



The Robert Maynard Hutchins
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

October 14, 1987

Max Terral
2431 E. 56th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90058

Dear Mr. Terral:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful response to the CBS "60 Minutes" segment that focused on the class that I teach.

I appreciated so much your sending me the short story about your experience in Vietnam. I hope to make use of it in my class.

Many thanks for writing.

Sincerely,

Walter H. Capps
Acting Director

October 7, 1987

Mr. Walter Capps
Department of Religion Studies
4724 South Hall
UC Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California 93106

Dear Mr. Capps:

Last Sunday (Oct. 3rd), I viewed 60 Minutes and the segment on Viet-Nam 101.

The program was moving and compelled me to write to you.

I am a disabled Vietnam vet who feels well adjusted and successful. I don't talk much of Vietnam.

When I was released from the Army, I went back to college. One of the courses I took was English 2 (Literary Composition). During the course we had to write about an experience in short story form. I wrote about the day I was wounded in Vietnam. As I reflect on my story, I believe it tells alot more than just how I was wounded, it illustrates the confusion of the times.

I am very bitter over Vietnam and fell short-changed.

If you can use the story I wrote in your class, feel free to do so. I have included it as my enclosure.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Max Terral

Max Terral
213-582-8246

ORDEAL

Times goes by slowly in Vietnam, especially when you're out looking for someone to kill. You never know when contact will be made; you just pray that you won't be the one hit.

It was September 26, 1969, our Infantry Company had been searching for the enemy two days now. Yesterday, as we landed in the area, we received fire. I could hear the bullets hit the chopper as we neared the ground; it sounded like rain on a hot tin roof. We returned fire; and once we were on the ground, First Platoon cleared the area. Charlie was nowhere to be found.

The time was about 9:00 a.m. The Captain had stopped the Company. "Break for chow", said the Platoon Sergeant. I passed the word to my squad. "Joe, Bob, you guys sit down to the left of the trail; Nick and Paul, to the right. Shoot anything you see to your front guys, cause anything out there is your enemy."

I set my pack down just to the left of the trail. Then I sat down near it. Looking up I could see both my groups so I decided that everything was under my control.

The rest of the Company had sat down in line forming a parameter. Every

other man chowed down on hot canned peaches, dried bread, and candy bars. "C" rations were just like Mom's apple pie! The second man in each group watched for anything to move in front of them. Nine times out of ten, nothing ever did.

After breakfast, I sat back and looked around the area. Sixty men loaded down like armor tanks and I couldn't hear a one. I noticed how deep green the tree leaves were, and how blue the sky looked through the trees. The ground was a brownish-clay color, and bomb craters dotted the area. One was big enough to put a three bedroom house in and bury it. The holes were the only signs of war that I could immediately recognize.

Home soon came to mind, as it often did. I had been married only five months when I got orders for Vietnam. But I was a sergeant and trained to lead men into battle. War is a crisis in any man's life, as it was for me--a 20 year old newlywed.

I heard something move! Quickly I returned to reality and looked down the path. "My God!" Not twenty feet from me stood two North Vietnamese soldiers. Our eyes met. So young, so very young they looked to me. Turning to my right, I reached for my M-16 rifle. I could hear bees buzzing past me at great speed and then something hit me. I flipped head over heels into the air. When I finally came down, I landed in a bomb crater. Dirt was flying all around me. I could still hear bees buzzing. Those **bastards** were trying to kill me!!! **Why?**

The shooting finally stopped. I was lying on my back, twisted and bent, shaking all over, and thinking God has called my name. Luckily, my rifle, ammo belt, and grenades ended up in the hole with me. I knew those two were still out there waiting to see if I could move or cry out for help. Blood was pouring out of my knee, and the back right-side of my shoulder was split apart. My men could see me, but they knew that Charlie was waiting on us to move. No one dared to make a sound. By now, filled with anger and little pain, I grabbed my grenades and started pulling the pins, holding for three seconds, and then throwing them down the path. Joe on the left and Nick on the right did the same. It took twelve grenades before Joe decided to run to help me. He could see the fear in my eyes as he knelt in my pool of blood.

"You OK Serg., don't worry about a thing, Old Joe will take care of ya, and put the gun down before you kill somebody!" Joe stopped the bleeding. By then, Doc made his way to me. He gave me a shot of morphine and then prepared me for the dust off. Ten minutes later, I was in a chopper, looking out the door. I could see the greenness of the trees and the blueness of the sky. The holes in my brownish-clay covered body were the only signs of war that I could immediately recognize.