

Last letter from Vietnam

Michael Walker, 81's Company Commander 1967-1968, sent me a copy of this article to me with some other artifacts about Charles (Chuck) Miller (see First Timers Corner last newsletter). I thought this was worth sharing with you — Editor.

Lance Cpl. Charles Miller, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, was killed in action near Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam on April 4, 1968 (attack of Hill 471, Khe Sanh). Following is a copy of the last letter his mother, Mrs. Gertrude Miller, received before his death:

Chuck's last letter dated March 26 written by candlelight reads;

Dearest Mom,

It's been awhile since I last could write. Much has happened — some rather sad.

On the 24th we went on an early morning patrol before dawn to see what we could find. Well, we had 6 killed and 4 wounded. I lost a very dear friend — one of the South Vietnamese scouts. I was not in on much of that action since I was about 400 meters away on another ridgeline. The poor devils walked into a bunker complex and my friend was the second on hit. Their bodies are still out there; we couldn't get to them. I think we'll be going back for them today if possible.

On the 25th, we took some 120 mm mortar rounds and while I was helping carry and load the wounded for evacuation, a round went off about 15 meters away wounding the guy in front of me, I didn't get a scratch, no one was too seriously injured that they won't heal up after awhile.

Then today while I was shaving we took two 120's and the piece the size of a pencil eraser hit me in the face, right on, the right cheekbone. It really stung, not bad enough for a Purple Heart, but I'm enclosing the piece as a souvenir. What's really bad is that I won't even have a scar. It doesn't hurt much and I think that I bled two drops and then quit. I sent a piece home in this letter. Maybe I can drum it into a real war story when I get home, it will take a lot of drumming I'm afraid.

Not a very big deal, but I let the man upstairs know that I was glad he has spared me so many times this last few days, I've been very lucky so far.

I've been put up for Meritorious Mash this month. That means someone thinks I did a good job.

Today the Captain showed me a paper, which he sent to my Company Commander recommending me for a promotion, no wonder that "gook" mortar round hit me — I had a pretty big head.

Mom, they still don't know when or if we'll ever leave here. We haven't had mail for at least a week or more and then not much.

It's rained hard, — HARD —, about 3 nights, we've stayed as dry as possible. It's about 10:30 at night and I'm on radio watch until about 12.

They had some trouble this morning about 200 meters outside the wire and this afternoon we were shooting some 81's into the area, in case we had to go into the area. We'd know where we could land somewhat safely. Well, we got a secondary explosion, which means we must have hit some of the "Bad guys" ammunition, some luck, huh?

I hope our luck keeps up, don't have much longer to go, 168 days left until I rotate September 1st. Might be able to make a little sooner — I hope.

Over half done and still kicking, I've started complaining, the fellows say I'm human now. They say a happy, healthy Marine is one who is complaining all the time, I'm trying to fit in.

Well, time to go — don't worry I'm keeping in good touch with the Man upstairs and He's keeping up pretty well with me but Mom, if He wants me, He'll take me so I don't have anything to worry about and neither do you Mom, I'll be in Good Hands.

I'll try to write and let you know that I'm ok. Don't worry — I'm doing just fine, Good night now.

Love Chuck

An earlier excerpt from one of Chuck's letters to answer his mother's question of why we are fighting in Vietnam go this reply:

Dear Mom,

We're here because we're Christians. You could never see these Vietnams and not love and want to protect them. It must have been much like Lafayette felt for America during the Revolutionary War. Doctor LaMore held a brief memorial service on April 16th at the college Chapel. On Monday April 24th, another service was held at the Crane Funeral Home, which was attended by the men of Sigma Phi Epsilon of which Chuck was a member.

Let's hope Chuck as well as the other soldiers killed in Vietnam have not died in vain.

(From the Wesleyan Tiger)

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