

## Holiday Fun



**From Toots Marchand:** In 1946, Bob and I were married and he was still in the Navy. On Thanksgiving, I took a bus to Boston where he was stationed. On Thanksgiving Day, wives were invited to the ship for the dinner. What a thrill to be on one of those big ships. As you can see, one of his buddies was kind enough to take a picture with my camera along with another buddy. He was given passes to leave the ship and so we did get to tour Boston and have fun.

## Howey: Vietnam And Yearning For The ‘Real World’

**BY GARY HOWEY U.S. ARMY**

Specialist 5-E-5, Central Highlands, Viet Nam 1970-1971

**I**n the spring of 1970, while serving as a Communications Specialist with the 7th Corps near Bamberg Germany, I was levied for Vietnam, assigned to the 4th Infantry Division, with my duty station at or near Pleiku, Binh Dinh Province in the Central Highlands.

Shortly after arriving at Camp Holloway near Pleiku, several soldiers, including myself, were ordered to Camp Radcliff, An Khê Army Airfield, known as the “Golf Course,” a heliport near the village of An Khê. We were attached to the 794th support unit, assisting D Troop 1/10 Air Cav as well as other 4th Infantry units.

I worked as a communication specialist, operating and repairing communications equipment, assigned to An Khê Army Airfield, spending much of my tour on Firebases and Landing Zones (LZs) between Quinn Yan to Pleiku.

While there, I wore four different unit patches, as several of the units I served with received orders to return to the “real word” — the States, part of the troop withdrawal from Vietnam. Those of us in these units, who had time remaining in country, stayed in the same place, doing the same job. Nothing changed but our unit patch, as we were reassigned to another unit, one still in country; we replaced our old unit patch with a new one and carried on!

I received orders to return state side in late April, assigned to Ft. Lewis Washington, where I was honorably discharged in May.

# Some Thoughts On Vietnam

**BY JOE HOVORKA**

Native of Tyndall

**T**his is a true story about a United States Army Interrogator assigned to an American Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta Region in the Republic of South Vietnam.

The story I am about to tell begins in the United States in the year of 1966. I had just returned from San Francisco where I had been working as a valet attendant at the International Airport.

I was seventeen years old at the time and pretty uncertain as to what I wanted out of life.

I returned home to South Dakota, my native state, in December of 1966 to find not too much of anything worthwhile happening.

My girlfriend was on vacation from Nursing School but I didn't get to see her much because her parents didn't approve of me at the time. The reason, I believe, being that I had not decided on a course of future livelihood yet.

I had returned home with the intention of joining the United States Air Force, but due to some complications or other, I ended up joining the Army instead.

I joined for a field in Military Intelligence and got a school guarantee without too much trouble.

On the morning of Jan. 17, 1967, I had let myself in for something that will probably affect me for the rest of my life.

I had gone into this venture with good faith, thinking that I was doing something for my country and my loved ones back home. It was hard for me to adjust those first few weeks at basic training. But I eventually got used to it and started drifting along with the Military Machine that I



COURTESY PHOTO

**Vietnam veteran Joe Hovorka was an interrogator for the U.S. Army in the autumn of 1968.**

had become a part of at that period in time when the Vietnam conflict was in pretty much full swing.

Eventually, I became a part of a group that is very seldom spoken of, much less written about. By doing the job for which I was trained, I have nearly lost all dignity and self-respect in the face of God, my country and loved ones. My views on the conflict are ongoing ones and sometimes not understood by others.

I feel America was humiliated, both military and civilian. There were too many rules and regulations placed on the fighting man in South Vietnam. Too much restriction was placed on the field units by the politicians who tried running it from a desk in the Pentagon and White House. And most assuredly, didn't know the first thing about the kind of war the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were waging in the South.

For example, whenever a high-ranking

civilian would come to Vietnam, a battalion would be assigned to clear the area that he was to visit and make sure that everything was “hunky dory” and perfect for him to inspect and return to the states to make his report.

These types of men never did see the real fighting areas of the Mekong Delta.

Also, too much authority was given to the lower echelons of command within the country. Specifically, South Vietnamese District and Regional Chiefs who controlled district and regional boundary crossings by U.S. military forces.

Whenever an American unit was in hot pursuit of Viet Cong or NVA, the unit would have to wait for permission to cross said boundaries, giving enemy units a chance to escape.

Pulling out before the job was done seems to me to be the most shameful act of all. The lives lost can only be summed up as “lost in vain,” for I cannot see nor understand what was accomplished.

The fighting still goes on as it did 30 years ago over something that the majority of South Vietnamese civilians do not understand. The greater percentage of the people and peasants are illiterate. They only want to grow their rice and live in peace. They did not understand why a strange country was on their land, changing the lifestyle they have known for hundreds of years.

This was especially true with the civilian peasants who were the people most frequently detained as civil defendants, innocent civilians or, last but not least, “prisoners of war.”

I was one of those strange military personnel who brought one of these classifications upon the many detained people of the Mekong Delta.

## Postal Support: Writing To Soldiers In Vietnam

**BY YVONNE HUENNEKENS**

Yankton

**I** graduated from high school in 1970 so I saw the horrors of the Vietnam War on TV. I had two cousins who grew up across the road from us and were like brothers to me, who served in Vietnam, and I went to the funeral of a young soldier who spent time at our home. The war was very much on our minds.

I was in college and I saw a note on the bulletin board to write to a soldier. I knew how much letters meant to the soldiers and often wrote to my cousins, so I sent a letter. I was slightly overwhelmed when I received over a dozen letters back. The lieutenant who was the assistant Adjutant of the MP Brigade (which means “read all the incoming correspondence to determine who it should go to”) had given my letter to an “enlisted man” and it got passed around! He wrote “loneliness is the same for an officer and one who

is in a secure area, just the same as it would be for anyone else over here. We are all in equal ways far from home.” The soldiers were stationed at Long Binh, Vietnam.

I wrote a letter back to everyone. I figured it was the least I could do. As time went on and the guys got home I was relieved to get less mail. I was a poor college kid and for me postage was an expense! The soldiers' letters were free. I learned a lot from these guys though. They were from all parts of the U.S. and I hadn't traveled much. They wrote of their homes. I learned some military terms and what it was like to serve. They wrote about the weather and that most of the traffic was Hondas. Most of all, they wanted to go home.

A line from one of the soldiers — “Most Americans support the men over here, but not the war” — is sad in that many soldiers who returned home did not have a hero's welcome like they do today. They were drafted and didn't have a choice about going.

## Brokaw

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vated early, barely escaped the attack on Pearl Harbor and wound up fighting its way from the Philippines, and island by island across the Pacific.

At home local farmers grew more so the troops would be fed, women stepped into jobs vacated by men to keep the homefront going. When the war was over, everyone turned to the mission of making Yankton the home of values defended during those hard years of sacrifice and valor.

These are the people I grew up with in Yankton, shaped by their influences and modesty, their accomplishments and patriotism.

They were, in a way I didn't realize at the time, the early models for what came to call THE GREATEST GENERATION.

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