



Collection Information:

Folder: Photograph album, undated.

Series: Vietnam War Service.

Collection: Daniel C. Conlon Papers.

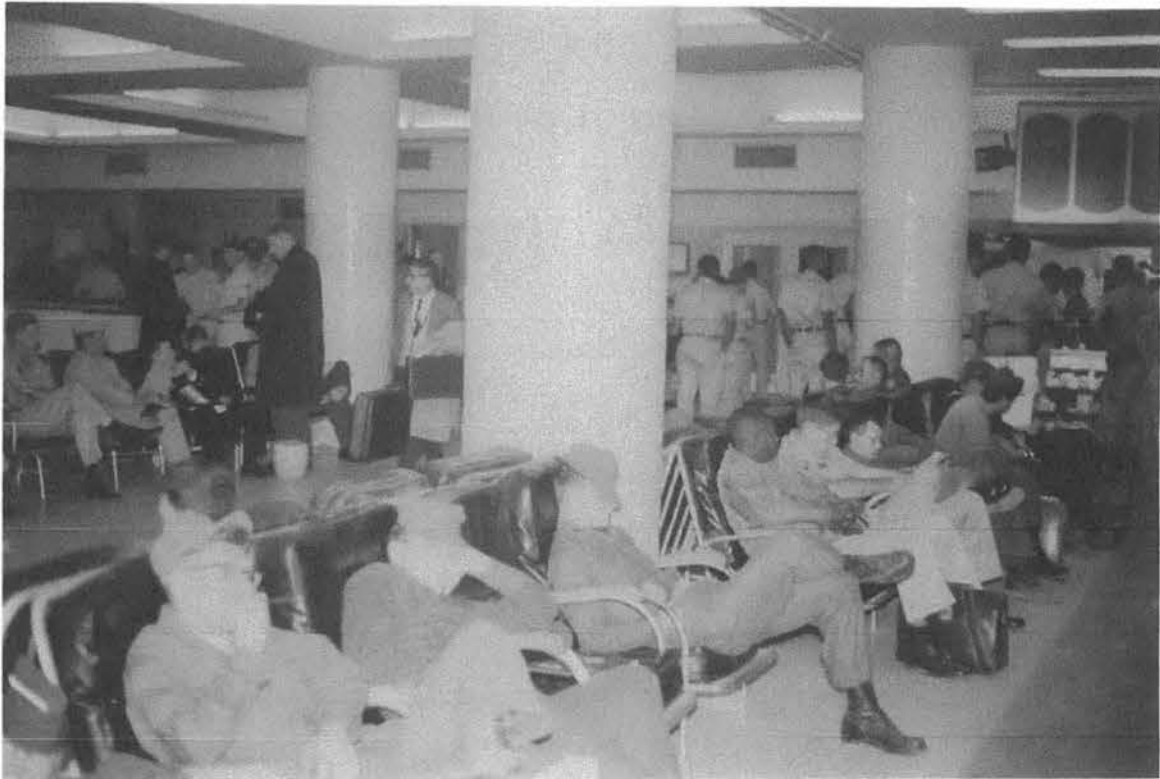
Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.



1966 Wichita Falls, Texas. Shephard Air Force Base before Vietnam

L to R: Baby Megan 1965, Captain Dan Conlon, Erin 1963, Michaela 1962,
Colleen 1960,
Kay Kelly Conlon 1935 and newborn Jim 1966.



Ton San Nhut Air Base, Saigon, January 1967.

Back Row: recently arrived soldiers to Vietnam – FNGs

Front Row: Veteran soldiers waiting for shipment back to States – FOGs



Conventional Map of Vietnam/Cambodia/ Laos – former French Indochina
Countries appear flat and each country appears to have only Vietnamese,
Cambodians, and Laotians – no minorities.



A FINE FIT — Montagnard Suihui Lus (left) looks over the brightly adorned jacket just presented to Air Force Capt. John F. Rudy II, Pleiku AB judge advocate, in ceremonies which declared Captain Rudy the "chief" of the Vietnamese central highlands village of Plei Brel. Captain Rudy was the first American to receive this honor, it was bestowed on him for his humanitarian work with the Montagnards, bringing them donations of food and clothing and selling their locally-made crossbows for them. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

Jack Rudy given a chief's robe in Plei Brel



left: Y-Bham Enol, president and general of the FULRO, located in the Highlands of Cambodia. Bottom right: Y-Bham saluting the FULRO flag.



First look at the gray tongue of the flight line as we approach Pleiku Airbase. The only alternative to get to Pleiku is Highway 19 and a possible ambush.



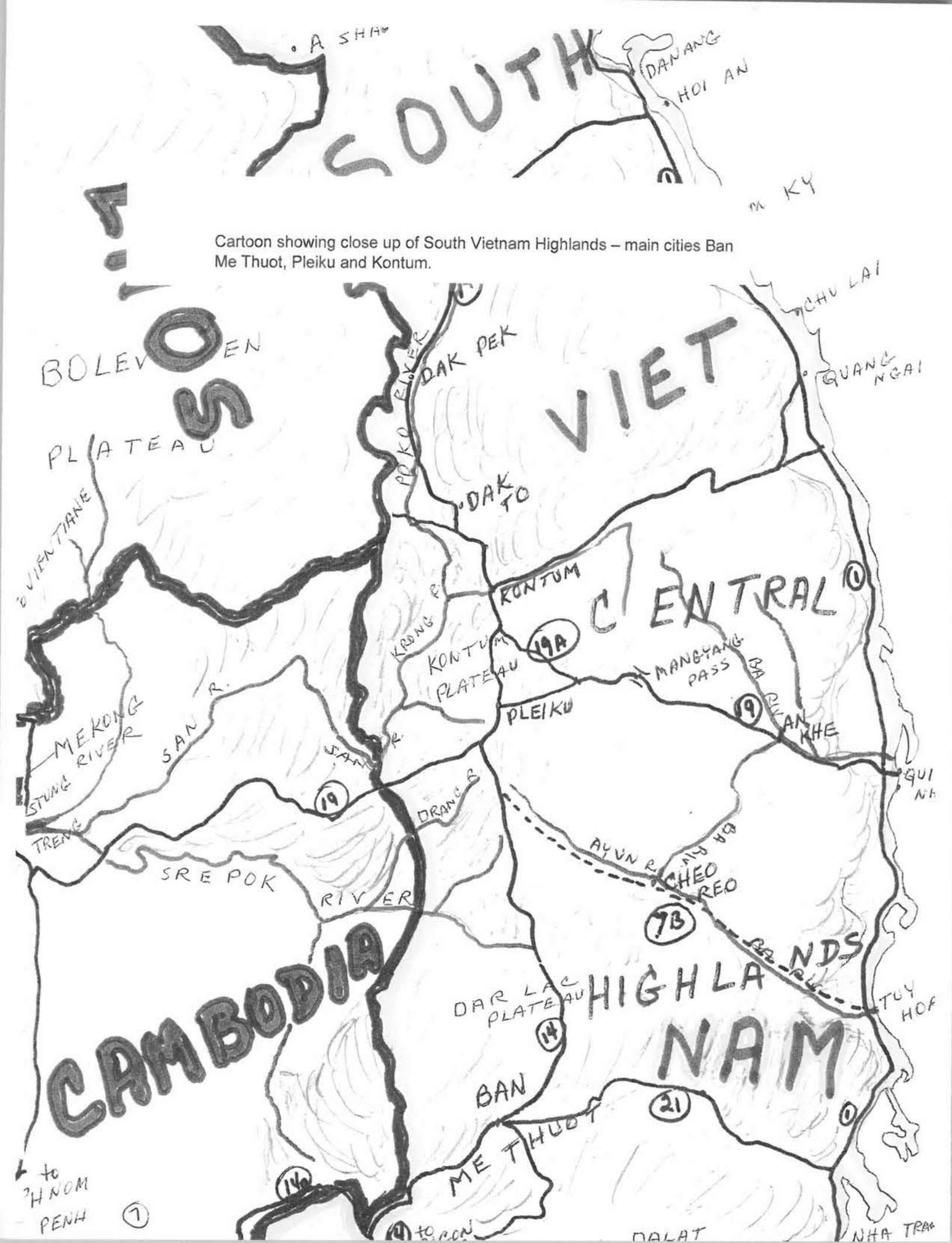
Approaching Pleiku Airbase and the concrete tongue that is lifeline to the Highlands.



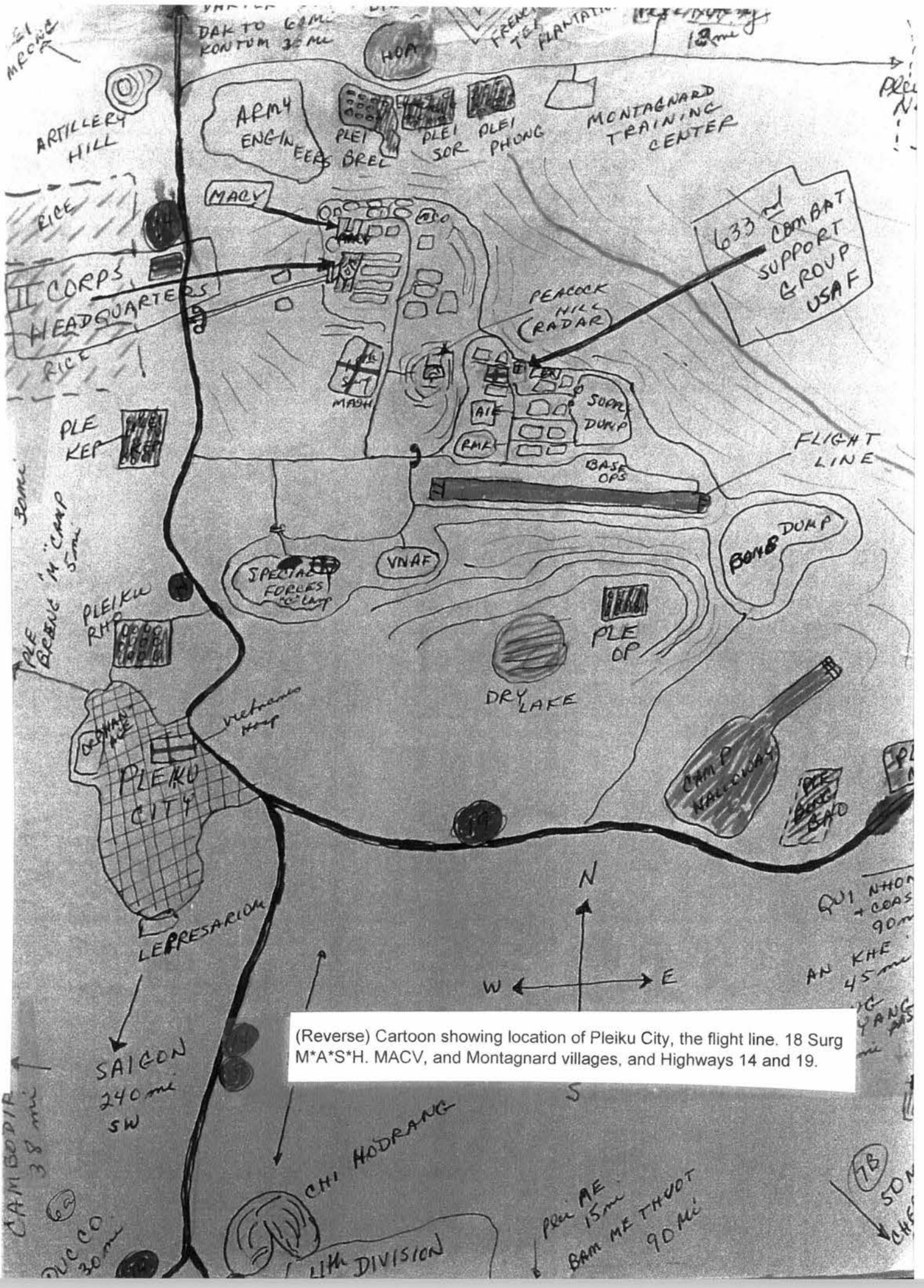
PLEIKU This airstrip has been greatly expanded since the attack on it early in 1965 triggered the U.S. buildup. C-47s and other prop planes use the 6,000-ft. strip for combat-support missions.

may 1965

Pleiku airstrip after the 1965 attack.



Cartoon showing location of Pleiku City, the flight line, 18 Surg M*A*S*H, MACV, and Montagnard villages, and Highways 14 and 19.



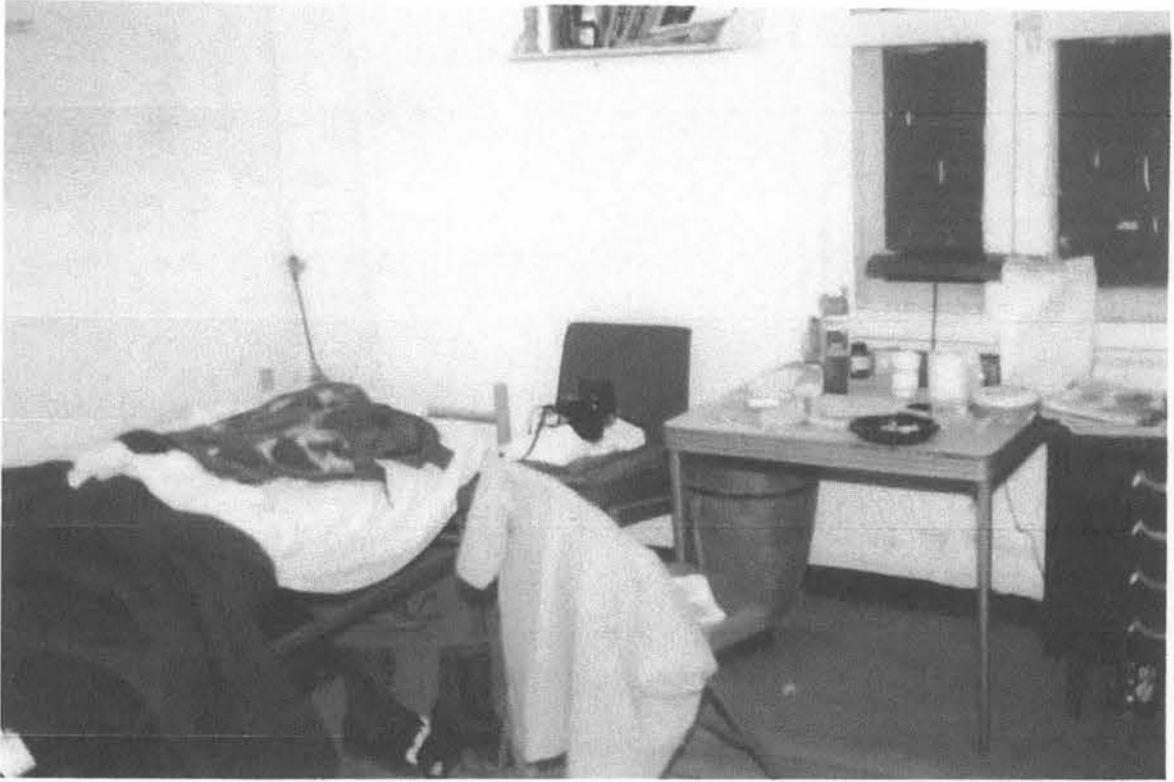
(Reverse) Cartoon showing location of Pleiku City, the flight line. 18 Surg M*A*S*H. MACV, and Montagnard villages, and Highways 14 and 19.



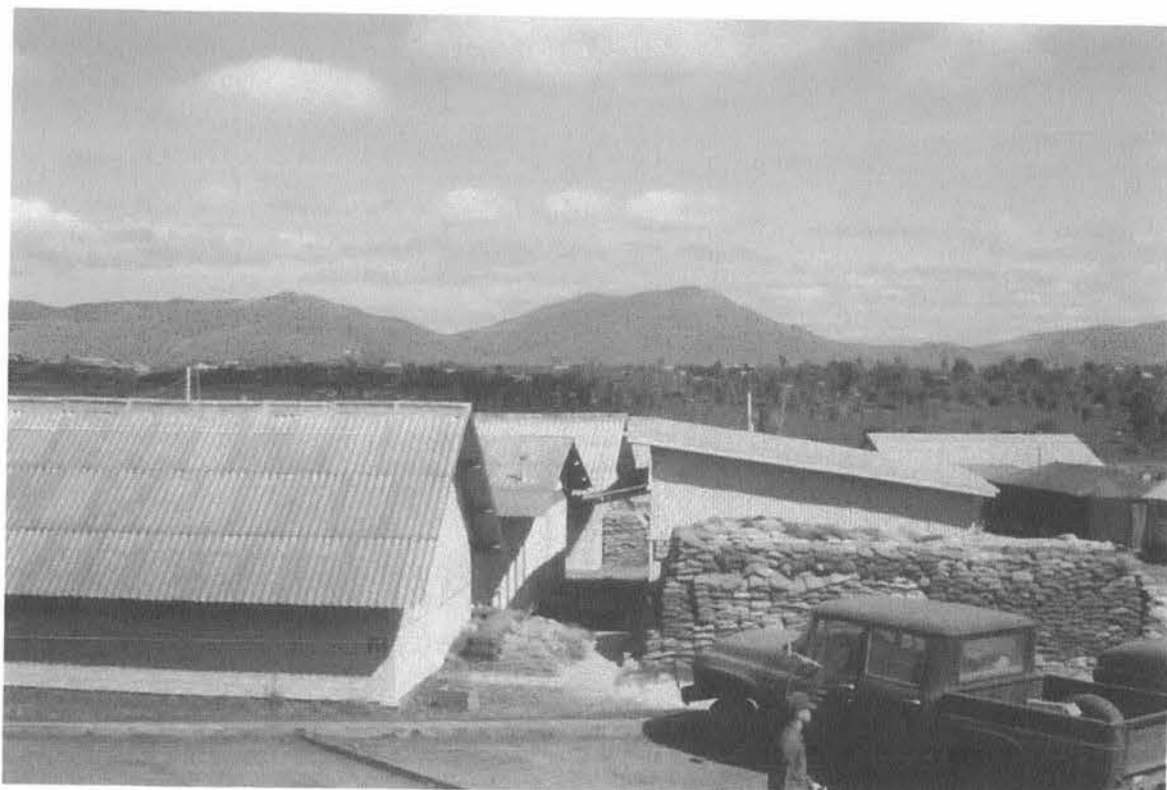
MACV Officers Quarters – old French quarters taken over by the Air Force officers. My quarters with Major Bob Schultz is being stared at by the man walking. “like a seedy motel”.



Vietnamese mommason who cleaned our clothes and shined our boots
(and stole whatever she could).



My bed and writing desk across from my roommate Bob Schultz.



Air Force NCO (non-commissioned officers) quarters. Sand bagged to the windows.

Montagnard villages beyond.

Mountains to the north on the way to Kontum on Highway 14.



C130, the workhorse of our airbase, along with the C47. Air Evac, supply, troop deployment. Noisy, making it impossible to use our stethoscopes when they landed or took off.



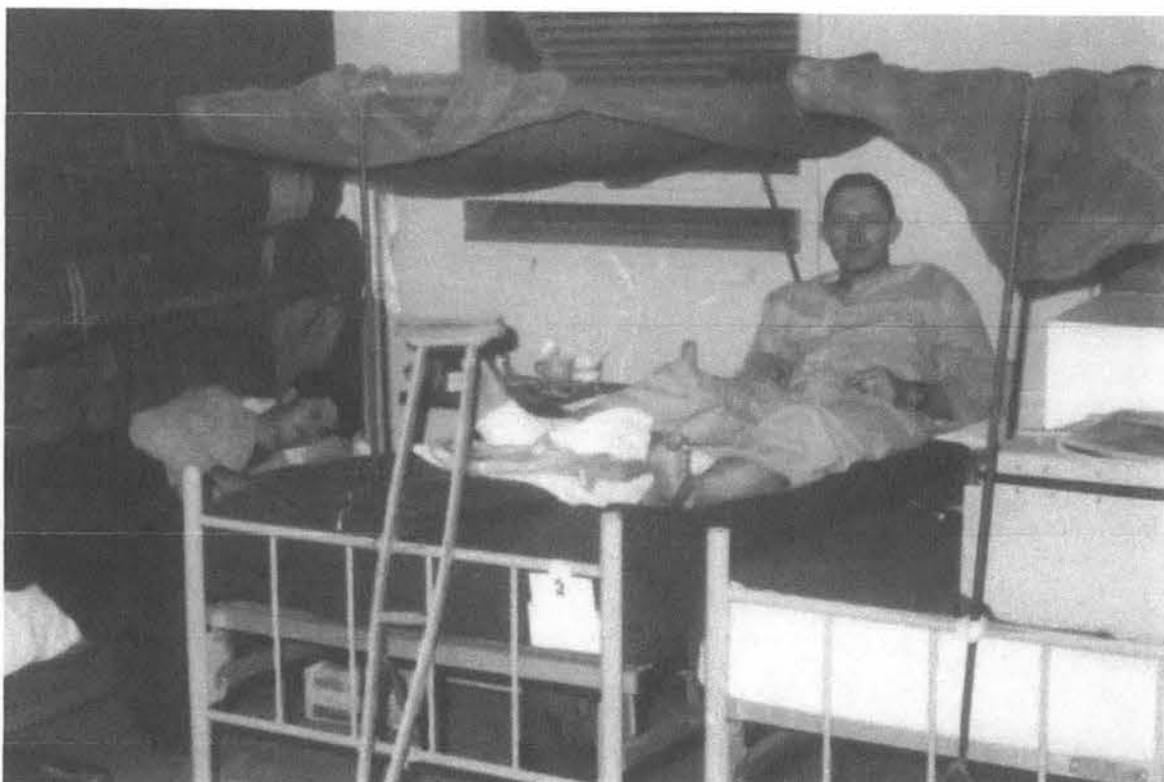
What it says: the US Air Force Dispensary. Three GMOs (General Medical Officers) a lab, an X-ray and several corpsmen for 3,000 healthy airmen.



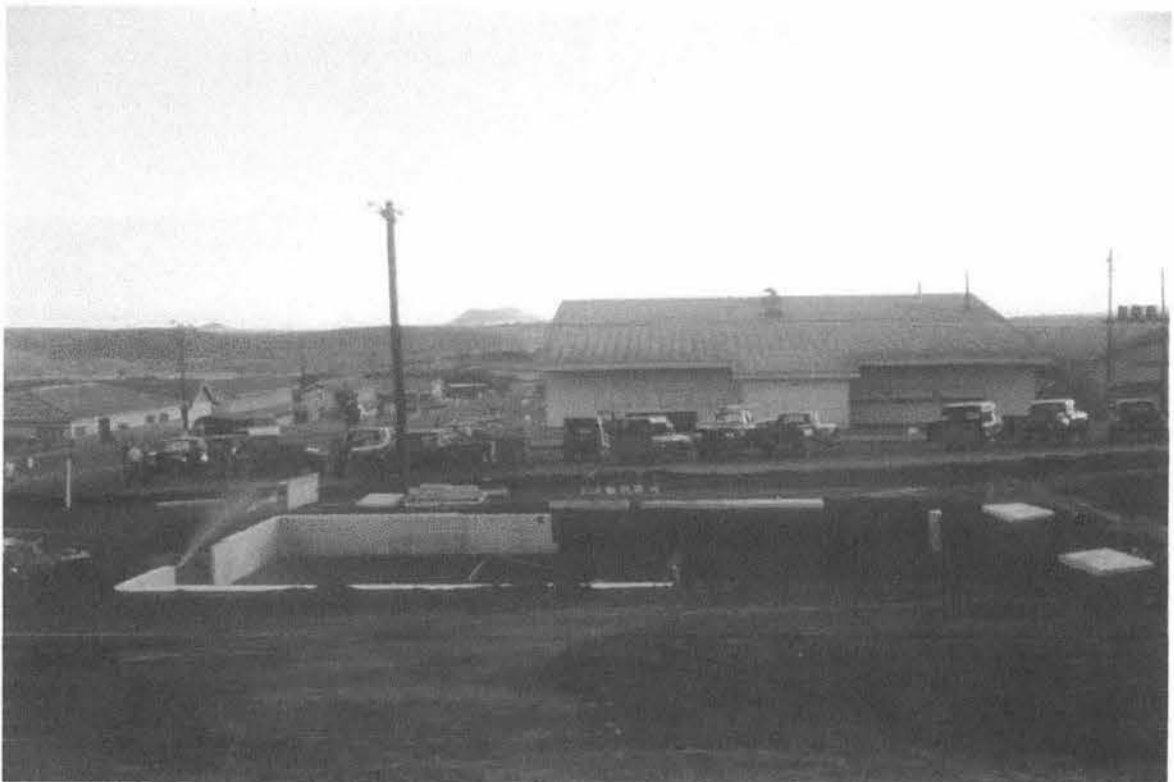
Our surgical area and equipment. The big cases went to the M*A*S*H 18th Surg.



Typical patients.



A rare actually wounded patient in our hospital bed.



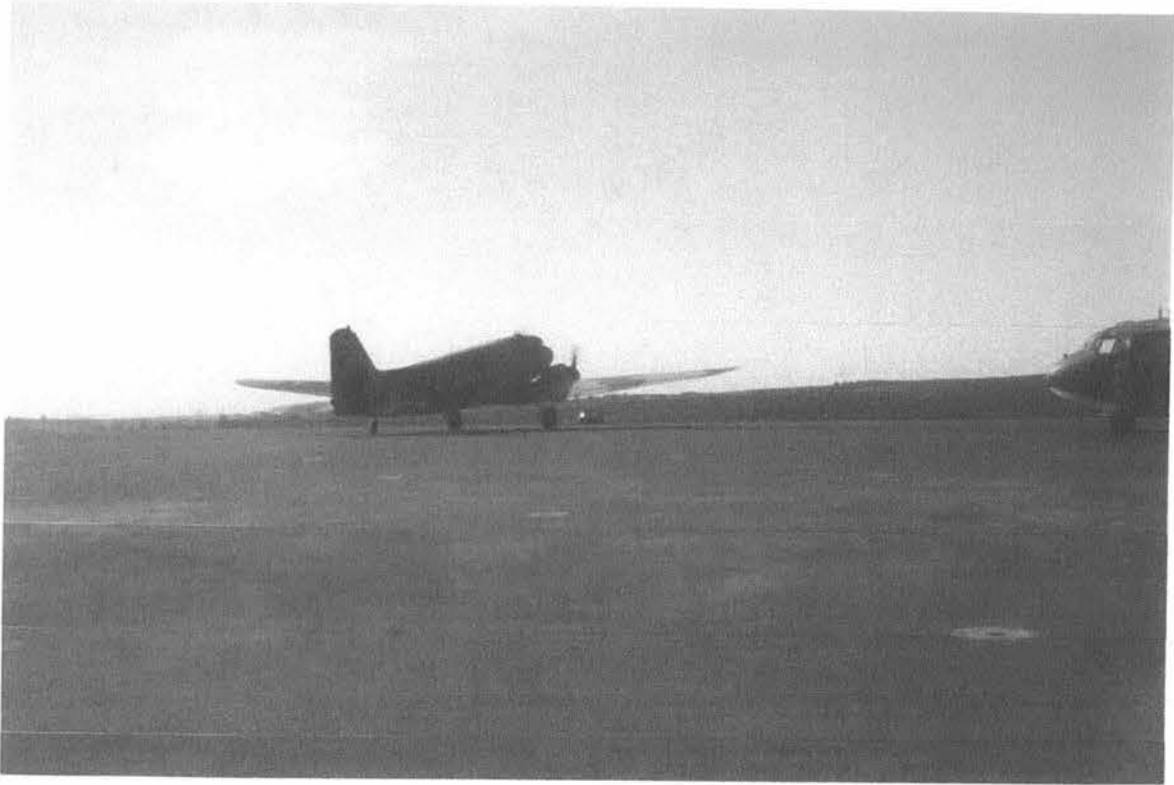
Former "Tent City" – tents going down and barracks going up. That's a future swimming pool being prepared in the battle zone.



Major John Hodgson, dispensary commander late in my tour. And Sergeant Reid, head of the Air Force dispensary supply – accounted for the missing supplies I helped myself to for the Montagnards.



The fabled (and forbidden) supply dump, where I learned to do "midnight requisitions" to supply my Montagnards with clothes, boots, tin for their roofs and anything else I could steal.



C-47 (DC 3 civilian). Called the "Gooney Bird" or "Spookie". Was our base airplane at the command of our Commander, Colonel Huller. Finally became the airplane of the Montagnard Crossbow Enterprise.



Captain Conlon and corpsmen on our first medcap trip to Montagnard villages.



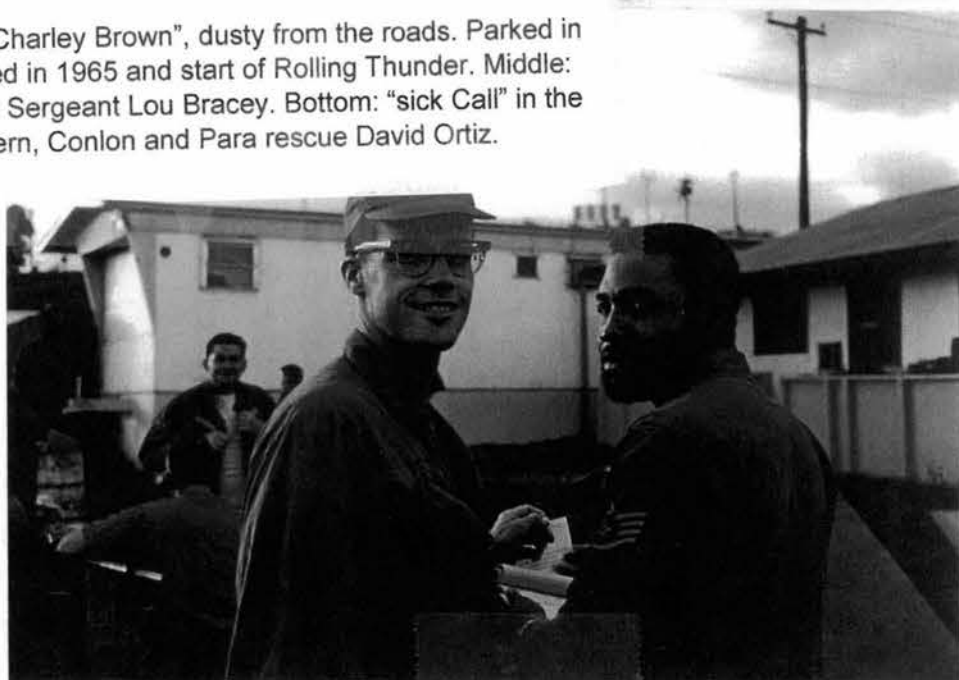
A Montagnard hooch in Pleiku Rho refugee village. Jungle reflected in my rear view mirror.



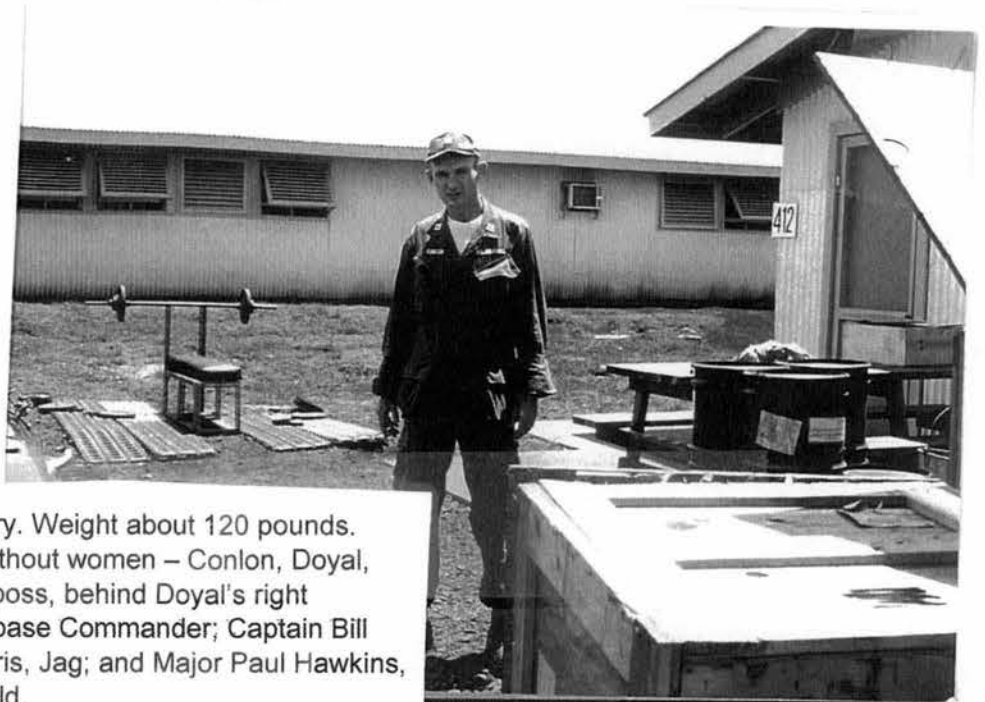
Siu Saih and Major Hevern. Major Hevern was our angel pilot who flew the base gooney and recorded our adventures for the Civic Action folks. Siu Saih – a sinister “friend” who got me in a bit of trouble.



(Reverse) Top: Our truck "Charley Brown", dusty from the roads. Parked in the spot Pleiku was attacked in 1965 and start of Rolling Thunder. Middle: Captain Steve Charles and Sergeant Lou Bracey. Bottom: "sick Call" in the village. Major Howard Hevern, Conlon and Para rescue David Ortiz.



22a



Top; Captain Conlon, in back of dispensary. Weight about 120 pounds.
 Middle: USAF Officers' Club – Dancing without women – Conlon, Doyal,
 Value and the Greek. Dave Dulaney, my boss, behind Doyal's right
 shoulder. Bottom: Colonel Robert Huller, base Commander; Captain Bill
 Fulton, my replacement; Captain T. I. Harris, Jag; and Major Paul Hawkins,
 Civic action. Note: three out of four are bald.



23



(Reverse)Top: Plei Brel rice storage sheds with metal on legs to keep rats from reaching.

Bottom: Schools built by Jack Rudy and the 633 Combat Support Group in Plei Brel. Painted blue and yellow for Air Force. Khat is the school teacher.



23a



Hinh, Gir's father. Worked in the Officers' Club. Good friend of Jack Rudy.

56

(24)

< HOW HE CAN WRITE AND READ



Captain Dan Conlon USMC (United States Medical Corpse) loaded down with weapons and gear – none of which he knew how to use.

The "Lick Hilton". Painted red white and blue, with a Christian cross on top.





(Reverse) Top: Dak Pek and the Jeh villagers lined up to receive desperately needed supplies. A minute later we were given the signal, dumped the supplies and got the hell out of there.

Bottom: Dak Pek. Jim Phillips in the center, Roy Worthington to his left, John Watson on his right.





Isolated Montagnard village along the Dak Poko River and near the Ho Chi Minh Trail.



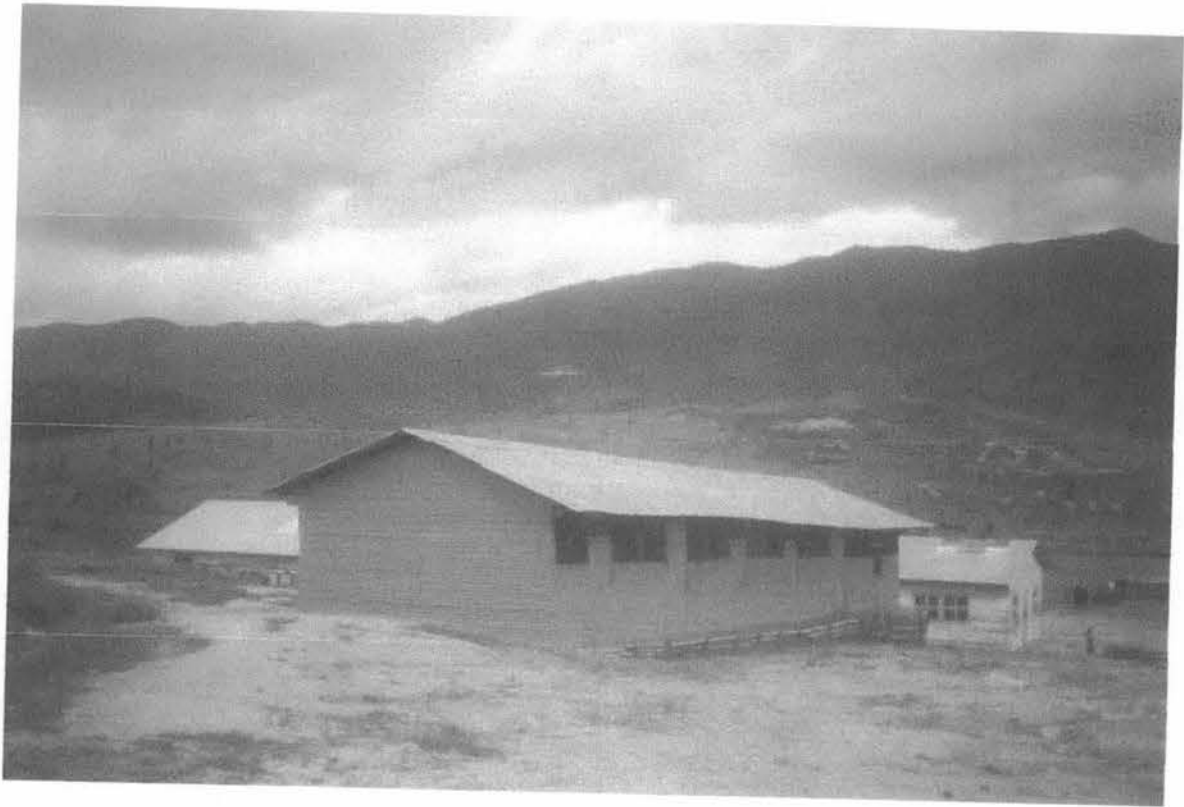
Another isolated Montagnard village (with tin roofs) along the Dak Poko River on the way to Dak Pek.



Flight line at Dak Pek made of packed dirt. Jéh Montagnards watching to see if the Caribou plane, flown by Aussie pilots, will dump into the Dak Poko River.



5th Special Forces A camp on the Ho Chi Minh trail. Dak Pek. Former French prison for Viet Minh soldiers. Note lone Montagnard guard.



Dak Pek Hospital and Dispensary run by Sgt Jim Phillips. Mountains in background separate South Vietnam and Laos. Somewhere up there is the Ho Chi Minh trail.



Jeh Montagnards coming out of their caves to greet at Dak Pek.



Another view of the packed earth flight line, ending in the Dak Poko River.



Dak Poko River winding between Jeh villages in dense jungle on way to Dak Pek.



Dense jungle with gray bridge over the Dak Poko River. Dark object is our truck carrying clothes, food and medical supplies.



Another view of river and truck and bridge.



Jeh villagers coming to meet us at the truck.



Jeh villages assembling at our truck. Jeh soldiers distributing the supplies and watchful for enemy troops.



Many Jeh soldiers guarding our truck in the jungle, ready to signal our rapid departure if Viet Cong enemy sighted.



Jeh villagers coming down the hill to the bridge to get to our truck.



Jeh soldiers guarding us – alert to possible Viet Cong attack.



Line up of the Jeh villagers to receive needed supplies. No pushing or shoving. And yet they are desperately hungry and poor.



Conlon crossing the swaying bridge over the Dak Poko River on the way to distant Jeh village.



Another view of the bridge.



Interior of the Jeh meeting hall. That's Pat Cohen and his Mexican serape hanging to dry. Pat is a Wycliffe Bible missionary, translating the Bible into the Jeh language and giving the Jeh a written language to boot.



Note the Australian kangaroo on the Caribou plane. A motorized former glider used in WW II. Other than helicopters, this is the only airplane that can land at Dak Pek. Once the rainy season started, only helicopters can come in.



Captain Dan Conlon with mongoose for catching rats.



Cat. Dan Conlon and Aussie pilot on top of team house at Dak Pek.



Our rescue helicopter coming in to get us in the pouring rain at Dak Pek.



Dak Pek seen from the rear of the helicopter taking Roy Worthington, John Watson and me to Kontum.



Downtown Kontum. Note the Vietnamese walking on the sidewalk and the Montagnard family in the road. We were falsely reported as missing and probably KIA in Dak Seang south of Dak Pek.



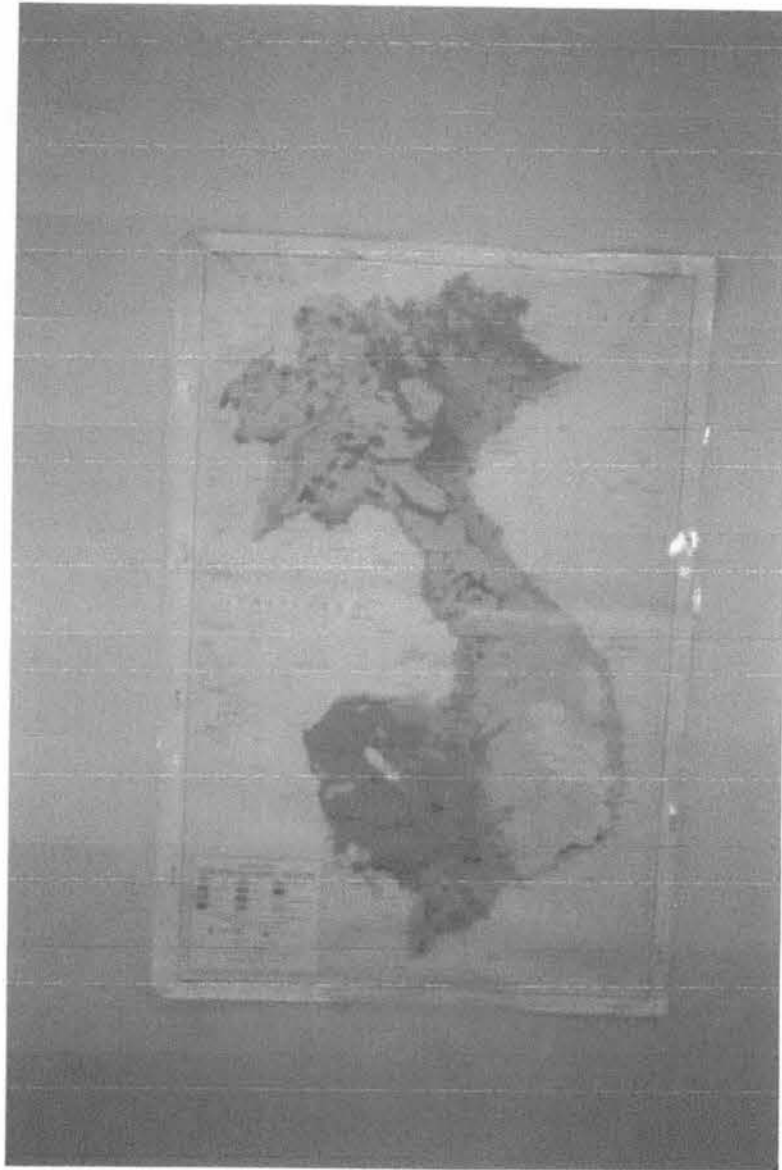
Another view of downtown Kontum, second city, after Ban Me Thuot, in the Highlands.



Lick Rahlan with his Panama hat tasting the local rice wine brew in Plei Brel.



One of my favorite pictures of a joyful, fun loving Montagnard young man.

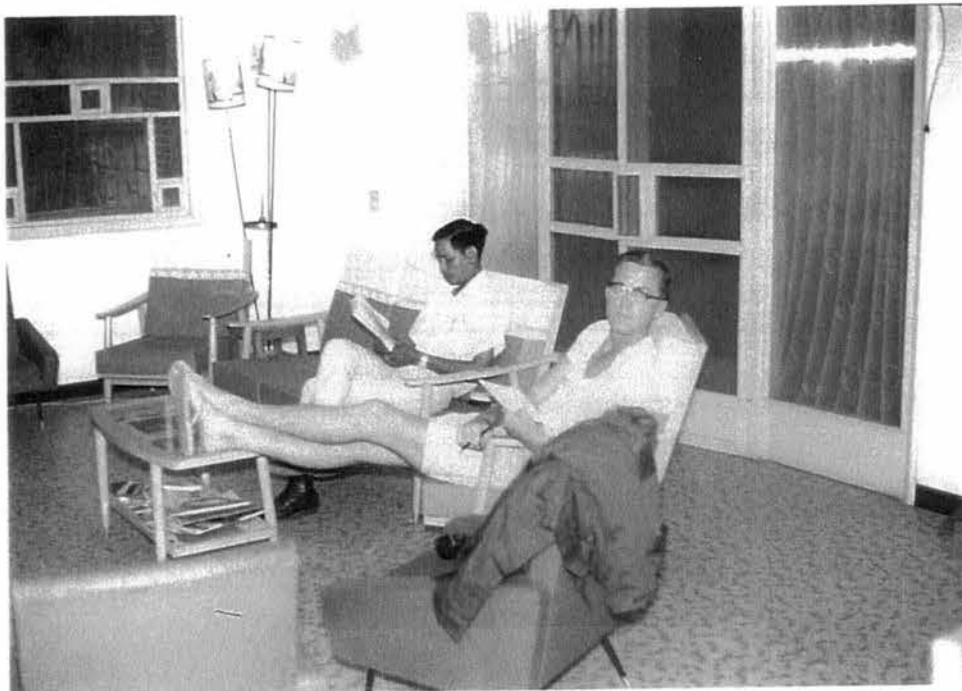


A repeat of picture #4 showing the dominance of the Montagnards in the Highlands of Vietnam and Cambodia. Not in population, but in their presence in a large part of both countries.



My attempt to show the large extent of land in North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia occupied by the "indigenous tribes" that we distinctly separate for the Vietnamese, the Laotians and the Cambodians. They lived

in the mountainous sections of all three countries – the former French Indochina.



Top: "F-Troop" SAC (Strategic Air Command) quarters in Saigon. That's Lick Rahlan playing chameleon role of a Filipino.

Bottom: Lick Rahlan on his Honda, earned from his wages as Colonel Huller's interpreter.





65a

(Reverse) Lick Rahlan, USAF Interpreter, at "F-Troop". On the back, Lick hand wrote "Saigon Gift Friendship".



Main Street Plei Brel. That's Roy Worthington on the left.

My grand daughter Bler.



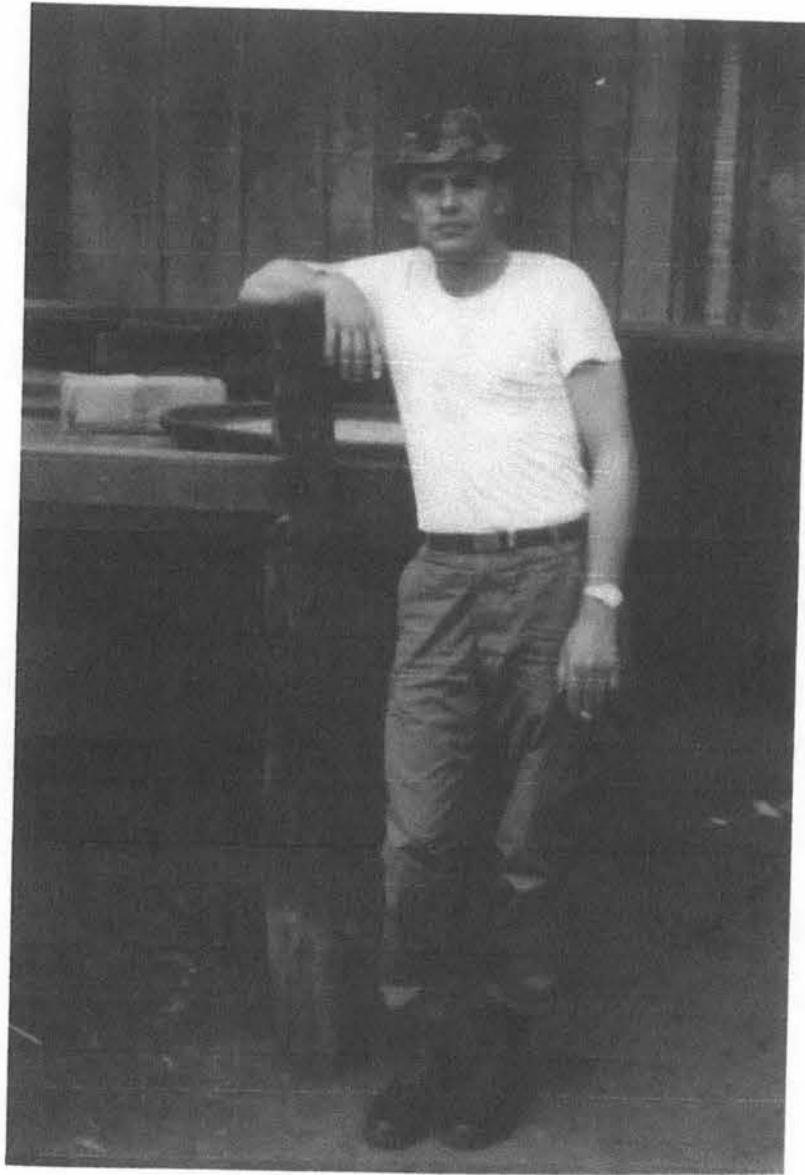
56



Lake called Ben Hoi. The center of the extinct volcano that was the origin of Pleiku. L to R below Ben Hoi: Engineers compound, Plei Brel, Plei Sor, Plei Phung.



My friend and body guard Lou Bracey. He was the night corpsman at the dispensary when not shadowing me.



Lee Ignatowitz, my other body guard. Also an Air Force corpsman. Both Lou and Lee were my constant companions in the villages half way through my tour. Either they were assigned to guard me or simply volunteered. I never asked.

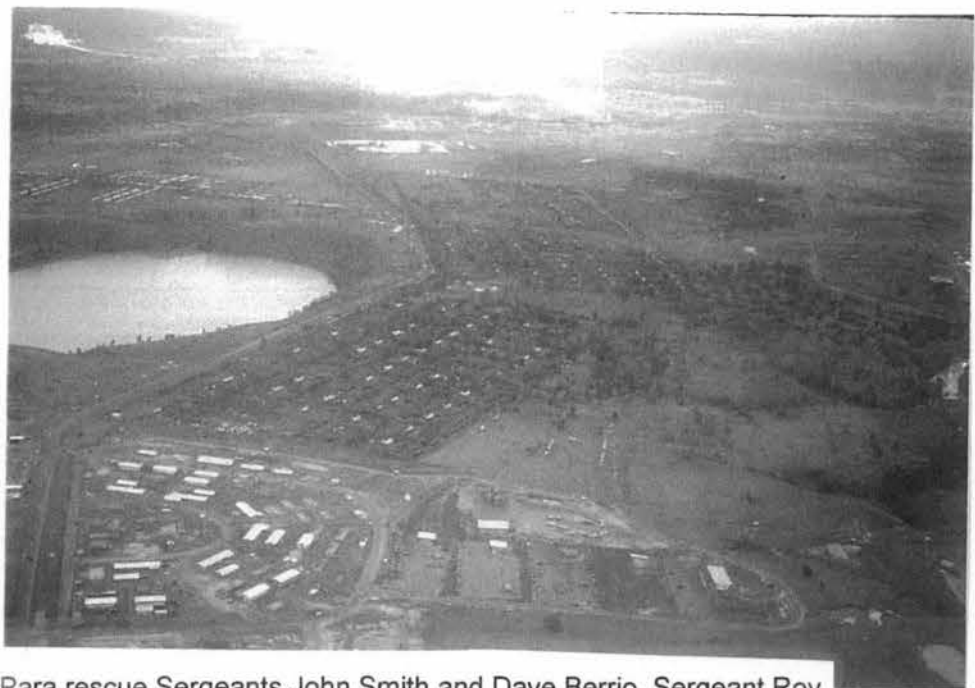


Kek, Mlo, K'sor Hlin and Lee Ignatowitz. Lee had been adopted into Hlin's family. Hlin eventually became my adopted son. Good soldier. Good man.



K'sor Hlin, to be the next chief after Ton. Former Viet Minh soldier. My son by adoption. Kek, his son. Mlo his beautiful wife. In front of their newly built house in Plei Sor. That's possible lunch near Hlin.

L,
-
r



Middle: Para rescue Sergeants John Smith and Dave Berrio, Sergeant Roy Worthington, with Lee Ignatowitz under Dave Berrio. That's Ton's front porch in Plei Brel.

Bottom: Ton's hooch in Plei Brel and my home away from the base. Ton chief of Plei Brel and six other villages. Note Honda motor cycle to the left.

E
NT
on
L



60



Top: My "granddaughter" Bler

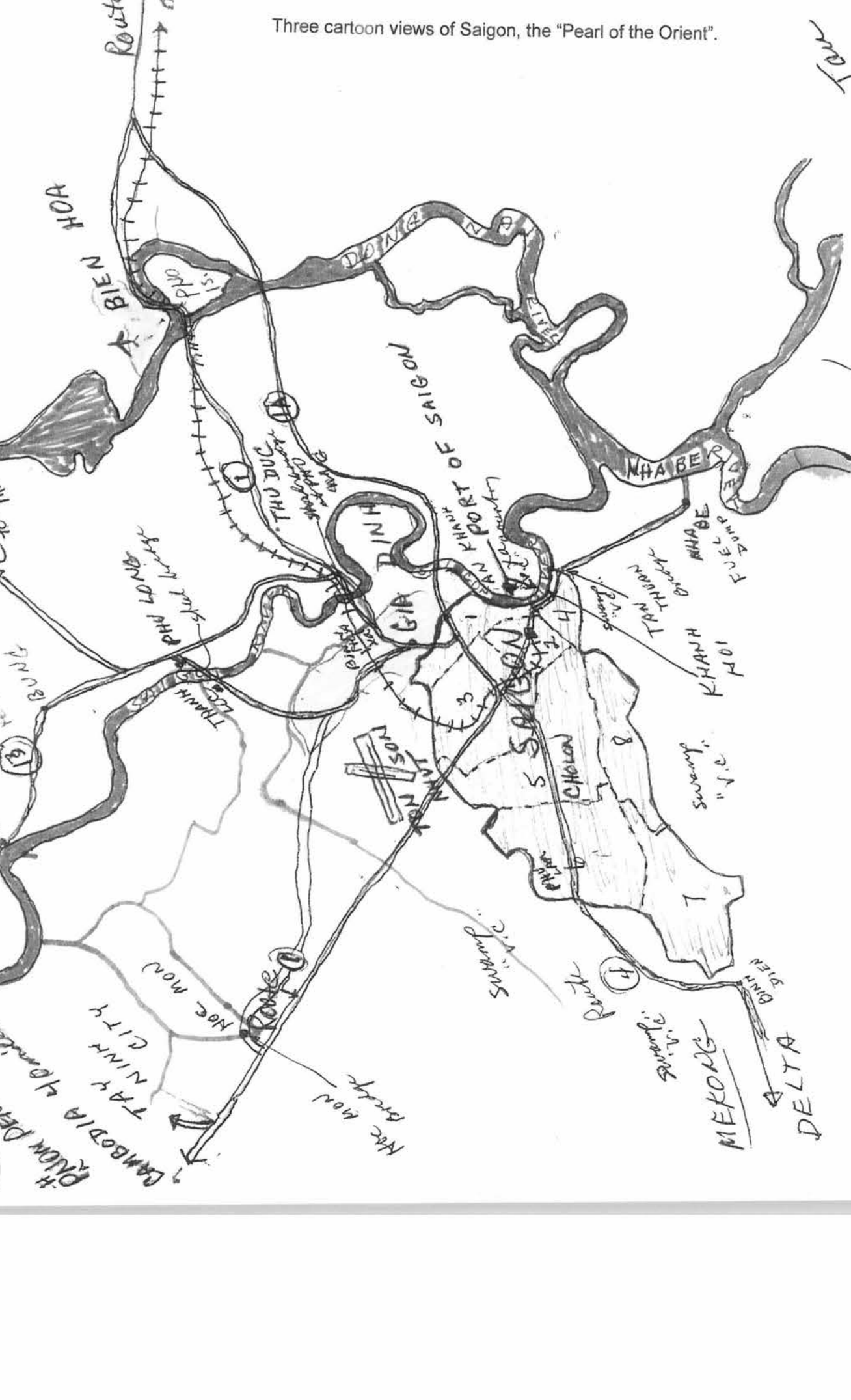
Middle: My "son - ana - R' ChomTon with his son Tuck in his front yard.

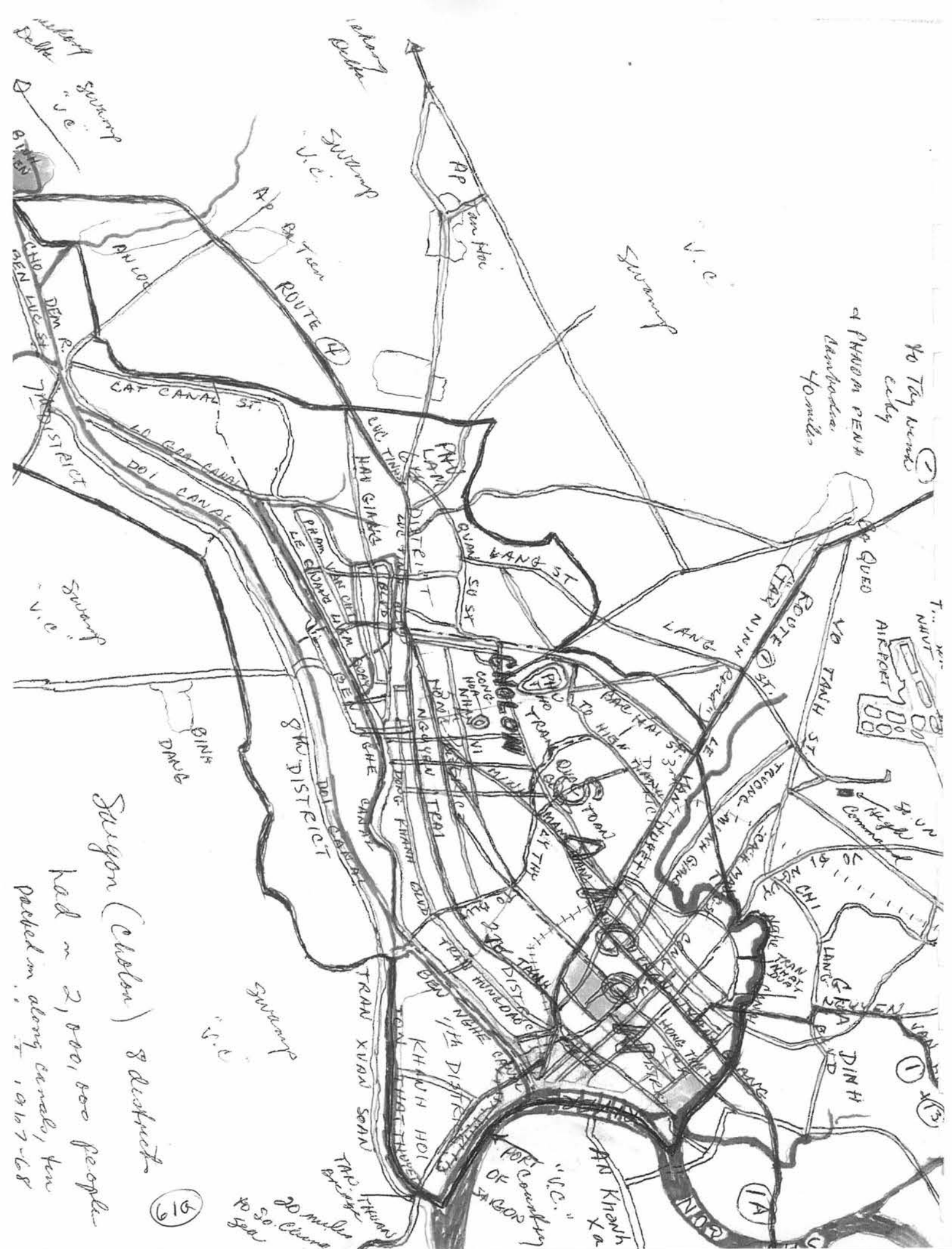
Bottom: Captain Conlon, newly installed as Ton's father - ama . That's possible lunch to his left.

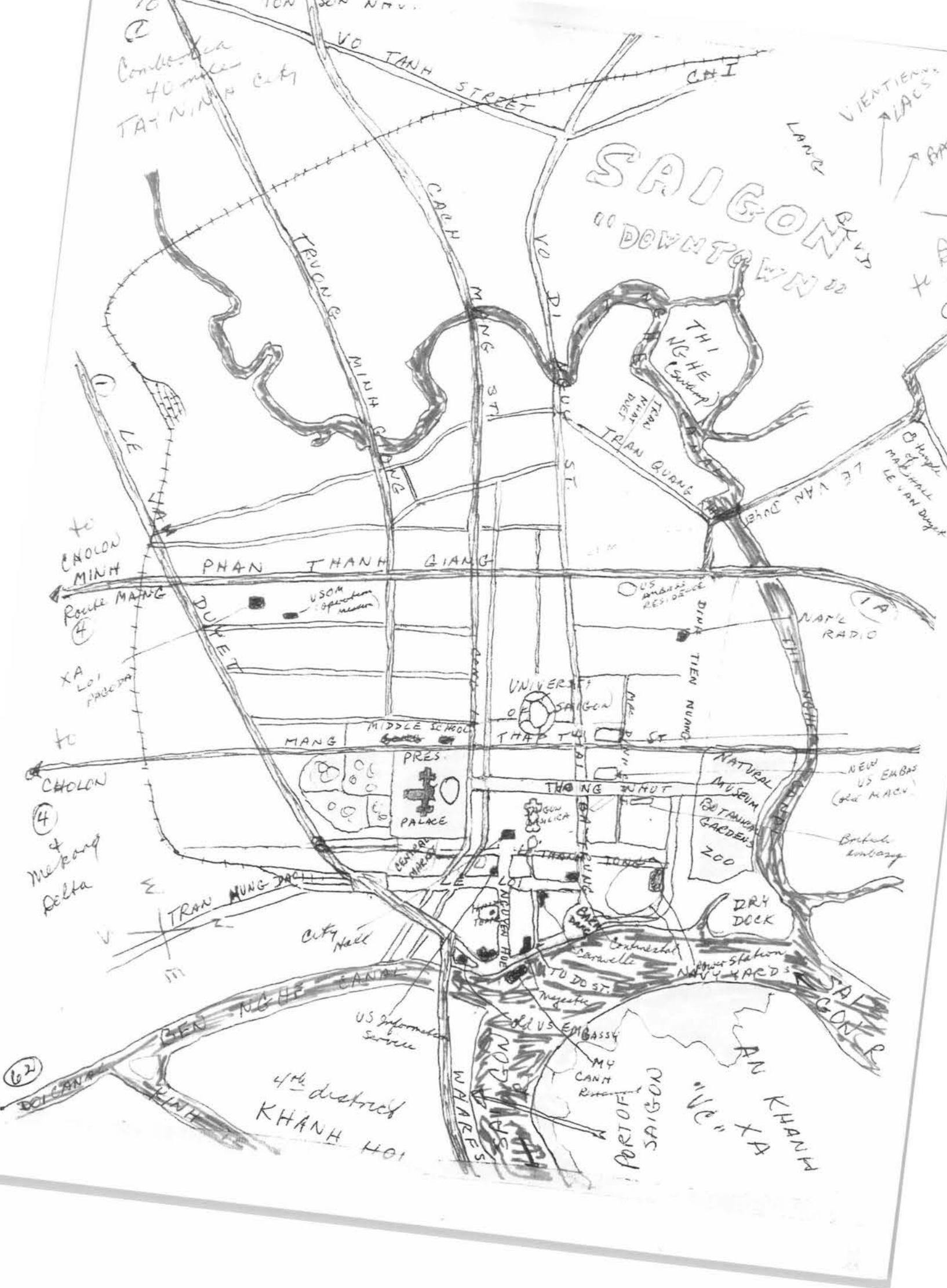


60a

Three cartoon views of Saigon, the "Pearl of the Orient".

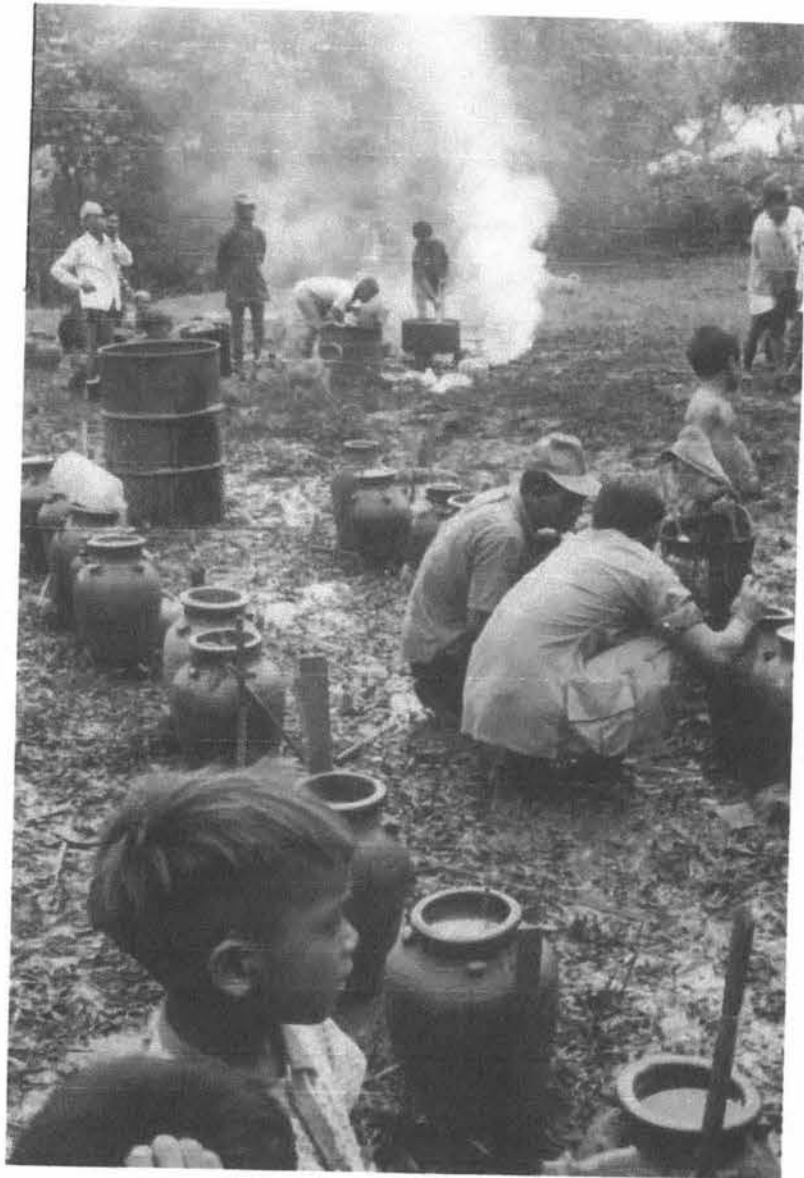








The ritual sword dance at Tet. Hinh receives a wound to his face. Will not let me treat it. A badge of honor.



My adopted grandson Tuck bottom left. The rice wine jugs laid out for the celebration. Full of numjum tupai – numpai – sour mash rice whiskey. Two levels required drinking from each jug. Or the host will be offended.



The ladies of Plei Brel offering their favorite dishes. The flies helping themselves along with us.



Tet celebration '68 before the famous Tet Offensive. Strange faces in the crowd. My men L to R: Lou Bracey, Lee Ignatowitz and Dave Berrio. I am the guest of honor.



Another view.



Again.



Still another view. Strange that the Montagnards will now allow, even welcome, photographs. Previous to Tet, Chief Ton would not allow pictures, saying it took something from their souls. Did not want people to take pictures of the Montagnards "like monkeys in zoo."



67

Still another view, this time with Gir by my side, wearing my Air Force blouse.



Line up of Montagnards and Airmen at Hlin's house in Plei Sor for Colonel Huller's picture. Colonel Huller in red shirt and fatigue pants.

Conlon second row, second from left. Lick Rahlan in front of Conlon, Hlin next to Lick. Bill Fulton behind Hlin, Paul Hawkins to right of Fulton, Roy Worthington next to Hawkins. The tall man is Sgt. Ellis.





Rice storage bins in Plei Brel. Copper/tin around legs to prevent rats from stealing.



The precious kids of Plei Brel. One out of ten live births survive. Life expectancy of a Montagnard is 35 years on average. That's my adopted grandson Tuck with his hand in front of his face.



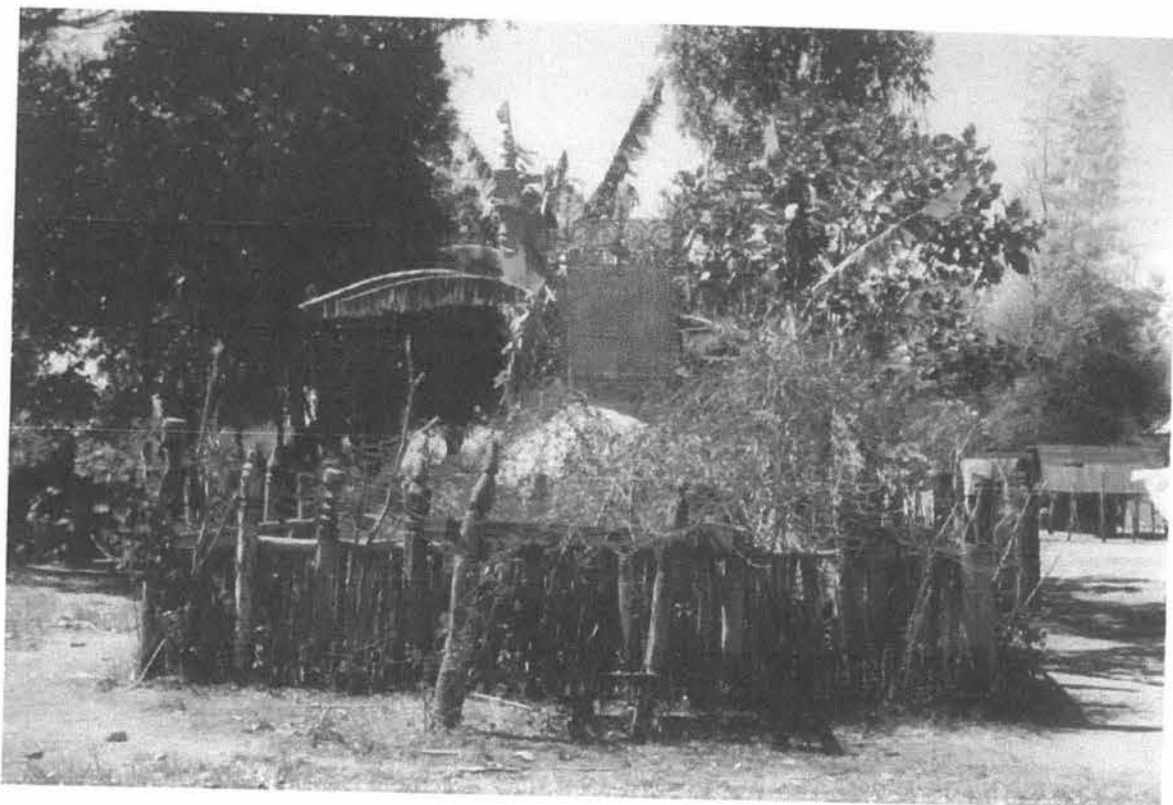
The water hole where Montagnards bathed. I never went into the cave. Too many secrets there. Women bathed in there under flowing spring water.



Men and boys bathed outside of cave. Bamboo spout plugged into the hill gives flowing clean water.



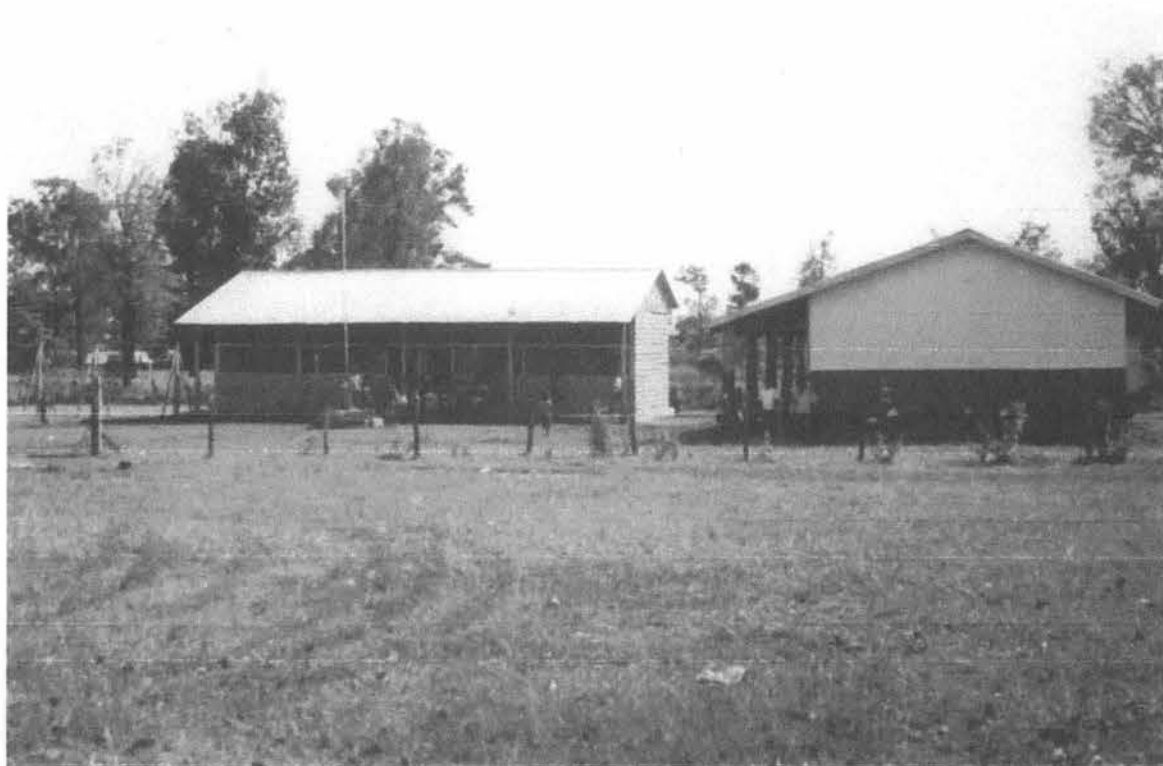
This is the walkway built by Jack Rudy (Charlie Luckie) and the 633rd US Airforce Combat Support Group. Without this walkway, the water hole would be inaccessible during the rainy season.



The gravesite in the center of Plei Brel. The Montagnard Church. Animists and ancestor worshippers. The home of the yang – Montagnard gods.



Downtown Plei Brel and the village common area.



Two schools built by Jack Rudy (Charlie Luckie) for Plei Brel, Plei Sor, Plei Phung – three of Ton's villages. Khat taught here. So did Bud Meehan and John Watson. Painted white and blue for the Air Force.



Ton's house in Plei Brel and my home away from the base for sleeping.
R'chom Ton became my son – ana –by adoption.



Interior of Ton's house. That's Dan Conlon facing the camera. The only ventilation or light comes in from the open door. No electricity or running water or toilets (but Ton had a Coleman lantern for special occasions). Rice wine odor and cigar and cigarette smoke filled the air.



Captain Stephen Charles "lapping at the hose" – two levels from each rice wine jug required.



Dave Berrio. Stephen Charles, Roy Worthington and Lick Rahlan. That's a water buffalo looking at them.



Scotty and his wife, Scotty can read and write (note the pens in his pocket).
Scotty attends the Montagnard training center. Scotty is 15. His wife is 13.
Good looking Montagnard couple.



The "Happy House" in the common area of Plei Brel. Serves as a place for the young people to gather, like the neighborhood pool hall. Also doubles as a place to put old feeble people to die. They are given food, tobacco and rice wine to die a peaceful death.

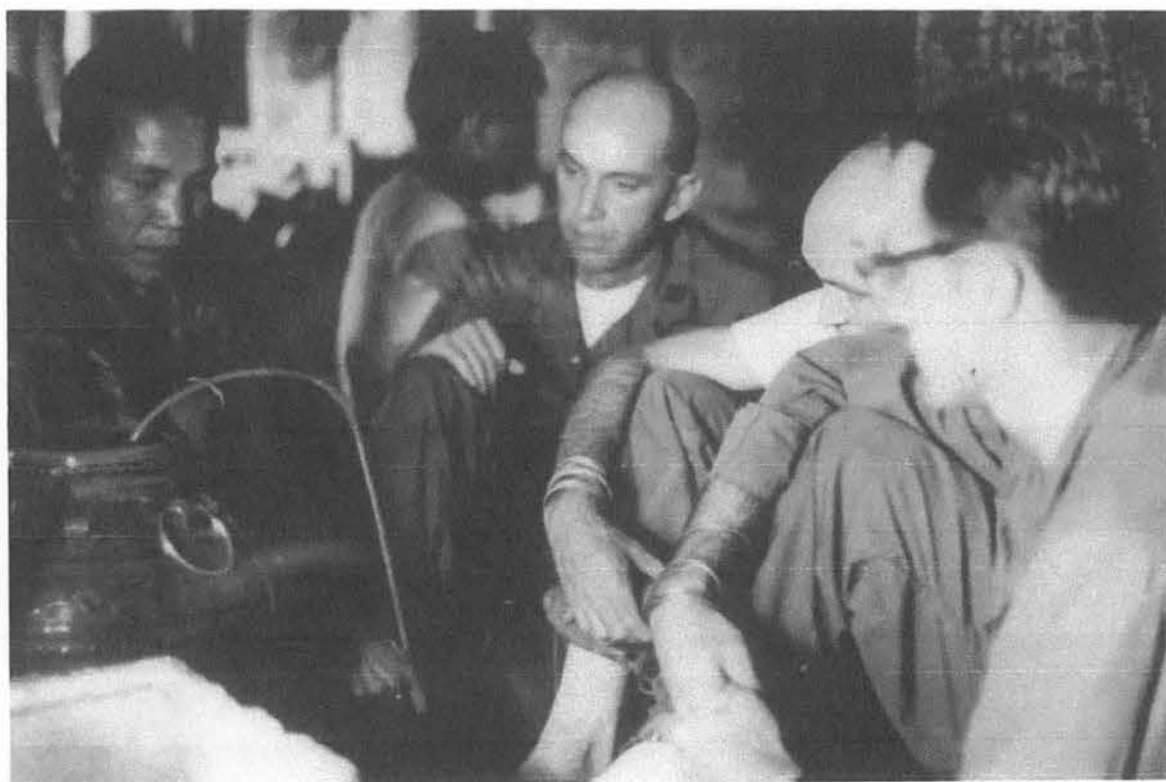


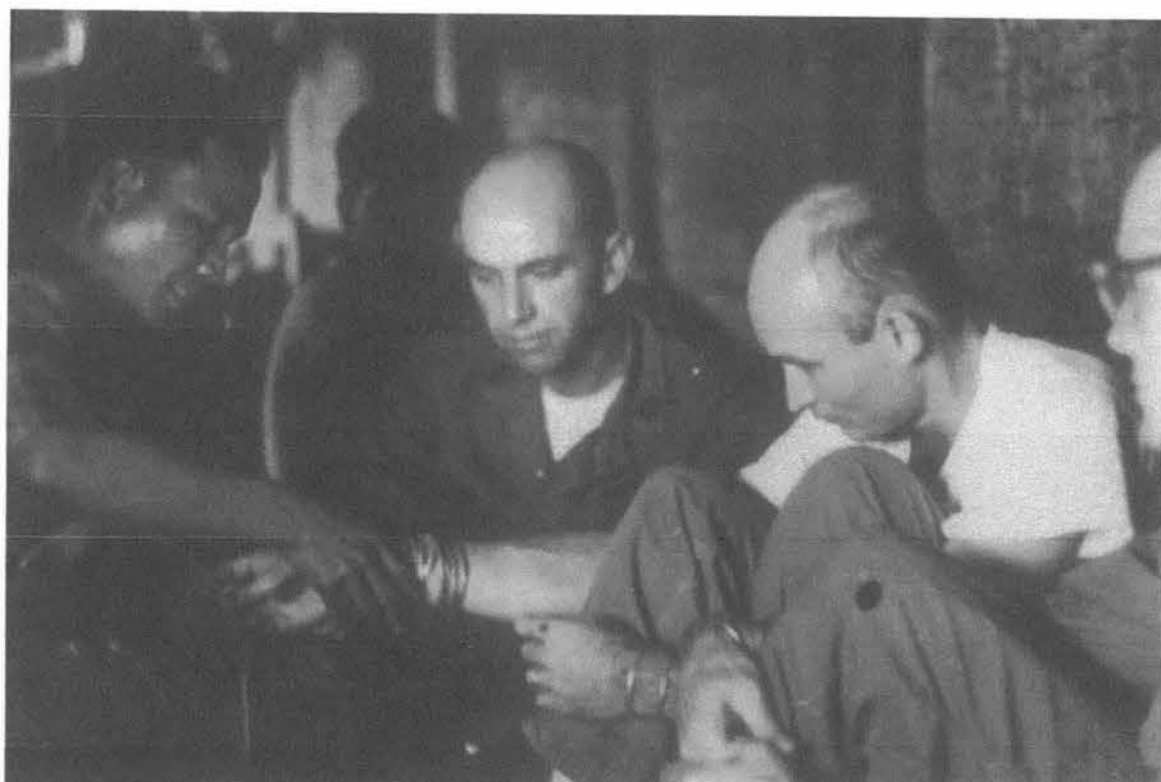
Khat the school teacher with Bill Fulton, my replacement. Bill is a surgical nurse and boss of the Air Evacuation C 130s, loading the wounded at night for the trip to the coast and, eventually, to the states.



Khat, Bill Fulton, Dan Conlon and Steve Charles. #s ⁸⁵82, 83, 84 show Khat making me his father by adoption. Khat is pouring his special rice wine on my naked foot, calling on the Montagnard gods to witness what he is doing. Note the copper bracelet on the jug, that he will place on my right wrist as solemn promise to protect my personal ass.

85 83

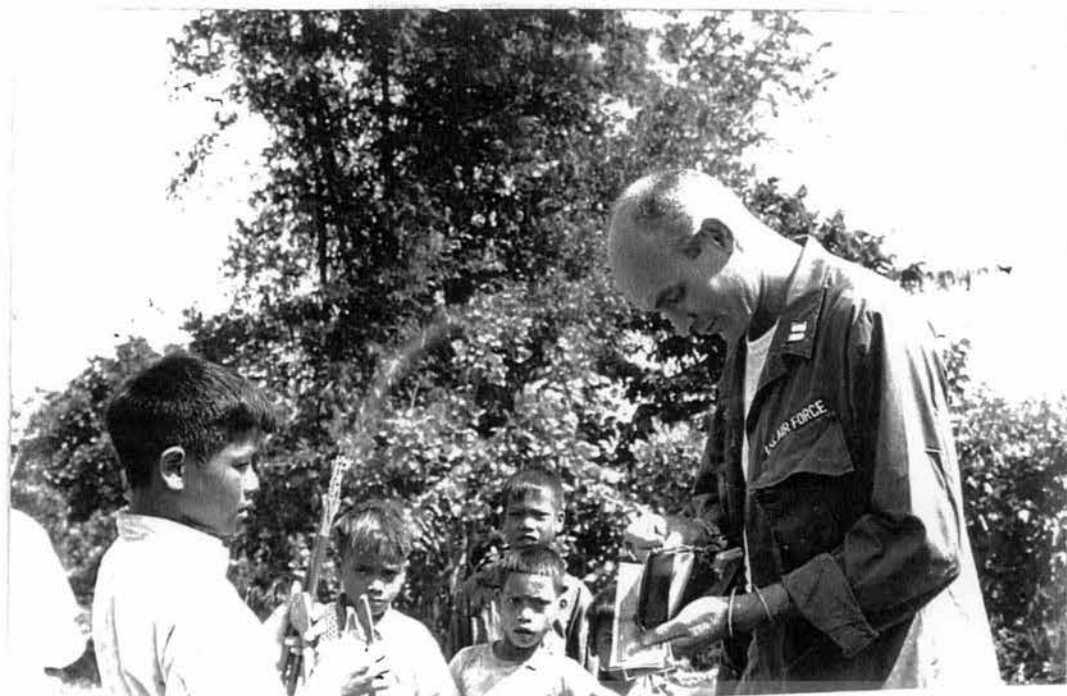






88

Typical load of crossbows in our room at Plei Ku MACV. Major Schultz kept the records and was our treasurer. That's Conlon on the right.



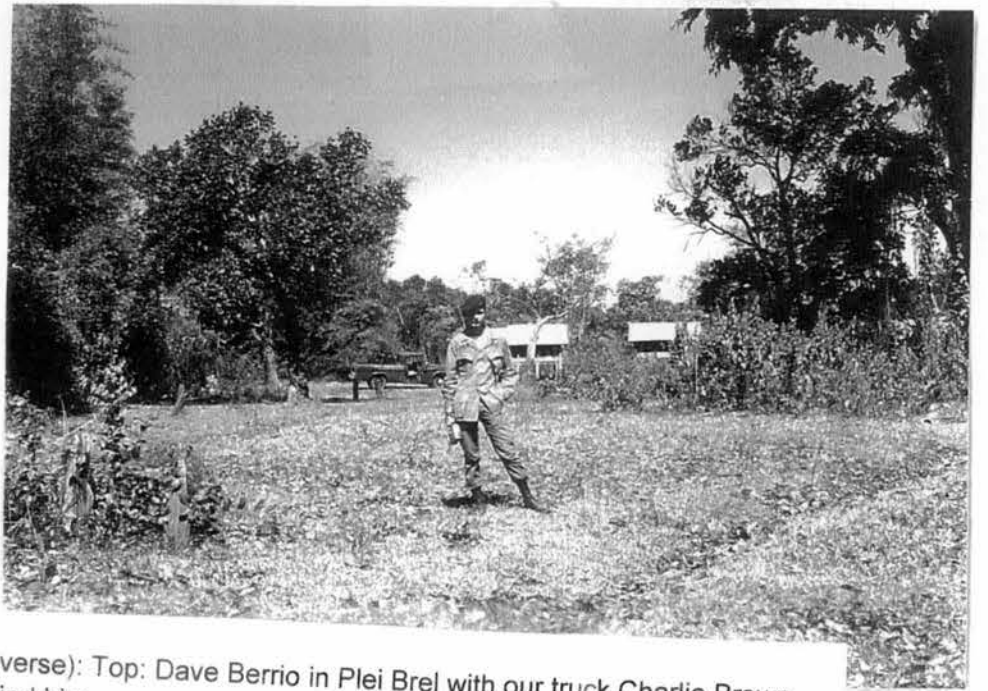
My buddy Gir (son of Hinh) getting money from me to buy crossbows. I made Gir the purchasing agent because I was paying too much for the bows and we were running out of cash. Gir got a good price for the bows and wouldn't budge on the price. That's my grandson Tuck in the middle.



88a



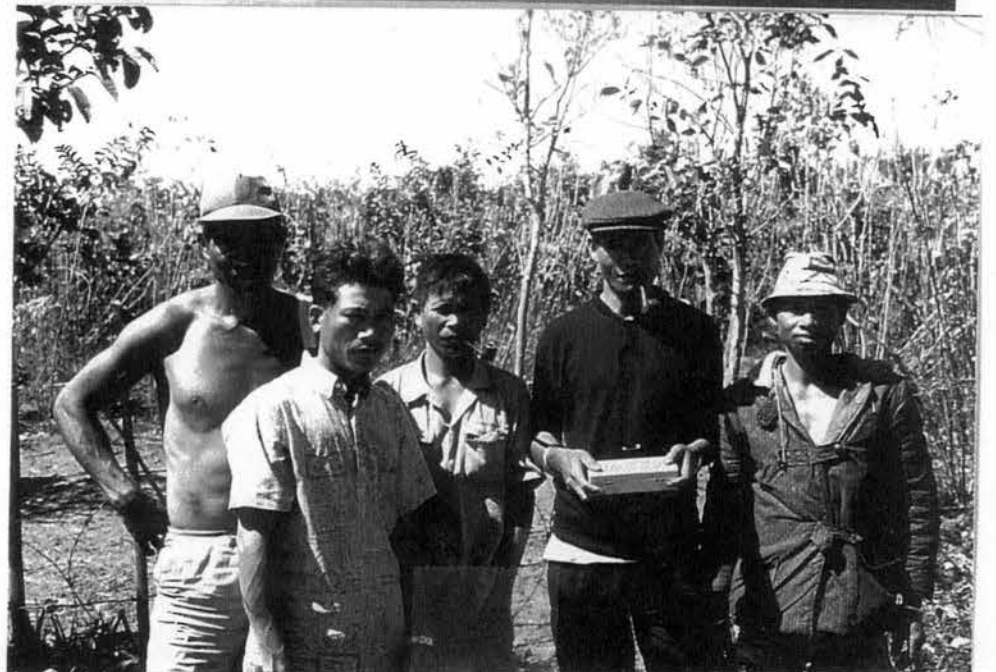
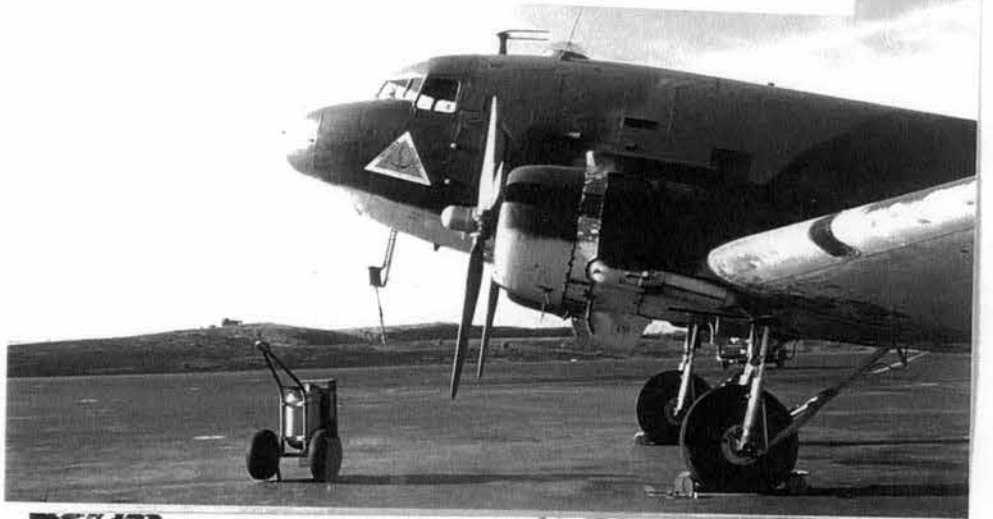
Officers of the Montagnard Crossbow Enterprise standing in front of our new official airplane labeled with decal on nose saying "Crossbow Airlines" with a crossbow in the middle. L to R: Sgt. Dave Berrio, Capt. Dan Conlon. Sgt. Ellis. And Lick Rahlan, interpreter.



(Reverse): Top: Dave Berrio in Plei Brel with our truck Charlie Brown behind him.

Middle: Our base goonie, now officially the airplane of the Crossbow Enterprise. Note the crossbow in the middle of the triangle.

Bottom: Citizens of Plei Brel. That's Ton second from the right.



89a



Idyllic scene of a Montagnard woman returning home with typical basket on her back.



Lille and his grandson. The former chief of the hamlet before my son Ton.
One of the "wise men" who advised Ton.



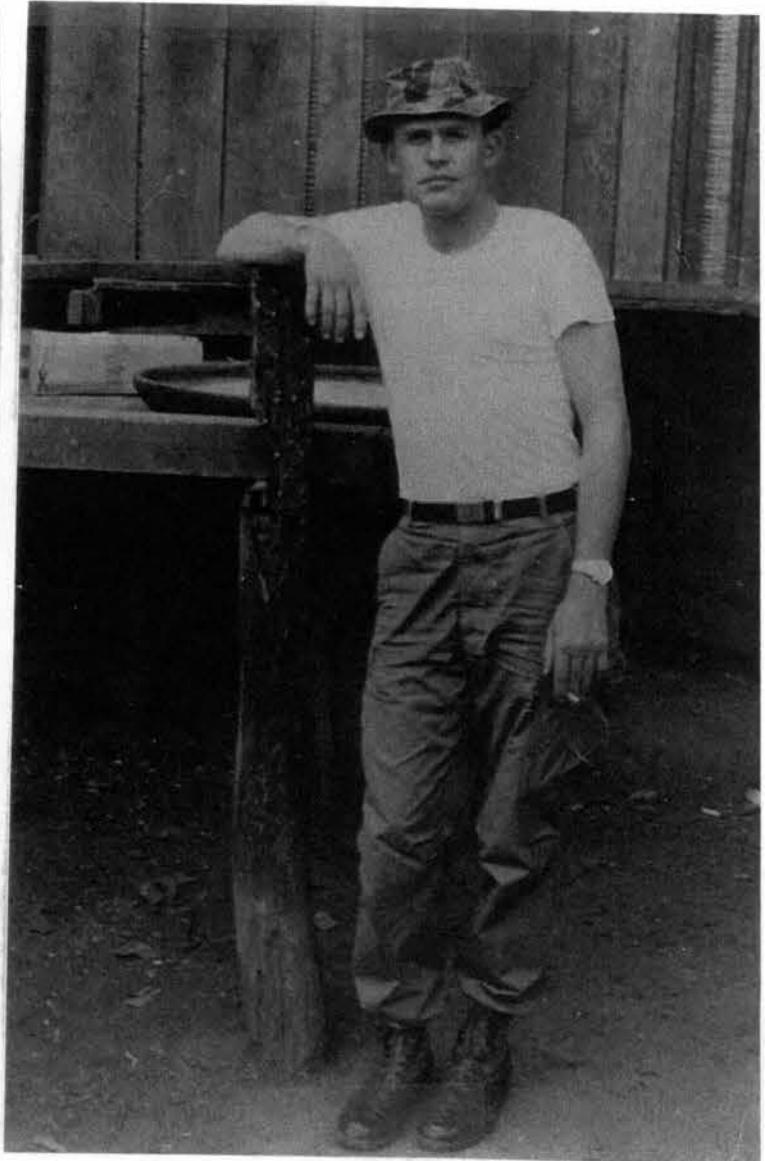
Conlon clowning around at the end of my tour, January 1968. An M16 in one hand and a beer in the other. — in my room in MACV.



Gnau, his son and daughter-in-law and grandson. Gnau made custom crossbows for me. The ceremony where he made me his father led to the disastrous tank accident for John Watson.



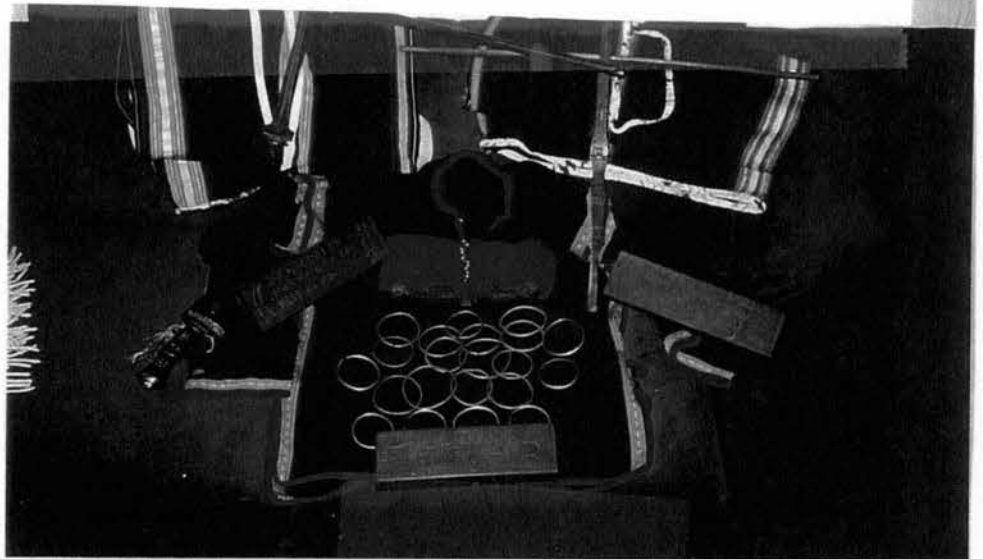
Another picture of Lou Bracey and Lee Ignatowitz, my protectors.





(Reverse) Top: Dan Conlon with crossbow, my quarters in MACV. End of tour 1968.

Middle: My "medals" – bracelets, robes and a plaque by Hlin that said, "Dan Conlon – Montagnard – Plei Ku"



93a



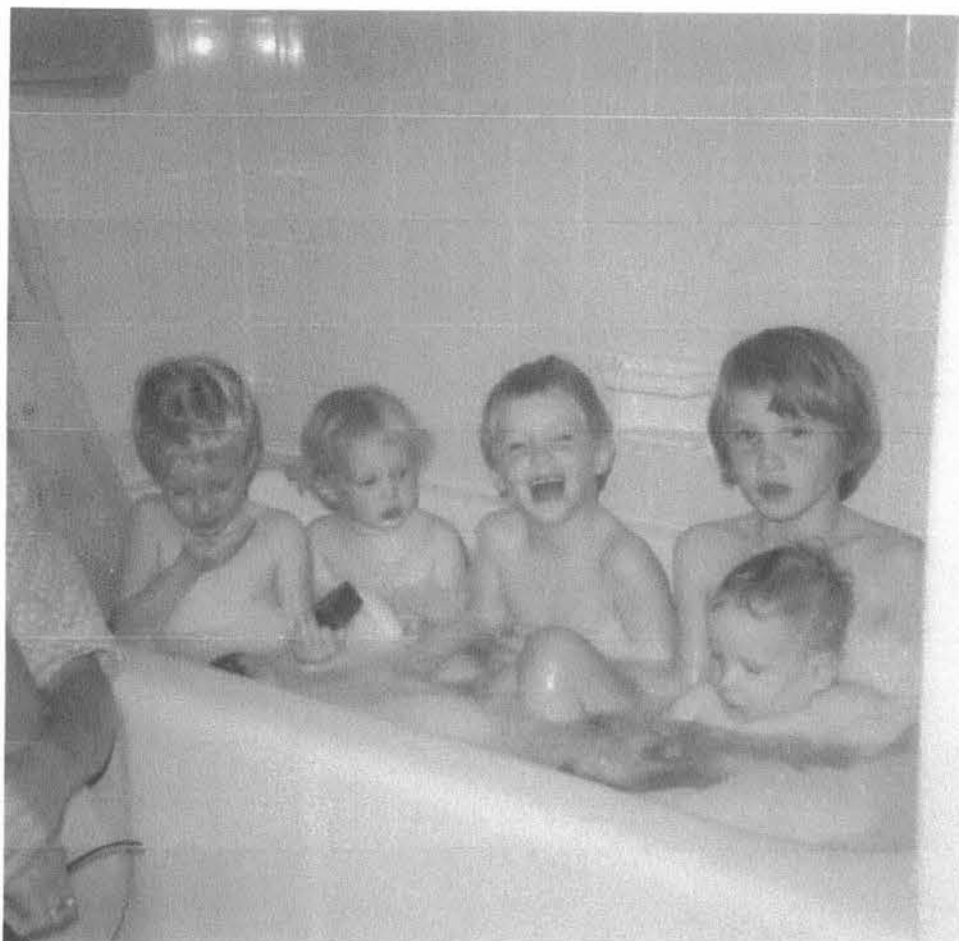
January 1968. Kay and I arrive in Minneapolis and are greeted by my kids: Colleen 7 ½; Kaela 6; Erin 5; Megan 3. Jim, age not quite 2, wonders who this guy is. We came home one at a time – not as a group – no parade. I shed my uniforms and bracelets and medals soon after.



Home to my son Jim, almost 2. The only males he's had are his cousins, the Bonin boys, who are teaching him to play ball.



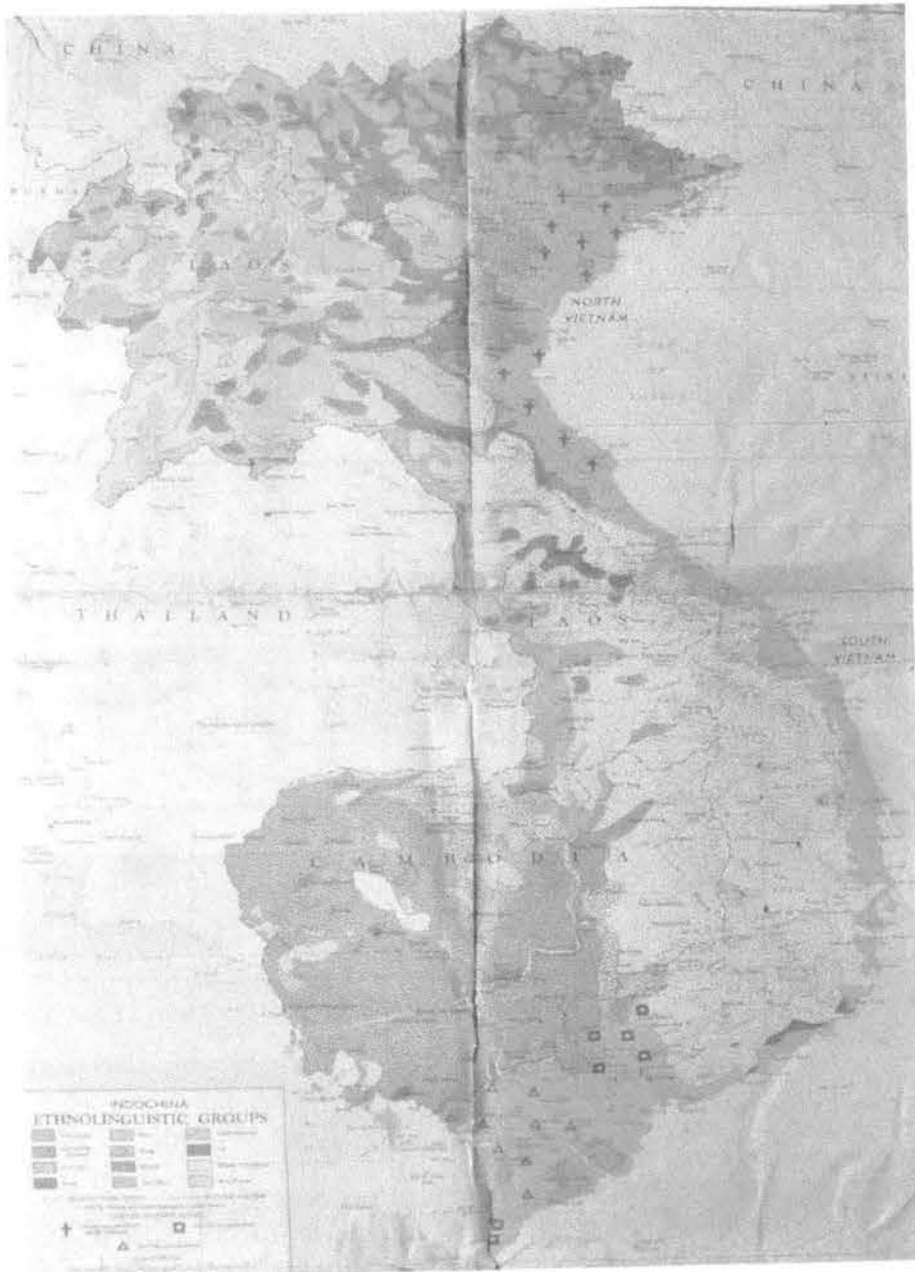
Back to peace and civilization. Away from the constant fear, alertness and fevered activity. My daughter Megan is part of the new serenity.



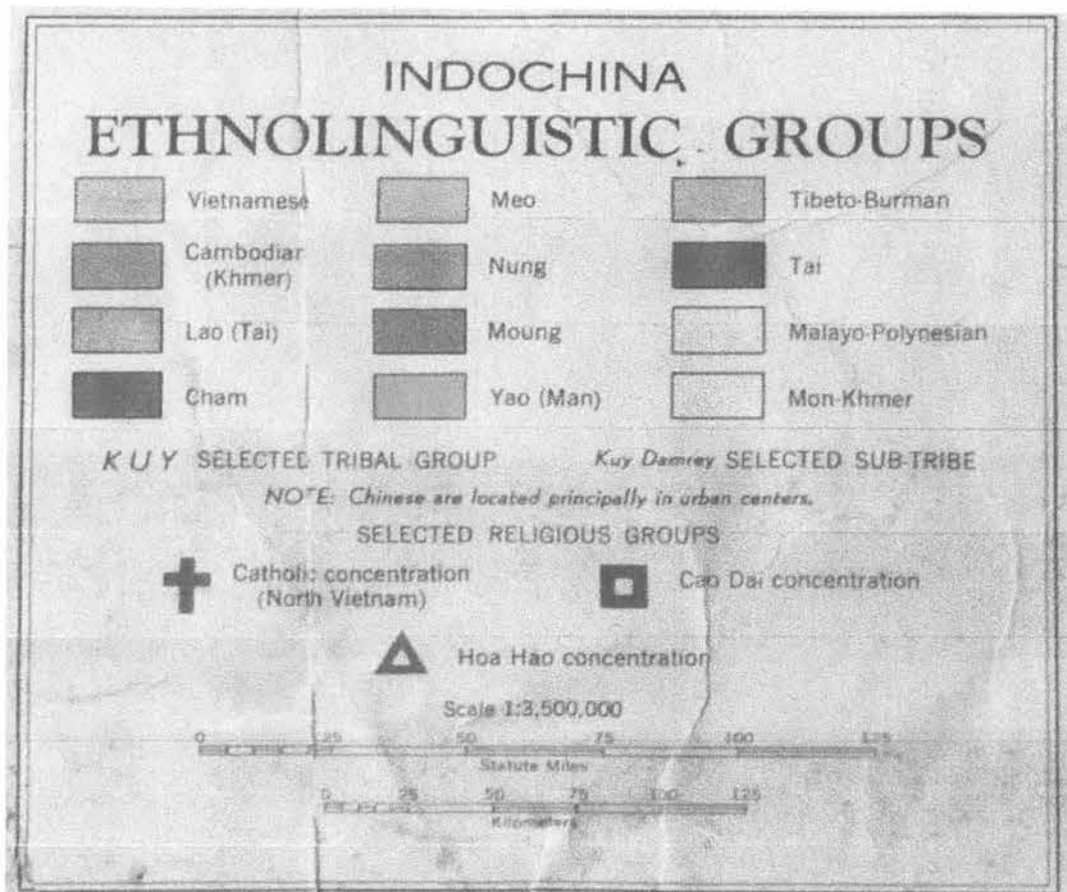
Idyllic scene of my kids in their bath tub. I'm home and the war is far away.



The scene in Wichita Falls, Texas before the Vietnam experience changed everything.



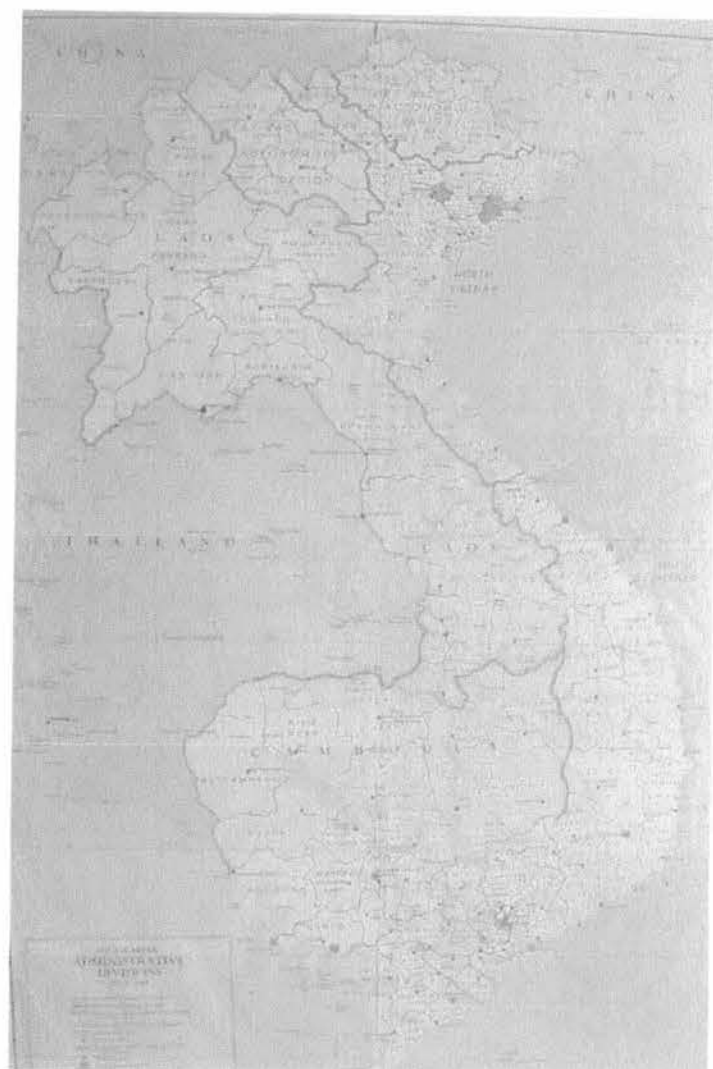
Repeat for emphasis; how the Montagnards and other "indigenous" tribes dominated the mountainous regions of the former French Indochina.



Color coding showing the ethnic origins of the tribes of the former French Indochina

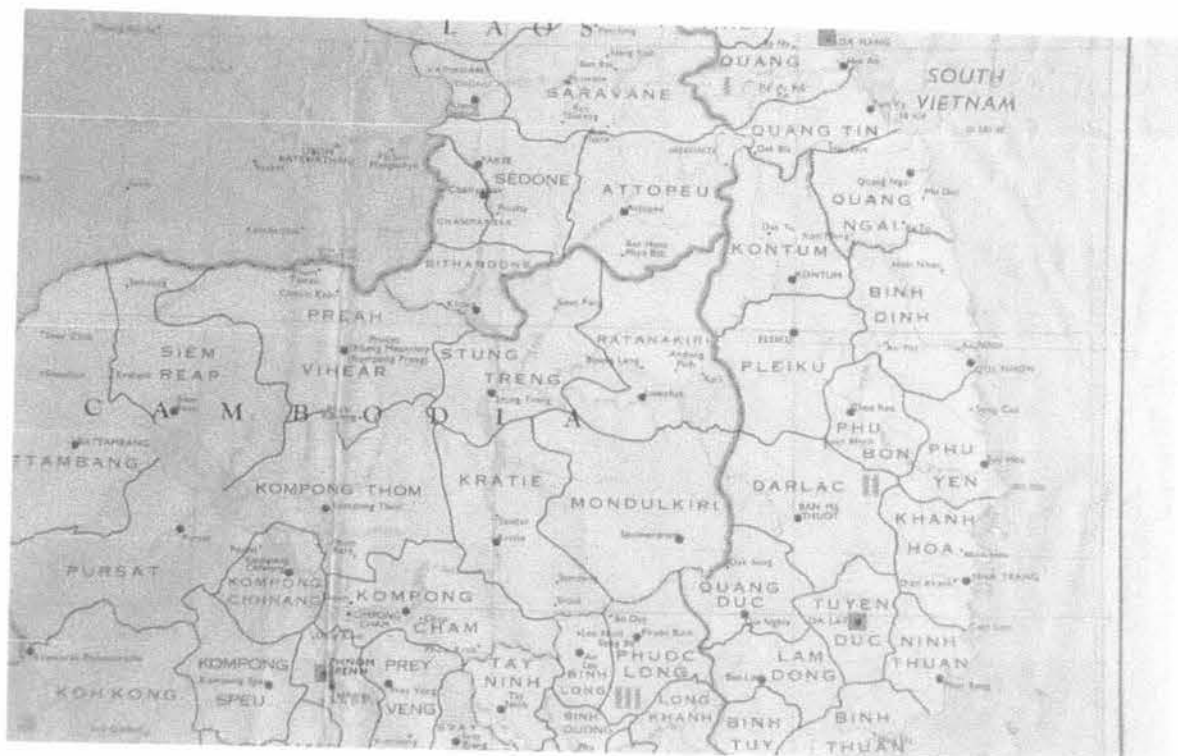


Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot – principal cities, along with Kontum, in the Central Highlands. Note the green for the Vietnamese along the coast – not in the mountains and jungles.





The autonomous regions in North Vietnam reserved for the native tribes by Ho Chi Minh. They served as the sanctuary for Ho and his comrades before their victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu – way out in Montagnard country.



Another view of Pleiku and its proximity to Cambodia. The border is not marked as it is on the map in the mountainous jungle.