

Dear Scott:

It has been a few weeks since Nancy called me to notice me of your passing. Needless to say, I was pretty bummed out hearing the news that I knew would come someday. Since then, so many memories of our meeting and time spent together during the war came back to me in fond remembrances. Most of the time, out of sequence to time. Memories of us brewing up our first package of ramen noodles and planning the strategies and bait selection that would successfully lure the gigantic rats to the traps we planted in our hootch. Remember the sound of the snap of the first trap the first night we set them out and how we rejoiced in our success that was interrupted by the sound of two more traps in quick succession? We chuckled on our success but the following night when a triggered trap was carried off by the “King Kong” of rats made us a little more humble and we kept our rejoicing to ourselves.

Your sense of humor and intellect made going through the war liveable and surviving the war possible. Working with you and Berry on fire missions was a thing that the text books would have admired. The speed and accuracy of the firing data was unquestionable and when your data beat the FADAC’s computations and sometimes found fault in the computer’s results, was something of the simple proof of your abilities and dedication.

Of course, our episode of taking a shower during a monsoon rain was epic. We thought we were so smart. Instead of hauling our water from the water wagon to shower, we decide to take a refreshing wash in the open air. The looks on our faces when the rain stopped after we had suds up would have made a great episode for a “practical jokes” tv show. It was even funnier that we had to trek totally nude to the water trailer with only our boots on and a towel on our shoulders to rinse off. I won’t mention some of the expletives we mumbled but I’m sure God would forgive us.

We took a nice Christmas picture around the FADAC with our egg nog and miniature artificial Christmas tree. I still have a few more copies of the Christmas card we made with the assistance of the kids who frequented our battery at Bu Dop to work in the mess hall tent and who worked the ugly task of burning our daily waste with diesel oil. The memory of the smell didn't make the food taste any more worse than what the "Mess Daddy" tried to make edible. Remember how p.o.'d "Mess Daddy" was when the chocolate cake he made looked like brownies because the cakes "fell" in the ovens when our 175's fired a mission before the cakes were done? "Mess Daddy" always tried his best to serve up the meals the best he could regardless of the Army's menu and ingredients provided by the lowest bidder.

Remember that rainy monsoon night "Mrs. Squid" found her way into our FDC at Loc Ninh and just adopted us? She later bore pups that we could not help ourselves but adopted. Trudy, Sydney and Booger became our mascots and they never ever turned up their noses to "Mess Daddy's" cooking.

I always enjoyed opening my "Care Package" from home in front of you guys because I never got the usual cookies, crackers, cheese and fruit cake you guys got. I had the canned smoked octopus, sardines, Japanese rice crackers and the infamous dried whole squid that I could bite chunks off and chew like beef jerky. You thought I looked like I was chewing on "Red Man" chewing tobacco. You always drew yourself to the farthest corner of the FDC bunker as I enjoyed my little home snack. You never got used to it. But one item you did learn to enjoy that first package of Ramen noodles. Must have been a funny sight to any VC sniper the night you, Jim Cannon and I cooked up that first package. It took so so long to get the water to boil while we tried to hunkered down as low as possible behind some sandbags to make it less than easy for "Charlie" to pick us off from the wood line. After we cooked up that first package, we scarfed it down and spent the better part of our night shift figuring out a better way.

There are so many of these memories that I have of the times, good and bad, that we shared. They come back to me every day in snippets, especially when I'm having my morning coffee in my garage with my cigar. Scott, you and Berry are my bestest buddies and I will never forget either of you. I don't know how much longer I'll have in this world but I hope you'll save me a space in yours. We still have a lot more memories to share and friendship to continue. Thank you for being my friend.

Until we meet again, Aloha,

Les