

Chaper 15; Homeward bound

I got my orders for MacDill AFB early in June. All my requests for extensions were rejected. I was able to give Linh a bunch of my personal items like my refrigerator, radio and tape player.

I left An Son on July 14th 1972. We knew this day was coming, and we were powerless to stop it. Linh Held on to me tears running down her face. The Huey that was to take me to Tuy Hoa already had its engine running, and Rick said we gotta go.

Marie, Linh's friend held on to Linh while I walked away. The day that most soldiers looked forward to was one of the lowest in my life.

We arrived at Tuy Hoa and hung out till the C130 showed up for the flight to Ton Son Nut. However when they tried to start #3 engine, the starter failed. The pilot told us not to worry, another C130 was inbound and would give us a "boost". In about a half hour a C130 rolled up and in front of us and we pulled in close behind it. They revved up their #3 engine, got ours spinning. Our #3 engine lit up and away we went.

We arrived at Ton Son Nut Air Force base and got some sleep. The next morning everybody had to take a drug test. If you were not drug free, you did not leave until you tested clean. I tested clean and was cleared to go.



I boarded the Freedom Bird and Headed East. We arrived at Oakland on July 15 1972 and proceeded through a thorough inspection. They cut my soap in half looking for contraband. Well I cleared all of that and proceeded to look for a flight home. I called mom who was thrilled to hear from me and I told her that the connections through San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Denver should get me home on the 11:16pm flight. Well, as things go, the flight into Denver was late and I missed my connection. The Family

and neighbors showed up to meet me and I just wasn't there. The communications are not what they are now, so I was not able to get a hold of them by phone until 1:45AM on Sunday the 16th. Frontier had me on standby for the 2:30pm flight, so everybody came out again. Again they were disappointed when I was not on the plane. I was able to leave a message at the gate in Bismarck that I was not able to get on the flight.

I called home at 5:30pm saying it looked like I would make it on the flight that evening. By this time some of the neighbors were a little tired of making the 2 hour round trip, but they came any how. When the plane landed, the pilot asked if there was a passenger named Larry on board, and for the other passengers to let him forward because there was a bunch of people to meet him. In those days we just got off the aircraft on the ramp and walked to the terminal. Passengers were allowed on the ramp. They had welcome home signs and banners.

There is no way that I can describe my feelings as I stepped off of that stairs into the arms of those who loved me and kept me in their prayers for the last year. It was overwhelming. The loneliness of the last year was forgotten in that moment. I was home, but now I had a loved one on the opposite side of the world.

Am. getting so excited. Today is Friday - 10th July 1972

Sat. July 15 '72
I stayed in the house all day waiting for Larry to call. I had been nervous and excited, around 3:45 he called. He was still in Oakland. Said he would call again. He will be home sometime, late tonight or in the wee hrs. of the morning. I am sure he has missed emotions & I do feel for him. I do praise and thank the Lord for bringing him safely home. We pray and will pray for every day on Greg's behalf & the family.

Sun. July 16
When the Frontier plane

72 came in last night at 11:16 P.M. Larry was not on it, we were all there to give him a royal welcome but no Larry. We all went home. He called at 1:45 A.M. today. Said the Airlines muffed it all up for him and he didn't make it to Kansas in time. I felt real bad for him. Said he would be on the 2:30 plane this P.M.

We all went to Bismark again. When we got to the terminal there was a message from Larry saying that he didn't make the plane again & would call later. He called at 5:30 saying he did not know if he would make the plane that night. Some were hesitant to go in again but we all went. we did

out the banner eat. We
was on the plane. The
second one off. We was
really excited to see so
many there
Bern, Ruth, Lois, Linda,
Bonnie, Pat & Larry Oster
Ken & Karen Blakke (our
pastor) O Miller, Marie,
Jeff, Messire, Justin, Jason,
Jerry, Gladie, Tom, David,
Lisa, Hazel, Kay, Selma
& Peggy, Dad & myself and
Aunt from Oregon. All were
there to give him a
royal welcome. It was
nice to see him home
again.

These pages were scanned from my mothers diary.

The next day I rode on my dads tractor, and found myself watching the road sides where there were trees that could conceal someone. My brain had not quite caught up with the fact that the most danger I was in here was a whitetail deer jumping onto the road.

I worked on my 1966 Chevelle. The engine I had ordered was waiting for me and I proceeded to put it in the car. On July 21 I was 24. I left for Florida on Aug 16th and spent the night at my sister Joyce in Alden, Mn. I made another overnight stop at Elizabethton, TN to visit my

college buddy Daryl Bussert. He was training to serve with Wycliffe Bible translators.

From there I went to Tampa and checked in on 8/19/72 at USA aviation support element, U.S. Readiness command. Since this was an Air Force base, the facilities were pretty nice compared to what I had left at Lane. We had 4 story barrack buildings with 2 man rooms. The company mission was to provide aviation support for the US Readiness command. We had Huey, U21 and U8 aircraft. I was assigned as a crew chief for a U21. Unlike the Hueys in Nam, we did not fly with the aircraft. We preflighted the aircraft and got it on line for flight, met the aircraft on return and performed maintenance on the aircraft.

I got a couple letters from Linh, sent through Gary Monsees at Lane. I did not have any address for her other than that. She sent me a cassette tape of her voice. She said she loved me and would love to come live with me in America. The Army discouraged marrying the Vietnamese and was absolutely unhelpful in any actions that would result in getting Linh to the U.S.

To compound the communications problems, the U.S. was in the process of closing down Lane. I was starting to have doubts about my commitment to Linh. Did I love her because she was available, or because I felt sorry for her? Would the love last after she was relocated to a new culture? By October, it was apparent that there was nothing I could do to get Linh to the U.S. It was a really sad time. What would happen to her?

I wasn't able to go home for Christmas, I was lonely again.