

6 June 70

Hi Ma.

I have something different to tell you. You ask me a couple of questions I can answer.

You ask me how the children are treated over here. They, most of them are treated like dogs. The people over here are so poor they can't even feed the kids. Most of them after they are 6 or 7 are left to find food of their own. They beg, borrow and steal (as the saying says). I have even seen kids eat C-Rations that are opened and left sometimes 3 or 4 days with ants all over ~~them~~ it. You know how a dog will eat grass, I have seen a lot of kids pull grass and leaves off bushes and eat them. The bad part of it, we can't give them food except when they eat it right then. The VC see us give them food and they steal it. I have seen kids eat 5 or 6 boxes of C-Rations and then still be hungry. Also we

get only enough food for ourselves. I have gone a little hungry a lot of times so a kid could at least have something to eat. I said the kids steal. You can't leave anything laying around unguarded. Most of the other G.I's find a kid stealing and they beat him, when it only food I can't see that. I don't believe in stealing but I don't care who you are, if you're hungry enough you will steal it. I have seen kids steal food and just not say anything about it as long as it's just my food. Also I have seen, for instance, 1 kid wear the same clothes for over 2 months at one time. The kids you see in the pictures I sent are the ones who learned English and can sell G.I's sodas etc. They make pretty good money. You know the pictures of the girls that I sent. The girls usually sell sodas 80¢ MPC or \$1.00 Vietnamese. They clear about 15 a case and sometimes sell 15 or 20.

cases a day.

I said the kids are treated like dogs. To illustrate this - The other day I saw a boy (about 9 or 10) working in a rice paddy and was smoking a cigarette. He dropped the cigarette and reached down to pick it up. It had fallen on a blasting cap, I guess. Anyway the blasting cap went off and almost blew his whole hand off. He had pieces of metal and sand in both arms, chest and face and his mother stood over him bawling him out. She said "See I told you not to smoke". All the Arwins stood around laughing. No one did anything for the kid. Later he died and no one even cared at all. I'll take some pictures of the "other half" of the children for you.

Well I'll go now and write again sometime.

Write again,
Bill.

[Bill Spainhowerd]

Interview on Viet Nam

Bill Spainhowerd - letter to be drafted
March 12, 1969

Basic Training - Ft. Knox - Sgt. E6 - twice

Age going in - 20 years old

Married - 15 months when drafted

Time served - 1 year, 10 months, 22 days

When he went in he thought he was
serving his country.

If he had it to do all over again
he'd go to Canada. He said he felt
like the war was a police action
and not a war. He said the war
helped make the politicians rich.
His words, "We didn't go over to win
a war; we went over to help economy
and the budget." He also said the
American Government kept the American
people from the real truth and that
the newspapers lied about what
was really going on in the war.

When they went out on patrol they
carried 110 pounds.

136-men went out and 14 were killed and 56 amputees within the first two weeks of the war.

While they watched Bridge 104, 6 men watched every night for 5 months with only one injured. They were hit by enemy fire every night. A squad consisted of 6-men.

There was vietnamese children that helped at Bridge 104, ages 10 and 12. They planted the explosives for the Troops. He said the children were a big help in the war.

After seeing so much in such a short time, he said he didn't think he was ever coming home alive. He began not wearing his protective vest and helmet. He felt like there was no need for protection since he knew he was going to die anyway.

There were rules that you couldn't shoot till they shot first or it was considered murder.

When they received packages from home they shared with the local people (and children). They had a good rapport with the people.

When they received word that they were going home once the fighting was over, he began to take precautions. He started wearing his protective gear and helmet the last two weeks of the war.

Most of the men had a snoopy dog divided into squares and numbered. They marked one every day to count down the days before going home.

During the war Bill lost a stripe for not making his men shave every day. He said they had to look sharp but with tattered uniforms and dirt that he didn't see how they'd look sharp if they shaved. His commanding officer didn't think his comment was funny.

He was stationed at Comrahn Bay, just below mid line S. Viet Nam. Chulia and Cambodia

He was released, January 1, 1971.
It took 23 hours to get home and
3 time zones. He was home in
the U.S. one-half hour before he
left Viet Nam.

They arrived home in Ft. Lewis,
Washington. The "Red Carpet" was
rolled out to welcome them home.
It was 25° when he left Nam and
130° off the plane in Washington.

When he went to NCO school he
had been working construction making
\$350.00 a weekend. Had a regular job.
Once in the service he sent \$25.00
a week home. It took three months
before the first check arrived home.

He said that people are people no
matter where they live; there's
good and bad people everywhere.

He also said that words can't tell
his real feelings about how he
felt while in Viet Nam.

2-5
Basic Training - Ft. Knox

AIT - Ft. Lewis

NCO - Ft. Benning, Georgia

On Job training - Ft. Polk, Louisiana

OJT-NCO - Learned to give orders

Viet Nam

Took a year to do all.

James T. Smith 20 years old Sept. 15, 1944
POW WW II.

Went in the army March 1943 - Drafted

Basic training: Ft. Jackson
South Carolina Four months Basic
Six months; Unit training

Unit: 81st Engineers Sargent
attached to 106th Infantry Division

Job: Engineer - Had training during
the service.

Reconnaissance - Made roads or temporary
bridges for the infantry to get through

Action he saw: No fighting in England and
France. November 1st two to three months
fought in Belgium and Germany. When
the fighting got bad December 16, 1944
fought in Battle of the Bulge.

Captured: Dec. 16, 1944 with two other
of his patrol while out on reconnaissance.

While they were sleeping he and his
two men lay awake and crawled 100
yards and ran to their line. They were
shot at but missed.

Captured a second time Dec. 19, 1944
Germans tracked them and this time took
the whole patrol.

Treatment - physically he was treated good. The place was a large building and cold. If you came with two pair of pants, they took one. If you had two pair of socks, they took one, etc. They would look for any reason to mistreat you.

The privates and officers were separated. The privates worked the salt mines. The officers were walked to death. One man that worked in the kitchen was caught stealing and stripped in the snow and beat with a black snake whip. He said when they were done beating him the snow was red.

They were allowed to write one letter a week. The only letter that he wrote arrived home after he had already been released.

The one letter the family did receive during the whole time was a letter stating he was missing in action.

They had two razors between 500 people. He shaved only twice during the 103 days. He was a POW.

Food on Christmas Day was stewed carrot peelings and a small piece of bread and water.

After that it was steamed alfalfa and sometimes raw. A ration for the day consisted of a can of alfalfa and a small piece of bread. When you did get meat it was full of maggots. He said you got so hungry you ate it to stay alive. The alfalfa would have rocks and sticks in it and you had to pick them out the best you could.

He was released on March 31, 1945. General Patton liberated the camp before the war was over.

They were on a train six days and seven nights, 75 miles from Castle, Germany where he was held as a POW.

He said he didn't even recognize anyone on the train. They all had long beards and hair. He weighed 170 pounds when he went in the army and after being weighed back in the states he weighed 100 pounds.

When asked how he feels about the people now, he said "I don't love them." He said he sure wasn't praying for his enemy.

His quote: "There's no bigger crook than the Federal Government."

He also told me while he was waiting to go overseas that the German POW's in America were being treated like Kings.

He said that the building they were prisoners in was brick and sweated. The sweat would drop from the ceiling. If someone caught a cold after being so weak and starved, they would die.