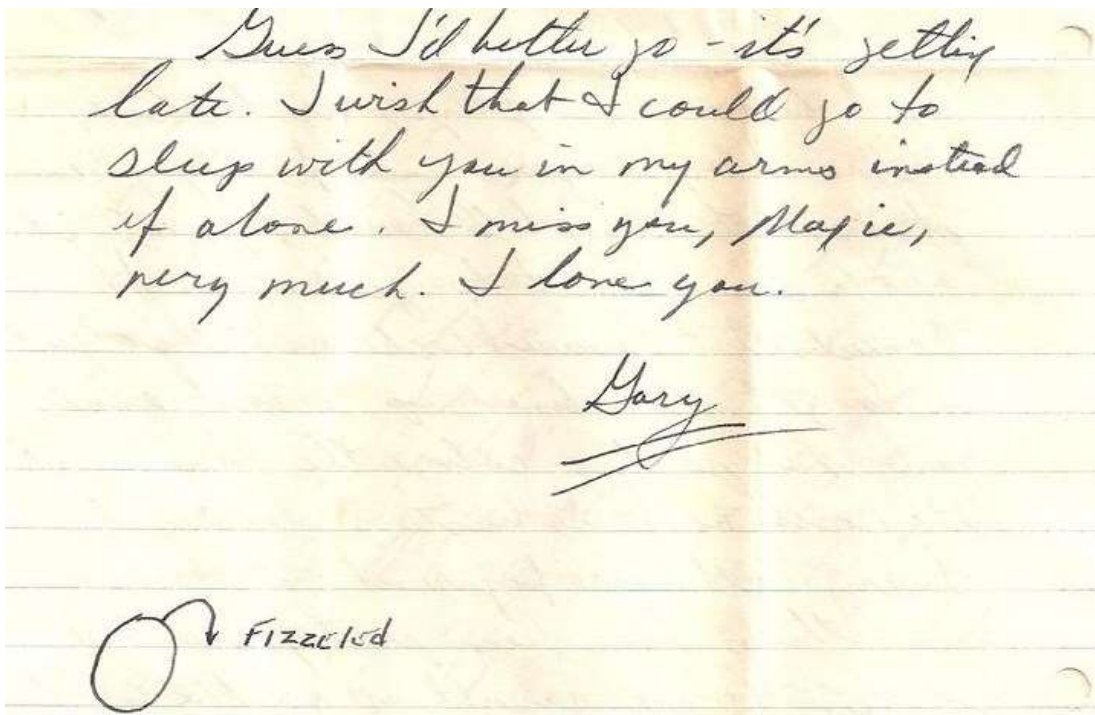
We've been playing with those damn blocks again and finally figured it out. Larry still hasn't figured it out and is about to go crazy. It consists of 4 square blocks and the object is to get them lined up so that each row has no two colors the same in it. It's really a brain buster. Wonder if Larry will ever figure it out.

Things have been pretty quiet around here. We're caught up on the work and will stay that way until something happens – which I hope doesn't. We don't really have that much to do since we haven't had any casualties lately. The routine stuff goes pretty fast. I'm learning to type better and can do the diary in no time now. The rest of the guys in the office know their jobs pretty well so most things go without a hitch.

Guess I'd better go – it's getting late. I wish I could go to sleep with you in my arms instead of alone. I miss you, Maxie, very much. I love you.

Gary

Fizzled.

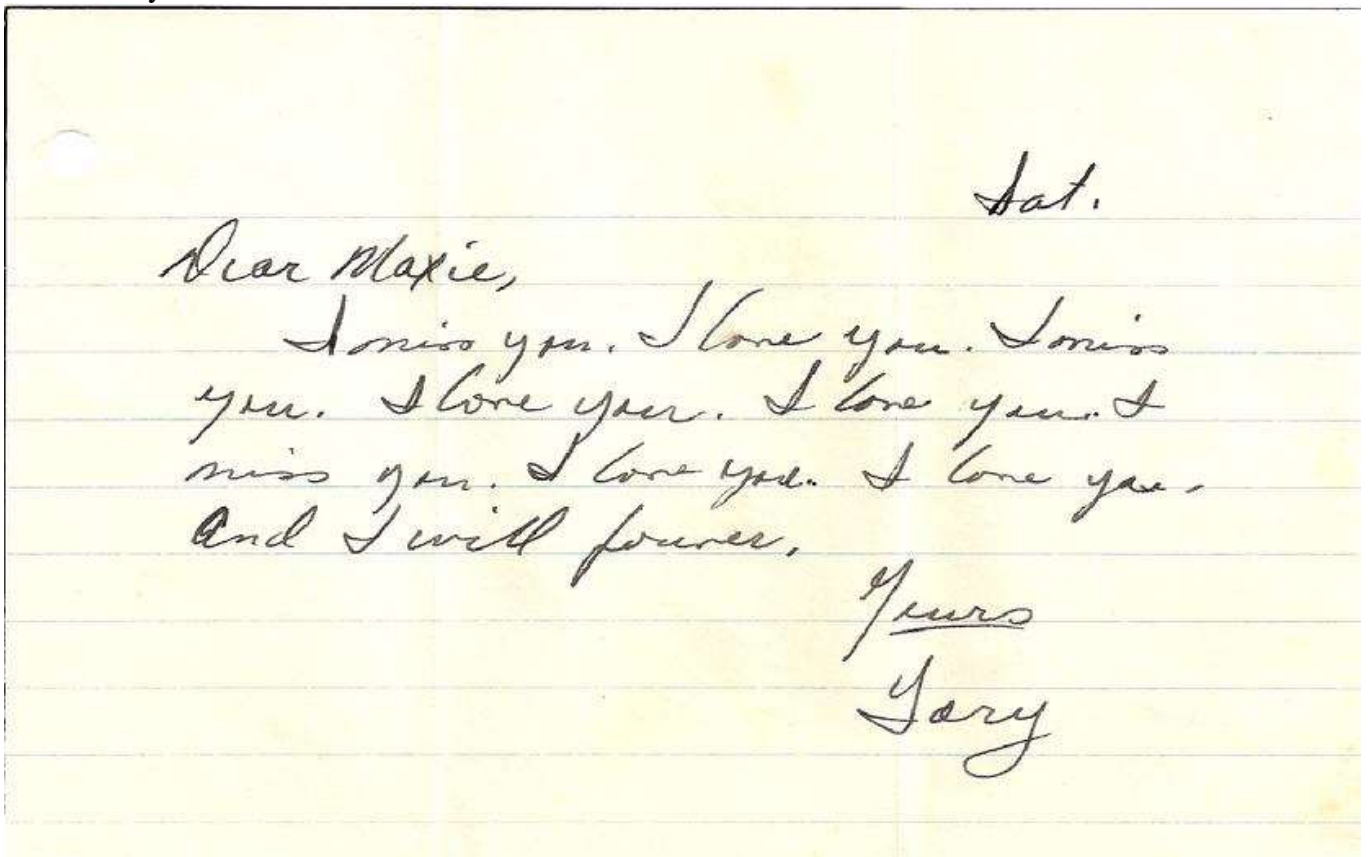


Day 43
97 Days Left
I love you and I will forever

Sat.
Dear Maxie,

I miss you. I love you. I miss you. I love you. I love you. I miss you. I love you. I love you. And I will forever.

Yours
Gary



Day 44
96 Days Left
I sent Maxie a roll of film



Continued

Day 44
Continued
I sent Maxie a roll of film



Continued

Day 44
Continued
I sent Maxie a roll of film



Day 45

95 Days Left

No mail today. Maxie fears the worst.

Maxie had the film developed and had a panic attack. She thought that I had been killed in the explosions. Her mother tried to reassure her that since she got the roll of film and that I had to be ok. She wasn't sure. To make matters worse, no mail came today.

Day 46
94 Days Left

Maxie finally gets a letter that explains the pictures of the dump.

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbas! I lit some candles tonight as best I could. Haven't gotten a letter from you for the last two days. Guess the mail system is just messed up. It's still a bad day when I don't get a letter from you. Hope everything is OK. I feel so much better when I get a letter from you and know that you are all right.

I would have written you last night, but I think when you develop the film I'm sending you'll understand why. We had incoming yesterday at a little after 4 P.M. There were only about 10 or 12 rounds but one of them hit the main ammunition dump about a mile away which blew up all night and even blew some this morning. There were some huge and I mean big explosions and even this far away we got shrapnel and shock waves. A large piece of metal went thru the tent next door and tore hell out of the tent. Don't worry - I was in a trench. The shock waves made our tent a mess - broken coffee cups, over turned the coffee pot, papers flew all over the place and generally messed things up. There weren't any people really hurt around here - a couple got cuts in the arm by flying metal. Don't know how many were hurt near the dump - but did hear that at least one was killed. Someone should have his head examined for putting all of that stuff in one place - I heard that about \$3 million worth of ammo went up last night. Hurry up and get the pictures developed - I want to see them. There are a few mushroom shaped clouds from the big ones - hope they turn out.

I've been busy as hell lately and it's been hot and I haven't gotten a letter from you. Other than that, everything is ok.

Found out how much money I'll be drawing this month - \$702. Am going to take \$30 in cash for myself and send a check for the rest to you. Your check might have been included in that - I don't know. If you don't get a check next month I'm going to write and find out why. We'll get what's coming one way or the other, so don't worry.

I miss you, hon. This place is really bad and I'm very lonely. Just thinking about it makes me lonely. It hurts to know how happy we were and to be so miserable over here. I love you.

Yours,

Gary

Send food. - I'm about to starve - the chow is horrible. I don't really need anything else now - except love. I'm hungry for love and for food. Am too lonely to really be horny now. I just need to be with you more than anything.

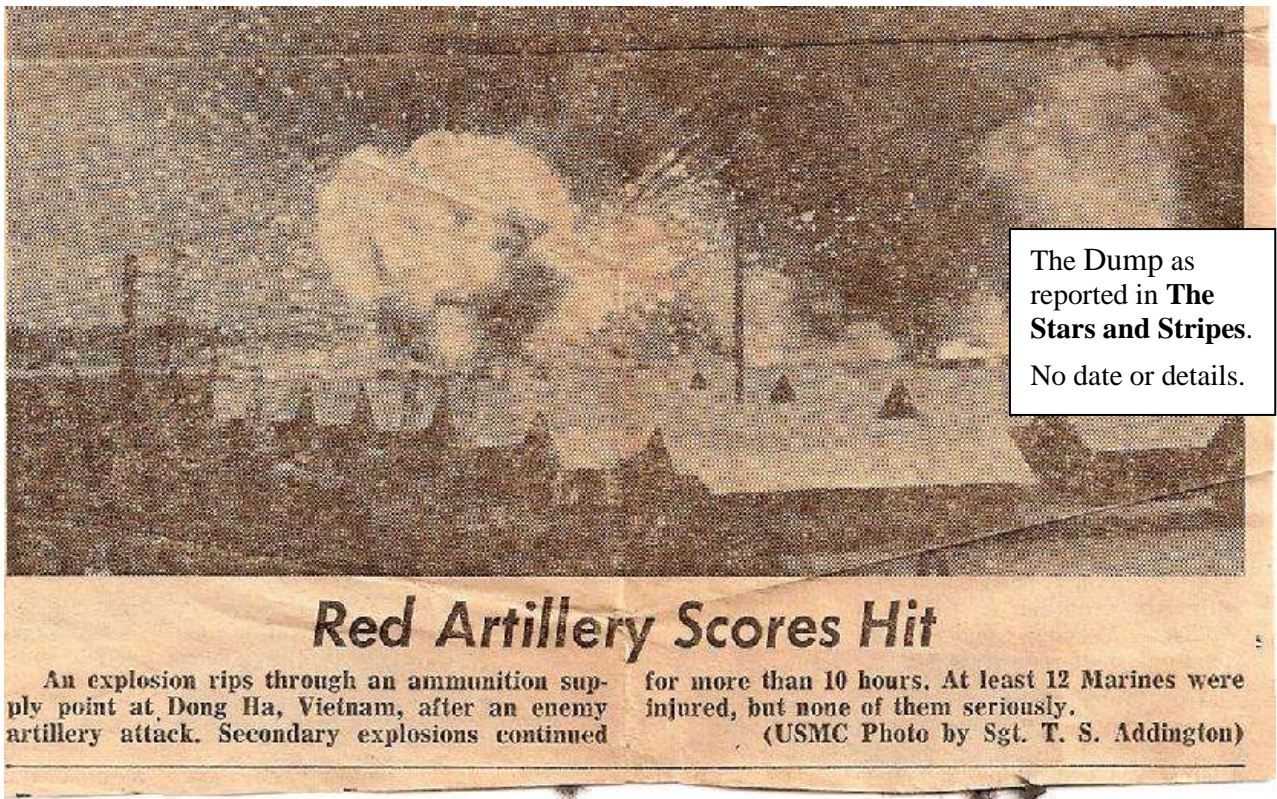
Day 47
93 Days Left
The Dump is finally mentioned in the U.S. newspapers
Fri

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbas. I had completely forgotten what day it is until I started to write to you. We won't forget once we start a home together. I promise.

I got three letters from you today to make up for the two days that you didn't get any mail. Sounds like you had it a little rough too – going three days without a letter. It's not because I'm not writing because I write every night (I skipped one night when we had incoming) Maybe that's why you didn't get mail that Friday.

What did the papers say about Dong Ha anyway? All we get for a newspaper is "The Stars and Stripes" which is a horrible newspaper. It didn't have anything about the dump blowing until about a month after it happened and then didn't tell what date it was. Still, I don't blame you for being worried. I was a little worried myself while those big bullets were flying around. It's a funny feeling to be shot at – intentionally. Artillery is so impersonal. At least once you hear the round go by, you're safe. It's the one you don't hear. Enough of that, I don't want to make you worry more. I just want to let you know that I don't think you're silly for worrying – I do myself at times. I'll be so happy when we're together again.



Continued

Day 47

Continued

The Dump is finally mentioned in the U.S. newspapers

I finally gave up and sprayed the bugs. The net keeps most of them out but there are always a few little ones that get through and worry me to death. It's terribly hard to concentrate on writing a letter and fight them too. When I get home I hope I never see another bug. I hate them.

About your blue letter that you wrote Saturday nite, yes, I can read between the lines. I laid out for a couple of hours tonite looking at the stars and thinking about it. I get terribly lonely at times too, hon. I miss you and your gentle kiss. I miss things like that as much or more than you do. It's a wasted life away from you and I won't live again till I am with you again.

I love you, Maxie, and I always will. When I'm 90 years old and too old to even fizzle, I'll still love you. You can bet on that. As for right now, no one could love more than I love you. No words express my feelings any better than the simple "I love you."

Yours

Gary

According to the internet, the ammo dump at Dong Ha blew up on June 20, 1968

A whole 105mm howitzer shell blew from the dump and stuck in the ground next to our tent; it had flown for almost a mile. After the dump blew, our tent leaked like a sieve from the small pieces of shrapnel. We had to cover it with a tarp in rainy weather.

Gasoline was stored in large, rubber bladders near the ammo dump. When one of the bladders blew, there was a large flash just like when ammo blew, but the big boom shock wave never came. When the gasoline blew, it would make huge smoke rings in the sky.

When the large ammunition piles blew, we could see the flash first and knew there would be a large concussion soon. As soon as we saw one, we ducked into the trenches. We learned to stay down for a while, because soon after the flash, large pieces of shrapnel started flying by us. You could feel the large booms like someone slugged you in your stomach.

Day 48
92 Days Left
Larry's convoy ambush, terrible chow, the moon

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

I got three letters from you today. Wow! In your letters, the hurricane was just hitting Jax. Everything should be ok now. Hope so. About my being harsh about your letter on drinking – I'm sorry I made you feel bad; it just hit me wrong. About you planning to buy me a fridge or a fan – don't. Sometimes we get ice and the current isn't too good here for a fridge. As far as a fan – we already have two here in our office/home. Thank you for the idea. If you want to send me something – send FOOD. Chow is horrible here and anything different is great. Also send a lot of love. One thing you don't have to do is spend a lot of money on me – save it and we'll spend it together. We'll make up for everything when we're together again. O.K? Something nice would only get ruined over here anyway. That's why if I buy anything over her I'll send it directly home – ok?

There's a full moon out tonight. Seems funny that the moon shines the same over here as it does back in the states. Only lonelier. It's still beautiful and makes me miss you because I like to see beautiful things with you. No matter how much men fight, the moon still comes up and goes down, it still rains, the sun still shines only some guys don't get to see it anymore. It seems so useless – war in man made and peace is God made. Why do men fight? It really changes nothing.

Larry went on Convoy security and they got ambushed. He had my rifle and put it to good use. I'm just glad he wasn't hurt. I have to go day after tomorrow – hope it's quiet then.

Nothing's been happening around here. Just work and boredom. Damn I miss you. If I were with you now, I could care if time passed or not. As it is now time seems to drag and every day is an eternity without you. We'll definitely make up for lost time when we're together again. I've got a lot of kissing, hugging, laughing and mostly love to catch up on. We'll spend a lifetime making up for 8 month away from each other. Funny I miss sex, but miss just being with you more. I love you

Love,
Gary



Larry with my
“Made by Mattel”
M16 toy gun. We
missed our M14s.

Day 49
91 Days Left
172 days left. Monthly budget. Shaving

Thursday

Dear Maxie,

One more day of many down. I count 172 to Jan 7, when I figure that I will be leaving for the states. There is no way of knowing the exact day yet but it will be in January – around the middle. Wish I could give you a definite date for my being home but I can't. When January finally comes, I'll probably be a nervous wreck waiting for that very special day to come. I can even get a little excited about it now, even though it's a long way off. It's sure great know that this time I'll be coming home for good – that in less than six months my service will be completed and then I won't even have to worry about reserve meetings. What a relief! At least I'll be able to say "I did my share and it's over". No worrying about the draft or being called back to active duty. When I'm out they can't call me back except for a national emergency and I'll be the very last to go. After 2 years there's no calling me back. Sounds great because I've seen all of the military I want to see and will be perfectly happy to stay home with you – I never want to leave you again – never. Think how great it's going to be when we have our own home and later our family. It still sounds like a dream.

I'm doing pretty well on money this month – so far. I thought that \$15 for the typewriter would put me in a bind but I still have about \$8 left which is plenty. One reason I'm saving is that now I only go to the club about every third night. When I go I only spend about 60 cents a nite but that mounts up over the period of a month. I've found that it's pretty hard to judge how much money I'll need for a whole month. I never know what will come up. \$20 a month should be plenty as long as I don't leave Dong Ha. If I ever go to DaNang I'll spend a fortune on food and ice cream and ICED tea, not the lukewarm stuff we have here.

We've almost finished our patio. We put up stakes for our hammock today – it's nice to lie out there before it's dark and when it's cool – which isn't too often.

My moustache is doing fine – I've got about a week's growth now and it feels funny. It would be longer but I was half asleep one morning and forgot and shaved it off. Habit. I shouldn't do anything before 10 A.M., I'm getting like you. Odd? Five more minutes – please.

Damn I miss you, Maxie, it seems like the day will never get here when I'll be with you again. I love you.

Forever

Gary

Symptom – loneliness

Rx – A lifetime with Maxie, take four times daily with lots of love.

Caution: May become habit forming

Keep out of reach of children

Continued

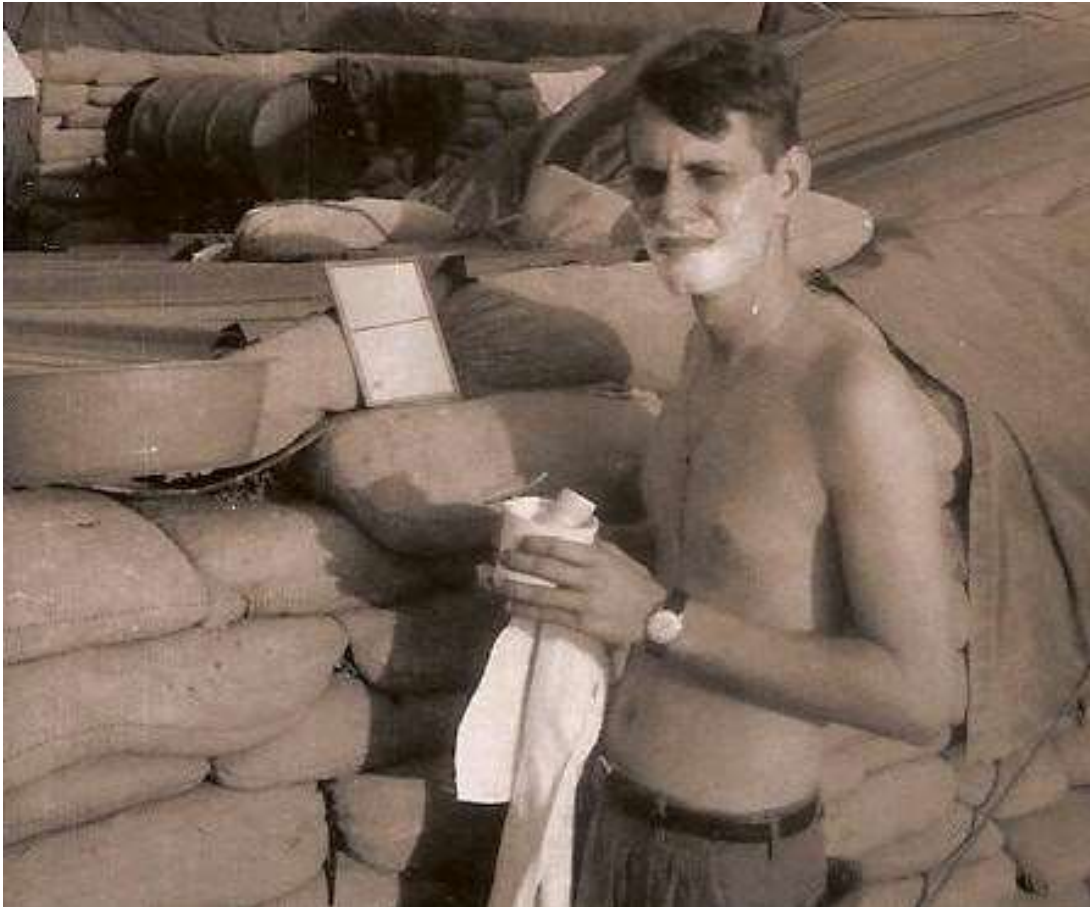
Day 49
Continued
172 days left. Monthly budget. Shaving

Accept no substitutes

Cost: All I have

Tax: Just a little more

Total: Love



Sorry I look so horrible. Just got up and was trying to shave out of a pan with cold water. The shaving place is anywhere I can find to put a mirror.

Day 50
90 Days Left
Maxie and Teddy. I go nuts.

Monday
Dear Maxie,

I'm looking at your picture with the teddy bear – wow! I've got to get home soon. Damn you look good. I should be there instead of your teddy bear. I want to be with you. To think I use to lie in bed you're standing next to. Can't wait to hold you again – lucky bear. I love you. I'm about to go out of my mind – if you can't tell.

Wow!

I'm getting terribly depressed for some reason, hon. Maybe it's looking at your picture and knowing that I can't be with you. I miss you terribly. So much it hurts. I need you Maxie, more than I can say. I love you completely,

Love,
Gary



Did you really think I would post the full picture of Maxie? Wrong.

P.S. Now Teddy has to stay in his chair; I get to hold Maxie.

Day 51
89 Days Left
High Finance, Picture of Maxie

Aug 1

Dear Maxie,

About my discharge date – I can't promise anything yet. Do plan on my being home with you between, well not exactly – sometime around the 20th. If my discharge date is the 24th, I'll leave here around the 7th and with luck will be out pretty quick. Once I get to the States, it will take about six days to get discharged. As far as the exact date, I can't say. I hope early!

I found out how I've been doing on the diary so far. For the month of June I had a 0.0% error, which is pretty hard to beat and the best in the battalion. The only trouble is that a perfect record for my first month gives me a lot to live up to. I plan to keep it up.

About your picture, hon, you've lost weight. Yup, my wife is looking good. Wish I could see for myself. I even like your hair (believe it or not). Damn, you look good. Lucky Jody getting to see you when I can't. I hope they draft him.



My Maxie

Mailed my pay home today so you should get it with this letter. About your allotment – it is included in the check. You may get one more bond – July was the last month. As far as I can figure, I'm getting almost my correct pay now, but won't be able to tell for sure until next month. This is how it stands:

Continued

Day 51
Continued
High Finance, Picture of Maxie

Base Pay	\$291
Combat Pay	\$65
Overseas Pay	\$16
Separations	\$30
Dependents Allowance	\$105
Total/month	\$507
	\$507
	-108
	\$399, which is what I got.

\$380 check to you and \$19 for me (wow!)

Taken out:

\$75	Car payment
19	bond (this is the last month)
12	Social security
2	Insurance (\$10,000)
108	Taken out

The only thing I'm not sure of is my separation pay (\$30 / month) for part of May and June. I have no way of knowing if it was paid to me without checking my pay record because my pay was so messed up then. I'll try to find out sometime.

Maxie, I miss you. I don't function well without you. I need you to smoothe the rough edges, to make me live and not exist. I love you very much, Maxie, and nothing or no one could ever make me love you any less or place our marriage on shakey ground. I'll always love you with all my heart, more than anything or anyone; nothing can change that. I'll be so happy when we can be one again and feel that peace that comes from knowing that we are one and that nothing can ever drive up apart. I love you completely.

Gary

Day 52
88 Days Left
USO Show!

Friday
Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbat. It's not much of a Shabbat over here, but at least it's quiet – that's something,

Saw my first USO show tonight - didn't even think they had them up this far. It was good - a group from Australia with a band, 3 dancers and a singer. The guy who MC'd the show was even Jewish! I asked him after the show because he said a few things about a Jewish accent.



Round eyed women!

Bob Hope never
made it up that far
north, close to the
DMZ.

Loved those Aussies

The girl even sang "Hava Nagila", but she wasn't Jewish. The only thing wrong was that the show was too short. Do you realize that's the first round eyed women I've seen since I've been here. It's sure good to see girls who speak English and don't have slant eyes, even though it brought back many memories and made me very lonely. One of the girls looked a little like you - she had coal black hair and brown eyes like you. It hurts being away from you, hon; it's easier to be a monk. The guys acted real great and didn't make any trouble so we may have more shows. It's funny, the guys are real coarse around here but act pretty good when women are around. Most of them have been isolated long enough to appreciate even seeing a woman - and try to act civilized.

I was interrupted – had to do some work – it comes up just about any time of the night or day. It wasn't much, still a pain. Just when I get settled down on something some weird things come up. It's still better than being in the bush.

Larry's finally writing Phebe again – he couldn't stand it any longer. He's not giving up – he still thinks about her a lot. I'll never give up on you. Talk about long letters – sometimes I get carried away myself and

Continued

Day 52
Continued
USO Show!

don't know when to stop. Guess I'd better close and get some sleep – it's getting late – wish I could go to bed with you instead of by myself. I'd like that (understatement) I miss you very, very much, Maxie. I'll love you for as long as I live. My wife.

Till (infinity sign)

Gary



From Australia

USO show my memory is not what it used to be, though I think the small blond chick was LITTLE PATTI dunno who the other one was, there was wild fire rumour going round at the time, LITTLE PATTI had no under wear on and the outfit was see thru, so I don't think even ONE Ozzie even saw the other chick, we only had eyes for Little Patti.

At the time, I sued to develop my own pics at the PX where they had a dark room,(helped fill the time) and decided to settle once an for all the debate whether she actually had nothing on underneath.

Blew up the pics for a close up and try as I may, could never establish via the pics whether it was true or not.

Mind you, it did provide us with subject matter to discuss at the Club of an evening, at least 6 months worth. HEH



Little Patti
did a
number
on the
Aussies

Day 53
87 Days Left
Incoming again.

7 Aug

Dear Maxie,

Happy anniversary! Four months today. I just wish that I could have been with you for the four months instead of being over here. We'll spend our forth year anniversary together because after I get home we'll never be apart again.

We had a great celebration today – incoming for the first time in a couple of weeks – or longer. Nothing really close, but close enough. I'm still a little jumpy and probably sleep under ground tonight. At least I'm not a jumpy as some – Larry takes off on the first round and doesn't appear for about half an hour. One guy here even jumps when the telephone rings. You should see this place when the first round comes in. Everybody knows the sound – a whistle followed by a ragged boom. Nobody has to say anything because it would be too late anyway because after about a second, everyone is in a trench. After you expect it, you can hear the guns shoot and have a few seconds before the rounds hit, so people get up and walk around (near a trench) talk and listen. Everybody curses when a chopper goes over because then you can't hear the "tube pop" (when the guns go off). It doesn't take long to be able to tell the difference between our artillery going out and theirs coming in. It's almost like a sixth sense. Don't worry about me because they aren't shooting for us but trying to find another ammo dump. We've got pretty good trenches around here, too.

So you had your first run in with prejudice. I feel for you because it took me a while to get used to the idea that it exists. One thing I'll say is that I've met some colored people in the service that I would take home and dare anyone to say anything. Some of them. I've been through a lot with them and they're no different than I am. Just wait to we get to Alabama, the place thrives on prejudice. It hurts to hear it, but it's there. I grew up in the midst of it and pray that I've outgrown it. It stinks and you'll see it and agree. To try to fight it would be like trying to hold the ocean. It's a viscous cycle and hard to break.

Man, I'm turning to a preacher tonight – forgive me for getting carried away.

I would love to be with you right now so I could hold you and kiss you. How great it's going to be when we're together again. Then we'll be one again and be happy again. I miss you, Maxie. I love you. Soon we'll be together in our own home and I'll live it because we'll be together as one. I love you and I always will.

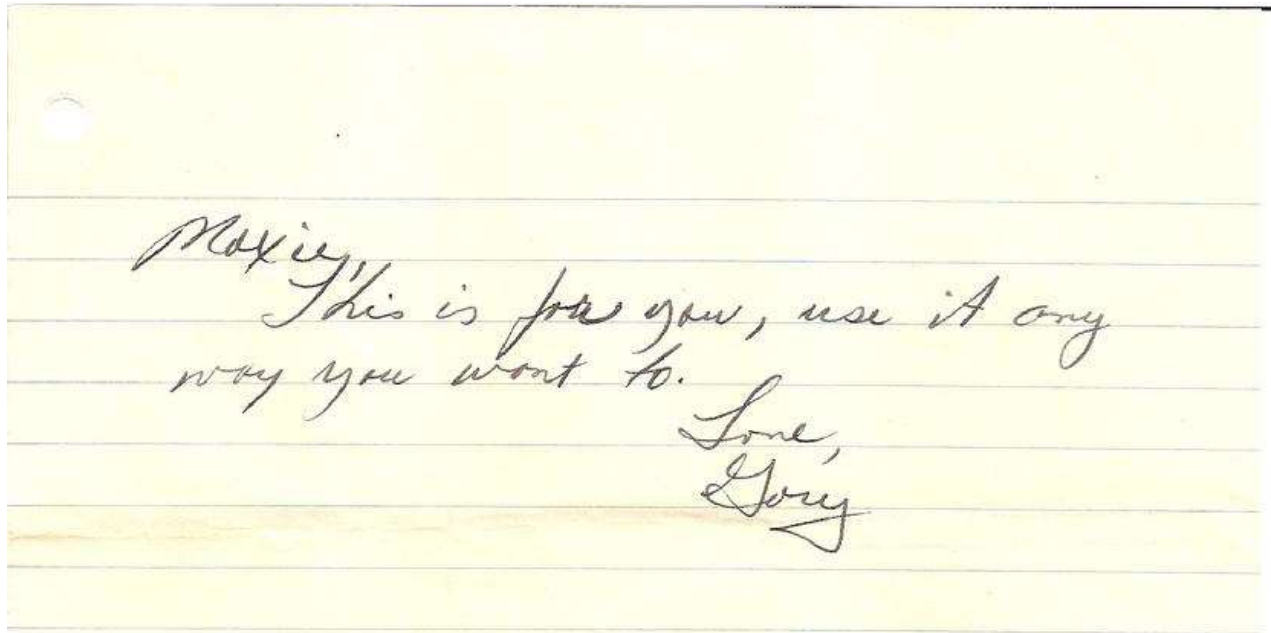
Love,
Gary

The sound of an artillery round going over is one that I will never forget; it sounds like the air being ripped apart. At times we would swear that we could read the serial numbers on the rounds going over; they were that close.

After a while, we knew the pattern of the NVA gunners; they would fire a volley and there would be a minute's pause before the next group of booms. As soon as the first group ended, we would run back into the tent to get our cigarettes and jump back into the trench. We chain smoked in the trenches until the incoming stopped.

Day 54
86 Days Left
This is for you

Maxie,
This is for you, use it any way you want to.
Love,
Gary



Maxie,
This is for you, use it any
way you want to.
Love,
Gary

I have no idea what I sent to Maxie with this letter.

Day 55
85 Days Left
Hungry. English Major. The Corps

Sunday
Dear Maxie,

I finally got two letters from you today – yea! It was starting to get to me – not hearing from you. I miss you too, hon! It seems like time is dragging by and like an eternity till I'll be with you again. You talked about the night we met and how I looked at you and where I stood – you have a very vivid memory, much better than mine. I remember some things about that night but I was so busy trying to get enough to eat for once that I wasn't as perceptive as you were. Forgive me.

I've been looking at the college catalogue again. I've decided against chemistry again, completely. I am thinking about a major in English (wow a change) and a minor in math. I would have to work hard for the English but would only need one more course for a minor in Math. I got to thinking about bending over test tubes again and don't like the idea at all. As for English, I like to read and will have to do plenty of it. I don't know what I could really do with a major in English but there is no need in studying chemistry just because there are good jobs in it if I don't like the courses – I would probably be unhappy doing that kind of work. I don't know yet what I plan to do but it has to be something I like, not something just to make money.

The food is really getting bad now. We haven't had a decent meal in about four days. The usual menu now is a couple of hot dogs and maybe bread if we're lucky. I had some soup and stuff, but ate my last can tonight. It's getting pretty bad when I can eat a meal and still be hungry. It's the first time I've really experienced hunger and I don't like it a bit. It's a hell of a feeling to be hungry and to not be able to get anything to eat. I hope that they do something about this mess hall soon before I lose too much more weight. It would be different if officers had to eat there but they have their own mess hall and don't care about ours. I'll be glad when I'm out of this outfit. I hate it.

I know you don't like for me to cut down the Corps but it does have a lot of things to cut down and after almost four years of it, I've had more than enough. All I want is to be free, to be home, to be with you, to be able to run my own life, to decide where I want to live and where we will go and where I'll work etc. I could go on and on. Maybe I'll appreciate things more now that I took for granted before. If the Corps has done anything for me, it's made me appreciate my freedom because it took it away. It's a hell of a feeling to be told your every move by an impersonal machine. I just want to live my life with you as my wife as it should be. That can't be asking too much. If I want to let my hair grow down the middle of my back, I don't want anyone to tell me I'll go to jail for it. I don't want to let it grow that long but it's the principle of the whole thing. I just want for us to be able to live our own lives in peace and to be happy. We'll be happy, hon, because once I'm with you again, I'll forget all of this. All I need is to be with you and everything will be great again. Life without you is hard and cold. Life with you is – life. I love you.

Stay sweet.

Love
Gary

P.S. Happy 5th month, one day anniversary

Day 56
84 Days Left
25 cent women

Sunday

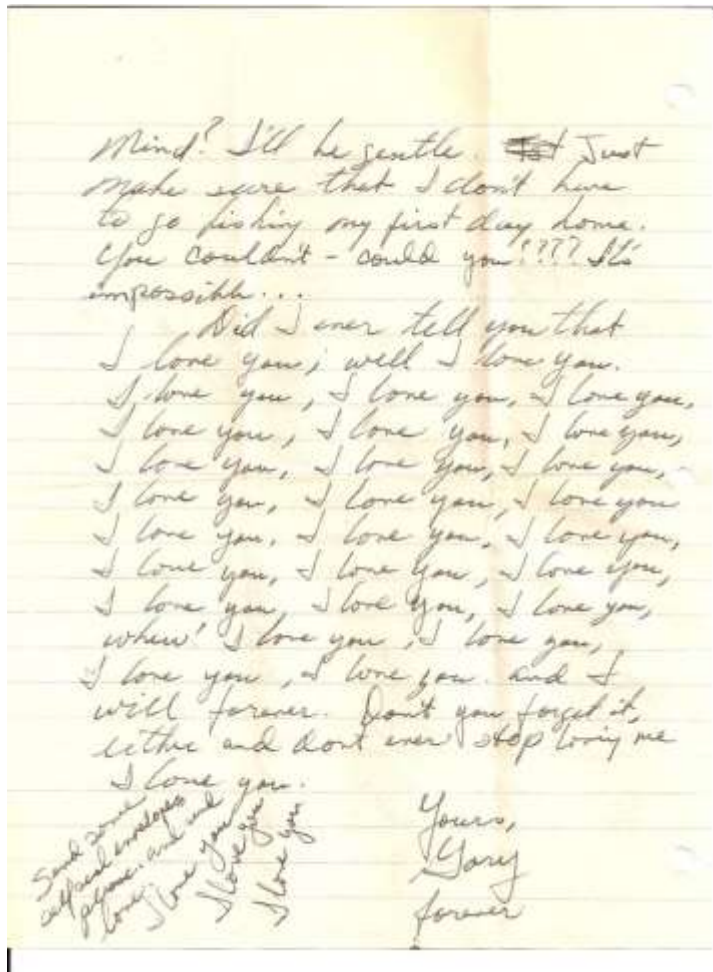
Dear Maxie,

I got your card from the 27th. Sure is good to hear from you – a day without a letter from you is a wasted day. A day away from you is wasted anyway, but at least when I get a letter, it brightens the day a little.

Today has been a great Sunday – at least we got the afternoon off. We got a new commanding officer, who doesn't seem too bad and a new 1st Sgt, maybe who'll be in charge of the office here. I hope he isn't too bad; doesn't seem so right now.

The weather has gotten a little cooler here because it's been raining around here. It's muddy around here, but I don't mind that too much. It's better to be a little dirty than burning up.

I start a 3 day school for administrative work. I've doing this job for a while and am finally going to school for it. At least it will be a break from the routine. I need something to pass the time a little faster here – it seems to kinda drag on.



Continued

Day 56
Continued
25 cent women

Have been trying to pick up something on the radio tonite. There's only English speaking station – the official one. The rest of the stations have that weird oriental music that I can do without. About your 25 cent women – I haven't even seen or heard about any 1 cent women. In other words there aren't any here. The closest thing we have to a woman is your picture and some pinups. As for the Vietnamese women – no thanks. I'll wait for my Maxie. The nearest hamlet is about 5 miles from here and I wouldn't even care to go there – it stinks.

To tell you the truth – I'm about to go out of my mind. I'll be gentle. Just make sure that I don't have to go fishing my first day home. You couldn't – could you???? It's impossible

Did I tell you that I love you. Repeated for the rest of the page.

Send some self seal envelopes please and send love.

Your

Gary

Forever.

What we saw on the road was a society that had been ravaged by years of war. Permanent buildings all had bullet scars from previous battles. Some of the people lived in huts with thatched roofs and walls covered with C ration boxes. They were mostly farmers who farmed by hand, like they had done for centuries. There were roadside stands all along the roads. Some of them would sell booze in bottles with American brands on the labels. We found out that they would cut the bottom out of the bottle and replace the whiskey with their native brew. The replaced bottle bottom was then carefully sealed with wax and was difficult to detect. We didn't buy it because we didn't trust it. We did not trust the natives because you could never tell who was friendly and who was the enemy when night fell (sometimes it was the same person). Since we didn't speak their language or understand their customs, it all seemed strange and foreign

Day 57
83 Days Left
Convoy to Ca Lu, Fathers Day card?

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbes. I love you. It's funny – I didn't even remember that it was Friday until I started to write you. Days are so much the same here that it's hard to keep track.

So you sent me a Father's Day card. At first I thought you were trying to tell me something – but that's impossible? Thank you for the thought.

At least today was a little different. We spent the morning rearranging the office. It does look a little better and gives us more room now. I didn't get through with my work until about 8 P.M. tonite. I don't really mind because it's a lot easier to work when it's quiet and there aren't a bunch of other people around. Tomorrow I have to ride a convoy up to Ca Lu – about 5 miles from Khe Sanh. Hope we don't run into anything – it's been quiet for the past couple of days. Wish me luck.

I submitted my application for the school cut today. I should get an answer pretty soon. Like I said before, I don't think I can get out as early as I'd planned, so will be pretty rushed when I get home. The semester doesn't begin until Feb 3, so I should be leaving here around the first week in January. That means we're going to have to get to Alabama pretty quick and get a place to stay. I only wish that we could have more time together before I have to start school. At least we will be living together and I guess that is enough – I know it is. Damn I miss you, Maxie. I married you to be with you, not half a world away from you. I love you.

Forever,

Gary



A truck in a
convoy on
Route 9.

There weren't
any McDonalds
along the road.

Day 58
82 Days Left
New Ho Chi Minh's

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

Got two letters, one bank card and a package from you today. Wow! Jackpot. The rum cake was a little crushed but still fresh. Haven't eaten it yet, but I did taste it - it's good. Thank you, hon, and thank you for the sheets. Some things like that are almost impossible to get around here. Thank you again. I'll see that everything gets put to good use. I love you.

Well, my school's over. I scored the 2nd highest in the class. Kinda hate to see it end - I have to back to work now. What a bore. Being away for a couple of days was nice. Wish I could get away to Florida to see my wife for a couple of years - that would really be a break.

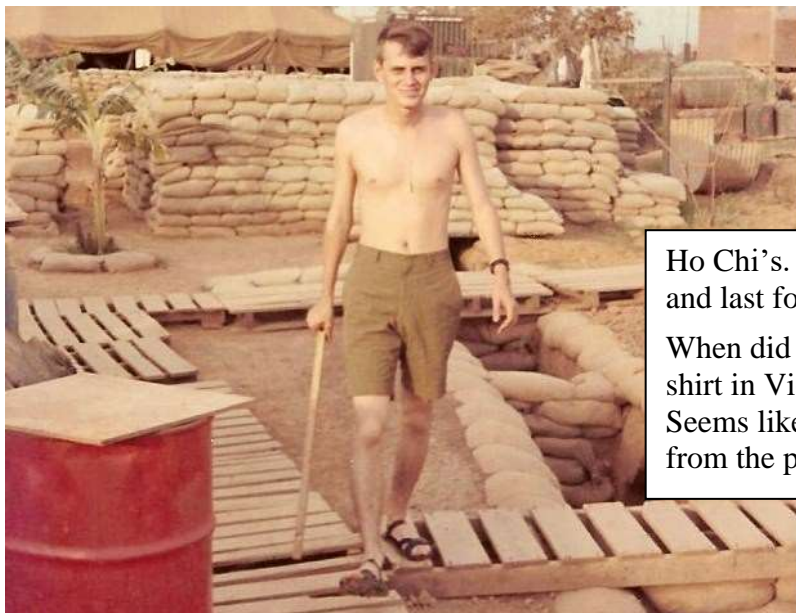
Getting mail from you today made my day. Have I ever told you how good it does to get a letter from you? I never get tired of hearing that you love me. It's what I live for - want to see you again.

Am watching the office. Someone has to be here at all times, so it's my night to miss the movie. It's quiet and kinda cool and I enjoy evenings like this when I can write you without being interrupted. Just wish that I could be with you now and listen to the quiet with my love.

Bought me a pair of Ho Chi Minh's today to wear around here. In case you don't know - those are sandals made by the Vietnamese out of tires cut up for the soles and inner tubes cut up for the straps. They're really handy and don't guess that I could ever wear them out. They're even water proof.

I know I ought to close and get some sleep, but I don't want to stop writing to you. Let me tell you just one more time that I love you. It's not fair for everyone else to get to talk to you and see you when I can't. Lucky bastards. I love you.

Forever,
Gary



Ho Chi's. Waterproof
and last forever.

When did I wear a
shirt in Vietnam?
Seems like never
from the pictures.

Day 59
81 Days Left
A Conversation. What am I, a walking calendar?

Conversation

Hey, man.

Yeah

What day of the week is it?

Monday, I think.

Oh, I thought it was Tuesday.

Hey, man

Yeah

How many days you got to go?

243

Yeah, I've got 41

Getting short, huh?

Yeah!

Hey, man

Yeah

You sure it's Monday?

Hell, I don't know. What do you think I am, a walking calendar?

Day 60
80 Days Left
Getting Drunk

Sat Nite

Dear Maxie,

It's hard to believe that it's Saturday night – it's not different from any other night. Every day here seems just like the other. In a way it's good because I lose track of the days and they seem to pass faster that way. I miss you.

I got pretty drunk tonight. It was great to be away from here for a while if only in my mind. I hate to have to drink to escape the reality of this place. When I'm with you, there's no such thing as trying to escape because then I'm happy and drink has no purpose. That's why you don't have to worry about my drinking when I get back to you. Then I will stop drinking because then there will be no need to drink at all. Now I'm away from you, I have a lot of reasons to lose myself and try to forget. It's a hell of a spot to be in and I would much rather be with you. I miss you very much. Please write to me. I didn't think that I needed your letters so much, but I do. I also need you, but that will have to wait for a while – to the 20th? Of December.

Have you been getting my letters every day? Hope so, I've been trying to write daily since I've been here. I don't care if I write anyone else as long as I write you as often as possible. You're my wife and life and I need to write to you. Please write me as much as possible.

I love you.

Gary

Day 61
79 Days Left
Maxie Bikini. At the club, got unable

Sunday Morn

Dear Maxie,

Wow! The latest two pictures in a bikini. Buy it. You couldn't look better. Yes, I can tell that you've lost weight. You're beautiful. I love you.

Love

Gary

P.S. I would have written you a nice long letter last night, but the club opened and I got a little unable. Will write later today.



Day 62
78 Days Left
Lonely rain

Wed

Dear Maxie,

This is the second night in a row it's been raining like hell. Guess that the monsoon is about to start and it will rain for quite a while. Didn't get a letter from you today – guess it might be the weather. This weather isn't good for anything except sleeping and making love to you. (I'd rather do the latter) but I guess I'll have to sleep for now since I'm away from you. This is lonely weather because it reminds me of the times we spent together when it was raining. I only hope that we get a place that doesn't leak because this tent leaks like mad. I had to put a cover over my rack to keep the water from dripping on me tonite. Hope we don't have to worry about leaks when we get our own home.

The tent leaked everywhere from the shrapnel holes after the dump blew up in Dong Ha.

It's definite now that we are moving to Quang Tri. We got a lot of stuff to move, looks like we're got some work ahead of us. We're going to move everything possible, even the wood we stole. We are moving into pre-fab "Hardbacks" instead of tents, and they shouldn't leak so bad but will be smaller and harder to heat this winter. At least we will be out of the range of the big artillery across the DMZ, which is a relief. Dong Ha is only about 12 miles from the DMZ and Quang Tri is about 17; every little bit helps. Don't worry about my address changing because the mail goes to the company, no matter where it is.

You said something before about me writing my congressman about getting out earlier. A sgt here in the company did write his congressman about the same thing and they wrote us about it. That's the way it works and now he'll have to do the same thing I'm doing. If it doesn't come through them I'll have a reason to write.

Guess I'll go to bed now and listen to the rain. I sure will be glad when I don't have to sleep alone any longer. I'd love to have your head on my shoulder tonite. I miss you, hon, I miss waking up to you. I miss you. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 63
77 Days Left
Jody. Still trying to steal our women

Thursday

Dear Maxie,

Another day gone – one more day that I won't have to do over again. One day closer to being with you. Time is going slow, but it's going – I just wish that I could hurry it up – some way to make the next six months pass so fast that it would seem like six days. Every day is so long and there are so many long days before I'm through with this madness.

So you're planning on getting a bikini – sounds like you're really looking great. It's just unfair for you to look so good without me around to see you. Do wish that you would send me a couple of pictures – you've got my curiosity up now. Bet you look great. You'll have to fatten me up when I get home – you'll probably have to after my tour over here. One thing there, beautiful, don't look so good that you get picked up by Jody or Zeke or any of those draft dodgers and other non-combatants who are trying to take over all the girls (and women) in the country while we're over here – Hear? Jody's sneaky. He's easy to spot – he's got long hair, drives a big new car, is a smooth operator and isn't over here. I think you recognize the type. Just can't wait for the SOB to get drafted and come over here – it'll serve him right. When I get home and give you the greatest loving you've ever had and kiss you from head to toe and sweep you into bed and gently make love to you and have a cigarette afterwards with you and take a shower with you and take you back to bed and do it all over again, there won't be a Jody or Zeke in the whole world that will stand a chance – just watch and see. Damn, I'm getting horny just talking about it. We're going to lot of time to make up for, hon, and I plan to make up for every second that I've been away from you, even if it takes me a lifetime to do it, and we'll have a lifetime together to try to make up for lost time. You are my love and without you I'm not complete and with you I'm everything. I love you.

Yours,

Gary

I understand that Jody is still alive and stealing our women while we go off to war.

*Ain't no use in goin home,
Jody's got your girl and gone.
Ain't no use in goin back,
Jody's got your Cadillac,
Ain't no use in feeling blue,
Jody's took your checkbook too.*

Day 64
76 Days Left
Typhoon. Bunkers cave in

Friday

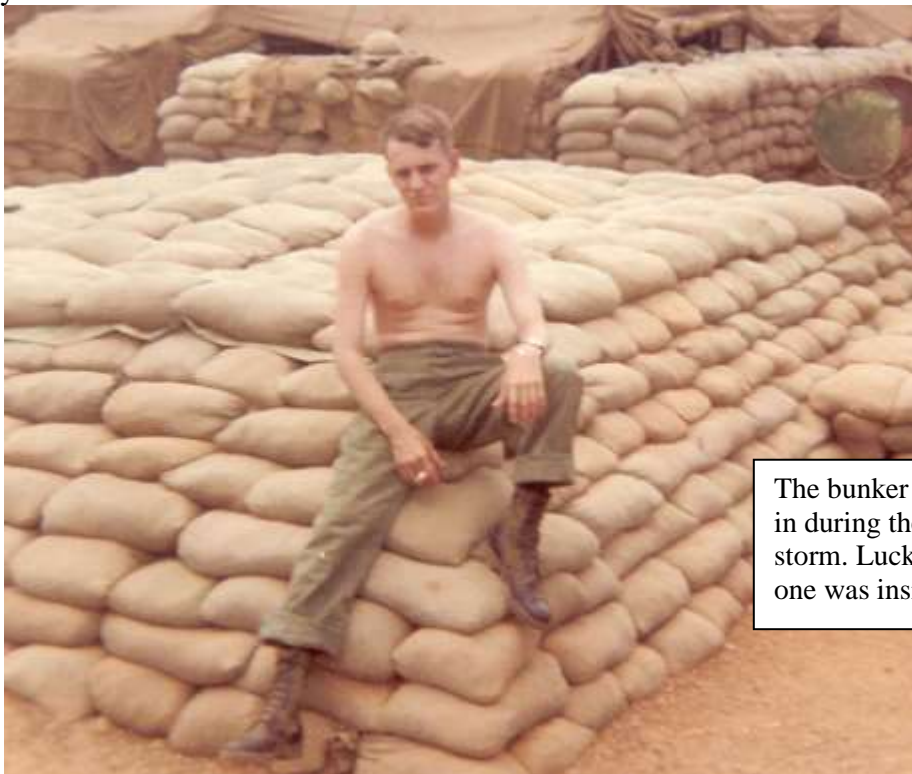
Dear Maxie,

Good Shabos.

Tonight makes the third day in a row it's been raining hard. We had a typhoon come close by and we got a good bit of rain and wind, and therefore no mail for the past three days. Some planes came in today when it slacked up a bit so I hope to get a letter or two from you tomorrow. You may get my letters a little late because no mail could go out of here either. It's been pretty miserable around here – everything is flooded. We have to go outside for chow and to even go to the bathroom. We had to keep a plastic cover over the tent because it leaked in a zillion places when it rains hard, which it did. It rained so hard that some of our bunkers caved in and some of the sand bag walls fell down. It's a good thing we're moving because this place is a mess and it would take a lot of work to get it fixed up again. This is the kind of weather that I would just love to lie in bed with you. It gets terribly lonely now because there's always the sound of rain on the tent that reminds me of times with you. I would feel so much better if I had gotten mail during the storm but none at all came in. If I can't be with you now, I at least need a letter from you to cheer me up. I miss you, Maxie, and I love you very much and need to be with you. I love you.

Love,

Gary



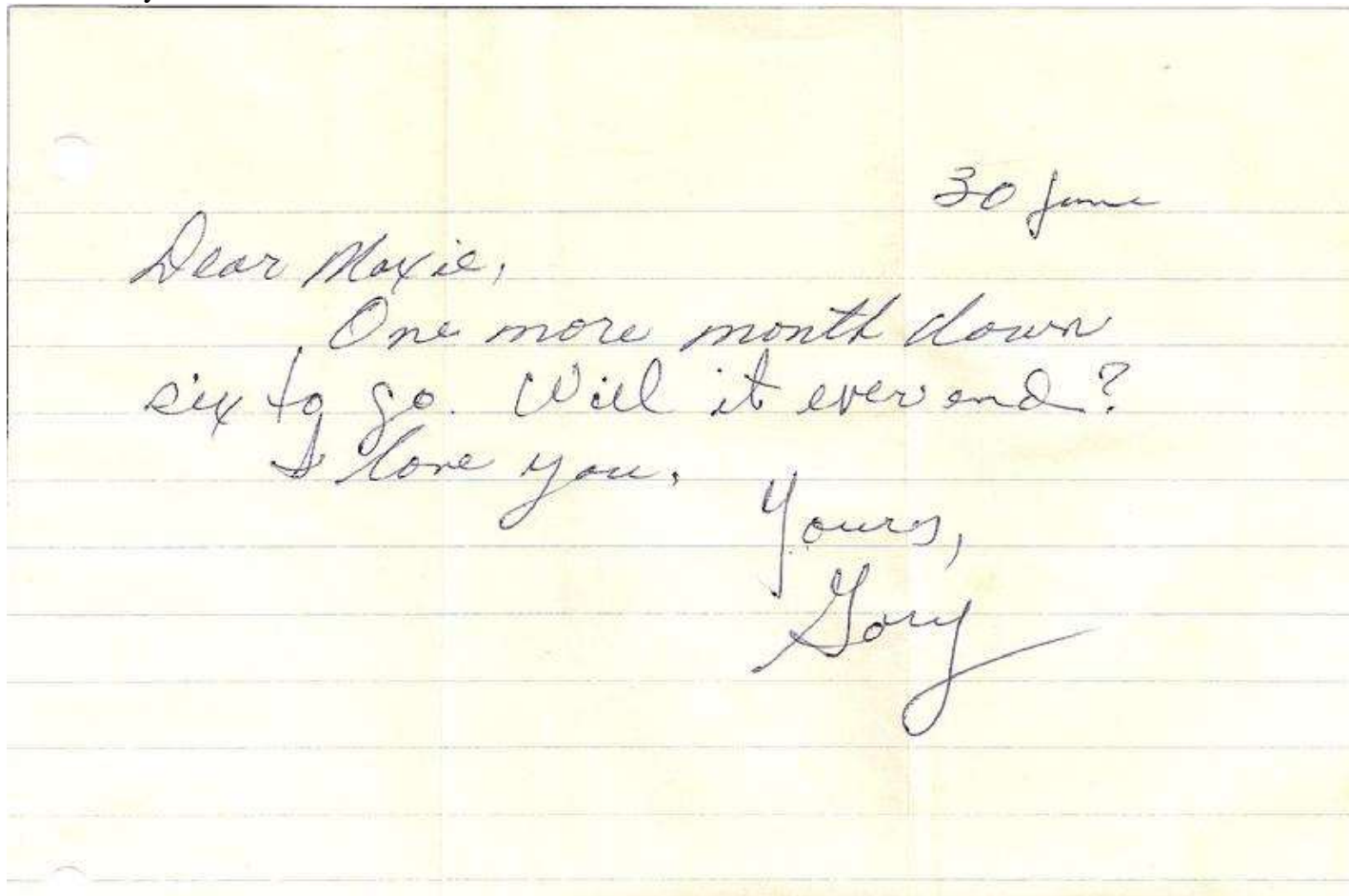
The bunker caved in during the storm. Luckily, no one was inside.

Day 65
75 Days Left
Will it ever end?

30 June
Dear Maxie,

One more month down, six to go. Will it ever end?
I love you.

Yours,
Gary



Day 66
74 Days Left
A little incoming. Short letter better than no letter.

Sat Morn

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbes.

I would have written last night but we had a little incoming when I started to write – nothing too close but enough.

Got a package from you yesterday but not letter again. Thank you very much for the food. Now I know what poppycock is – it's pretty good but I like you better.

Had a USO show last night – not as good as the other

Gotta go –mail's going out. I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 67
73 Days Left

One day we will be too old to have sex . . . And talk about how great it used to be

~~Mon~~ Sunday
Dear Maxie,

I love you.

How's that for starters? I got a depressed letter from you today. In it you had slept the night before in rollers and had a headache the whole day and the weather was cold and you missed me. Well, I don't have a headache because I didn't sleep in rollers last night, and it's not cold or even cool, but I miss you, too. This separation doesn't seem to be doing either of us a bit of good at all. I think what we both need is a lifetime of good loving together so we can grow old and be happy together. Just think, Maxie, one day we'll be too old to have sex (a long time from now) and then we can lie in bed together, talk about how great it used to be and pretend like hell! Funny that I should think about something like that now when I want to be with you so badly, but it just popped up.

There was something that I wanted to tell you but I can't think of it right now. Anyway, we've got a new mess hall now and the food is a little better although the lines are terribly long. Looks like I'm not going to lose too much weight over here; if I'm lucky I might even gain some. Don't want to gain too much because I want to give you a chance to fatten me up.

I lost weight down to 120 pounds. I'm 5 foot 8 inches tall, and that is skinny.

Guess I'd better get some sleep but let me say one more time – I love you.

Yours,
Gary

P.S. Try the coffee and see what you think of it – it's horrible

Maxie saved the C Ration coffee packet for me so we could share it when I got home. I did not think that was funny.

Day 68
72 Days Left
July 4th, rockets red flare. Underwear, or lack thereof. Tabasco
July 4

Dear Maxie,

Happy Fourth of July. You should see this place – everyone is shooting off different colored flares. We had some shot off around here and now have of couple of lifers walking around trying to find out who did it. Kill joys. Guess they're too old to go for that sort of thing. It's a holiday and we had to work all day – it's kinda nice to do something.

Got a couple of packages from mom today – candy, soup, other goodies and of all things, underwear. Guess she doesn't know that I don't wear any over here. I already have about six sets here and they're just sitting around gathering dust. Oh well, she means well, what should I do send them back for Dad or just keep them?

I've decided something – I'm going to eat this food no matter how bad it is. I don't want to be skinny when I come home to you. Sometimes I have to force myself to eat this stuff, but usually manage with lots of Tabasco sauce (sent more!!) I still can't bring myself to eat their breakfast, though, and I get so hungry by the time noon rolls around. I'll be so glad to be back with you again to get a decent breakfast. I love a good breakfast, but I can't get up and eat slop first off. Mornings are bad enough as they are – waking up to another lonely, boring day half a world away from my wife. It just ain't for me.



I went through a bottle of Tabasco in less than a week. It was the only way I could eat the food.

Got your letter today about your paycheck disappearing – where does it all go? I had thought that you'd have very few expenses living with your parents and been able to save some. Guess it costs money to live. One thing, don't spend money on me except for food. I can live pretty well on \$20 - \$30 a month over here and really don't need anything except to get myself home as quickly as possible. I've got enough to live on over her and that's all I need.

Oh hell: Why do I have to be here? Why can't I be with you where I belong instead of being miserable and lonely? I miss you. I'd love to be with you now but I can't. Damn. Damn. DAMN. It has to end soon.

I love you.

Gary

Day 69
71 Days Left
School cut mess. Going to Quang Tri. Hardback.
Wed

Dear Maxie,

I would have written you last night but when you see the enclosed letter, I think you will understand why. I got you letter yesterday about your experiences with VW. I was going to chew you out for losing your temper, but now I guess I don't have grounds since I kinda lost mine after the application came back. I was pretty sure that it would go through this time because everything was perfect and now I'll write my congressman – I have my reason. I'm sending the original to my parents so they can forward it to him. He should bet the ball rolling. These idiots are trying to read something into the order that isn't there and I'm going to prove them wrong. Wish me luck, hon. I honestly didn't think I'd have to write him but worse came to worst and I did. They started it and I'm going to finish it. The reason I didn't write before is that there is an order out that says a person is to do everything possible through the military before going to a congressman and that's exactly what I did and now they can't solve the problem for me so I'll go higher. There's a saying in the Corps "Payback is a mother fucker". I intend to prove it.

Enough of that. Yesterday I went down to Quang Tri (said like tree) to see the area where we're going to move. It looks pretty decent, but I wouldn't exactly call them "cabins". All they are only plywood building the same size as this tent. As for being safe from artillery, yes because we're father from the DMZ. There aren't any trenches yet but there will be as soon



Hardbacks at Quang Tri

Continued

Day 69
Continued

School cut mess. Going to Quang Tri. Hardback.

as we get there. The only thing I don't like is that we're pretty far from everything else but that may be a blessing because the airfield is a long way off and that's what they usually shoot for. We'll probably be moving pretty soon, but I hope we don't move while I'm down at China Beach for the Holidays because I want to keep an eye on my gear so it won't get lost. It's going to be a lot of work moving but will be a break anyway.

I'm getting tired of being away from you every day and the Marine Corps isn't helping out very much. I need to feel your gentle touch again very badly. I feel like an old man now and need to be young and alive again like I am with I'm with you. It's been too long since the last time I held you. I miss you terribly.

Love,

Gary

Day 70
70 Days Left
Seven days a week. Friends

Wed

Dear Maxie,

I got a great letter from you today. You wrote me on the 14th – one year from our first date. Funny – I'm just now finding out how you really felt on our first date. You remember every little detail – more than I would ever remember. Guess it's like a woman to remember little things like that. Seems you can remember everything like it was just yesterday. How could you have fallen in love with me that quickly – you didn't even know me then. I'm glad you did because you taught me how to love and gave me love without question – something that I never had encountered before. With every girl I had ever dated before, love was not given, it had to be won and almost bargained for. You gave yourself completely and I admit that I was a little set back at first. I had never met a woman like you before and was a little afraid to let myself love. You're something special – my love, my life, my wife and I love you.

Today has been one hell of a day. We have a roster of the people in the company that comes out every month for correction. The one for this month is completely messed up and we've been putting in some work trying to correct it. Out of 200 people in the company – only three were right. Tomorrow I have to run a diary on all of the people who are wrong. Tonight it took three of us 2 ½ hours just to write down the info, now I'll have to type it out. I've got my work cut out for me. At least when I get it done, it will be a good feeling plus it won't be wrong next month. It's a lot safer back here in the rear, but a lot more work at times. We had a whole company's paperwork to keep up and have a constant turnover of personnel. For the 35 people that we had wounded or killed last week, we'll join 35 new people this week and that's a lot of paperwork. Everyone has his own problem. In a way I'm glad that I'm busy because it does make the time pass faster. The only thing that bothers me is that there is no break. Every day – seven days a week – we have the same work to do. We never really get caught up, we just keep plugging away. A day off would be so great every now and then. Just one day to sleep late – to do something different – to not to have to work. Guess that day will be when I'm with you again. Just being with you will be a rest – a vacation.

There have been so few people in the service that I have really become friends with. So few and I'll probably never see any of them again. It's the type of life that discourages close relationships because by the time I really get close to anyone, one of us gets transferred or something happens.

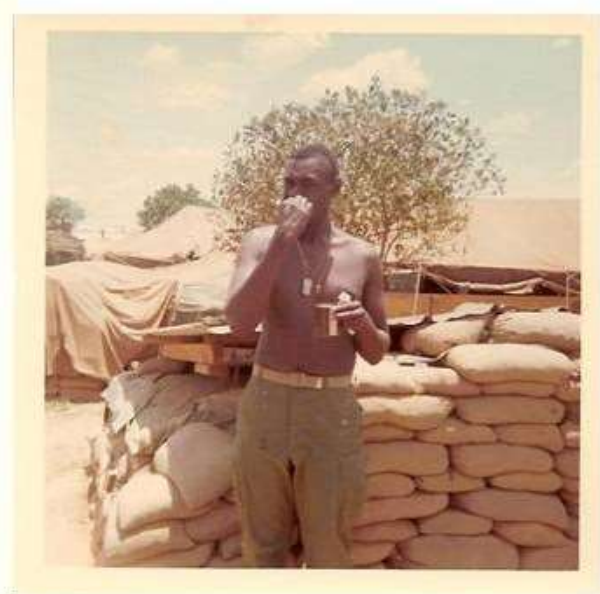
I'll close now and try to go to sleep. Lately, I've been having trouble going to sleep. I stay up sometimes late just thinking about being with you again and how happy we were before. I'll be so happy when we're together again so I can sleep peacefully. Damn I miss you.

Love

Gary

Continued

Day 70
Continued
Seven days a week. Friends



Friends. Whatever happened to them?

Day 71
69 Days Left

Maxie, you are prettier than the Playboy bunnies.

Today
Dear Maxie,

I got a long beautiful letter from you today. You talked about our first experiences together. How you like the quiet and peaceful times together. I miss them too, Maxie, I miss that most of all. Miss lying in bed with you and holding you and the peace that comes from knowing that we are one. There is nothing greater in life. I really need a little time like that to settle me down and give me purpose. Without times like that I get edgy and hard to live with. Once I'm with you again, I'll be happy and contented. I miss you, Maxie, very much, terribly.

Got a great picture from you today – you were lying in the Florida room in a night gown; you do it justice. You look great. Good enough to – love. You said something about looking as good as the Playboy bunnies – you look better. You're a beautiful woman, my little wife. The bunnies are only pictures on a page, you are real. You are my wife and the most beautiful woman in the world. No woman could ever look as good to me as you; you are mine. Yes I can tell that you've lost weight but not too much. You still look like my Maxie but even better now. I love you.



Someone posted
Playboy centerfold
pictures in our
office.

Did you ever find Kath's address? Larry has been writing her pretty regularly and I said for her to get in touch with you – that you had lost her address. In one of her letters, she said something about my not writing because I had a broken arm. I scribbled a note to her left handed and asked her to not say anything else like that again because I (supposedly) broke my arm after Larry got her letter. If she says anything to you, play along. I'd like to see how she reacts.

Better go, it's getting late (as usual). In a little over 5 months I'll be going to bed with you again. I miss you. I love you, Maxie, I always will.

Love,
Gary

If it's 10:00 PM on the 6th here, you are getting up the morning of the 6th (I think). When I get up on the 7th, you are getting off work on the 6th.

Day 72
68 Days Left
Last birthday in the Corps

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I have just spent my last birthday in the Corps. It's nice to know that for the next one, I'll be a civilian and we'll be together. As a matter of fact, I'll be with you for your next birthday. Right now I have no idea what time it is. I went to sleep around 7:00 PM and that's what my watch says now. I kept tossing and turning and half sleeping, partly because it is so humid and partly because I hadn't written you yet today and kept telling myself to get up and write.

Usually I can sleep from the minute I go to bed until morning and that's a blessing because time passes quickly. The faster it passes, the happier I am because I miss you very much.

I love you completely.

Love,
Gary

Day 73
67 Days Left
Another so so day

Oct 22
Dear Maxie,

Today has been one of those so-so days. A typical day away from you. One without too much meaning. Just another day. I didn't get a letter from you today, which didn't help any. I'll be so glad when this is over, Maxie, being away from you is a private hell. I need your tender touch so badly. I need you, Maxie. I love you.

Love,
Gary

Day 74
66 Days Left
Drinking to escape

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

I've gotten four letters from you in the past two days – pretty good. It really helps to get a letter from you; you can imagine how good it makes me feel to hear from you. It makes the day just a little easier and faster because I know that we love each other and that you are waiting for me.

We had quite a bash last night. I didn't go back to my hootch until late because I was working. When I walked in I was greeted by a crowd and a bottle of Segrain 7. With all the people we had it didn't go too far but I did get just enough to loosen up a bit. A couple of the guys got pretty bashed and pulled a raid on the next battalion and stole a whole bunch of clothes. All in all it was a pretty good night and a nice break from the routine and no one got into trouble. You can't imagine how great it is to have a chance to let off some of the tension and forget this place for a while. You should have seen Handy dancing – can he ever dance. I'd like to pick up some of his movements, if I could. He's got soul. As a matter of fact it was pretty funny when everybody got up and danced, a free for all with everyone doing his own thing. It was a riot.

I've decided to retype my application for the school cut tonight. Am going to get it in the mail anyway and see what come of it. Capt Austin said that he would help me in the Battalion endorsement and put the wording a little stronger and have the Colonel sign it. Guess one more time of typing the thing won't hurt. Do you realize that I've typed the damn thing about half a dozen times so far? This is going to be my last time typing it and something is going come out of this, although I can't promise what. Here's hoping.

You asked me about my job and what I do – a little of everything. Typing, handle people, handle supplies and generally do anything that comes up. In other words, the Captain's helper. He's the officer in charge of the rear, so there's a lot of work to be done.

Guess I'll close for now and work on my application. I love you. Stay sweet.

Love

Gary

Day 75
65 Days Left
Piss on it. Shocking Old Ladies



Maxie did not realize what I was doing until one of her mother's friends (an older woman) saw the picture and asked her about it. Maxie took another look at the picture and took it out the stack of pictures that was being passed around.

Day 76
64 Days Left
Moving to Quang Tri. Sometime around Rosh Hossanah.

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

We got the word today that we are moving day after tomorrow – what a mad house. We got a lot packed today but have a lot of work to do tomorrow. Everything is so messed up now.

I will write you a decent letter when we get moved and I have time to get settled.

I hope I'll be able to make Rosh Hashanah now.

Love,
Gary

I love you.

Day 77
63 Days Left
Going to Danang for Yom Kippur. I feel empty.

Sat.

Dear Maxie,

I'm going to DaNang tomorrow for Yom Kipper. I finally got my orders and they give me five days. I'm a little nervous because I don't know exactly what to do but hope everything will work out and I'll be able to understand what's going on. There's a typhoon due soon and I hope it waits until I get down there before it hits or I won't be able to get out of here – the only way to go is by plane. I hated to miss Rosh Hashanah but I did finish the rest of the book on the New Year and think I did learn something. I feel sort of undone now and hope I feel better after I get down there. It's my first Holiday by myself, pray for me.

You talked about crying when you heard the song "Happiness", at times I wish that I could cry because I get so lonely being away from you. We're so happy together; it's hard being away from you. It still seems like such a long time until I'll be holding you again. I miss you terribly, hon. I miss your understanding. I love you. I always will.

Love,

Gary

I feel empty.

Day 78
62 Days Left
Wed? More condolence letters

Wed?

Dear Maxie,

Would you believe it's almost 1 AM? I didn't mean to stay up this late but I got tied up in a book and couldn't put it down until I had finished it. It's by a Jewish author and you might have read it, "What makes Sammy run" I was really fascinated with it. Don't know if you'd like it but you could give it a try.

We finished the last bunch of condolence letters tonight – we had to type 3 more on one guy for each of his parents – they're divorced. It's pretty hard to make up 3 different letters for one person.

So you wear my ring – I'll be home someday to wear it and then we'll be happy. I'll be incomplete until that day. I love you.

Guess I'd better go to sleep because morning is not far away. One more day closer to being with you and then I'll never sleep alone again.

Love

Gary

I found my pen – forget buying me another, at least till I lose it again.

G-d I love you.

The moon is full, beautiful and lonely tonight. Did you see it? We will look at it together in the not too distant future.

Day 79 61 Days Left

Yom Kippur in China Beach. DaNang - ice cream and slums

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

I haven't written you since I left for Yom Kipper and I ask your forgiveness. I spent the time just enjoying being away from here. It was good to get away for a while and to be around Jewish people. There were a couple hundred of us there and it was quite an experience. I was disappointed in the services themselves for a couple of reasons: the building was open and the services were often interrupted by airplanes flying over, the service was almost orthodox and there was a lot I didn't understand. I think he would have done much better to conduct a Reform service since many of the people didn't know any more Hebrew than I did. Even the sounding of the shofar was pathetic, I was disappointed. One thing I noticed was the almost indifference by a lot of the Jewish people there. Guess I can almost understand how they feel because I couldn't get really involved in the service, as bad as I wanted to. I'll be glad when we can spend the holidays together as we should instead of being apart like this. I almost feel cheated because the service wasn't what I expected. Over here religion requires a little bit more understanding and it wasn't provided.

Being in DaNang was quite an experience. It's a place of distinct contrasts. There are great big P.X.s there and the most horrible slums you've ever seen within half a mile of each other. The whole place is much busier than here and they even have traffic jams. The place has much more to offer as far as entertainment and food goes, but I think I like the quiet here a little better. It's easier to live without a few things than to be constantly reminded that you are living well while someone else is starving. It hurts to see something like that. Paved streets, ice cream and poverty in the same breath, it's hard to take. It was good to get back, to see the quiet countryside again. In Da Nang, I forgot about everything and enjoyed myself. When I first got there I was almost in a daze because I couldn't believe it. I got up when I wanted to, I ate when I wanted to and I was myself without a lot of discontent floating around in the air.



I saw Dr. Zhivago in an air conditioned theater in DaNang. I was cold for the first time in Vietnam

I really feel bad about not writing you while I was in Da Nang. Please understand that it was only because I was trying to forget everything and trying to just enjoy myself. It didn't work completely because I could never forget you, but it was nice to get away from this place – I really miss you, Maxie. It may sound like I'm repeating myself, but I need to be with you. I love you. I love you.

Love
Gary

Day 80
60 Days Left

I'm sick of the whole machine that sends people out to get gloriously shot at

Sunday
Sept 1

Dear Maxie,

No mail at all came in today – guess the mail people are playing their games again just so I won't get a letter from you. I hope we'll get mail tomorrow because I sure do need a letter from you.

Today has been another so-so day. It's starting to rain again. Guess it will be settling in again and it will rain for a pretty good while. The monsoon is supposed to start in Sept so I guess it's about time. They don't have winter here, only rain.

I was talking to one of our new boot lieutenants tonite – he's got so much to learn. Even if he is an officer and a gentleman by an act of Congress, he still is naïve and idealistic. He's still got the idea that combat is something glorious and that the Marine Corps is great and all of that rot. He'll learn soon enough. I wonder what they pump into officers to make them think that they are great and smart and heroes. I imagine it's a shock for some of them to learn the truth. Most officers don't last too long in combat here because they learn slowly – I wonder if this one will be the same way. This officer/enlisted bit seems to be the biggest farce I've ever seen. You know the diary I run every day (as does every other company), I had an officer ask me how to read it the other day – and officers have to sign the damned thing. The officer that signs mine doesn't even know what he's signing – he just does it because he's an officer. If I sound like I'm running down the military – I am because it's so messed up. I'll be so glad when I get out of this mess and back to life.

Forgive me for writing such an extended essay on the Corps, guess I got wound up. To tell the truth hon, I'm sick of the whole machine that sends people out to get gloriously shot at. I just want to be home with my wife where I belong. I need to lie with you and to hold you and to have you fix me breakfast in the morning and make me happy. It's going to be great being with you again – to wake up in the morning with a good kiss and hug – wow! I used to really love waking up with you and really look forward to that again. It seems almost like a dream – a very good one and I'm ready for it to come true again. I miss you. I love you.

Love

Gary

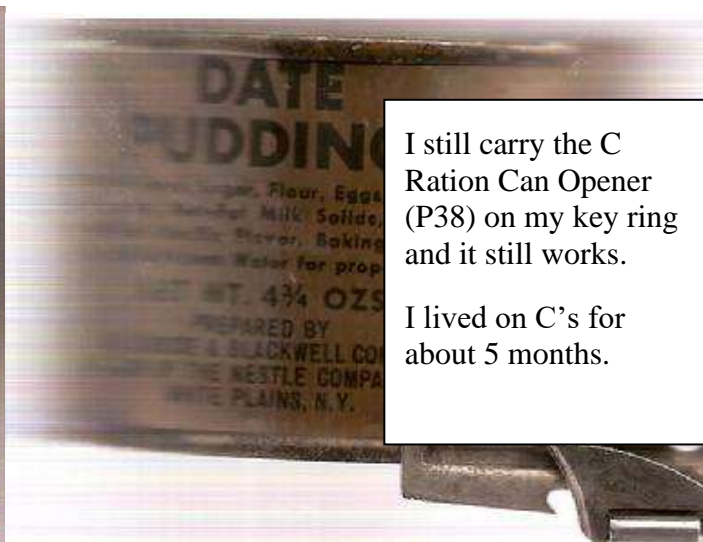
P.S Am sending my paycheck for \$370. Let me know when you get it.

Day 81
59 Days Left
Missed Rosh Hoshanah. Moved to Quang Tri. C's.

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

Well I didn't get to make Rosh Hoshanah because of the move. This is the eve and I'm still here in Quang Tri. We have been working hard for the past couple of days getting moved and getting set up. Sorry about not writing to you sooner, but the mail wouldn't have gone out anyway because the mail room closed down for the move too. I have really been working because we had to move everything we own which is a lot. It will be a while before my hands get limbered up enough to type well again. The new buildings we're in are pretty nice but there's still a lot of work to be done. There are nice lights up here but not electricity yet. There's not a mess hall yet so we'll be eating C's for awhile. At least we can get almost all we want (I stole an extra case) and it's a change. We just got moved just in time because it started raining last night and has been raining hard off and on all day.



I really hated to miss Rosh Hashanah because I was looking forward to it. I will go down for Yom Kippur. Right now I don't feel very Jewish or anything – I just feel lonely. The rain is noisy on the tin roof and I'm writing by candlelight and it gets me lonely. There's not getting used to being away from you. There's not getting used to being lonely. It's like a constant growing pain that won't go away. I love you, Maxie, and need to feel your tender, loving touch again. I love you.

It seem funny having to go to bed when it gets dark and not being able to listen to the tape recorder. The night seems just that much darker, longer and more lonely that way and this rain doesn't help any. It's pouring now – again – and it's starting to get a little cool.

I'm going to have to close now – my candle is getting short and won't last too much longer. I miss you, Maxie, terribly my love. Happy Rosh Hoshanah.

Love
Gary

Continued

Day 81
Continued
Missed Rosh Hoshanah. Moved to Quang Tri. C's.

Cooking on C-4

Some of the C's were so old that the cigarette paper had turned brown. The cigarettes still smoked and the "ham and mothers" (ham and lima beans) were still edible - if you had enough Tabasco sauce.

Normally, we ate our C's cold because we didn't have a way to heat them. There were C ration heating tablets available, but they always seemed hard to find.

After a couple of weeks of eating cold C's, we wanted a hot meal. The guys at Vandegrift had discovered that a chunk of C-4 made a nice, hot fire for heating a C ration can. C-4 is a plastic explosive that is more powerful than TNT. It looks like white taffy and can be shaped and pulled apart by hand. When lit, it burns with a fairly hot flame and puts out a lot of sparks. They claimed that it wouldn't actually explode until set off with a blasting cap.

One of the guys bet that it wouldn't go off if he stomped it with his foot while the C-4 was burning. He lost. It blew the heel off his boot.

He didn't try that one again.

Day 82
58 Days Left
Maxie's last picture - going out of my mind

Wed

Dear Maxie,

Your last picture – I'm about to go out of my mind. Do you look that much better or has being away from you made me appreciate you more? I'll say one thing, hon, you're in for one great big loving when I get home. I'm never going to leave you again, hon, never. We'll be together always, for the rest of our lives. One thing for sure, being away from you makes me appreciate you very much because I miss you terribly. There were some things that I sorta took for granted before and some little things that you did that irritated me before. It won't be like that when I get home, Maxie. I'll be so happy just being with you again that I'll be a lost easier to live with. Will still have our ups and downs, but the downs won't be so bad because when things get rough, we can always think how it was being separated. I know that for myself, whenever something starts to bother me, all I'll have to do is remember how miserable I was away from you and it won't be so bad. I think that being away from you makes me want to be with you and to always be with you and give you all of the love I can. I want to live, hon. I want us to live, love and be happy. We're got so much lost time to make up for I intend to make up for it for the rest of my life.

Love,

Gary

P.S. Can't quit yet. I looked at your pictures again. You're a beautiful woman, Maxie. How did I ever get so lucky to find someone like you. If you were only beautiful it wouldn't be so great, but you are such a beautiful person and I feel very proud knowing that you love me as much as I love you. You are better than a dream come true. I'll always love you.

G



Maxie, the
beautiful

Day 83
57 Days Left
Missing the world

Wed

Dear Maxie,

Two days without a letter from you – is everything OK? It must be because you've been working overtime. Hope it hasn't been too hard on you. I know what it's like to work long hours – tiring. How long will it keep up?

Today and been a so-so day – mainly hot. We're pretty busy because we're getting a bunch of new people. Most of them are from the states and are not due to go home until July of next year – 13 months – wow! That's a mighty long time over here – sure am glad I don't have that long to do. Now I only have about 6 months to go – 2 months, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time away from you has passed already. Damn, I hope the rest of the time goes by very, very fast.

Sorry I didn't write you last night – I had good intentions. I took a nap after chow and didn't wake up until this morning – guess I was a little tired. Anyway, the time passes fast when I'm sleeping. Wish I could sleep for six months and wake up in your arms. You ought to see where I sleep – on a cot in one corner of the tent. It's comfortable enough and I'd bet both of us could sleep on it if we tried.

Haven't gotten your package yet – when did you send it? One hint, hon, when you send packages – send small under 5 pounds and they'll probably get here faster. What I need most is food – it's pretty hard to get anything decent to eat around here. You'll probably have to fatten me up when I get home. Don't think I've lost any weight yet – I can't tell. I have lost about an inch in the waist – oh well. I'll get it back with you. Did you decide against send me liquor? Don't worry about me getting drunk anymore because we can't buy any more than 2 beers a day now. It sure is a sterile life around here, 2 beers a day, no women, no cars, lousy chow, etc. coming home will be like starting life all over again from the start. I think I'll eat all the ice cream, fried chicken and everything else I can find when I get back to the world. There's some good music on the radio now and I would love to dance with you now. There's so much back in the world. Damn, I'd love to have a smelly ol scotch and water now – with lots of ice and not the funny tasting water we have here. There's so much I want us to do when we are together. I want to make up for all the lost time. I want to lie with you and love and be happy, to listen to good music, to dance, to sleep, to drive a decent car, to eat, to talk to you, to kiss you, to have weekends, to drink orange juice for breakfast, to be able to walk in the country without worrying about being shot at or having a water buffalo charge, to talk to people who speak decent English and who have round eyes. What I'm trying to say is that when I get home, we're going to live and love and be happy. I miss you. I love you. I want to be with you. I want to talk to you, touch you, make love to you, take showers with you. I love you.

Gary

Maxie sent packages to me that weighed almost 50 pounds!

Day 84
56 Days Left
Quang Tri midnight attack on the other side of the base

Saturday Morn

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbos, hon. Today is pretty slack because I'm caught up with the office work. Yesterday I had the working party and kept very busy all day and went to sleep early last night. It's a good thing I did go to sleep early because we had an attack about midnight on another part of the base that woke everyone up. It couldn't have been a very big one because all we would hear was our weapons and very few of theirs. They'd have a pretty hard time against this place because we have a good defense and lots of helicopters etc. here. I am definitely glad that we left Dong Ha because they've been having incoming pretty often lately. You ask if Quang Tri is safer – yes, quite a bit. We're out of artillery range and Dong Ha seems to be prime target. The only I don't like too much is this bombing halt deal, as soon as it goes into effect, it seems like we get more action around here. They want us to stop bombing but use the halt to move more men and supplies down. I'll still be glad to get out of this country. I don't like this war one bit.

Time has to go faster, hon. I know that it's the first of Nov already and that I don't have too much longer to go but it still seems like a long way off. Do you realize that around the 20th of this month that I will have been in V.N. for six months? I'm starting to meet a lot of people that I went through boot camp with and who'll be getting out about the same time I will. They're getting anxious too.

I miss you, Maxie, we've got a lot of lost love to catch up on when I get home. You'd better be ready because we're not coming up for air for quite a while. I love you

Gary

Day 85
55 Days Left
Lonely rain

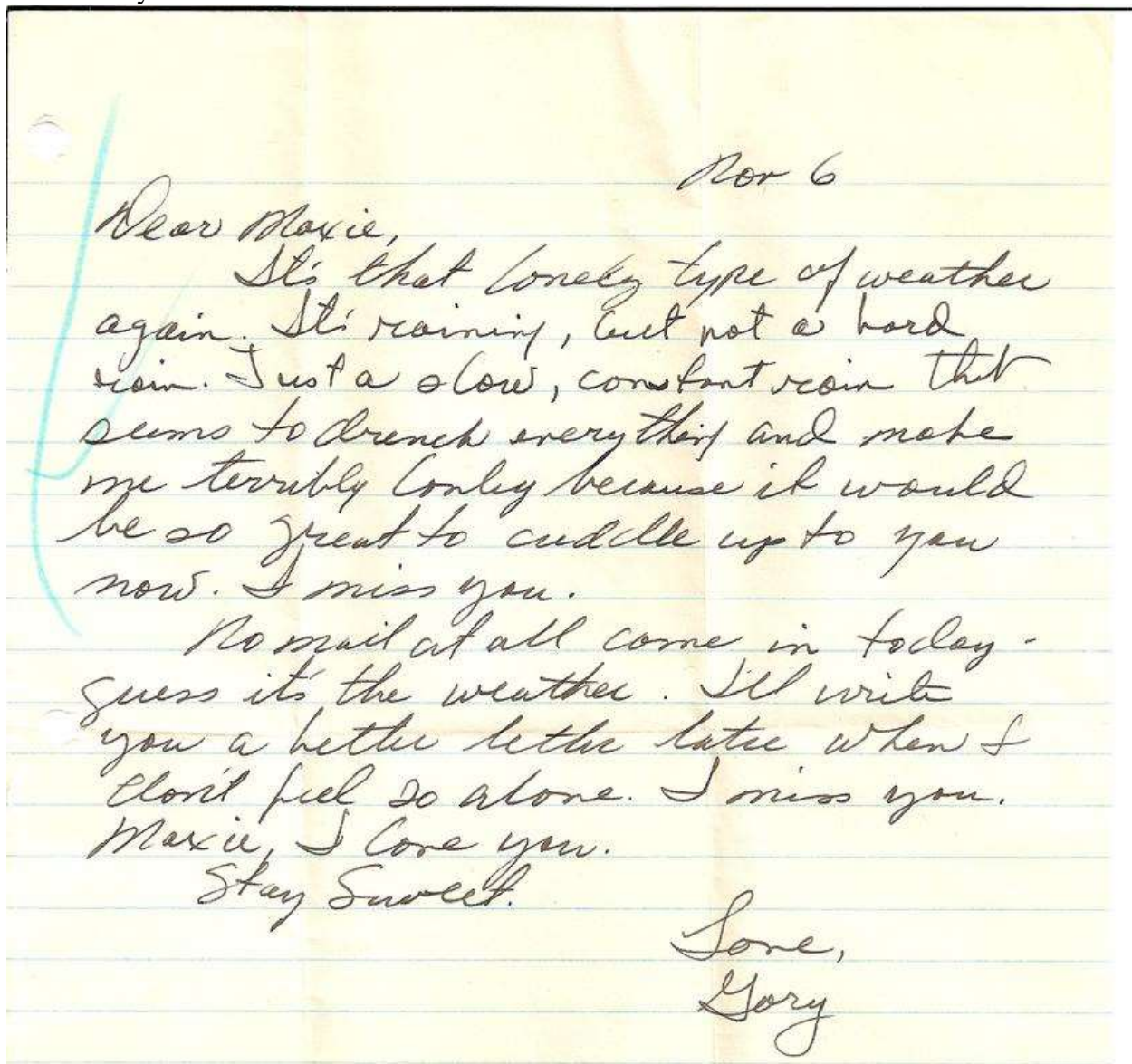
Nov 6
Dear Maxie,

It's that lonely type of weather again. It's raining, but not a hard rain. Just a slow, constant rain that seems to drench everything and make me terribly lonely because it would be so great to cuddle up to you now. I miss you.

No mail at all came in today – guess it's the weather. I'll write you a better letter later when I don't feel so alone. I miss you, Maxie, I love you.

Stay sweet.

Love,
Gary

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The letter is written in cursive and matches the typed text above it. It is dated 'Nov 6' and addressed to 'Dear Maxie'. The paper has a light blue vertical margin line on the left. The handwriting is fluid and personal. The letter concludes with 'Love, Gary'.

Day 86
54 Days Left
Back to Dong Ha to steal telephone poles. My Medal

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Guess you're in Alabama now, but good Shabbas anyway. I love you.

I had a busy day and spent last night in Dong Ha. I had to go up there to try to get a semi-tractor trailer, you know, a truck – to use at night so we can steal some telephone poles. I failed to get a truck but did bump into a man who used to be in Lima Company so I stayed at his place. The mess hall up there has 10000% better food and even has native women to pick up your plate when you leave it (don't worry they were all ugly). Also saw "In the Heat of the Night" again. It was good. He's got it made up there, good food, indoor movie, an ice chest with beer in it right next to his bed etc etc. The only thing is that it's still Dong Ha and they have incoming up there so I don't mind staying here.

I got two letters from you yesterday and two today. Somedays the mail comes in waves, other days, nothing. There's an awful amount of packages now for the x-mas rush and many times they send them up first from DaNang just to get them out of the way.

I just solved one of my problems about keeping my moustache – I shaved it off. Sure does feel and look funny. My upper lip feels naked. Maybe I'll grow one later on – maybe.

I finished "Rosemary's Baby" it was great. You should read it. I am reading "Our Crowd" now, which is about Jewish families of New York. It is pretty good, but I haven't had time to read too much lately.

I had a dream about being with you last night. Maxie, I miss you. The time has to pass faster. I count 49 days till the time I should be leaving Nam. I need to be with you, hon. I love you. Make time go faster.

Love
Gary

P.S. Capt. Austin put me in for the Navy Achievement Medal today. I'm a hero.

No, the Navy Achievement Medal is not a medal for heroism.

Continued

Day 86
Continued
Back to Dong Ha to steal telephone poles. My medal



I am authorized to wear the Combat V

Day 87
53 Days Left
50 Pound Package! Air conditioner went out.

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

I didn't get a letter from you today but I did get at 50 pound package – wow, I'll be eating good for a while. Thank you, hon, you don't know how good it is to have something extra to eat if the chow isn't too good. I'll be eating pretty good for a while. Thank you again. I'll let you fatten me up when I get home, I know you can do it with your cooking.

It's starting to rain almost everyday – not hard, just enough to make mud and make it sticky when the sun shines. When you told me about your experiences without the air conditioner I almost had to laugh even though I feel for you since you're not used to it. I was almost the same way when I first got here but have gotten used to being hot and sticky and it doesn't bother me at all now. At least you have ice and cold water and cold baths. Hope it's fixed now. Be grateful for what you have, I wasn't and now I'm finding out what it's like to live without a lot of things that I took for granted before. Things like running water and a refrigerator. And freedom. And love.

The last four months is the longest time of the whole four years. I can almost see the end but it still seems so far off and it seems like such a long time for a week to pass, much less a month. I want to be home with you so badly, maybe I look forward to it too much and that's why the time seems to go so slowly. I'll be so happy being with you again. There are so many things about being with you that I miss. I miss your gentle touch. I miss being one with you and the quiet after. I miss laughing with you and being happy. I miss you. I love you.

Love

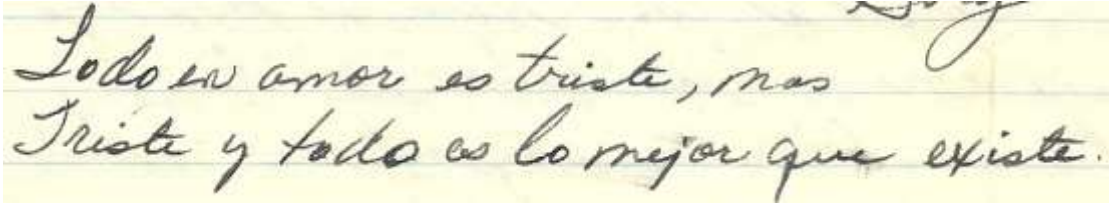
Gary

Our air conditioner went out today too. It's hot.

Stay sweet.

Our air conditioner was November.

Day 88
52 Days Left
Todo en amor es triste. . .



Todo en amor es triste, más
Triste y todo es lo mejor que existe.

All in love is sad, but
Sad and all it is the best that exists.

Sounds so much better in Spanish.

Day 89
51 Days Left
Drunk First Sgt

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

Sorry I didn't write you a long letter last night. The 1st Sgt came in drunk last night and we had to work till about 1:30 this morning. He stays up at their club every night and gets pretty plastered and hard to live with. Really he doesn't have much else to live for, but I wish he would take out his frustrations on someone else. What bothers me is one time he'll come in sugar sweet, he did tonight, and the next time he'll come in a drunken idiot.

Nothing much has been happening today since we got so much done last night, we finished up our work around noon and took the afternoon off. The only trouble was that it was too hot to sleep.

Found another Sgt over here who is in just about the same boat we're in. He got married April 13th to a girl from Scotland (he met her while he was on sea duty) and came over here about the same time I did and gets out in January. He was wounded on June 30 and just now came back from the hospital. If you think I hate the Corps, you should talk to him. The doctors really gave him a bad deal while he was sick and he's not completely healed yet. He tried to tell the docs that he wasn't ready to come back yet and they wouldn't even look at him. He's less lucky than I was and went straight out to the field and is really bitter about the whole thing. I'm not the only one.

Didn't get a letter from you today but did get one from mom that she put the wrong address on. Guess it's about time for me to get an answer from the one when I blew my top. I'm sorry about that, hon, but it's been building up for so long and I've tried so hard to not blow up. I don't want to see you treated like a little girl ever again – I love you too much for that. At least after we are together again, we'll be living in our own home. The easiest way to avoid an incident is to move to Alabama as soon as possible. When we stayed at your parent's house, I never could shake the feeling that you were their little girl instead of my wife.

I just wish that the time was now and we could start a home of our own right away. I'm going to love living with you. I miss you, Maxie, I can't even say how much. Very much.

Love

Gary

Day 90
50 Days Left
Planning for life after The Corps.

Wed

Dear Maxie,

I finally got three letters from you today. There are about 3 days worth of letters missing somewhere – they must have gone down with the plane that crashed. There are some things that I missed and guess I'll never find out. Oh well, there's nothing we can do. It sure was good to hear from you again. Letters help so much while I'm over here. They're my only link with you and I depend on them to keep me going. Thank you for writing. I love you.

I've been talking about my plans when I get out and I'm starting to get excited. I feel so tied up in the military and there are so many things that I want to do, but can't. There are so many good jobs just waiting for me to give them a try. You know something, Maxie, I'm convinced that I'm going to do exceptionally well in civilian life. It may take me a while for me to find exactly what I want to do. With my major in English, I hope to improve my speech and writing enough to be able to feel at home no matter how high I go. I definitely believe that I can't go anywhere unless I can speak and write well, agree? It's worth a try anyway.

One thing that seems odd. You know how I hate the Corps and everything that goes with it, yet when I do get out, I will be proud to say that I have served in the Corps. It's been a hard, long four years and I wouldn't want to do it again, but I do think that I have learned from it and gained self confidence and a sense of pride from it. Damn, I'll glad when it's over. "Yes, I was in the Marine Corps, what were you, a draft dodger?" I've done my part.

I did not tell people that I had been in the Marines or that I had been in Vietnam for almost 30 years after I came back to the world. I did not even tell people that I had been in the service.

Another thing – our separation is a personal hell, but it can turn into a good thing after we're together again. I know that I will be so much more thankful being with you and will appreciate you so much more now. I think you know what I mean and feel the same way. Once we're together again, I'll never leave you again because I know how miserable I can be when I'm away from you. My happiness is being with you and when I'm with you everything else will fall into place. I love you, Maxie, I always will.

Love,

Gary

P.S. You asked what I got you in Hong Kong. Would you believe a 500 pound budda on a chain to wear around your neck? Or a 2 carat diamond ring? Or a full length mink coat, complete with live mink collar? Or a year's supply of saki? In other words, looks like you'll just have to wait until I get home to find out.

I love you.

Day 91
49 Days Left
Maxie worried about drinking.

Fri

Dear Maxie,

I received two letters from you today, one this afternoon and one later. After the first one I was a little upset because you gave me a sermon about drinking. After receiving your second letter, I couldn't be mad anymore. How can I be mad at someone I love so much.

Like I said in the other letters I won't mail, I guess there a lot of things I'm behind on because of the mail that hasn't caught up me yet. Like, you're working now? The Car? If you got my packages? How you're doing? Guess I'll find out as soon as I get my back mail.

Sorry I got so upset about your talking about my drinking. One thing I have to say is that I don't like you picking up bad ideas from your parents. Really honey, it was an innocent request because such things are hard to get over here and one of the few ways of passing the time and forgetting the many things which other people take for granted that we don't have over here.

You asked me if I have an electrical plug near me here in the tent. The answer is yes, but why? Let me know what you plan to do so I can be prepared.

Nothing much new has happened here, except that I got mail from you. It's still the same old routine. We have a lot of paperwork because we had some casualties – one or 2 killed in action and many wounded. Seems like such a waste to have our guys messed up over here. I'm just glad that I'm here instead of out there. It's getting pretty rough out there.

Sometimes it seems like my tour over here is so long – like it will be. Then today when I had to ask what day of the week it was and found out that it is Fri instead of Wed, the time seems to pass quickly. If I can somehow completely forget the days, the time should pass fast – and that's not hard to so since we work 7 days a week they run together easily. The faster time goes, the happier I am because I miss you very much.

I'm not quite as good as you are at expressing myself – I guess that saying "I love you" will have to do because it's how I feel. I do long to be with you. Until I can, you'll be in my heart.

Love

Gary

Day 92
48 Days Left
Larry's R&R in Australia. He wouldn't shut up.

Fri

Dear Maxie,

Good shabbas.

It doesn't really feel like the Shabbat. In my last letter I told you that the company was in it again, only I didn't know how bad. Today we found out – 40 wounded and 4 killed and we're not sure if that's all. I won't fly off the handle like I did last time – you know I get upset and there's no need to take it out on you. All I'll say is that it's such a terrible waste.

No mail came in today – the second day in a row without mail. I sure hope the mail comes tomorrow – I really need to hear from you to perk me up. Guess the people in Da Nang take weekends off; they don't know that there's a war going on.

Today has been a so-so day. Not too hot but hot enough. I just hope that this will end soon. Being with you again will be so great. It just seems so far away now. A little longer than 5 months. I've already been gone over three months – that's even too long to be away from you.

Larry got back from Australia and has been talking about it all day. He says he had a great time and that it was almost like being in the states. Guess he'll be talking about it for a week yet. He's even talking about going back and marrying the girl he met, but I doubt it because nobody ever gets around to it. I still haven't decided if I'll go because I've heard that Tokyo is expensive and I don't need to be spending a lot of money. I guess that I need to go to Florida for R&R – the long one. It sure will be nice to snuggle up to you again – wow. I really miss it, hon, and Larry talking about his experience doesn't help too much either. It seems like such a dream now and I want it to come true again so badly. I need to feel your soft warm touch again and to make love to you and to be happy and whole again. I miss you, Maxie. I love you and belong with you instead of being over here and lonely. I love you.

Love,

Gary

It just started raining and we had to run outside and roll down the tent sides – excitement

I never told Maxie that sometimes we looked forward to incoming just to have some relief from the constant boredom of being in Vietnam.

Day 93
47 Days Left
I married the right sister.

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

Got a nice long letter from you today – it's good to hear from you – to know that you care and are waiting for me. Yes, Hon, I worry about your health when you tell me you're having bad cramps. Funny, you won't do anything that anyone else besides me tries to tell you. How am I that different?

Damn I'm glad that I didn't marry (*your sister*) _____ – I don't think I could afford to support her. She's really got her head in the clouds. How are your parents planning on paying for her wedding if they couldn't even pay for ours? She should have a little consideration. I'm kinda glad we're starting like we are – from nothing – because anything we do and our life will be ours and we'll work together with love in the middle. We'll probably never be stinking rich, but we'll never be poor. I know I can do O.K. in some type of work and with you behind me, I can do a little better. Right now, my college comes first and after that, we can work uphill.

What's the word on the paint on the car? If it's peeling, it's probably because of the salt air at Lejuene, but it still shouldn't have. That climate up there is terribly hard on a car (and people). Just wish I were there so I could take care of it instead of you, but I guess it's good for you to learn how to do things like that – and to write business letters and handle insurance and all that.

Today we gave the place a good spring-cleaning – it needed it. I don't know where all the dirt comes from, but we had plenty. We've got a big inspection tomorrow and everybody is going spastic. I'll sure be glad when I'm out of this outfit. People see a little rank and go crazy. Guess it's a little like that were you work when the big bosses come through. Why can't they realize that they're still people and treat them as such? It's amazing what a little power will do to people – what a farce.

Larry chickened out on his letter last night – he wrote two pages telling her how much he loved her and tore it up and then stomped around for a while. He's all messed up over the affair. He still loves her but doesn't want to come crawling to her. Everyone gives him advice, but I keep my mouth shut – it's his problem and I don't know what I'd do in his case – probably the same thing. She could have at least waited 'til he got home because he needs to have decent letters from her while he's here. He's pretty hard to live with at times now.

So, Sue's having a rough time. I could imagine how we'd be if I saw you for a couple of days and had to leave you again. Probably just as bad or worse. I'd have to see you again, but leaving you would tear me up. I'd rather wait a little longer and never have to leave you again. That's what I live for – being with you again. I love you.

Good night, my love.

Gary

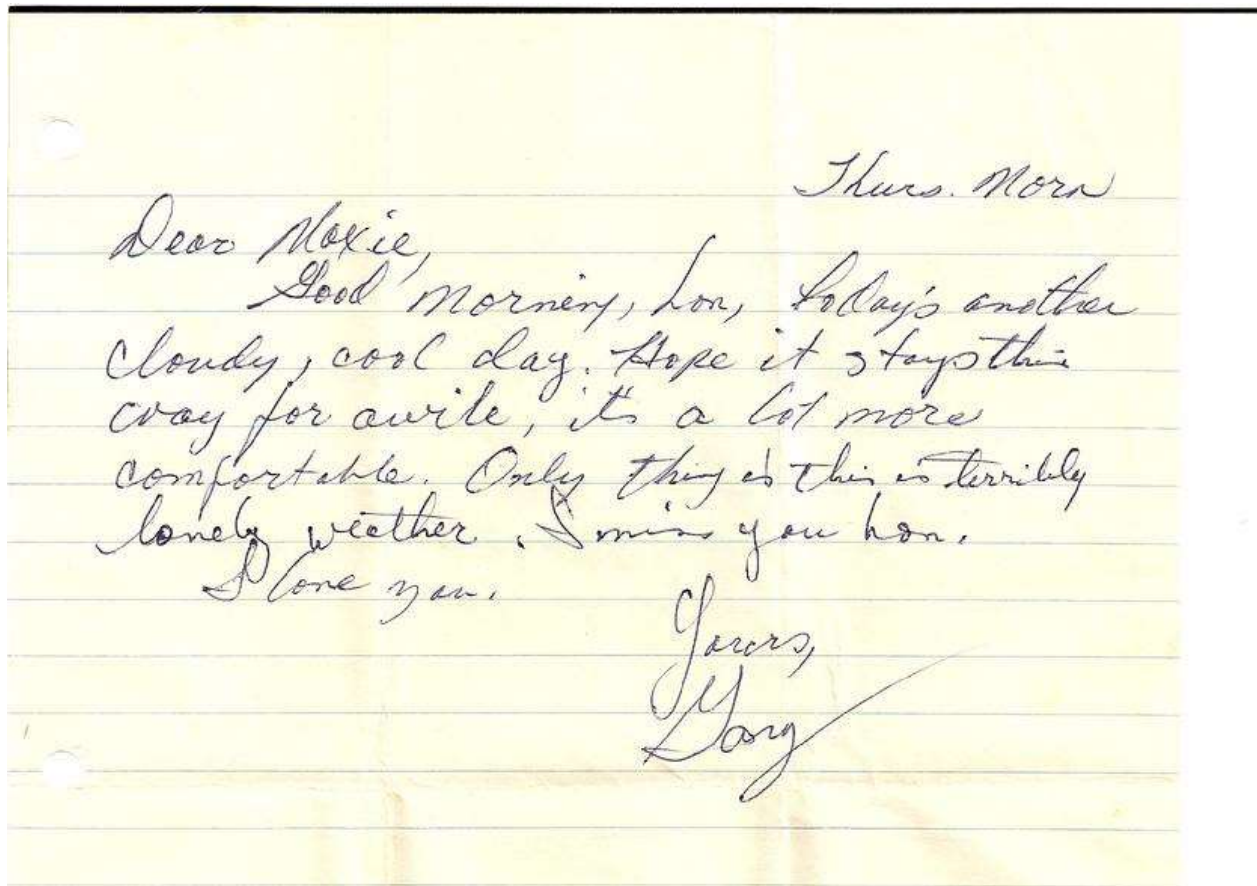
Day 94
46 Days Left
Lonely weather.

Thurs. Morn

Dear Maxie,

Good morning, hon, today's another cloudy, cool day. Hope it stays this way for a while, it's a lot more comfortable. Only thing is this is terribly lonely weather. I miss you, hon.
I love you.

Yours,
Gary

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The paper is yellowed and has two binder holes on the left side. The handwriting is in cursive. The text of the letter matches the typed transcription provided in the other blocks. The signature 'Gary' is written with a large, sweeping flourish.

Thurs. Morn

Dear Maxie,

Good morning, hon, today's another cloudy, cool day. Hope it stays this way for a while, it's a lot more comfortable. Only thing is this is terribly lonely weather. I miss you hon.
I love you.

Yours,
Gary

Day 95
45 Days Left
New work schedule makes time go faster.

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I'm tired. It's been quite a day. Capt Austin has a new system now. Since there are three sgts working for him now, we rotate jobs. One day in the office, one day in charge of the outside working parties and one day all around man. Today I was all around man and it seems like everything came up. First I rode in a truck taking new people and gear to Dong Ha to catch the convoy and picked up supplies to bring back. The road is horrible now since the rains and it's a wonder there is a road at all. In a couple of places the water is a couple of inches from covering the road where there used to be nothing but rice paddies. The rest of the day I spent running around and directing a fork lift that we had to move things around the area. One of the things that we moved was one of our heads. If you can imagine a four-seater outhouse on the move, you can imagine how funny it looked. I think I'm going to like this new system because this way I don't sit in the office and get bored. I'll always be doing something different. It's funny that Sunday is supposed to be half a day off and I didn't even have time to think about it. Time is going faster for me now because I'm busy. Hope I stay that way.

I read in the local Quang Tri newspaper (one page, once a week) that there will be a service in Q.T. next week. I will go. No mail came in today – guess everything is still backed up from the rain. Tomorrow is another day.

I typed my application again last night and put it in the Capt's in box this morning. He hasn't done anything to it yet, but he should get around to it pretty soon and write a pretty good statement up for me. He's kept pretty busy, too, since he is in charge of the rear and in charge of the S-4, too (S-4 is the department that is in charge of supply and all that rot). Am pretty sure that he will put in a good word for me.

Do you realize that time is starting to get shorter. I count somewhere around 88 days until I leave the country and it's getting shorter every day. Seems like time has gone faster since I've gotten this new job because I'm kept busy at different jobs and don't have time to really get bored. It's getting about time to get this school cut business finished. Before too long I'll be home holding you and then I'd never leave your side again. That's for sure.

Will finish later – it's getting noisy here.

Later: I just took a shower – was it ever cold. It's even getting a little cool now and the water gets pretty cold. We should get a water heater soon. I certainly hope so.

Would you believe that it's raining again? I wonder if it ever quits. This would be a great night to lie with you before a fireplace and make love. You should hear the rain on this tin roof. It's something like at Ronnie's. I miss you, hon, this weather is not too enjoyable by myself, I need you to cuddle up with. I'd really love that because I love you.

Goodnight, hon, I'm going to sleep and dream about you. I love you. Stay sweet.

Yours,
Gary

Day 96
44 Days Left
What does it really take to live?

Oct 15

Dear Maxie,

It's finally stopped raining. It rained terribly hard all day yesterday and off and on today. We thought that we would be washed away or have our road washed away and be cut off yesterday. Many other parts of Quang Tri were under water but we're lucky and are on a small hill and the water drains off fast. No mail came in at all yesterday but I did get a letter from you today. In it you were worried about my not getting a job and being sent to the bush. Maxie, I think at times you underestimate me. I was a little worried about going to the bush myself but I do have a pretty good reputation here and it's not too hard to find a job. You talked about being mad at _____, don't. I'm grateful that he took over my job and that I'm out of the office. My life is a lot easier now and I enjoy my new job much more. Capt Austin is a good man to work for.

Here comes the rain again – our dry spell didn't last too long. Guess it will be like this for quite a while. It rains enough in the country for 10 countries. The odd thing, to me, is that it is still warm. We're still running around in short selves and it gets down right hot. It sure doesn't seem like the middle of October. It should be getting cool instead of just raining. What a miserable country. Why would anyone want to live here? One thing, I'm starting to get used to the lack of T.V., electricity, excitement and all of that. It is pretty peaceful and quiet around here, and all we have now is radio and I'm starting to enjoy the quiet. It's going to be a little hard to get used to all of the things that go with civilization when I get back. The only thing I really miss is you, the rest of the "necessities" I could live without. It's amazing how few of the things I was so used to back in the world that I don't really need. I don't think you could exactly feel like I do because you haven't had to live without things like air conditioning, cars, T.V., etc. for too long. They're nice, but really can be lived without. I just wonder what I'll be satisfied with when I get back to the world. I wonder if I'll want more of be satisfied with things the way they are. I think I appreciate everything much more. I'll have to.

Like I said the only thing that I really miss now is you. I need you to survive and to make life worthwhile. Nothing else matters as long as we have each other. I love you, Maxie, and my idea of living is being with you. With you by my side I could even be happy in an environment like this. With you we could be happy anywhere. I love you, Maxie, and I always will. We'll have a good life, hon, because we have each other. Everything else will come in time. I love you.

Stay sweet.

Love

Gary

Day 97
43 Days Left
Nothing has happened today – just another boring, long, hot day.
Monday

Dear Maxie,

Still no letter mail today, Wonder why we haven't gotten any mail for the last two days. Guess they must have the airplanes busy for something else. Hope I get a letter from you tomorrow – two days without hearing from you is too long.

Nothing has happened today – just another boring, long, hot day. I wish that the days would go faster – that I had something to look forward to. Seven months seems like such a long time – a lifetime and time just drags. Damn I want to be with you.

I wish that I could settle down and write you a long, interesting and passionate letter, but I'm in one of those moods where I can't. Everything seems so far in the future – like a dream, like it's too good to be true. Seems like an eternity before I'll see you again and I just have to keep myself from thinking about it.

Forgive me for cutting short – promise that I'll write a better letter next time.

Love

Gary

Send me some good books to take my mind away from this place – please

I love you – forever

Day 98
42 Days Left
Trip past the Rockpile

Nov 7

Dear Maxie,

I'm in a bit better mood today, we just has a USO show with real live girls from Australia – I'd almost forgotten what the other half look like, but now I remember and , wow, do I ever need to get home. You never have seen such a bunch of horny guys as the group that was there tonight. You can imagine about 1,000 guys who have been away from everything for a pretty good while. Anyway, the show wasn't too bad, although it was about an hour late. It was good for a change.

I also took a trip today. I went up to our forward supply position up in the mountains. It's pretty country – green and mountainous. Went by one place you may have heard of – the “Rockpile” – it saw a lot of action earlier in the war. Most of the fighting is taking place further west now – almost to the border of Laos – I don't know how far I was from that but it couldn't have been too far. The trip was good for me because it got me away from here for awhile.



On the way
to the
Rockpile

I got a letter and a package from you today. I almost had to fight people off when I got the package. Thank you, hon. I've already tried the shampoo and eaten some of the food. It's good to have something different to eat. Thank you again. In your letter you were depressed – more mad – about the overtime bit at work. You seemed to feel bad because you didn't feel that you should carry your idea to _____. Maxie, don't feel bad about it. I understand and have been in the same spot many times since I've been in the military. If you could only imagine what it's like in the Corps being a peon and your word not really making a damn to anyone you can imagine what it's been like for me. Now I'm in a position where I can say a little, but I still don't want to take any chances that would delay my discharge. See what I mean? Sometimes it has to be that way so don't feel bad about it.

Continued

Day 98
Continued
Trip past the Rockpile

Maxie, I miss you. This has got to end soon so I can be home holding you like I should be holding you like I should be. I miss your gentle, loving touch. I love you, Maxie, Nothing could ever take you away from me. I love you.

Yours,

Gary

Morn

Dear Hon,

I've got some news that could be good – my school cut came through, finally. The date wasn't exactly what I wanted, but I'm going to let good enough alone. It's effective for January 28, which is only a five day cut, but means that I have to be in the states by the 13th and may get out earlier if everything goes ok. I'm happy but disappointed because of the date. Guess every bit will help because it means a couple of days earlier with you. Next time you talk to (*your sister*) _____, explain to her the situation and tell her that I'll have to turn down the part in her wedding because I won't know until very late exactly when I'll be home. There is a chance that I could be home in time, but I don't want to have (her future hubby) _____ looking for an usher at the very last minute if I can't make it in time.

Love

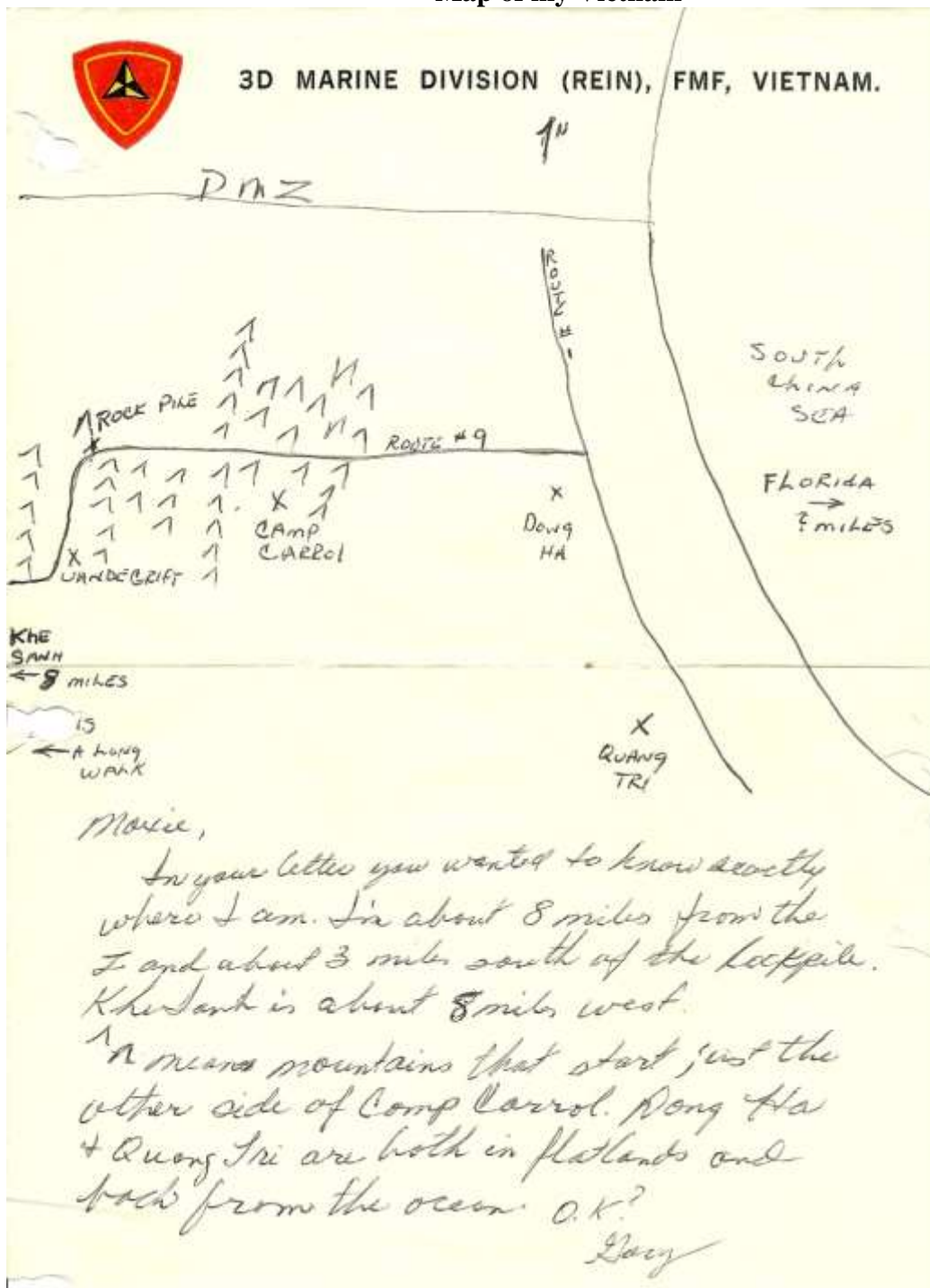
Gary

P.S. Happy anniversary, Maxie, 7 months, isn't it? I love you



The Rockpile from the new Route 9. It now goes to the south of the Rockpile.

Day 99
41 Days Left
Map of my Vietnam



Maxie,
In your letter you wanted to know exactly where I am. I'm about 8 miles from the Z (DMZ) and about 3 miles south of the Rockpile. Khe Sanh is about 8 miles west. ^ means mountains that start just the other side of Camp Carroll. Dong Ha and Quang Tri are both in flatlands and back from the sea. OK?
Gary

Day 100 40 Days Left

What do you do with an afternoon off in Vietnam?

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I had the afternoon off today – big deal. I wrote a couple of letters and slept. It rained off and on all day so there was really nothing else to do. What is there to do with day off when there's nowhere to go or nothing to do? The rain is starting again. This makes about three days in a row that it's rained. It's starting to get a little cooler now but it starts steaming as soon as the sun comes out. Guess one reason it seems cool is because it's hard to get really dried out. Everything is outside, even the heads so it's impossible to spend a day without going out sometime. I used to take things like indoor toilets for granted, but it sure would be nice to have one now. I just took a shower (outside, too) and it was COLD. The only hot water heater we have now is the sun and it isn't working too well. How great a nice hot shower (with you) would be? I never feel really clean, just a little less dirty. Such things are so easy to take for granted until a person has to live without. I'll appreciate things and life much more now.



Day Off.
Haircut day in
Dong Ha

I got a letter from you today asking me to tell you immediately if I ever fall out of love with you. Maxie, I may get upset at times and mad but as far as my every stopping loving you, don't worry about that because it won't happen. You've given me too much happiness and love to ever leave you. I fully intend to spend my life loving you and with you as my wife and making a home with you. I'll never stop loving you, so stop worrying about it. Just love me like I love you and we'll have a good life together.

You remember my telling you about the Sgt that has led almost the same life I have in the Corps. He's back in the rear again for a congressional investigation. He's having trouble with his school cut, too; and aims to get it one way or the other. Yea us.

Nothing new has been happening today, except the lonely rain. It's raining again and I'm starting to get lonely again. I miss you, Maxie, and need to feel your warm touch. I love you. I need to be with you. I love you.

Yours,
Gary

Day 101
39 Days Left
Being in Vietnam is the worst part of being in Vietnam.

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

I just got back from a USO show. Maxie, I'm horny. I didn't realize how bad it is until I see something that reminds me of home and all I'm missing. This place is driving me nuts.

Can you imagine what it's like working 7 days a week and not have any place to go when there's a little time off? It's something that I've never experienced before and it's starting to get me down. There's so much to do back in the world and here I am stuck between Quang Tri and Dong Ha. The Smokies and the beaches are sitting there and I can't see any of it. And you're over there and I'm here and we can't see each other and I miss you terribly. Damn, I'll be glad when this is over.

Still nothing new on when I'm coming home. Guess it's still the same, like I won't know until I get my flight date. It has to end soon – I miss you too much.

I'm too excited not – I'll finish this in the morning. I love you.

Gary

Morn:

Good morning hon, Guess I was excited last night. I've been here much too long, hon. It's starting to get to me. Today has been pretty hectic but I've got everything straightened out now. Mornings are hectic, but the rest of the day is pretty calm. I just want to get it over with.

It's getting harder to write now. The only thing on my mind is coming home. Maxie, I love you. I've got to get home soon.

Love

Gary

Just being in Vietnam is trying. It's not exciting or fun or . . . you pick the description. This was the hardest part of being away from Maxie - the grind of each day just like the other.

Day 102
38 Days Left
Deck of cards. One card per day.

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

One more day gone – yea. At the most I have 46 days left here. I'm working on a deck of cards – each day I pull a card off. Can't wait to hit the ace of spades – then I start my trip back to you.



So you got my letter about the possibility of coming home in December. You want to know for sure. To tell the truth, I won't know when I'll be leaving until a couple of days before I leave. Tell you what I think. There are a lot of people who would otherwise leave in late December who are leaving earlier, so there should be a lot of flight dates open then and keep your fingers crossed, hon. As soon as I hit the states, I'm on my way out. Here hoping I get lucky. I'll let you know as soon as something develops.

Glad to hear that your cold had gotten better. Just don't gain too much weight back because I want to see you looking great when I get home. How did two such extremes get together? I could eat all day and still not gain.

We had an ARVN staying our hootch tonight. His name is Heim and he's a pretty decent guy. I kinda feel sorry for him. He's married and has a couple of kids and can't see them now even though he's not far away. He's been in the army for over 5 years now and doesn't know when he'll get out.

Maxie, I miss you. The closer I get to coming home, the harder it is. It seems like so long since I last held you and felt you warm and loving touch. I love you.

Continued

Day 102
Continued

Deck of cards. One card per day.

Capt Austin hasn't left yet, but he should leave soon. He's starting to get edgy and doesn't stay in the office much any more. I can't blame him – I'd be impossible to live with if they held me over my flight date.

Love

Gary

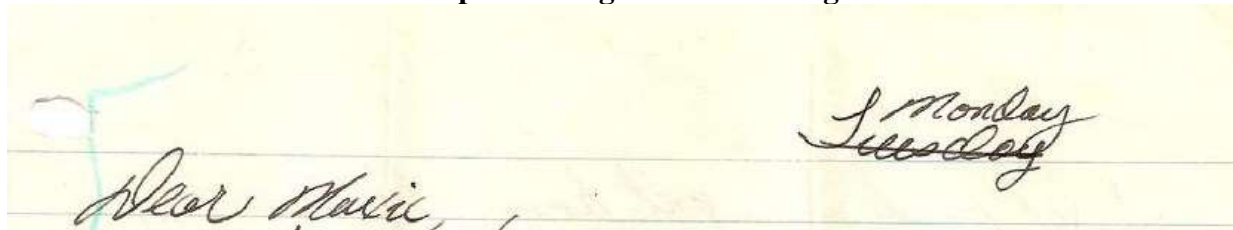
Morn – I just found out that today is Tuesday – last night was Monday

Gotta hurry up and mail this

I love you

Gary

Day 103
37 Days Left
Maxie finds apt. I can't get medal. Going on R&R.



So you found us an apt. It sounds pretty good to me if you're satisfied with it, I will be too. I'm glad you got us a place out of an apartment house because it could get pretty noisy. I like the idea of having a place to ourselves a lot better. I also like the price - \$60 a month - that's pretty good. Did you put a payment down to reserve it for us or will they hold it until we can go there and make arrangements? Don't let it get away, hon. I'm looking forward to fixing it up with you. Our first home together and we'll get to fix it up together. Good going, hon. I love you. By the way - about you air conditioner. I don't think we'll need one for a couple of months, but I guess we can have one.

By the way, it's December - yea. I go on R&R in a week and when I get back I won't have very long left to go before I start coming home to you. I'm glad I waited to go because it would be terribly hard to go on R&R and come back with a lot of time to do. It's a lot easier to live without seeing good things. Once I get a taste of life again, it would be hard to get used to not living without again. When I get back, I'll be on the downhill slide and it won't be too bad.

I can't get the medal now - I won't be able to get it until I leave. They have a policy where I can't get it until I've spent 10 months in country or my tour is over. Oh well, at least Capt Austin put me in for it and it was turned back for a technicality. I'll get over it. Oh, Capt Austin left today. I'm glad because he was on a legal hold and starting to get hard to live with. I don't blame him. I would too if they held my flight day. He's planning on getting out of this green machine this summer. The best move he's made so far.

The nights are starting to get a bit cooler now, although it isn't what you would call cold. It still gets pretty hot in the day - hot enough to go without a shirt. The nights are nice and would be so great for making love to you - it won't be too long. I miss you.

Sounds like you enjoyed your stay in Alabama - even if it was painful. Funny, I had taken my parents' way of life for granted when I was growing up and didn't realize how lucky I was. The greatest thing is that they gave me almost complete freedom yet still cared. It's a pretty good combination. I couldn't have a car until I could keep it up myself and they went along with my wild ass ideas - like making the wheat harvest one summer.

We're going to have a good life, hon. There are so many places I want to take you and so many beautiful things I want to show you. Never will I be bored with you because you are so great. I'm proud of my beautiful, young and smart wife. I love you.

You know, I feel like I fit in the adult world so much better before I joined the Corps. I remember some of the stunts I pulled before in school, I just couldn't do some of them now. I am married and happily so. I like it.

Continued

Day 103

Continued

Maxie finds apt. I can't get medal. Going on R&R.

About R&R – I just missed going with Handy. He's going to Hong Kong, too, but on the 16th. We tried to get the same dates, but couldn't. It's a shame because we would have a great time together. I hope you get to meet him.

I am looking forward to being out so bad. To be a free man. To start a life with you. To be able to chose my friends and where we go. Maxie, I can't wait and need to be with you. You are a part of me and my place is with you and it'll always be that way. Maxie, I love you, and I always will

I love you,

Gary

C-130's

The only way to get from Dong Ha and Quang Tri to DaNang to the south, and therefore the rest of the world, was on a C-130. From Quang Tri and Dong Ha to points west you could go by jeep, convoy, truck or helicopter. You couldn't really go any more north without being in North Viet Nam, or any more east without being in the China Sea.

The C-130s didn't have any seats or anything else in back, just an empty floor. They would pile in about a hundred guys with all of their gear, rifles, luggage and anything else they were carrying. The only way to hold on was to try to grab one of the tie down rings on the floor - if you could find one.

The airstrips at Dong Ha and other bases were made out of metal airstrip material, and were very short. We learned that the C-130s were very good at short runway landings. The only problem was they would point the plane straight down and everyone would start sliding into each other. One time when they did that, I ended up with an M16 sticking in my nose.

The C-130s always seemed to get up in the air and get back down again on the short airstrips. It was a lot better than driving to DaNang.

I thank the guys that flew them and kept them going. There weren't any stews, and it wasn't exactly first class, but they got us there. Thanks.

Day 104
36 Days Left
How did I get to the airport when I left?

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

I got a fairly long letter from you today. In the first part you were upset about the latest episode with the car. I don't blame you for getting upset, but only wish that I could be there to handle things like that so you wouldn't have to worry. It seems that you get upset so easily now. I get more depressed letters from you now than I used to and it kinda worries me. This separation is not good for you, Maxie. It's not good for me either. In the second part of your letter you asked me if I think about you very much. At first I didn't let myself, but I am starting to more now. It's like you said, it doesn't get easier, only harder. The first month or so was bad, but it was a sharp pain kept alive by fresh memories. Now it's like a dull pain that keeps getting worse as time goes on and I have no fresh memories to fall back on.

I've already been away from you for six months, and it seems like an eternity since we last kissed at the airport. You were so brave, trying not to cry, and I was proud of you – there was just a little tear or two then. In the not too distant future, we will be kissing again at the same airport, only this time I will be joining you again and our ordeal will be over and any tears will be tears of joy. In a way, I think that it's fitting that you meet me at the airport where I left you.

When I get back, we can start our life anew, have a short second honeymoon, and then begin to build our life together. Just think, Maxie, we'll be starting our very own home as Mr. and Mrs. and later we'll raise our family. You asked what type of apartment I want. It doesn't matter as long as we are together. I would prefer something like Ronnie's instead of a project, but I'll be happy anywhere as long as we are together. The main thing is having you there. It's going to be cold when I get home, and I'll need you to cuddle up to and keep me warm. Happiness is a beautiful, warm wife. My happiness is you. Now my happiness is half a world away and I'm sad and lonely and need my new wife. I try to keep busy by reading and working now, but there's always that time just before I go to sleep when I need you most of all, and there's that emptiness that no amount of busy can fill. Nothing can take the place of your warm loving touch. I love you, Maxie, and always will. You still have the idea that some day I will leave you. No, Maxie, I'd never leave you because I love you, hon, forever.

Love,

Gary

Day 105
35 Days Left
Muddy first days at Quang Tri

Wed

Dear Maxie,

I feel a bit better now. They finally got our shower and I just took my first shower since we got here. It's funny how a little thing like being clean will make me feel better. I didn't get a letter from you today because our mail is still going to Dong Ha but I did manage to find a portable tape recorder and listen to your tape. I couldn't hear it too well because I didn't have the right batteries for the recorder and had to turn the reel by hand. Still I could understand most of it and it was good to hear your voice. So you're down to your goal weight – sure would like to see you now – bet you sure look good. Say you wear a size 10 now – guess you won't tell me what you weigh till I get home. I'll wait.

I've been thinking about R&R. I have a chance to go to Tokyo on the 19th of Oct. Should I go? Can we afford it? Please let me know what you think because it's our money I'll be spending.

We're starting to get settled a bit here although things are still messed up. There is still a lot of mud from the last rain because we haven't built yet. Going to the bathroom is still a major undertaking – especially at night – because we only have one now and it's about 100 yards of mud away. I sure will be glad to get some electricity, but no telling when that will be. I think that if I do go on R&R, I'll just lie in a hot bath for a couple of days. All we have here is cold water and it's pretty hard to get really clean. There is a better PX here. I even found B&H's and some books. I bought two yesterday and have already read one – The Angry Hills by Leon Uris (he wrote Exodus). It was a good book and I enjoyed it, but it was too short and didn't last long enough. I read it in about 3 hours.

You know, Maxie, I'm terribly lucky to have a wife like you. There are so many things I love about you, but I guess the thing I love the most is the way you love me. I couldn't have found a greater mate. Where else could I find a person who loves me for myself, accepts my little faults, manages money well, is beautiful and that I love so much. I'm lucky and intend to hold on to you for the rest of my life because I love you completely. We'll have our little problems but nothing will ever come between us because of our love. I love you, Maxie, and I always will. Mrs. Canant, I love you.

Yours,

Gary

Day 106
34 Days Left
Bodacious package

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

Letter mail came in today late and is still in the mailroom, so I won't get a letter from you until tomorrow morning. I did get a bodacious package from you today. I'll eat good for a while. One question – what in the world am I going to do with all of that shampoo? I couldn't use all that in the time I've got left if I drank it. Some of the bottles had the caps come loose, and I had a layer of shampoo on the cans. I saw the box wet on the inside and thought it was a broken bottle of scotch – for that I would have been mad. Thank you, Maxie. It must have cost a fortune to send. Thank you!

Well, how are things going in Alabama now? Let me know.

Today was a so-so day. I redid part of the office and built some shelves. Seems like I'm the only one who can saw a straight line. I don't trust anyone else when it comes to building things because some of the guys here have come up with some real lulus! At least it gave me something different to do. I think I'll build a 40 foot sailboat on our back porch when I get home in my spare time. With you, I don't think I'll have exactly what you could call spare time for awhile because I intend to keep busy making love. We've got 9 months to catch up on, and I do intend to catch up and start working on 1970 and 1971. In other words, I'm about to go out of my mind.

Maxie, I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 107
33 Days Left
What is worse than a boot lieutenant?

Tues

Dear Maxie,

Today has been horrible, everything went wrong. It all started when some boot lieutenant used our truck this morning and then signed the paper releasing our truck so we didn't have one all day. Maxie, I'm tired, not physically – mentally. I like this job, but it seems like I'm the only one who gives a damn and tries to get things done. I get people for working parties and have to watch them all day and keep after them or they'll just sit down and do nothing. If this was civilian life, I would have already fired most of them, but this is the military and it's pretty hard to fire someone. Guess I need R&R and to come home pretty bad.

I got a letter from you today. It was a long one and went pretty well until one part. Maxie, accept the cut for what it is and don't contact our congressmen again. I want to get home very badly, but I'm the one who signed the enlistment contract so let me handle it. If I don't I'll still be coming home around that time. I will say something this time because everyone else is getting the same type of cut over here – 10 days prior to the registration date. I'm tired of fighting this - I've been at it for about five months. This may be too late, you may have already contacted him, I hope not.

Anyway, I finished The Adventurers last night. I made it in three days and enjoyed it very much. It was different than I thought it would be, but a good book. I'm reading Rosemary's Baby now and have to finish it tonight because the guy that owns it is going forward tomorrow. I'm trying to get used to reading again since I'll have plenty to do soon. I need to learn to read faster and maybe I can.

You know, Maxie, I'm getting shorter. It's about 52 days until Jan 10, when I should be leaving the country. With a break for R&R in the middle it should pass pretty quickly. And if I lucked out and left in late December – wow! It's getting closer. Sure do hope you find a place while you're there in Alabama. You should be there by the time you get this letter. Hope you see some snow, but it doesn't snow that much in Alabama. Let me know how Major is and don't try to ride him by yourself. If Dad doesn't ride him too much, he should be just about right for me when I get home. I like a peppy horse.

So Jax has a new airport. I was looking forward to meeting you at the old one where I left you, but I guess it will be better to meet you at the wife new one. How did "wife" get in there? Guess I'm letting my thoughts wander and thinking about the new, slim, and beautiful wife I'll have when I get home. Hurry up time, go faster; I want to be home with you.

I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 108
32 Days Left
A dark letter.

Wed

Dear Maxie,

I've been sitting here trying to get started, just looking at the heading. Have you ever had one of those times when you had so much to say, but want to say it in person not in a letter? That's exactly the way I feel right now. I'm tired of being away from you (of writing letters instead of being able to hold you and talk to you). I need a change, hon, I need to get away from this place and start a new life with you because I'm getting bitter and disgusted with the little things here that don't make sense. Things like the 1st Sgt checking something I typed right, thinking it's wrong and having to type it over because he wrote all over it in black ink. There's a chance he'll be leaving soon – I hope so because he's a temperamental, old, drunk lifer and we do better work without him. He's been in the Corps about 30 years and he's almost getting senile. You say for me not to cut down the Corps, hon; I can, I know what it's like. As for the guys out in the bush, the ones that come in for their couple of years and get out they're the best. As for the old bastards that stay enlisted for about 30 years and are in charge of this place, I don't have very many kind words for them. Our mess hall is so messed up and dirty with lousy chow and they don't give a damn because they don't have to eat there. I'm sorry I sound so bitter, but it's hard not to be. I'll just be so glad when it's all over and I'll be completely out of the Marine Corps and I can forget all of the bad things and all of the lifers who couldn't even make a living on the outside.

The way I feel right now nothing really matters except being with you again. I can't really get enthused about a wedding right now. I just want to spend some quiet time with you. I need that very badly because my nerves are getting ragged from the constant, every day over here. I really could use a good rest, good food and lots of love now. I wish that we could take a month off and just relax and get to know each other again. I know that we're going to be rushed when I get home with the wedding and moving and school starting. Promise me, hon, that the wedding won't take up too much of our time for the first couple of days. I can almost picture how it will be for our first couple of days with all of the excitement and I don't like it. I just want to be with you and enjoy ourselves. I'm almost relieved now that I know that I don't have to be a groomsman and would be content just to attend the wedding. I know that one won't set too well with you because you're so excited about it. No one even asked me if I wanted to be in it, it was just taken for granted. Please, Maxie, when I get home, save a little time for me. I want to spend a couple of quiet days with you, not to have to share you with everyone else. I need the peace and quiet very badly after being over here. It's going to take me a while to unwind and get used to living again. Please don't plan too much for the first couple of days. Leave it for us.

I'm sorry that this such a horrible letter, but I'm terribly wound up now from all the work and everything else put together. I really need to spend some quiet time with you. I need you very much.

I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 109
31 Days Left
Thinking about R&R as other people go.

Tuesday?

Monday

Dear Maxie,

Forgive me for not writing last night. When I got ready to write, the lights went out and didn't come back on like they usually do. I sat around for about half an hour waiting for the power to come on and finally went to bed.

I got a letter and a tape from you today. It's good to hear you sounding better; I'm glad you're not too depressed now. Guess you were getting a bit nervous. Please don't depend on them too much.

I've been writing the Professor of English tonight to ask him for information about English major. Am sending you a copy. I didn't say much, just enough to let him know that I exist. The rest can come later. I've met him through Joe and Yogi (although he won't remember me) and he seems like a real great person.

_____ got back from R&R yesterday. He spent \$480 in four days and has nothing to show for it except a couple of pictures. I looked at a couple of the pictures and saw the same type of bar-fly whore that I'd seen so much of in the Med. I don't want to go on R&R. This is the first time out of the states on his own and really got taken. He's even writing one of the whores. What a fish!

Larry took off today for R&R in Australia. He should have a good time. If I were single, that would be the only place I'd want to go on R&R because who wants to spend a tour over here and then the few days he's off get tangled up with a girl who doesn't speak English, is Oriental, and who just wants your money. I've seen too much of it.

You talked of how you miss me and how it seems like it's getting harder instead of easier – hon, I feel exactly the same way. It's been too long and there's still too long to go. I'm tired of being lonely and away from you. I miss you terribly – it's hard to believe that we could be so happy together. It's lasting too long, Maxie, I need to be with you again. This is now way to live. I need to be your arms and kissing you again and loving you live you've never been loved before.

I love you.

Gary

Day 110
30 Days Left
Money

Mon Morn
Dear Maxie,

Happy Monday – only 3 days left in July and then August. Time is going.

Here's a dollar that I managed to scrounge up – I still have money left – believe it or not. Will be sending \$380 this time, I am drawing \$19 for myself. It may be late because the pay master is still in the field.

Better get to work – I love you.

Love,
Gary

How much will we have saved with this \$380? Is it enough to pay off the car yet? \$12-1400 and it will be paid completely.

Day 111
29 Days Left
Dear "Abby" Maxie. 50 pound package.

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabas! Gee this week has gone by fast. Hope the rest of my time over here will go real fast. I want to be with you again.

Dear "Abby" Maxie,

I have a problem. I am getting married when I get home from here in 89 days. But that's not the whole problem. I want to know which is proper on the wedding night – for me to be in bed first, or for her to be in bed first. Every one here laughed when I popped that question, but I have never been in this mess before. You are the only one left to turn to. Please help me.

The Enquirer

I confess, I laughed. I didn't have that problem – we jumped together. By the way, that was Dick, he was ashamed to put his real name (you might print it).

It's raining again. Didn't start until tonight after it had cooled off a little already. It was hot again today. Anyway, it will be nice sleeping tonight, although I could sleep a lot better with you in my arms. I'd like that. I miss you.

I got a small package from you today – about 50 pounds. I'll eat good for a while. Thank you, hon. I really appreciate getting food – besides you, it's what I need most now (I'd sure like a good bite of you for desert) I'll make sure that all of the goodies get put to good use, my stomach. Can't guarantee I'll get fat, but I'm trying. Thank you again, Maxie, it helps out. I did have a tough time with the Hawaiian punch – Larry went wild over that so I gave him a couple of cans. Even got some bread today for the honey my honey sent last time. Writing about food just made me hungry, so I'll eat something and finish this in a minute.

In the letter I got from you today, you asked how I'll be when we're together again, if I'll be hard to live with or moody. No, Maxie, once I'm with you again I'll be happy and forget this mess and separation. About my loving you any less – never. I will always love you nothing can ever change that. Maxie, I'll never love you less, only more as time goes on. You are my life. I love you.

Love,
Gary



Dick on left

Day 112
28 Days Left
Just passing time in the Corps

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

I'm glad to hear that you are getting the car repainted – I'm proud of you. That's my Maxie.

Our Captain came back here today from R&R. He's a changed man. The life in the field and the responsibility have aged him a good bit. He's a smart man and I wish that he could be back here more because he's a good man to work for – he knows what he is doing.

I was just talking to one of the guys about my attitude toward the Corps now. You know, I'm just passng time now. It has nothing more to offer me now except a discharge. I do my work by my heart isn't in it. I'm tired of it all and just waiting to get out and start a new life with you. The hardest part is waiting. As least the work part will be over in about 4 months and the whole thing will be finished in about 4 ½. Out of four years that's not too long, but it seems like an eternity because I am looking forward to getting out so much. I won't say the Corps hasn't taught me anything or made me grow up because it has. It's just that there is nothing more the Corps can do for me and these last couple of months are agony.

Maxie, I miss you terrible. I'm tired of being lonely, of going to bed alone and being able only dream of you. I want to be with you, to hold you and to be able to love you in person. I love you, Maxie, and need to be with you. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 113
27 Days Left
Found a good book. Seeing guys that went thru boot camp with me.

Sat

Dear Maxie,

Forgive me for not writing last night. I found a copy of Harold Robbins The Adventurers and you know how I am when I get a good book; I just read until I almost go blind and then I read some more. It's good but pretty earthy – did you like it or did you finish it?

I got two letters from you that were written last Sat & Sun. Maxie, how can anyone turn a foot under the clutch, the right one at that? That's my Maxie. I hope it's better now. Looks like you need me to look after you so things like that don't happen and to comfort you if they ever do. Hope that you're feeling better now.

Still no definite word on leaving early. If I do, it will almost be a shock, but I would be very, very happy. I even went through my gear today and threw a lot of stuff away so I can leave at a moment's notice. When they say I have 5 minutes to get ready, I'll be able to ask what they want me to do with the other four. One thing, if I do leave in Jan, I'll be leaving with a bunch of guys I went through boot camp with. They are starting to turn up in the weirdest places. Every time I run into one, he knows someone else and so on. In a way it would be great to get out with these guys because we all came in together four years ago and are all due to get out soon. I still want to leave as early as possible because a reunion with you is much more important. You're the one I need.

Do you realize that November is already almost half way over. Slowly but surely, that time is getting closer. At the most I have 55 days left in Nam and not too many more than that away from you. It has to come soon, hon. I miss you too much for this to last much longer. I need your touch and love, Maxie. I love you, hon, and live for the day when we can be together again and look back on this as a bad dream. Maxie, I love you.

Forever,

Gary

Day 114
26 Days Left

Free beer, even Ski got drunk. Guy wanted to shoot someone.

Monday

Dear Maxie,

We had free beer for the company tonite and just about everybody got drunk, even Ski, who doesn't drink. I feel like I might even helped one guy – a guy who just got out of the brig; he wanted to shoot a people and I hope I talked him out of it. There are some people over here much more bitter than I am and it sometimes takes some talking to convince them that their only responsibility is to themselves. War does strange things.

Got two letters from you today. Do you know that I miss you very much? Maybe it's drinking that brings out the truth, but almost all of a sudden I seem to need you very much. You asked me if I forgive you for going out with Billy, yes, hon, I forgive and forget the whole thing. I know that you could never run around on me and trust you. It was just an unfortunate incident that would not have happened if we were not apart. I need to be with you – I feel that this was much harder on you that it was on me because you were worried about what I would think. I love you very much, Maxie, and nothing like this could ever make me love you less. I only regret that it had to happen this way because it was hard on you. I only I could be with you. Everything will be so great what we can start our own home together. Life without you is so empty and useless. I need you, hon, to make my life complete. I love you.

Stay sweet.

Gary

Billy was on the Shangri La with me; he introduced us. He was a very special friend who would never hit on Maxie. I know.

Day 115
25 Days Left
Craving a big salad, fresh vegetables, iced tea and a banana split.
The last day of July

Dear Maxie,

One more month gone. 5 more and a little to go. It seems like a long time but it's getting shorter every day. One day I'll be getting on a plane and coming home to you. I really look forward to being with you again. You were talking about what I want to eat when I get home. I want to go out somewhere and get the biggest salad I can find. There are no fresh vegetables and I'm hungry for that sort of thing and iced tea, and a great big banana split. It's funny the things we get over here, we can get steaks, olives, mushrooms and things like that but can't get fresh vegetables, cold things, and sometimes salt. I've just about got my fill of mashed potatoes and beets. And when we get a room . . . We'll make up for a lot of lost time – or try to. There's a lot of holding you that I need to catch up on. I'll try my best to catch up on that first night.

Got a poem from you tonight – “The Last Tear” about the day I left. It was good and almost brought a tear to my eye now. I love you, hon.

Am sending you a check for \$22 – my back travel pay. Use it for yourself. Guess you could use it after the postage and all of the rest of that. OK? I should be getting paid tomorrow and sending you \$380 to put in the bank. If you need any, let me know.

It was terribly hot again today but rained tonight so it's not too bad now. Can't wait to get back and snuggle up to you when it gets cold – wow.

I should be getting an answer back from the dean soon so I can put my school cut in again. I've got to get out a little early so we'll have a little time together before school starts. If worse comes to worst, I'll write a congressman (I'll have to find out who he is first). I'll get it.

Guess I'll go to sleep alone again. I miss sleeping with you. I miss your head on my shoulder and your leg on mine. I miss you. I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 116
24 Days Left
Black and White

Sat

Dear Maxie.

. . . We've got a new person in the office today. A great big Negro called Handy. Ski is leaving to work in the mail room and we're going to teach Handy the mail. He's a real decent guy and I think I'll enjoy working with him. I think he'll be a great asset because he doesn't mind working. How about asking Cindy at work if she'd like to write a Marine over here. She's not married, is she? I think he'd get a kick out of that. If she says yes, get her address and I'll have him write.

Handy didn't finish high school, he dropped out his last year and I think he can learn a lot here in the office, maybe enough to help him get a decent job when he gets out – I hope so. I'm going to teach him as much as possible – just hope he wants to learn. Am pretty sure he does, he seems like that type.

Sat

Dear Maxie,

I got the Scotch yesterday – thank you. I shared it with Handy. We had a pretty long talk last night and I got to know Handy a lot better. He's one Negro that's going places because he knows what the story is. You'd like him and I hope he'll come down to see us sometime. By the way, Cindy hasn't sent him a picture yet – can you help out? He'd like to have an idea what she looks like.

Saturday

Aug 31

Dear Maxie,

. . . Thank you for sending Cindy's address. You asked if he's good enough for her, is she good enough for Handy? Now I get along better with him than anyone here in the office. He's really quite a guy and a bit different from the rest of the people and makes the office a lot easier to live in because of his jokes. It's funny some of the things he thinks seems so inconsistent with his large size. We call him the "500 pound gorilla" but he's really an easygoing, sensitive person. We like the same kind of music and more things in common than I do with the other people in the office. He's the type of person I could take home anywhere and dare anyone to say anything. He's really a great guy. I kid him a lot about the scar he has in the back of his head where he got shot.

Continued

Day 116
Continued
Black and White

Tuesday

Dear Maxie,

. . . Work is starting to get a little tedious. The other Sgt is a Negro with one hell of a complex. I couldn't begin to analyze him, but I know that he thinks every white man is against him, which is almost true because he asks for it. I'd say he has an inferiority complex because he lifts weights so people will be impressed with his muscles (he really is pretty dumb) and has a burning desire for money. Example – he bought himself a one caret diamond ring for his pinky (he's married) and is going to buy a corvette and join the Playboy Club when he gets out. He laughs when I tell him that I'll drive a VW for now and a Caddi later. What I'm getting to is that he's impossible to work with and I'll be glad to see me go.

Handy was one of my best friends. The other Sgt was one of the most prejudiced people I've ever met, and I've met a bunch of bigots; I grew up in the land of the Klan. He wouldn't allow music by a white guy to be played on his tape player.

Day 117
23 Days Left

I realize that I won't have any clothes when I get home.

Thurs

Dear Maxie,

I got a letter from you today and a package from my aunt in Calif. Both helped make my day a little better. Thank you for writing.

About my leaving in December – I don't have too much faith in it because I want it so badly. I've been begging, pleading and trying to persuade them to let me leave in December instead of Jan 12th. I'm not giving up yet, but I don't have my hopes too high so I won't be too let down if it doesn't happen. If only it could. I'm going to keep trying and maybe something will come up so they'll let me go. The deal is that they are two versions of when I should leave the country. The regular time is in January – the other in December. They can let me to as early as the want – it's up to battalion personnel office, just next door. What do I do? I can't really go to anyone because January is the prescribed time for me to go. I'm not entirely sure if Dec is legal, but I intend to push it as hard as I can. It's only 58 days until Jan anyway, I'm still getting closer to being with you, although I won't be happy until I'm holding you in my arms again. I love you.

Maxie, you have been talking about having clothes altered, buying new clothes and the cost. How do you think it's going to be when I get home? I don't have anything. I'm going to start almost from scratch – from underwear out. That's going to cost some money, too. After four years in the Corps, I have almost nothing now; no winter clothes. We'll cross that one when we get to it. You know, Maxie, there are a lot of things that we are going to have to plan out – we're starting a life together. It's going to be quite a change, and do I ever look forward to living with you. It's going to be great, hon.

One thing you asked – about not calling when I'm in Calif. If I get out early, it won't matter, but if I get out late, you'll have a lot of things to do before I get there and I'd like to be able to talk to you to plan the move together. Let me know how you feel. OK?

Maxie, I miss you. I've got to be with you soon. This has been going on too long and won't end. Two months seems like a lifetime. I want to be with you so I can live again. I love you.

Love,
Gary

Day 118
22 Days Left
New job with H&S Company. I'm lucky.

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

Got a beautiful letter from you today. It was short but filled with a lot of love. It sure is good to know that you love me because I love you very much. I'm not as good with descriptions as you are so it'll have to suffice to tell you that I love you very much. I wish I could be with you to show you how much. At least the time is getting shorter everyday, and one morning I'll wake up and be coming home to you. It has to come soon because I've been away from you too long. I miss you.

I got a new job today – working for Capt. Austin. I don't know if it will be much better, but at least it will be a change and I'll be out of the office. My address will be changed to H&S Co. so you can start sending my mail there instead of L Co. I didn't move far; just a couple of buildings down, but it's far enough not to hear _____'s constant bitching. They are all mad at me for moving out, but I could really care. Even Larry got hard to live with because he hung around _____ so much. Handy is the only one left I could live with because he was unaffected by the whole mess. Speaking of Handy – what happened to Cindy – he hasn't heard from her?

I think I may get some help from Capt. Austin on my school cut because he knows this type of thing, but I don't know if he'll be able to do enough because the man who turned it down is bull headed. It's worth a try and I won't use the congressman unless I have to, and I may have to. It's kind of discouraging to keep running against someone like this because it's hard to beat. I can't even get to see the man without going through everyone else over me. I'd like to talk to him to ask him what kind of a man he is to tell me how much time I'll need to get ready for school. You'd think a person who's been to a school would understand the problems and give a person every break possible. Understand now why I hate the Corps?

Maxie, someone must be on my side because I'm terribly lucky. I'm lucky I didn't end up going to the field instead of getting this job. It could have happened very easily if I'd had a bad 1st Sgt. So to tell the truth, I quit working in the company office. When I got back from Yom Kippur, I walked in the office and walked right out when I heard the bitching and decided I wanted no part of it. Since I was out of work for a couple of days, I was sweating the 1st Sgt. sending me to the bush, but he didn't and helped me find another job. I'm glad I did what I did because I think I saved myself a lot of headaches and bitterness but did take a chance and won. Your prayers must have helped.

Come to think about it, I'm pretty lucky to have found you and I'm never going to let you go. I love you, Maxie, and it looks like we're going to have each other for a pretty long time because I'm not going to let you go and you better never get rid of me. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 119
21 Days Left
I've had enough rain. Wanting to dance with Maxie.

October 17

Dear Maxie,

I haven't gotten a letter from you in two days because no mail has come in. Guess the mail is tied up with the bad weather we've been having. When it rains hard around here, everything slows down and almost stops. The roads wash out, the planes can't fly, and it's wet going to the bathroom. Hope mail comes in tomorrow because I need to get a letter or two from you.

We've been listening to records tonight on a portable record player, and all of a sudden I got the urge to dance. Remember how we danced on our first date and I forgot everything except dancing and I completely enjoyed myself. Let's go to a dance when I get home and dance like wild. I feel like that now, like I could dance all night and then fall into bed. We never did dance much after that. I'd like to now and hope we can when I get home. I'd like that.

Funny – seems like every time I start a letter to you, it rains. It just started a minute ago, and is raining like hell. I don't mind a little bit of rain, but this is getting monotonous. This has been going on every day for over a week. I had to work one day by candlelight because it rained so hard. The rain usually makes me lonely, but when it goes on for weeks at a time, I can't just keep thinking about being lonely all of the time and thinking about how much I miss you because I'd go stark raving crazy. Anyway, it won't be too terribly long now – somewhere around three months now. 90 odd days and I'll be holding you. I haven't been keeping count of the days because it seems to go faster that way. It's always nice after a while of not counting to find out how many days have passed. Time is passing, honey, slowly but surely. Here it is after the middle of October already...next Nov., then Dec. Then it will be over soon and I'll be holding you and will never let you far out of my sight. I love you, Maxie, with all my heart and always will.

Love,

Gary

Day 120
20 Days Left
I'd almost forgotten what sex is like

8 Nov.

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbos, hon.

Nothing much is new today except I'm one more day closer to being with you. Not too many more to go, but I won't be happy until you're in my arms again and I'm out of the Corps for good. Then I'll be happy and not until. I will feel pretty good when I get on that plane bound for the world and that should be in about 60 days. Not too long ago, we had almost 9 months to go – that's 270 days. The end is in sight, but still too far off to suit me. I miss you, Maxie, and I need to be with you.

No mail at all came in today – it can't be the weather because it's clear and hot now. It got up to the 90's today, and the humidity must have been almost as high because it felt like 120 degrees. It sure doesn't seem like November here with the heat. It's fall in Alabama, and it should be cool and crisp when you go up there. You should see a fall up there, hon - you might catch the end of it. Guess you'll be going up in a couple of weeks. By the way, I wrote my parents a letter the other day so everything should be OK when you go up.

I heard a comment after the show last night – someone in the group said, "I'd almost forgotten what sex is like." That's sort of the way I feel, Maxie. It's been too long, and I've been isolated so long that it is really weird. I look at your pictures and it's really hard for me to believe that not too long ago, I was holding you and kissing you and sleeping with you, because it seems too good to be true. Someone like you just can't exist because great things like that don't happen to me. I consider myself very lucky to have found you, hon. To me, you are all that I have ever looked for in a wife and more. I love you.

Gary

Day 121
19 Days Left
I get an R&R date and plan on going to Hong Kong

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

Guess you're on your way up to Alabama now. You talked about snow and cold, and it seems so strange because it's still warm here. It's hard to believe that it's the middle of November, and I'm still wearing just an undershirt at night and running around in my ho-chi's. I'm glad it isn't cold here because there is no way to heat these hootches, and I'd just be cold without you to warm me up. I'll be doing that pretty soon, and we can keep warm together.

Today I had half the day off and spent it reading. I'm half way through The Adventurers now, and if all goes well, I should finish it in another two days. I need to get used to reading again because when I start back studying English, I'll have lots of reading to do. The only thing I'm going to miss is being able to read what I want to. I'm in the habit of putting a book down if I don't like it right away. I guess I can't do that all of the time.

Got the letter from you that had the letter from the Credit Union in it. That takes a great load off my mind. Thank you, Maxie. You did the right thing.

I have gotten an R&R quota for Hong Kong on the 10-15th of December. With your permission, I'm going to take it. It would be a shame for me to spend that much time over here and not see anything. Let me know if you approve. Maybe I could find some good buys there. Just think how short I'll be when I get back. I'll have to pack my bags and be ready to come home to you. It's not far off now, hon. Soon we will be together again for good.

Later –

Maxie, I've been just lying here thinking, and nothing seems to matter except being with you again. Everything else is just wasted time. I need you, Maxie. I need you to make me go so that everything doesn't seem so useless. I love you, Maxie, and I always will. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 122
18 Days Left
R&R! I'm angry when I meet an admiral who gets combat pay.

Wed

Dear Maxie,

Well, I'm here. It sure is nice to be able to relax and enjoy myself for a while. Here I can sleep without having to worry about mosquitoes, incoming or any of that. The only thing I don't like is being here without you. There are so many great buys here that I wish I could take you around shopping. You'd go wild. I bought a suit today for \$20 – a good one. I'm going to shop around.

Was great talking to you today. Would you believe that we talked for 13 minutes? I didn't have to pay for the extra time because they forgot to cut me off after 4 minutes. Seems like whenever I get to talking to you, the time flies. Maxie, I miss you. Now especially. I love you, hon.

Hong Kong is quite a city. It's a lot more Americanized than I thought it would be. It's quite modern and is big. Everything seems so cheap here that I wish I had a fortune to spend. It's hard just to look and not be able to buy. I guess it's a good thing that I didn't bring more money because then I'd probably spend it on things we don't need. The sailor that I'm running around with has already bought 2 sets of china (like ours, almost, a 95 piece setting for about \$70), a camera, a watch, etc. The thing is that I wouldn't know where to start.

Would you believe that my shoulders are peeling? I got a little sunburned before I left V.N. In December yet.

Guess I'll close for now. I'm going to sleep a while before I go out. Nothing starts happening around here until about 10 PM. I sure do wish that you could be with me now because being here without you now just doesn't seem right. Maxie, I love you and can't wait to hold you again. I love you.

Love,
Gary

Fri

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbas, Maxie. I love you. I called the synagogue here to ask about services tonight, but decided not to go since he said they have an Orthodox service. There are only 120 Jewish families in the whole city and only one schul. Oui.

Please forgive me for now writing more while I'm here. I have been going out every night and sleeping late every day. I went out again tonight but got tired of the same thing and started missing you and came back. Maxie, there could never be another woman for me besides you. I can see that now more than ever because I can see that now more than ever because I've tried to have a good time without you and it all seems hollow and wasted. I can dance and act like I'm having a good time but it's not the same as when I'm with you. I can never completely

Continued

Day 122

Continued

R&R! I'm angry when I meet an admiral who gets combat pay.

forget you and let myself go. I'm glad that I did come on R&R because it reminds me of how great you are. No one could ever take your place, hon, you are my love for life. I love you.

Of all the bars I've been to, I like the one here at the hotel best. It has a band that plays American music and never stops playing. Also, it's a closed club – it doesn't let single girls in. That means that aren't the girls constantly pestering you to buy them a drink like they do at other places. Here I don't spend much money – I dance instead.

There was some admiral eating in the restaurant downstairs where I ate this afternoon. For some reason I got mad at the idea of his being here. I don't know exactly why, maybe it's because I wanted to get away from the military bit and then he had to show up to spoil my day. Another thing I don't like is that he is getting his combat pay by just being in V.N. waters one day out of the month. He's nice and safe there because who's going to attack an aircraft carrier over here – now? All the people in V.N. doing the fighting get is one R&R while these idiots don't get shot at, but get to go everywhere. I shouldn't get all steamed up, but it bothers me. I'll be so glad to be out and a civilian again. I want to be able to live my own life with you and decide where I'll go and be happy.

It's going to be hard to go back to Quang Tri now. I've gotten used to warm baths, sheets, clean clothes and no mosquitoes. I am glad that I waited as long as possible to go on R&R because it would be twice as hard to go back if I knew that I had a long time to go. It's not as bad now because I know that when I go back, the end is not far behind. Maxie, I have to come home to you soon. Even here this separation is not easy to live with. I need to be with you, with my wife and the woman I love. Maxie, there could never be another woman for me other than you. I love you.

Love,
Gary



Day 123
17 Days Left
Back in Quang Tri and this place seems like such a hole now.

Tuesday
Monday

Dear Maxie,

Well, I'm back and it's quite a letdown. I had started to get used to the easy life again and this place seems like such a hole now. I do feel better here than I did in DaNang where I stayed last night. I was terribly nervous there and couldn't sleep very well because we were near the airstrip and jets were taking off all night. I do feel a bit better here because it's quiet and I have my own things here. Still, I'm excited about the prospect of going home early and am going to work on it tomorrow. I'll even resort to bribery if I have to – I want to be home with you pretty badly. I can't say yet when I will start home, but I hope it's soon – very soon. I need you, hon.

Forgive me for not writing more while on R&R – I was really terrible. I didn't get any mail either and had a bunch of letters and a package waiting on me when I got here. Maxie, it's really good to get your letters again. Hearing from you does so much for me – I love you, hon.

You know, Maxie, I'm convinced that you are the woman for me. I was around a lot of women while on R&R and no one seemed to quite measure up to you in looks, gentleness, and plain goodness. No, Maxie, there could never be anyone else for me – only you. You are everything I'd ever wanted and dreamed of – and more.

Later:

I've been drinking gin and talking to Houston. Maxie, I've got to be home with you soon. Maxie. I've got to be home with you soon. This separation is getting worse and I'm starting to get nervous. It's been so long since I felt you gentle, warm touch. I send all of my love. I need to be with you soon.

Love,

Gary

P.S. I bought you something in Hong Kong. I'm not going to mail it, but will bring it home with me.

Day 124
16 Days Left

Getting excited about being short. Short timer calendar.

Today

My wonderful wife,

Do you know what I forgot to do last night? I forgot to thank you for the cookies you made – thank you, Maxie, they're good and I've already eaten almost all of them myself. Gee, you're a good cook, hon. You can fatten me up when I get back. Also forgive me for not thanking you more for the scotch. No, I didn't finish it all at one time and made it last almost a week. It was too good to get drunk on.

Bad and good news. First – I talked to the guy who handles the flight dates and I won't be able to leave V.N. until around the 10th of Jan – about 25 days from now. Bah. Good news – I heard that they're discharging people in about 3 days now – that means that I should be home between the 15 and the 20th. I'll try my best to get home as early as possible because I miss you so very much, hon. It's bad to be short but not quite there. At least it is the last half of Dec. now and it can't be too far away now. Hurry up time – run, don't walk. I want to be with my beautiful, slim, young wife. I love you, hon.

My last day on R&R, I went to an English Pub that was really great. The English people are a lot of fun to be with and I met a man who is a Merchant Marine Captain and quite an interesting person to talk to. It's funny how much we had in common to talk about. I told him that I resented being enlisted and he understood. It's great to be able to talk to someone like that man to man without all the formalities. Maxie, I intend to go high because I'm tired of being low. I hate it and will rise above it. Guess I've started already. I had some business to talk over with this Marine Corps captain today and instead of saluting him, I shook his hand – an unheard of thing for an enlisted man to do to an officer at such a time. I don't care because I'm on my way up and people had better start getting used to it. I decided that when I get back, I'm going to be the best dressed around and forget this enlisted complex forever. It's not for me. I want also to do some thanking in person. Like Bill Nichols, and the Dean of Admissions. The world is going to know that we're around. And they're going to know my beautiful wife, too. Good times are coming.

I can't wait to get out to try my hand at business. The service makes me feel so restricted and I have a feeling that I'm going to like the competition of business. All I ask is that you give me all the moral support possible and I'll do the rest.

As you can tell, I'm getting excited about coming home. Sometimes when I think about that plane ride home, I could almost cry. It sounds too great to be true. After so long over here, that great big jet will take me home in a matter of hours. It sounds so unreal, but it will be true in less than a month – a matter of days. Maxie, I can't wait to be home with you again. It's going to be too great to describe and we're going to have a great life together. I want to be with you so much, hon, that it's like a pain that won't go away. I miss you, Maxie, and being with you and starting a life with you is what I live for. Maxie, I love you.

Love

Gary

Continued

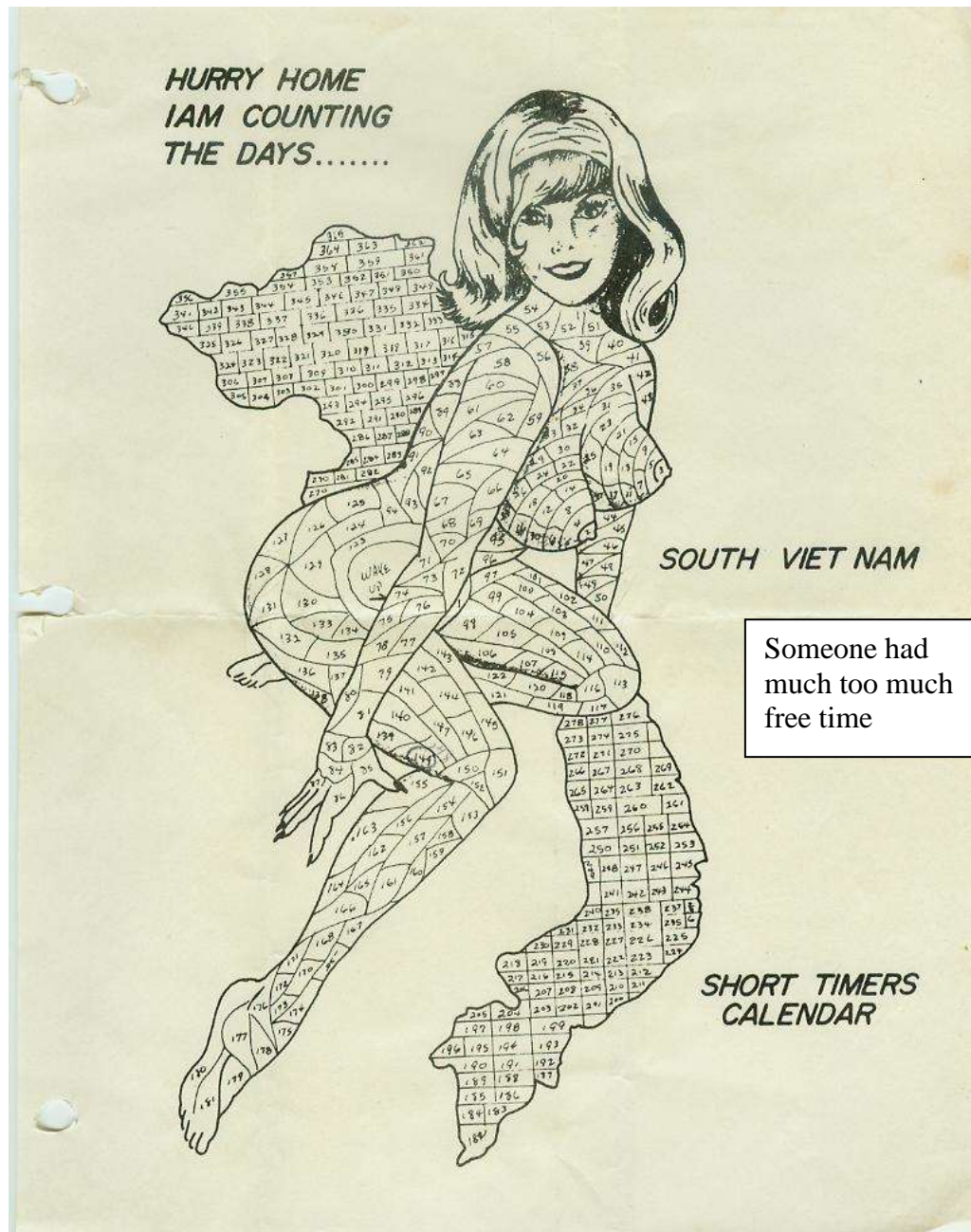
Day 124
Continued
Getting excited about being short.

PS. We'll go to the Chateau when I get home. Not the first night, the second, OK

I wrote a letter to Dr Calvert tonight. Here's a copy.

Am going to bed now. Sure do wish that it could be with you instead of alone. It won't be long now. Maxie, until I'll be with you never to leave again. I love you.

Gary



Day 125
15 Days Left
Damn, Damn, Damn, I'm here and you're there

Nov 5
Dear Maxie,

Damn, Damn, Damn. I'm here and you are there. Damn, Damn, Damn! One more day gone and I'm still here not with you. It's got to end SOON. I miss you, Maxie, terribly. Did I ever tell you? No, don't guess I did. Maxie, I miss you. Here I sit writing a letter when I should be with you being happy and carefree and in bed with you and . . . !

Enough said

Day 126
14 Days Left
Maxie, stop worrying. We'll be ok.

Saturday

Dear Maxie,

I got three letters from you today, two from AL, and the first one when you got home. Maxie, you sounded so depressed and worried about money. Honey, take it easy. Look at the good side. How many other couples our age have \$4,000 in the bank that they have saved by themselves? How many other young marrieds have enough money to pay off a 1968 car? We've got a good start, hon, and we've done it ourselves. It's been hard and the separation has been a private hell, but you and I are not hurting for money. We've got such a great future waiting for us. So we drive a VW for a couple of years. So we live in a small apartment. It can't be all bad. Maxie, we've got each other and just about everything we've got we've gotten ourselves. Please cheer up and STOP worrying about money. If you have to, dig into our savings to pay the rent and fix up our apt. I'm not a terrible animal that will eat you alive if you spend some money. I think you've been doing a damn good job saving and am proud of you. If we need to spend, do it. I hate to see you so worried when there's no need to be. Later we'll drive a caddy. Being together matters. Nothing else. I love you, Maxie, and your happiness is worth more to me than anything. Besides, I'll be home soon and I want to come to a wonderful, happy and young Maxie, not one who's worried sick about money, the apt., etc., etc. Cheer up; it's almost over.

Today is Dec. 7. Eight months today. Happy Anniversary, hon. We're already starting on our last part of our first year of marriage. I love you.

I bumped into a friend that I went through boot camp with today and we talked about old times over a couple of beers. It's the first time I've seen him since 1965 and we had a lot of old times to talk over. I should start running into a lot of "old" people soon. We're all getting out most-scooch (soon).

I start getting ready for R&R tomorrow and leave Monday. I can tell you now because you won't get this letter until after it happens. I'm going to call you from Hong Kong. I've heard that it only costs about \$10 for the first three minutes. We won't be able to talk for long, but it will be worth it to hear your voice. I love you, hon.

Am glad that you enjoyed your trip to AL even though it brought back painful memories. Am delighted to hear that you and my parents got along so well. I will even get along with your parents better now. What do you think? I just wish that you weren't going to work so much now. The money is nice, but I don't want you to work yourself to a frazzle. It's not worth it. Take care of yourself, hon.

I just took a shower and feel almost clean (as clean as I can feel over here). Gee, it sure would be great to crawl into bed with you now. Maxie, I need your warm, gentle touch. I miss you, Maxie, so much it hurts. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 127
13 Days Left

Short timer attitude. My mezuzah broke. Met an old shipmate from the Shangri-La

Thurs.

Dear Maxie,

Forgive me for not writing to you last night. I bumped into a friend off the Shang yesterday afternoon and we got to talking over old times and drinking beer. I always considered him a boot because he came on the ship a month after I did, but he'll be getting out in March. My time is almost up, too. I figure that I have about 22 days at the most left over here. That's about three weeks, and I'll be so glad when those three weeks are up because then I'll be on my way home to you. It still seems too good to be true, hon. I can't believe that I'll be holding you in less than a month. It's been a long separation, Maxie, and I miss you very much. It's getting bad when I get turned on reading your non-sexy letter. Guess I'm getting horny too. I love you.

My mezuzah finally broke last night. The little ring on the top finally broke. I was lucky that it happened here instead of some place where I couldn't find it. The chain broke a long time ago along with the little ring. Guess I just wore it out. I'll still keep it and will bring it home. It's kept me safe so far, and I intend to keep it.

All I can think of now is getting out and being with you. Nothing else matters. By the way, somebody is looking after me. They're having a deal now where there is a big move to send everyone in the rear to the bush except the necessary few. I would be going except for one thing – I don't have enough time left to go. Maxie, if this deal had come sooner – I would be out there; now I'm safe. Sounds too good to be true. Your prayers may have had something to do with it. Thank you, hon. How lucky can I be?

Like I was saying – all I can think about is coming home. That's all that matters. You know, I've come to value my life more since I've been over here. I even got nervous riding the civilian jet to Hong Kong. Now that I'm getting short, I don't even want to go to Dong Ha. I just want to stay here until I leave and go as quickly as possible. I might even drive a bit slower when I get home. I want to have a long, full, happy life with you. We're going to have a good life together, hon, and I can't wait to get started on it. Maxie, I love you.

Stay sweet.

Love

Gary

Friday morn

Good morning, hon.

I love you

Day 128
12 Days Left

I'm pissed. With only 20 days to go, they are sending me up to Vandegrift!

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

Well today started off pretty good. The sun was shining, etc. I took some people out to fire their rifles, and it clouded up and started raining – I got wet. It's turned cool and has been raining ever since. Just great weather to get depressed and lonely in. To make it worse – the news came in tonight that I have to go up to Vandegrift Combat Base, up in the mountains. It's really not that bad, it's just the idea of them transferring me with about 20 days left to go over here. G-d I hate this Marine Corps. I've been in this damn thing for almost four years, and they put the screws to me at the end. Now I have to pack up everything and leave here, now that I have a pretty comfortable place here. What a bummer.

I won't talk about it any more because I might start getting mad – madder than I am, and there is no need to take it out on you. At least the end is in sight. That's the biggest reward for putting up with the bullshit. I could fight this and could win, but they won't have me out there for over two weeks, and then I'll be coming home to you for good, and all of the idiots will still be here with their glorious Marine Corps. That's enough reward for me, because soon they'll never be able to touch me again. Never. When I get home to you again, I'll never leave your side again, no matter what comes up. You'll go everywhere with me, because being away from you is not my idea of living. I miss you, hon. I love you.

I got a short letter from you today. You had been working overtime and worried about catching the flu. Hope you don't catch it, hon. Good luck. Funny – they called it the Hong Kong flu – but I didn't even heard of it there. You also talked about our apt. Maxie, I don't care what it looks like because we'll be living in our own place together, and that's what matters. A place is a place; a home is with you, and that's all I need to be happy – you.

Yes, Maxie, I'm starting to get depressed and lonely. The closer I get to being with you, the worse it gets. Damn, I want to be with you, Maxie. I love you more than anything. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 129
11 Days Left

Well, I'm at Vandegrift now. Gave away the chairs I stole.

December 25 Morning

Dear Maxie,

Well, I'm at Vandegrift now. It's not as nice as Quang Tri, but isn't too bad. The only thing I really don't like is the mud – it's impossible to walk without slipping and sliding. It's really a beautiful place. I'm in a little valley surrounded by pretty good- sized mountains. One thing I do like – the time seems to go faster out here. A lot has happened since I last wrote you, and already a couple of days have gone by, and I'm a couple of days closer to being with you. To start with, the night I last wrote, I was pretty mad because they were sending me out here now. Well, before we left, we took down everything we had put up in Quang Tri. Our hootch was fixed up nice, and we took all the walls down and gave everything away. I had stolen three metal folding chairs for the office – the only ones we had – so I gave those away, too. In other words, we left the place high and dry. The Staff Sgt. left there was mad about the chairs and threatened to write people up if he found out who gave them away. But he can't do anything because I stole them in the first place. After we finished wrecking the joint, we came up here in the rain. It's about a 2 hour ride, and it rained all the way, and the place was soaked in when we got here. I had only been here about half an hour when we got incoming – the first they've had in quite a while. So, there I was, standing in a muddy trench, hearing that whistle-boom again. Needless to say, it didn't help my nerves any – I'm getting too short to be shot at. That ended pretty soon, so I found a place and moved in. Yesterday, they assigned me a job - making sure that our people get out on the helicopters. It's really a poor job, because the people have a mind of their own about that, and if they don't want to go out, it's pretty hard to find them and make them get on a bird. Anyway, it's a job.

We spent the rest of Christmas day loading the Christmas dinners on helicopters for the guys in the bush. The dinners were in special, large, insulated food containers. That day, the guys in the bush ate better than we did. We had C's.

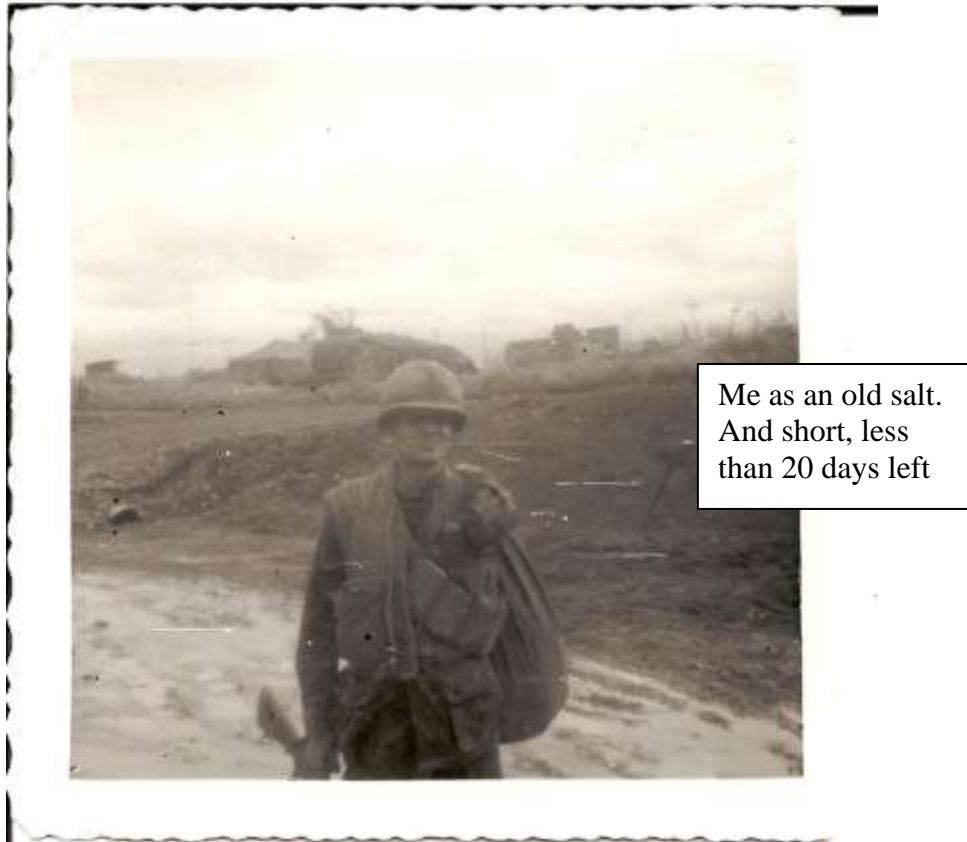
Last night was Xmas eve, and, naturally, we had a party. As a result, I feel a little low this morning. You know, this is my first Jewish Xmas, and I'm taking it pretty good. To tell the truth, it would really be hard to get enthused about it over here because there's so little to remind me of Xmas. Sure, there's music on the radio, but there's still mud, and today is a working day, and it's still fairly warm, and there's still a war going on. The people here were surprised to find out that I'm Jewish, but took it pretty well. I even said Kiddush over the beer last night. It wasn't exactly wine, but it was all we had.

As you can see, I've been busy, and time is going a little faster. Do you realize that I'll be holding you in less than a month? I'll be leaving here somewhere between the 10th and the 13th, and that's not far off at all. Soon after that, I'll be home with you and will never leave you again. Maxie, you don't know how much I look forward to being with you again. The nightmare will be over, and I'll be with you again. Maxie, I love you. Once I'm with you again, nothing will ever take me from you again. Never. I love you.

Love,
Gary

Continued

Day 129
Continued
Well, I'm at Vandegrift now.



The Deer – A story I never told Maxie.

The accepted way to travel to Vandegrift was to catch the daily convoy of heavily guarded trucks and go up Route 9 in a group. Several times, the convoys had been attacked, but we were able to drive them off since there were guards on all of the trucks.

When I was transferred to Vandegrift from Quang Tri, we decided that we did not want wait on a slow convoy to drive up, so four of us hopped in a jeep and drove up alone. We figured that we would go so fast that the NVA couldn't shoot at us; we'd be gone before they could take aim.

It was generally a quiet trip up in the rain. We drove very fast past Cam Lo and past the Rock Pile into the mountains. There was nothing between the Rock Pile and Vandegrift except the mountains and the mountain forest. As we were getting close to Vandegrift, a huge deer crossed the road in front of us and stopped on the side of road. We stopped and one of the guys had the brilliant idea of shooting the deer and bringing it to Vandegrift for a cookout. That's when we realized that we were in "Indian Country", NVA territory, and that a shot could bring a barrage or the NVA hoards down on us.

All of a sudden we felt very alone, scared and vulnerable. We jumped in the jeep and drove to Vandegrift as fast as possible. The deer just watched us drive off and went back to his grazing

Day 130
10 Days Left

The guys at Vandegrift drink. Hate the dust from choppers.

Thurs Afternoon

Dear Maxie,

I got two letters from you today. One was short and you sounded terribly upset about the letters I wrote while on R&R. Maxie, I'm sorry if I sounded like – well if I upset you. I didn't mean to and – well there's been a lot of steam building up over here and I've been away from life completely for 7 months now and letting go for a couple of days did help. Glad that you felt better in the second letter and hope that you won't hold it against me. I know it's been hard because it's hard on me. At least this whole mess will be over very soon and we'll be together living a life of our own and we can forget all about this war and take our turn at being happy. We've waited long enough for our chance.

Work here is a pain. The job isn't really that much but there's a lot of petty stuff going on. What I hate most is the dust that gets blown around when the helicopters come in. The can really make a mess. I do like the guys up here – there's only one thing – they drink too much. Maxie, you said in one letter that you worry about my drinking. I assure you that I'm not the worst, by a long shot. These guys stay up until they pass out and then get up in the morning and start all over again. I could never keep up with them. Don't worry about me drinking when I get home because the only reason I do over here because there is exactly nothing else to do.

Well the time is getting shorter, hon. I will be leaving the country in about 15 to 18 days and will be with you soon after that. Do you realize that the time is going, hon? Soon this whole bad dream will be over and we'll be together. At times I get terribly lonely and depressed but now that I think of how the time if getting close and it will be all over soon, I feel much better. Maxie, I love you and being with you again will be the happiest time of my life. I love you.

Love,
Gary



My office at
Vandegrift

Day 131
9 Days Left
I'm tired. I'm tired of working 7 days a week, etc.

Sunday

Dear Maxie,

I had started to write you this afternoon, but got interrupted by the helicopters and a couple of other things. It's pretty hectic during the day here, and Sunday is just another day. It would be nice to have a day off once in awhile, but I guess I'll have to wait awhile for that. Now I have about 2 more Sundays to go. The time is going here, but too slowly. Maxie, I'll be so thankful when this is over and I'm home with you for good. I only wish that we could have about a month vacation together so we could just relax and get to know each other again. It's been a long time, and it would really be great to just be able to relax together again. Maxie, I'm tired. I'm tired of working 7 days a week; I'm tired of being here and being dirty; I'm tired of being away from you. It's funny – a bunch of us were talking about the language we use over here and how it would be if we talked like that back in the world. Could you imagine me coming out with some choice ones while talking to Dr. Calvert or in English class? Wow! Pardon the digression; it just hit my mind. It's getting harder to write because all I can think about is how it will be when I get home with you again. I get excited and dream about you, and then I wake up and am still here. It has to end soon before I really go nuts.

I got a letter from you today that was written on the 20th; that's 8 days ago. I don't know what's taking the mail so long, but it's getting tied up somewhere. Have you been getting my letters or have they been tied up also? It's going to be great to be able to talk to you and not wait 2 weeks for an answer. Maxie, I miss you, hon. It has to end soon. I love you, and if I don't get home soon, I'll be a nervous wreck, too. I need your gentle, loving touch to make me human again and feel like a living person instead of just existing like I am. I love you, Maxie, and nothing will ever change that. I love you.

Love,

Gary

P.S. Here is a check for \$10 that Scope (*my brother*) sent me. It's yours – use it in any way you want to. Please.

I love you

Day 132
8 Days Left
1969! Our year.

1969

Dear Mini Maxie,

It's our year now, the first year that we'll have our own home together and start our own life without the interference of parents or the Corps. I'm getting excited about it, and the only bad part is that I couldn't spend New Year's with you. I just heard that it will be Jan. 1st where you are in about 8 minutes. Happy New Year, hon. We've gotten off to a slow start, but I promise that we'll make up for lost time as soon as I get home. Last year came in definitely better, but soon this will be our year. Already, I get out this month. I'll be holding you soon, and this whole thing will be over. Maxie, I love you. *Here's to us and our future, and may it be the best possible.* With you, how could I keep from being happy?

Last night I did what any red-blooded American would do in my position. I got drunk. After the way we spent last New Years, I couldn't have stayed sober and not gone out of my mind from loneliness. It's bad enough now knowing that you are by yourself, and that I can't be with you and wish you Happy New Year when the radio says it was time where you are. I'm sure you heard me.

No mail has come in yet today; it's been almost a week since I've gotten regular mail. Since I've come up here from Quang Tri, I've only gotten 2 letters and I wonder where the tie-up is and wish that it would get un-messed. Letters can't take the place of being with you, but they definitely help, and I miss them. Sure do hope that everything is O.K. Maxie, I miss you. This waiting is about to drive me nuts. So close, but still so far away from you. All I hope is that I'll be home very soon. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 133
7 Days Left
I've been lucky.

Monday

Dear Maxie,

Another day gone – about 13 to go – over here. Needless to say, the days are starting to get longer – at least it seems that way. Not long now, but the last few days are the hardest because I want to leave so bad and I can't go yet. Maxie, I'll be with you in about 3 weeks. I can't believe it because it seems too good to be true. The nightmare is almost over and soon I'll be holding my beautiful wife again. Maxie, I love you.

Today wasn't too bad. The dust was bad because it hasn't rained for a while, but at least I did get all of the people out. We had a cookout tonight and somewhere they got about 60 pounds of spareribs. It was good and afterwards I took a good hot shower and now I feel full and clean. Now would be a great time to cuddle up with you and just be contented. It won't be long now, Hon, and then I'll be with you for good. I can't wait.

I didn't get a letter from you today – guess the mail is still tied up after the x-mas rush. Soon we won't have to write letters. Strange, huh? Imagine a night passing without writing you (even if I do miss sometimes). Guess I could have been better about writing over here, but even if there were times I didn't write you, you were very much on my mind. I never forgot you, Hon, and talk about you a lot. I'm proud of my wife and I think that I'm very lucky to have found you. I couldn't have found a better person to live my life with, you are my love.

You know, Hon, thinking about my tour over here, I've been very lucky. I only (only?) had an 8 month tour to start with and have managed to spend the whole time in the rear. I haven't had to fire a rifle at another person and I haven't missed it a bit and haven't been shot at personally. Sure, I've been around incoming, but that's a pretty random, impersonal thing. I've been very lucky and I'm sure that your prayers had a little to do with it and I'm terribly grateful. I couldn't have been luckier (unless I never came over here).

The best part of it is that it's almost over. To be with you again will be the best. I've been away from you for a long time – too long and miss you terribly. Maxie, I love you and being with you is all I need to be happy. I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 134
6 Days Left
10 Days to go

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbas.

Damn, I'll be glad when this is over, Hon. It seems like it gets worse every day. I don't like this job at all, and wish that they could have left me in Quang Tri where I knew what I was doing. I don't mind the place itself or the guys, but I don't like the people I'm working for. Oh, well, it won't last too long, and then it will be all over. At most I have 10 days left to work, and I will be glad when it's over. This could be a good job if my heart was in it, but all I can think about is coming home to you, and I'm really starting to hate it.

I just got back from a good hot shower, and do feel a little bit better. The shower is about a mile away, and we all go down in a group on a little vehicle called a mule. In less than a month, I'll be able to take a shower with you right in our home. Gee, I'd like that now – to be able to take a shower with you, and then jump into bed with you and just be contented. It's been so long since I've really been happy, and then our happiness was marred by the idea of my leaving in the near future. Now, all we have to worry about is living, and that will be a pleasure. Maxie, I miss you. It's getting worse as the time gets closer. Every day brings me one day closer to being with you and one day lonelier – I'm starting to think about you more and missing you more. I want to be with you. I need to be with you. Maxie, I love you.

I didn't get any mail today because the courier didn't come up today. I heard that one of our mail planes went down, and wonder if it had any of your letters on it. I hope not. Mail is a little slower here because it has to come up from Quang Tri and usually gets here the day after it comes in. I guess I'm not the only one that came up here – they're moving almost everyone up here. There's also gossip that all Marines will be leaving Vietnam soon, and for the guys, I hope so. It won't affect me because I'll be gone, but it would be a great break for the rest. As far as I know, 3 / 4 has been over here longer than anyone else.

Gotta quit – the lieutenant wants to see me. Be back later.

Back. That was a farce. He could just have easily waited until morning to talk to me. Oh, well, I'll get over it.

I guess my letters are starting to sound all alike. All I talk about is coming home to you because that's all I think about. It's starting to get to me, Hon. It's all I think about and live for now. At least the end is in sight. Maxie, it has to end now. I need you. Maxie, I love you, and you are all I need. I need you. I love you.

Love,

Gary

Day 135
5 Days Left
Inspections in Vietnam?

Sat

Dear Maxie,

One more day less and one more day closer to being with you. I'm starting to miss you more as each day goes by. I need you, Hon. I got to talking about you tonight and it's amazing how much a part of me you are. The time has to pass quickly. I love you.

I'm glad that I'm leaving this place soon. It's really getting petty. Now we have to be in bed at 10:00 PM, up at 6:30 and have inspections. Can you imagine inspections in Vietnam? The war must be slowing down because this is getting worse than stateside. In the states, it's expected. I just hope I escape without having to get my hair cut because I have a pretty good growth now and it would be a shame to have to get it cut now. I may have to get a trim on my way home, but not too much. The whole Marine Corps gets on my nerves now and I'm so happy that it will be all over soon. What a pain in the ass.

Today was a slow day. It clouded up last night and has been raining off and on all day, so we couldn't get any choppers in. No choppers, nothing to do. Today has gone so slowly since I was bored. At least now I only have about 5 days left before I leave to go to DaNang. The time is getting here, Hon. Slowly, but surely. The Marine Corps lifers can play their games all they want, but they can't stop the clock and soon they'll have to play their games with someone else because my time is up. All but the shouting and you. Once I'm with you again, they'll never be able to touch me again. Never. I'll never leave you again, because I know how miserable I am away from you. Maxie, I love you, and being with you is my happiness.

Let me close before I get too depressed. I'll end with this, Maxie, there will never be anyone else for me – only you. I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 136
4 Days Left

I tell Maxie that I'm so short that it is time to stop writing me.

Friday

Dear Maxie,

Good Shabbat, hon. One more to go over here before I leave and if I'm terribly lucky I won't even have one more. The time is getting closer and I'm getting to be like you – going out of my mind. It still seems too good to be true because I've been away from you so long that it seems impossible to be happy again. It will all come true in the very near future. I will be leaving here within a week to start my trip back to you. Come to think of it, that's not long at all. No more uniforms, no more Marine Corps, no more being away from you, just happiness and a lifetime with you. I love you.

By the way, when you get this letter, you'd better stop writing me because I won't get them. Once I leave 3 / 4, I won't be in one place long enough to get mail and any mail that comes here after I leave will just be sent back to Alabama, OK? I know it will be bad not getting letters from you, but I will be on the way home and it will be a relief to be leaving this place, because then I'll know that before too long I'll be holding you and will have no need for letters. I'll be able to talk to you and not have to wait 10 days for an answer.

Maxie, I've been thinking what a change I'm going to make in a couple of weeks. I only wish that we could have more time to get used to each other again before I have to start school. I want all the good things in life at once. I'm tired of being a nomad. Travel is ok, but not under these conditions. I sleep anywhere I can find, sometimes on the floor if I can't find anywhere else. Now I'll have a home to come home to, and a wife to look after me as a member of society. Wearing decent clothes and riding in a car with doors, having a bathroom in the house and eating what I want to – it all seems so unreal. One thing, if I come out with some weird language, excuse me and help me get out of the habit. I'm really afraid that after 8 months over here, I'll come out with some lu-lus.

Better close for now and see if I can get a shower tonite. Be back later.

Later

Feels good to be cleaner. I can't really get clean until I leave this place. I still feel like I've got dirt in my ears from the dirt that the choppers blow up. Some of the big ones make so much wind that I feel like I'm going to fly. Not much longer. The end is in sight.

Maxie, being with you again is going to be heaven. It's all I live for and the thing that keeps me going. Nothing else matters.

I love you,

Gary

PS. I kept some money out of the last paycheck in case I find a stereo or tape recorder on the way home, OK?

Love

Gary

Day 137
3 Days Left

I'm this short and don't know yet exactly how many days I have left.

Monday

Dear Maxie,

I'm still here. Damn. I heard that my flight date came in but I couldn't find out what it is yet – hope I'll know by tomorrow. I'm starting to get nervous and hard to live with. All I know now is that I will be leaving within the week – that's not too long. It has to come soon and I'll feel a lot better when I know exactly when I'll be leaving. Seems funny now – I'm this short and don't know yet exactly how many days I have left. I just hope it comes soon and will be terribly relieved when I start home. I've been in The Corps for four long years and now it's over. Completely over. Now I can be with you and we can live our own lives without interference from anyone. It's too good to be true. Finally a real home with you. I warn you now that I'm going to be very happy and grateful – a dream come true. Maxie, I love you.

I got a short letter from you that was written last Monday. You said that you had a touch of the flu. Hope you didn't get a bad case. Are you feeling better now? I hate to see you sick – and if you are, wish that I could be with you and try to make you feel better.

The weather has really turned lousy here. It's been really cloudy for the past couple of days and today it has been raining, windy and turned cool. It's not real cold, but bad enough since we live in tents and don't have any heat at all. It will probably get colder and it could get miserable here. It would be great weather to crawl up in bed with you now and just be contented and warm. It won't be long now – soon it won't be a dream and I will be holding you for good.

I wish that I could tell you exactly when I'll be leaving and maybe I'll be able to tomorrow. I'll let you know as soon as I find out – although you won't know for a week later. I'm about to go nuts.

Maxie, I love you.

Love

Gary

Day 138
2 Days Left
Back in Quang Tri. First step in the journey home.

Tuesday

Jan 7

Dear Maxie,

Happy Anniversary, hon. Today makes nine months and the last anniversary that we'll be apart. We'll be together for the next one.

News: 1) I am in Quang Tri now. I asked the Lieutenant if I could come back and he let me. 2) I have my flight date now. Jan 14th. That means I will go to Danang on the 13th and be out of this country in a week from tomorrow. It could have been earlier, but I'm grateful as hell for leaving anyway. My date of coming home depends on how long it take for me to get a discharge and with luck I can leave on Friday – the 17th. I hope, I hope. I should be in the world on the 14th or early 15th, after that everything depends on luck and how fast processing goes. How does that sound?

I will stay here in Quang Tri until I leave and don't intend to go anywhere. I'll be perfectly happy to stay here until I leave. Once I got the word that I could leave Vandegrift, I had everything packed and left on the first chopper. I was glad to leave when I could because today was the first day for a couple of days that the weather has been clear enough to fly out. I would have hated to get stranded up there and not be able to fly out because of the weather.

Anyway, I'm here and know when I'll leave and it's less than a week until I leave the Battalion to start the long trip home. I've got a long way to go to get back to you and will be starting soon. Yea.

No mail today – they're holding it up because of the nasty weather. Hope I hear from you soon. If they don't get them here soon, I'll have to read them when they return to the world. Hey, that's a nice thought!

Maxie, right now I don't feel too excited because it still seems unreal. I guess the reality of going home will hit me when I get on the jet and leave. It will be so much of a relief – a prayer answered. Now I'm tense and nervous – then, I don't know. I just want to get it over with. Maxie, I'll be either in the states or well on the way at this time next week. I can believe it. It's finally coming true. After so long. Soon after that, I'll be holding you. After almost 9 months.

Maxie, I love you. The dream is coming true!

Love

Gary

Day 139
1 Days Left
Last letter from Vietnam. Gooks in the line.

Jan 10

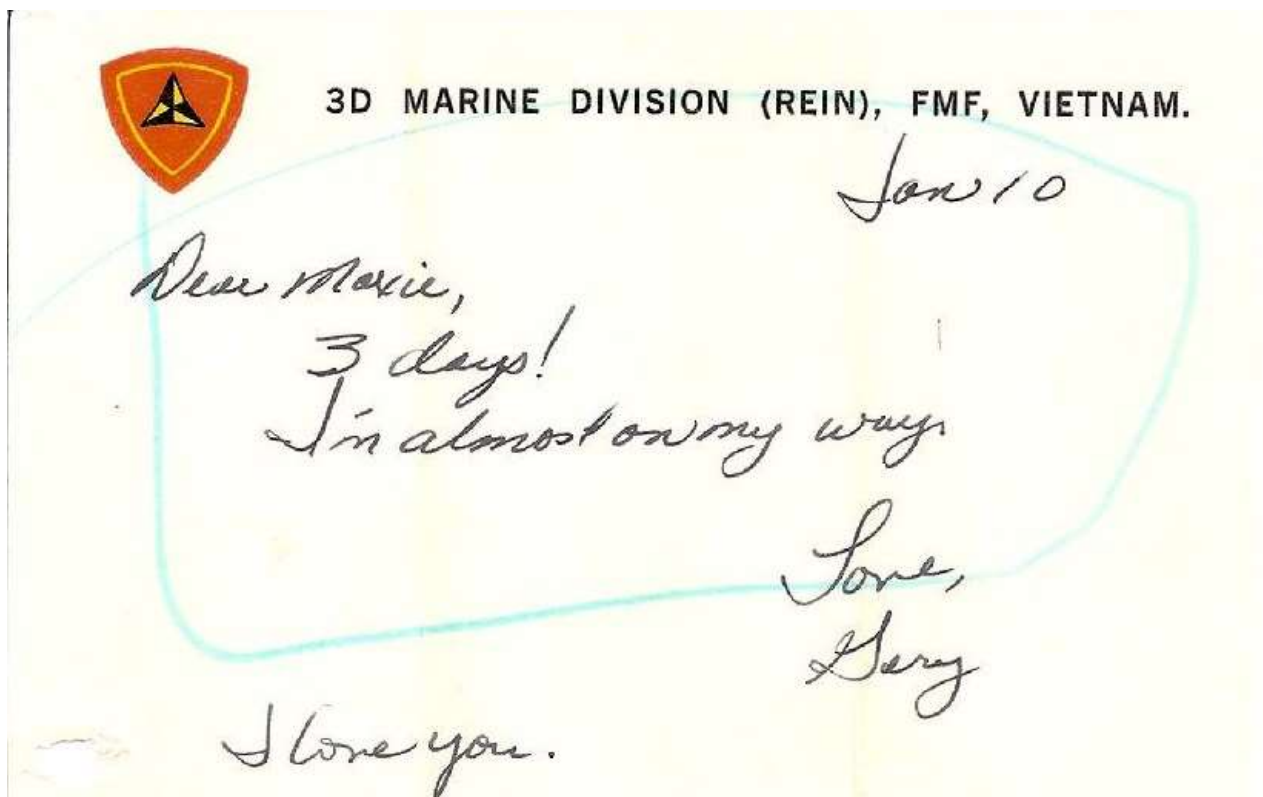
Dear Maxie,

3 days!

I'm almost on my way.

Love,
Gary

I love you



The night before I was scheduled to leave, we had an attack scare at Quang Tri. All our guys were running around shouting "Gooks in the line" and that we had been invaded. They had all grabbed their rifles, flak jackets and helmets and were ready to repel all invaders.

I crawled in a hole and stayed there until everyone calmed down. My war was over. It wasn't so much that I was afraid of the enemy; I was afraid of a bunch of guys running around in the dark with loaded M16s looking for something to shoot.

It was a false alarm.

Day 140

0 Days Left

Going Home!!!

I left DaNang on a commercial airplane on January 14, 1969 to begin the long trip home. After we were seated, the stewardess passed out cold wash cloths; we knew then that it was over.

When the plane lifted off, there was a small cheer. After that no one said anything. On the flight to Viet Nam, everyone talked and tried to get to know each other. Going home, everyone retreated inward to sleep, reflect or just be on that plane going home.

We stopped in Okinawa to pick up our gear we had left there. I stopped by the PX and bought a Kenwood receiver as the first building block of our stereo system. I don't even remember how long we stayed in Okinawa.

When we arrived in El Torro Air Base in California, there was a band playing as we got off the plane. I could never understand why; we were a group of individual people who had somehow made it to the end of our tours. We weren't some entire unit returning. We were being replaced daily by other guys going over. The war was still there even though it wasn't our war any more.

I don't remember much about that trip home; I was numb.

When we came back from Viet Nam and were waiting for our discharges to be completed, we weren't exactly good Marines. Our favorite response when given an order was, "What are you going to do, cut my hair and send me back to Viet Nam?" We didn't follow orders very well.

I didn't have any uniforms left; neither did any one else. Part of my uniforms had been left in Okinawa and the rest had been stored in Viet Nam. They were all moldy. I threw away the ones that couldn't be saved and barely had enough to make it back to the states. There was a large wooden bin of uniforms in the barracks. Each day we would search through the bin to find a uniform for the day. At the end of the day, we would throw it back into the bin.

In the morning we had to attend the morning formation. They would assign work party assignments for the day. Luckily, I was a sergeant and exempt from the work party assignments. I would find the rest of the sergeants, and we would disappear until formation the next day.

I was in California for only a couple of days waiting to be discharged, but it seemed like an eternity.

I arrived at the new airport in Jacksonville, Florida, Saturday morning at 3:10 A.M on January 25, 1968 and saw Maxie for the first time in more than 9 months. I dropped the new stereo receiver I had bought in Okinawa - I didn't care (it didn't break). She was wearing a short, black dress and a beautiful gray pressed wool coat with a fox collar and cuffs. She had come alone in a blinding thunderstorm to meet me. We hugged a hug that began to make up for nine months of separation

Continued

Day 140
Continued
Going Home!!!



After I left Viet Nam, I never dreamed about Viet Nam, the war, incoming or anything else connected with the war. My subconscious filed Viet Nam away as unnecessary past memories, just as I was consciously trying to forget.

I kept having a dream that I was back in the States at some Marine Corps base. My enlistment was up, but they wouldn't let me out. The paperwork was never totally ready. Every day I would go to the company office, and they would tell me that there was one more form missing. I would have to wait one more day to really go home. Each day the same thing, and I could never get out.

That was my nightmare.

Epilogue

I return in 2007 and find my Dong Ha

I returned to Vietnam after thirty-nine years to play taps, and to give closure to a war that happened a long time ago. I did not know exactly what to expect, but I came with the idea that I would let Dong Ha find me. Dong Ha was my Vietnam.

We had been in Dong Ha for two days and everything looked different; almost everything had been rebuilt since the war. There are only two buildings in Quang Tri that survived the war. I didn't recognize anything. Highway 1 is now a 4 lane paved road. Highway 9 going west out of Dong Ha is also four lanes to Cam Lo. During the war, both Highway 1 and Highway 9 were two lane roads, at best, dirt roads that turned into mud in the rain. During the monsoon, the rice paddies rose up to blend in with the road, so it was difficult to even find the roadway. I don't even remember people living on Highway 9 past Cam Lo; now there are villages all along the road from Dong Ha to Khe Sanh. A few of the houses in the mountains have straw roofs and look like they did all over the Province 39 years ago, except now they don't have walls of our C ration boxes.

In the morning of our third day in Dong Ha, Project Renew of the VVMF had arranged for us to visit a couple of "cow" families. The project is to give a cow to a family that has a loss due to UXO. It's not a gift; the family has to pay the \$200 value back when they can. Just one cow can give a family hope. When they sell the first calf, they can pay back the loan, and thereafter the descendents of the first cow supports the family. One cow can lift a family below the Vietnam poverty level of \$150 per year.

The first family had two cows; they had been able to buy a second cow with money they had saved over the years. The father had recently lost an arm and a leg digging for scrap metal when one of the bombs blew up; he did not remember what exploded. They also recently lost an infant son who fell out of a truck and was run over; we lit incense at the family shrine in the house. The father could not work at a regular job, but he could take care of the cows.



Continued

Epilogue Continued

I return in 2007 and find my Dong Ha

As we were driving to the second family's home, someone pointed out the old Dong Ha airstrip, the very same one where I landed 39 years ago in a C-130. It is the only thing left of the old Marine base where I lived for about 6 months in 1968. The local people have insisted that the airstrip be preserved; I don't know exactly why. I was told that they had tried to use the land near the airstrip, but ran into oil drums and other buried junk when they tried to dig there or plow the land, so they were afraid to develop the area.

The second family lived about half a mile from the airstrip. It could be the exact spot where I was stationed, but there was no way to tell now; everything has changed.

The second family also had two cows, Mother and Yellow. Yellow was the calf of the original mother cow. The father of the family had lost his sight in an explosion near the airstrip when he was 11 years old. He never knew what blew up in his face. Every day his wife would gather food for the cows, and he would feed the cows every hour; it was the only job he could do.

We went into his house to talk, and I found that he knew about my time in Dong Ha. He was born one year after I left, but his mother would tell him stories of the war years. He knew about the flood in September of 1968 when our bunkers caved in and their houses flooded. He also knew about the dump blowing up in June of 1968. He had seen the ville by the river where we had our laundry done and where I bought my Ho Chi Minh sandals made out of tire treads and inner-tubes for straps. I also told him that the local Vietnamese people would not bat an eye when our outgoing artillery fired, but that they disappeared when the NVA sent us incoming; they could tell by the sound and so could we (something we learned quickly). He also said that his mother remembered the sounds of war and paid careful attention as a way to stay alive just like we did.

He told us that his father had been killed in the Dong Ha area in 1969. I had planned to play Taps at the airstrip, but after I found out about his father's death, I decided that his front yard was a better place to play. Before I played, I let him feel my horn and had him stand next to me while I played taps for everyone we had lost, my fellow Marines and his father.

After I played taps, there was nothing left to say to each other. We shook hands and I left. I had found my Dong Ha.

The war was over for both of us.

The Letters

Day 0	140 Days Left	Letter from Okinawa. Last letter before Vietnam
Day 1	139 Days Left	First Letter from Vietnam
Day 2	138 Days Left	Taking shower and cooling off at night.
Day 3	137 Days Left	What am I doing here?
Day 4	136 Days Left	Glad that we are married
Day 5	135 Days Left	Jets bombing near DMZ, The Club
Day 6	134 Days Left	Getting used to the heat
Day 7	133 Days Left	Have been apart for a month. Just another boring day
Day 8	132 Days Left	New guys and incoming, FNG
Day 9	131 Days Left	What if they gave a war and nobody came?
Day 10	130 Days Left	Road sweep
Day 11	129 Days Left	NVA's not Jewish, incoming on the Sabbath
Day 12	128 Days Left	Vietnamese. K Company hit, Cookout
Day 13	127 Days Left	Patio and Spa. Numb.
Day 14	126 Days Left	Drinking. Incoming – into the trench naked
Day 15	125 Days Left	Telling Maxie I'm safe
Day 16	124 Days Left	Canned steaks. Maxie looking for apartment for us. The office
Day 17	123 Days Left	Mosquito net
Day 18	122 Days Left	Military Payment Certificates. MPC
Day 19	121 Days Left	Afternoon in the trenches
Day 20	120 Days Left	Lima Company is hit hard, Joyner killed
Day 21	119 Days Left	At the Wall in D.C.
Day 22	118 Days Left	Typing Condolence letters
Day 23	117 Days Left	Condolence letters
Day 24	116 Days Left	Guy Missing, Larry, Good Conduct
Day 25	115 Days Left	We get new people to replace the ones we lost
Day 26	114 Days Left	Found missing guy
Day 27	113 Days Left	Depressed, more wounded
Day 28	112 Days Left	Two more people from L Company killed, my anger explodes
Day 29	111 Days Left	How lucky I am. Sorry about angry letter
Day 30	110 Days Left	Maxie's upset by the angry letter, my response. Moustache
Day 31	109 Days Left	First food package. Condolence letter.
Day 32	108 Days Left	A short Letter
Day 33	107 Days Left	June stats, mess hall, skinny
Day 34	106 Days Left	Form letter from all of us to all of our wives and girlfriends
Day 35	105 Days Left	Still typing condolence letters, lost my pen
Day 36	104 Days Left	Short Poem: M16 and AK47
Day 37	103 Days Left	Air show, living quarters, mosquito net
Day 38	102 Days Left	Hot, watch, racial strife
Day 39	101 Days Left	Maxie's pictures keep me going. Bugs and more bugs
Day 40	100 Days Left	Busy day, 11 new people. Hungry.
Day 41	99 Days Left	We all chipped in \$15 for typewriter for condolence letters
Day 42	98 Days Left	110 pounds of steak!

Day 43	97 Days Left	I love you and I will forever
Day 44	96 Days Left	I sent Maxie a roll of film.
Day 45	95 Days Left	No mail today. Maxie fears the worst.
Day 46	94 Days Left	Maxie finally gets a letter that explains the pictures of the dump.
Day 47	93 Days Left	The Dump is finally mentioned in the U.S. newspapers
Day 48	92 Days Left	Larry's convoy ambush, terrible chow, the moon
Day 49	91 Days Left	172 days left. Monthly budget. Shaving
Day 50	90 Days Left	Maxie and Teddy. I go nuts.
Day 51	89 Days Left	High Finance, Picture of Maxie
Day 52	88 Days Left	USO Show!
Day 53	87 Days Left	Incoming again.
Day 54	86 Days Left	This is for you
Day 55	85 Days Left	Hungry. English Major. The Corps
Day 56	84 Days Left	25 cent women
Day 57	83 Days Left	Convoy to Ca Lu, Fathers Day card?
Day 58	82 Days Left	New Ho Chi Minh's
Day 59	81 Days Left	A Conversation. What am I, a walking calendar?
Day 60	80 Days Left	Getting Drunk
Day 61	79 Days Left	Maxie Bikini. At the club, got unable
Day 62	78 Days Left	Lonely rain
Day 63	77 Days Left	Jody. Still trying to steal our women
Day 64	76 Days Left	Typhoon. Bunkers cave in
Day 65	75 Days Left	Will it ever end?
Day 66	74 Days Left	A little incoming. Short letter better than no letter.
Day 67	73 Days Left	One day we will be too old to have sex . . . And talk about how great it used to be
Day 68	72 Days Left	July 4th, rockets red flare. Underwear, or lack thereof. Tabasco
Day 69	71 Days Left	School cut mess. Going to Quang Tri. Hardback.
Day 70	70 Days Left	Seven days a week. Friends
Day 71	69 Days Left	Maxie, you are prettier than the Playboy bunnies.
Day 72	68 Days Left	Last birthday in the Corps
Day 73	67 Days Left	Another so-so day
Day 74	66 Days Left	Drinking to escape
Day 75	65 Days Left	Piss on it. Shocking Old Ladies
Day 76	64 Days Left	Moving to Quang Tri. Sometime around Rosh Hashanah.
Day 77	63 Days Left	Going to Danang for Yom Kippur. I feel empty.
Day 78	62 Days Left	Wed? More condolence letters.
Day 79	61 Days Left	Yom Kippur in China Beach. DaNang - ice cream and slums
Day 80	60 Days Left	I'm sick of the whole machine that sends people out to get gloriously shot at
Day 81	59 Days Left	Missed Rosh Hashanah. Moved to Quang Tri. C's.
Day 82	58 Days Left	Maxie's last picture - going out of my mind
Day 83	57 Days Left	Missing the world
Day 84	56 Days Left	Quang Tri midnight attack on the other side of the base
Day 85	55 Days Left	Lonely rain
Day 86	54 Days Left	Back to Dong Ha to steal telephone poles. My medal
Day 87	53 Days Left	50 Pound Package! Air conditioner went out.

Day 88	52 Days Left	Todo en amor es triste . . .
Day 89	51 Days Left	Drunk First Sgt.
Day 90	50 Days Left	Planning for life after The Corps.
Day 91	49 Days Left	Maxie worried about drinking.
Day 92	48 Days Left	Larry's R&R in Australia. He wouldn't shut up.
Day 93	47 Days Left	I married the right sister.
Day 94	46 Days Left	Lonely weather.
Day 95	45 Days Left	New work schedule makes time go faster.
Day 96	44 Days Left	What does it really take to live?
Day 97	43 Days Left	Nothing has happened today – just another boring, long, hot day.
Day 98	42 Days Left	Trip past the Rockpile
Day 99	41 Days Left	Map of my Vietnam
Day 100	40 Days Left	What do you do with an afternoon off in Vietnam?
Day 101	39 Days Left	Being in Vietnam is the worst part of being in Vietnam.
Day 102	38 Days Left	Deck of cards. One card per day.
Day 103	37 Days Left	Maxie finds apt. I can't get medal. Going on R&R.
Day 104	36 Days Left	How did I get to the airport when I left?
Day 105	35 Days Left	Muddy first days at Quang Tri
Day 106	34 Days Left	Bodacious package
Day 107	33 Days Left	What is worse than a boot lieutenant?
Day 108	32 Days Left	A dark letter.
Day 109	31 Days Left	Thinking about R&R as other people go.
Day 110	30 Days Left	Money
Day 111	29 Days Left	Dear "Abby" Maxie. 50 pound package.
Day 112	28 Days Left	Just passing time in the Corps
Day 113	27 Days Left	Found a good book. Seeing guys that went thru boot camp with me.
Day 114	26 Days Left	Free beer, even Ski got drunk. Guy wanted to shoot someone.
Day 115	25 Days Left	Craving a big salad, fresh vegetables, iced tea and a banana split.
Day 116	24 Days Left	Black and White
Day 117	23 Days Left	I realize that I won't have any clothes when I get home.
Day 118	22 Days Left	New job with H&S company. I'm lucky.
Day 119	21 Days Left	I've had enough rain. Wanting to dance with Maxie.
Day 120	20 Days Left	I'd almost forgotten what sex is like
Day 121	19 Days Left	I get an R&R date and plan on going to Hong Kong
Day 122	18 Days Left	R&R! I'm angry when I meet an admiral who gets combat pay.
Day 123	17 Days Left	Back in Quang Tri and this place seems like such a hole now.
Day 124	16 Days Left	Getting excited about being short. Short timer calendar.
Day 125	15 Days Left	Damn, Damn, Damn, I'm here and you're there
Day 126	14 Days Left	Maxie, stop worrying. We'll be ok.
Day 127	13 Days Left	Short timer attitude. My mezuzah broke. Met an old shipmate from the Shangri-La
Day 128	12 Days Left	I'm pissed. With only 20 days to go, they are sending me up to Vandegrift!
Day 129	11 Days Left	Well, I'm at Vandegrift now. Gave away the chairs I stole.
Day 130	10 Days Left	The guys at Vandegrift drink. Hate the dust from choppers.
Day 131	9 Days Left	I'm tired. I'm tired of working 7 days a week, etc.
Day 132	8 Days Left	1969! Our year.

Day 133	7 Days Left	I've been lucky.
Day 134	6 Days Left	10 Days to go
Day 135	5 Days Left	Inspections in Vietnam?
Day 136	4 Days Left	I tell Maxie that I'm so short that it is time to stop writing me.
Day 137	3 Days Left	I'm this short and don't know yet exactly how many days I have left."
Day 138	2 Days Left	Back in Quang Tri. First step in the journey home.
Day 139	1 Days Left	Last letter from Vietnam. Gooks in the line.
Day 140	0 Days Left	Going Home!!!
Epilogue		I return in 2007 and find my Dong Ha



2007

At Troung Son National Cemetery (Vietnam's Arlington). Peace at Last.