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6 OCT 84

Dear Charlie,

Have finally taken a day off from the busy routine of medical practice, management, social obligations, bills and my research into "the book" to write a reply to your very welcome, surprise letter dated 30 Aug 84.

Where to start? Perhaps with my youngest son, Casey - age 14 - who brought a box of ~~opened~~ ^{opened, but unread,} letters to me last spring. They were all dated 1968 - 1969 and were from Congressman, Lick, some of his "brothers" and ^{one} from you. I made a copy of it for you to review. Immediately after returning to Mpls in 1968 - remember that year?

LBS resigned, Robert Kennedy & Martin Luther King were killed, Hubert Humphrey lost thanks to Eugene McCarthy, etc - riots, etc - I simply had had enough of the war, the confusion in my head. My practice, my family needed my full attention. We built a Children's Hospital. We built a run-away teenage medical center. The inner city - Model City - was a sleeping volcano of potential problems, ^{blacks, Am. Indians, Chinese.} I was a little crazy myself. And very fixed of the Montagnard cause & no one wanted to hear about.

It's been a very eventful 16 years for me in Mpls. Not rich - no one gets rich practicing in the inner city. Prosperous enough. A beautiful wife who still loves me. She ~~is~~ has survived a cancer

and is now actively pursuing a Masters in Art Therapy to be followed by another Masters in psychology and then perhaps a PhD.

My children are all going through the painful process of growing & onto responsible adults. We, too have had our adventures. Colleen, 24, has survived the drug culture, joined AA and is finishing a dual major of Theology and Music hopefully spring 1985.

Michaela 22 - also a survivor of the drug culture and brain surgery following an accident - will finish an Art Major & Education probably Christmas 1985.

a senior, Erin 21 - who avoided the drug thing - is thinking of being an actuarial - straight A in exotic math courses at U of Wisconsin, Madison.

Megan - Jewordian - 19 - sophomore - survived a car accident that nearly finished her - is a dynamo and a joy.

Jim - age 18 - wants to be and has a good chance of being a major league infielder - freshman at Mankato State - a "base ball" school like Arizona State.

our Casey - age 14 - is the only one at home. Post Vietnam child - and perfect, of course. As you can see, I have every reason to work hard with sex in college.

I am now the old man and philosopher of our rapidly expanding clan in the void of the inner city. We alone have survived the "war zone" as it is called and find we are much in demand with

the various NATO's, etc. Much politics
in this new age of our version of
socialized medicine.

But that Vietnam war did not
go away as I had intended it would.
Have my letters I sent to Kay - which
I've saved. Those pages from about
Frank Doyal, John Value and you
and taken from these letters.

Jack Rudy has been in constant
touch since 1977 when he appeared
at my door to tell me about his book.
The Montagnards still haunt me. Especially
Lech Rablan or whatever his name is
now.

In Nov 82 I began the labor of
writing my book - and am still at
it. Have read almost 100 books
about Vietnam and have many more
to read & reread. Have also read
much about Central America &
guerrilla warfare in general. Have even
given a series of lectures at my
old college last Jan 1984 - took a
whole month off. - about revolutionary
guerrilla warfare. Went to a writer's
school in Duluth end of the July - from
which came my annotated outline of
the book. Am working on Chapter XIV
now - plan a chapter a month with
my other time demands.

You can see from all of the
above how welcome your letter was.
I refer you to page 18 of my ~~to~~

~~Happy~~ Frank Doyd notes to the
identical letter from John Value - very
touching - for sure will be in my book
somehow. Also the poem page 17. I have
also included your very touching
letter to me - brings tears and a huge
emotional wrench even now when I
read it. We all tried so hard to
do the ~~the~~ right thing, didn't we?
Never did see the report of that reporter
who was going to give something about
me to the Mpls paper.

Some requests.

Please keep in touch

give me address and name
of your daughter in Hopkins
if it's okay to get in touch
with her

Names of your children, wife
What do you do to fill your
days up?

Come up to Mpls sometime.

Thank you.

As you said - p 26 - the
fates have decreed ~~our paths~~ again
our paths have crossed again.

You will note that the title of my
book is "There is a Man Who
Walks" - I believe the hero
will ultimately be Lick Rablon

Love, Dan Conlon

Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Brown
8222 Calle Pino
San Diego, CA 92126

October 23rd

84

Dear Dan:

I'm not ignoring you old son, it's just that your package has brought up from the depths a few demons that I had thought to be exorcised. That, and a lot of rather fine memories of people and places and things. I need to do a little thinking....

I have dug out the few letters that I wrote during that year and will try to find some of the remaining tapes. As I told you, we didn't write as much as we traded tapes, often recording over the older ones, but much of that was family and trivia.

It's funny who peoples' perceptions of events and other people are affected by time and space. I never knew Jack Ruby, although I heard a lot about him. I never saw Frank Doyal when he wasn't a total lush, although I had heard good things about him before we both went to PKU. He had the reputation of a total professional in our field, and I was really dismayed to find him as he was that last month. He was as much a casualty of that unhappy affair as any of those who fell in battle, or were lost in the air. Many of us were.

RANDOM THOUGHTS....

I was not surprised at the revelations about Lick. I was there when Col Bob Huller left, and was replaced by a total idiot from SAE. A little later, Bill Thompson replaced me, and I started the process of forgetting. Bill joined me at SAC Headquarters in 1974, and told me that the rocket and mortar attacks had gotten much worse than we had seen; direct shots on the base and barracks, etc. Lick was true to his word to Bob Huller. He must not have had any more respect for the new one than the rest of us old hands did. I told you about his wearing a gun day and night.....

Reading your references about me was interesting; sort of seeing yourself in another man's mirror. The picture did change some during the six months or so that we were together, although I never did measure up to your expectations. More about that later.

Among the memories that came back...John Watson. I can add nothing to your comments about that fine young man. Where is he now?

There will be more coming from here later. After-action reports, stray thoughts, and counterpoints to some of your opinions, as well as a bit of narrative of what happened to the tall round-eyes after you left us. Some will come from my letter and tapes, and some from an admittedly defective memory. It will all be grist for your mill, and may add something to your book. We all seem to need a bit of catharsis now and again.

By the way. One of the things that I do well is edit and review. I would be delighted to work on the final draft with you....

Charlie

Date: 3 December

To: Dan

From: CHARLIE BROWN

Since I clipped this, I have seen another story that Site Two is being abandoned and the refugees moved somewhere away from the border.

The Thais are not anxious to provoke a confrontation with the Viets, and the dry season is starting...

I am trying to figure out a way to set out a feeler or two among the Vietnamese community here to see if anyone was in the trek from PKU or BMT to the coast when the Montagnards rose up....I may not want to find out.....

charlie

Now Refugees, Once U.S. Allies

For Mountain Tribesmen, Viet War Memory Lingers

By NICK B. WILLIAMS Jr., *Times Staff Writer*

SITE TWO CAMP, Thailand—A group of Montagnards gathers around the radio here each Sunday night to hear the Rev. John Newman broadcasting from the Philippines.

For more than 15 years, Newman and other radio preachers have been the sole American connection for the mostly Christian Montagnards, the mountain tribesmen who fought alongside U.S. Special Forces during the Vietnam War.

"Until this week, I had not talked with an American since 1968," said a stocky, balding man named Thoraban, a spokesman for a group of 190 Montagnards who recently moved to this refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border.

His last contact with an Ameri-

can, he said, was with a Maj. Lamar, a military adviser with an outfit designated B-50 at Ban Me Thuot, Darlac province, in Vietnam's Central Highlands. It was the year of the Communists' Tet offensive in South Vietnam.

"During the war, we sacrificed many lives fighting with the Americans," Thoraban told a reporter. He reeled off the places his people had fought with their Special Forces (Green Berets) advisers in the highlands—An Khe, Phu Tuc, Ba Sarpa and others near the more familiar highlands towns of Kontum, Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot and Dalat.

He remembered his Green Beret team leaders only by their rank and surnames: Capts. Abernathy, Dan-

Please see TRIBES, Page 7

Nick Williams is the LA Times bureau chief in Bangkok. The address is 7th Floor, Prinya Bldg., 544/11 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok 10500 Thailand.

Charlie

TRIBES: War Refugees Wait in Camps

Continued from Page 1

iel, Wood and Carter and Lt. Chamberlain.

An American here who served in the highlands said, "The Special Forces considered the Montagnards our most effective ally in Vietnam."

The Americans trained the Montagnards to fight against the Communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, but the Viet Cong had occasional success in turning the Montagnards against the U.S.-backed government in Saigon. Relations between Saigon and the tribes had always been tense.

"We don't dislike the Vietnamese people, but they are always trying to genocide us," Thoraban said.

The struggle reaches far back into Vietnamese history, when the Montagnards, who had come from the Malay-Polynesian islands to the south, were pushed into the mountains by later migrations from the north.

The 190 people at Site Two, including 17 women and 23 children, call themselves the Dega people. The name Montagnards, or mountain people, came from Vietnam's French colonialists. The Vietnamese dismissed the tribesmen as *moi*, or savages.

Their history involves sporadic attempts to achieve some sort of autonomy within Vietnam, where the Montagnard population is variously estimated at 700,000 to 1.5 million. The Montagnards here proclaim themselves the Liberation Front of the High Plateau, followers of the late Y-Bham Enoul.

They say they have never stopped fighting the Vietnamese, until now.

"The Vietnam War is over. We are only 190. We don't know where to go. One hundred and ninety. We cannot defeat the Vietnamese," Thoraban said.

He said his group, once part of a guerrilla force of 2,000, was driven out of Vietnam in 1979 and reached the Thai frontier the next year by traveling across Cambodia along the Laotian border. In 1982 and 1983, Thoraban said, groups of his men tried to recross Cambodia (apparently unsuccessfully) with supplies for their compatriots who stayed behind in Vietnam.

Although the Montagnards have occasionally been helped in their travels by Cambodia's Communist

Khmer Rouge guerrillas, Thoraban insisted that the Montagnards do not agree with Khmer Rouge policies. A strong connection with the Khmer Rouge, whose brutal rule of Cambodia was broken by the Vietnamese invasion of December, 1978, could damage their hope for resettlement in the United States.

Want to Go to U.S.

"Our only choice now is to go to the U.S.A.," said Y-Ghok Niek-rieng, the Montagnard leader at Site Two.

Thoraban said they turned their weapons over to Thai soldiers shortly before the Montagnards were moved to Site Two in early October.

In a letter to Thai authorities explaining their bid for resettlement, the tribesmen said, "Because of our poverty, lack of opportunity in every field, we fight with bare hands . . . [with] no aid and support from the foreign countries. We feel that we don't have enough strength and ability to liberate our own people and territory from Vietnamese control."

Refugee officials at the U.S.

Embassy in Bangkok are studying the case. But the Montagnards, the first known to have reached the border, are settling in for what, at best, may be a long wait.

One day recently, the bamboo skeletons of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches were being erected on the Montagnard plot at Site Two. Most of the Dega people are Protestants, converted by an American evangelist named Smith who came to the highlands in the mid-1930s, according to Rmah-Dock, another spokesman.

The radio preachers broadcast in the language of the tribesmen, but the Montagnard leaders want their people to learn English. They eagerly accepted copies of American magazines and said they need grammar textbooks.

There are more than 130,000 refugees at Site Two. The Montagnards occupy only a small corner of the camp—just another group of Indochinese people tossed up on the Thai border by years of war, their years as warriors apparently at an end.

"We stop the struggle," said Y-Ghok.

Charles A. Brown
8222 Calle Pino
San Diego, CA 92126

May 1, 1985

Dear Dan:

First of all, apologies for taking so long. Your second installment came the week that my father died in Florida, and when I got back from settling things there we were up to here with Christmas, Robin here from Minneapolis, and then into the new year. Frankly, your work got put aside, along with my letters back from Pleiku, and my tapes that had survived several moves and a bit of overdubbing. Then, a couple of weeks ago the latest installment arrived and, coupled with all of the hoopla over the 10th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, I was forced to sit down and read what you have written.

General impressions. The first stuff you sent, memories of Frank Doyal and the early days at PKU are better by far than the overall. That showed some real promise. There are chapters in the main work that are excellent, especially those dealing with the motivations and fears of the Montanyards.

A lot of the "I was there and this is what I did" is pure catharsis; it got the feelings out of your system, but won't sell past the immediate Conlon family.

I think that you know a lot more about Lick and his life after the American pullout than you are willing to put to paper. That is the story. The Man Who Walks is really Lick, not the besotted American Doctor; and the rest of us are periferal. You can use some of the things for local color, and to establish your credentials for telling the story, but I can't think that there are many in this land who are that interested in the trials and tribulations of one more GI in the day-to-day detail that you have put down on paper.

These comments are from someone who edits for a living, and writes for a living, and aren't meant, certainly, to depreciate what you did. You did one hell of a job filling in for professionals as a gifted amateur. You learned a lot more than 99% of the folk who spent their time in Vietnam; what I would like to see on paper is more than "this happened to Dan Conlon"; show the conflict in values that tore the Montanyard community apart, that made them honor individual Americans while at the same time working hard to drive us out.

Go into the history a lot more...show how the ethnic Vietnamese, who came out of southern China centuries ago, drove the mountain people into their hills; compare that situation with the whites driving the Indians off their lands into reservations. If the Souix and Cherokee and Cheyenne can hate us for two hundred years of persecution, how much hate must there be between the "moi" and the Viets when it has built up over centuries? Speculate about the tons of arms and ammunition which the Special Forces provided to the Mike-Force troops which were never used...that were probably buried for future use. What will that use be? Since patience is one of the characteristics of the Oriental, are the M's waiting for a chance to reestablish the Montanyard Nation? Compare with the Kurds, the Baluchis, and any number of other ethnic groups. What is Lick doing now? Where is Y-Baum?

Compared with a lot of the "ten years after" junk we have read in the past month, you really have an off-beat story to tell, one that has been almost totally ignored by the rest of the world. I'll help with what memories I have, or can resurect from letters and tapes. I can even provide a counter-

point from the perspective of having lived just a thin plywood wall away from you at MACV (and been the midnight target of crossbow testing) and having lived with Paul Hawkins after you left and we moved down to the RMK compound just before Tet. Paul had a remarkable amount of information coming in every day during those tense days, which was shared with those who had to make the tough decisions.

And, true to Lick's promise, the Airbase did not suffer a lot during that week of loud noises, other than having to go on double shifts and wait for things that never happened in the Command Post. The same could not be said for the years after we left; my replacement said that there were a lot of nights when the rockets and mortars came directly in. Of course, there was a different commander then; Bob Hullar had left for Florida and the new man was cut out of the SAC Commander mold...about which there are a few funny stories....

Dan, keep what you have written for your children and grandchildren to read. Someday it may be important to them to understand that skinny guy who led them into this world. Now, let's try to make it into something that the rest of the world can, and should, read. Something that will, hopefully, teach a few lessons.

Question. Why are there so few Montanyards among the thousands of refugees and boat people? There are Viets, and Hmong, and Cambodians, and other tribes, but almost no Jerai or Banar, or the others. Why?

Now that I have waded through your turgid prose for the first time, for content and initial impressions, I'll read it again as an editor, and let you know what I think is the best part. I'll also read through my letters to Sue, and try to find a working tape recorder, and see what else I can contribute to the discussion.

I wonder where Paul Hawkins is now? He was at Hurlburt AFB in 1969, and about ready to retire. I'll see if I can locate him. He would very possibly add a few things from a position about halfway between yours and mine.

Best.....

Charlie Brown - the person, not the truck!

12 May '85

Dear Charlie Brown - the person, not the truck.

Thank you.

Your letter was like a bucket of cold, refreshing, clean water thrown into my face. I needed that. As you alluded to, have been wallowing in a recital of an "ode to Dan Conlon" (my brother Mike's phrase, not mine). Find that the initial writing is very painful and laborious. Many times have decided just to chuck the whole damned thing and get back to my wood carving. Decided in Nov '82 to quit thinking and talking about the book and get on with writing it. Same date as the Wall in Washington D.C. - maybe that was the trigger - can't remember.

Anyway, diddled around with it for almost a year, going nowhere. Then, by chance, took a writing course from a very hard but caring woman in Duluth, Minn July '84. Thus the work you see. Some is good, as you've generously allowed. Most is drivel and stinks, and I know it.

Hard to keep my eye on the ball.

Many reasons for writing:

1. catharsis - pure and simple.
2. to tell my story for my kids.
3. to tell the Montagnard story.
4. to tell Lick's, Hlin's, Ton's, etc. story and the "full story" - as much as I can know and get from Jack Rudy and others - about the Montagnards, FULRO, the ultimate fate, good or bad, of the Montagnard freedom fighters.

5. Teach about revol. guerrilla warfare (see chapter XV) - "preach" as this woman (Arlene Cardoza) said I should NOT do.

6. Make some observations about our American Ugly arrogant ignorance and arrogant use of pOwer and how they screw us up and make us look bad worldwide. Ultimately they-back fire in the hatred of the Third World towards us.

Mostly I just have to somehow put the first version down on paper and then slash and burn the parts that don't tell the story. (How do you carve an elephant? You take a BIG piece of wood and cut away all the parts that don't look like an elephant.) *Right now I'm finding the piece of wood.*

Agree with you that a lot of this is best saved for a personal memoir for my kids. Will edit. Appreciate anything you can do to help the effort.

Quite frankly, was so caught up in my own efforts in Pleiku 1967-68, tended to discount anyone else's efforts around me. As you may remember I was a very angry young man to most reporters, Civic Action workers,

"phonies", etc. toward the end. Remember Paul Hawkins as a very effective administrator whose heart seemed to be in the right place. I, however, considered myself a "hero" at the time and barely listened to anyone else's opinion. Have gained a little wisdom now that my testosterone level is down a bit - male menopause? Would welcome any communication from Paul and you I could get. A daily letter or phone call would be just fine.

I, too, have asked myself many times what happened to the Montagnards we knew. What happened to the five fully trained and armed Montagnard regiments hiding in Cambodia with Y-Bhaum (Lick's brother as it turns out. Lick's real name was Y-Djit. Same father? different mother - or something like that.)? Lick a.k.a. Y-Djit had a million brothers, "cousins", nephews, uncles, etc who met me at the "Lick Hilton" if you remember.

I suspect many joined the Kmyer Rouge under Pol Pot and became responsible for the blood bath in Cambodia. But I can't prove it. Noone who knows will tell me. Would certainly account for why they aren't refugees - they, perhaps MADE refugees instead. Am working on it - but many lips I know are sealed - at least for now. Have asked this question^{her} but get an evasive answer or my questions are ignored entirely. Apparently an employee of the Agency in town here is aware of me but does not want to talk to me.

Am convinced Y-Bhaum and Lick Rahlan were involved in the attack on Bam Me Thuot 10-11 March '75 that spelled the downfall of the Highlands. The collapse of South Vietnam came soon after, as you will recall. The war was over 30 April '75 (51 days later). "Blossoming Lotus" as Gen'l Dung (NVA general in charge of the overall attack plan - see Frank Snapp's book - DECENT INTERVAL). Again, can't prove it. Also the massacre of the Vietnamese forces and their dependents as they fled Pleiku down "Highway" 7 B to Tuy Hoa through Phu Bon province (Cheo Rheo capital). Only a remnant of the Vietnamese made it. I'm convinced Lick and his men were let loose by the NVA to have their vengeance on the hated South Vietnamese refugees who had stolen their land. Again, I can't prove it.

I know Lick survived. He, ironically, became the Province chief of that same Phu Bhon province where the massacre took place. He's an "old man" by Montagnard standards, if he's still alive. Born in 1931 - even older than I am (born in 1934). (50 years old means that you are as tired when you wake up as you used to be when you went to bed.)

Enough of the speculation. Am working on it. If I'm right, "the

man who walks.." Lick Rahlan a.k.a. Y-Djit, walked in a direction very troubling to me. That is not to say he did a bad thing, just disturbing to me.

Some personal comments:

You are a true friend. A good man. Thank you. Keep telling it to me as you see it. I know you have personal regards for me. Was very moved by your letter I found (my 14 year old delivered a bunch of letters to me last Nov '84 with your nice tribute to me among them. I had discarded all the letters unopened after I got back.) Thank you again.

More personal notes:

As you may remember or have been told, Col Hullar died a very painful death to bone cancer 29 Oct '84. Talked to Jean for about 1½-2 hours by phone. She seems a wonderful gal. As you would expect with Bob. A true friend. Revere his memory. ?Victim of Agent Orange?

Went to Austin, Texas after attending school in San Antonio for my recertification for Family Practice. John Watson WALKED to the door, carried in the groceries without crutches or help. Is studying for the Episcopalian (sp?) priesthood. The son-of-a-bitch is reformed! Off drugs, booze, mind expanders, etc. Wants to reform the whole damned WASP church. Sounds like he'll end up as a missionary in Guatemala. Three beautiful kids - 2 boys born after the 80 ton tank ran over his balls and pelvis. I asked him if, perhaps, his true identity was Super Man. Wonderful wife. We had a good day and nite.

My life progresses well. Kay (my wife) finishes her Masters this month. Art Therapy.. She's a going concern. Next stop: Masters in Adlerian Psychology and eventually (I suppose) a PhD in Art Therapy and plans to teach. Works a place called Courage Center for young folks who had their bell rung and paralysed in car accidents, etc. to help them use the rest of their lives. Am proud of her.

Colleen, almost 25, (who plans on going for Masters in Education at Catholic school in San Diego (USD?) will finish at Hamline in Music and Theology. Ultimate thesis in Liberation Theology, I think. Maybe she could look you up and say hello.

Kaela, 23, (Michaela Marie) gets married May '86 and finishes in Art Education from Stout U in Wisc. Aug '85

Erin, almost 22, finishes in Math at Madison, Wisc May '85 and then on to Maryland for Masters.

Megan, 20, in Journalism - Sophomore at Madison Wis. Jim, 19,

~~xx/Mark~~

in Mankato State - baseball and a little school. Casey, 14, doing A work, a baseball nut, a great kid.

The clinic expands. I have many great young doctors who take the bull by the horns and ease the load. I become the old "wise" man again.

Enough. Thank you, thank you.

Love, 
Dan Conlon

P.S. Somehow this thing didn't get sent. Have decided to write more to explain to you and myself what I'm doing in writing this book.

Have listed on page 1. my reasons for writing. Feel the real "story" is Lick Rahlan a.k.a. Y-Djit but must somehow plow through my own story to "get to" his. This will involve a lot of words, side tracks, justification of my acts, a catharsis. Much of this I hope to edit out or reduce to make way for Lick's story. Feel our stories are somehow entwined - as brothers perhaps. Some of that EAST OF EDEN thing. Jack Rudy and John Watson are also part of this brother thing. Anima / animus. Dark / light sides. Eventually, I hope, the story will emerge.

Feel strongly that, if a lesson can be learned at all, that it must be a lesson of what a legitimate guerrilla war is, how it involves the legitimate aspirations of a given people. To become the ENEMY of that cause will inevitably put us, as Americans, in a bad position even though we are successful on the short term of squashing it. Arrogance of ignorance, arrogance of power have been our trademarks for some time, it seems. Thus my fairly lengthy - and dull - Chapter XV. Maybe you can help me make it interesting.

After I'm through with the rough draft of the book and, hopefully, my own catharsis, I feel I can then concentrate on how the Montagnards felt during these same times. Particularly Lick, but also Hlin, Ton and Khat who I knew well but really didn't know. Armed with background knowledge of guerrilla warfare, insights into M's culture, religion, taboos, history, hatreds and loyalties, I think I can find the necessary empathy to see the war as they saw it. My letters to Kay help a lot but often just add to the confusion.

Part of my problem is that there is very little time to think and write. 80 hour work weeks, 6 in college, many friends and social occasions clinic affairs and preparation for Board Recertification make great demands on my time and energy - leaving precious little time for reflection on that remarkable year in Vietnam. It'll take time. But what's the

hurry? If the real story eventually comes out, that's good enough.

Thanks. Sorry to bend your ear so much.

Love,

Stan

Thanks again. Your letter
was a joy. Hope we can
work together.

Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Brown
8222 Calle Pino
San Diego, CA 92126

16 August 1985

Dear Dan:

Sue and I will be in your part of the country next weekend. I arrive the 23rd and go out on Sunday.

The original idea was that we were coming for daughter Robin's wedding. The wedding was called off for a year or so too late to cancel the tickets without penalty. (Severe penalty for early withdrawal...) So we are coming anyhow, and charging the trip off to visiting my rental property in which she is living. (don't ever buy a house for your kid as an investment; it is more trouble than it is worth...)

However, the kid is going with Sue to Ohio to visit the remaining ancestors so something good is coming out of the whole thing.

I can't promise to come and drink great quantities of Scotch, as another of your visitors did, and I can't promise to devote all night to remembering things we might both like to forget, but I will get in touch.

I still have the book draft...no further along than my last letter, but perhaps we can discuss it. And the attached clipping from the Washington (DC) Times.

Charlie

You can't be a doctor — you have legible handwriting!

*see enclosure in
War Story by
James Moore*

Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Brown
8222 Calle Pino
San Diego, CA 92126

25 August 1985

Dear Dan:

I flew out of Minneapolis this morning to San Diego and was met by 85+ heat at the airport and humidity to remind me of why we left the Middle West..... Sue and Robin went on to Columbus to see Sue's dad, who is in his mid-80s and, from tonight's report, failing faster than his wife's letter would indicate. Why do we always put the most optimistic face on things when we write? Sue did that for years to my parents, during periods of stress; they did the same while Mother was dying of Parkinsons and Dad was failing badly from intestinal problems...

For lack of anything better to do, I just watched a repeat of an Ed Bradley piece on Cambodia on "60 Minutes", and that jogged my memory of something you said upstairs...that the Montanyards of our acquaintance might just have been the beginnings of the Khmer Rouge. It may have been, for geography says that it was, but if so, why is Lick still a province chief under the Vietnamese? Surely they know the connection between him and Y-Bon (sp?). The one couldnot have been K-R and the other a trusted province chief of a critical border province.... it is not logical.

A followup question would be: What happened to all of the guns and ammo that the Jim Morris's of the world were providing to the yards, and which they were stashing away? Are the stray rumors that I get here of "unrest" in the Highlands the result of that? Is there an independence movement working there that we forecast nearly two decades ago, using old guns and old ammo carefully hidden from everyone?

You tossed out a comment that there is someone in Minneapolis (CIA?) who has little respect for you, and constantly puts the shuck on you. How do you stand in the Vietnamese community there? I saw several working at the airport this morning, and came home to read of a young lady who escaped from Can Tho as a teenager (sans parents, who are still there), who won a scholarship to UCSD. To check your thesis that the local Pleiku VC unit was responsible for the massacre along the highway during the time of deterioration, could you find someone in your local VN community who could phrase a query about that that I could try to plant locally? It might be interesting to get the grapevine working...

I'd love to see a copy of that stuff that Jack Ruby gave you, if you think that he would not mind my seeing it. It might chrystalize a few things in my own mind. The brief look that I got of it looked very interesting.

I'm really sorry that our time together was so brief. There are a lot of questions that I'd like to ask you, and some suggestions that I would like to make about your book. My contribution is stalled right now because the tapes which still exist between Sue and me from that period are blocked by a non-functioning tape recorder (which I got at a MACV Exchange Sale...) As soon as I can get it working, and can dub off to cassette, I'll send along to you for your background. I also have a small stack of letters which were not overcome by technology, that I have to run through and transcribe for you.

Not much more. If you fly out of MSP in the morning, pass on the omlette and sausage...Never could figure out how thay manage to make sausage grey!

I may be able to get some of the transcribing/taping done in the next two nights while Sue is in Columbus. She wants to put that chapter of our lives behind us, and I'm ore than willing. As I said, I don't have a buring desire to write about those days....I did that with my earlier tour in Arabia and the Middle East. I studied everything I could lay my hands on about the area through 1966, when I took a graduate course in the Politics of the Middle East as a part of my Masters just before we became acquainted.

For a while, I thought it was a tooss-up which area of my overseas specialization was going to be the tinderbox of WWII...the ME or SEA. Right now, my money would have to be on the ME, with more active shooting, and a more confused mix of players.

Off to bed...

Charlie

Smoking program to follow by separate letter -

CB

29 Nov 85

4212 Holmes Ave

Edina, Minn 554

Dear Charlie,

Still not doing well with the smoking but at present am chewing this d-n gum & no cigarettes around. Thanks for your letter 25 Aug. Have finally found time to sit down & answer it.

Here are a few more chapters. Only 2 to go before the whole rough is complete. Included a letter I just sent to Jack Rudy so you can see what I'm planning. Thanks for taking the time to ask your good questions & to think about this thing. Have sent a copy of your letter 25 Aug 85 to Jack - asked him if you could see his letters would be betraying a trust and could get him in much legal trouble e.g. Frank Schnepf, Philip Age if I let this information out generally. Have been working to confirm what he says with other sources so that Jack is not compromised. If he says okay, will make copies of his information for "your eyes only."

When you visited here, I felt stupid.

I had at least 1000 questions to ask, times I wanted to compare, impressions we had and people we knew - different perceptions of the same thing - the whole thing. Instead I was mostly mute.

Maybe both of us communicate better on the written page. I know Jack Rudy and I do.

"You're a good man, Charlie Brown - must have been written for you."

Thanks

Keep in touch

Am coming to the end of Round One on the writing game & it feels good!

Love

Dan

Date: November 30

To: Dan Conlon

From: CHARLIE BROWN

Thought you might be interested in this LA Times story on the 'yards being resettled in Carolina.

From the story, they came from our neck of that woods. I wonder which side they were one in our fuss, and if they are the same ones I sent the clipping to you earlier about...who were led by Lik's brother?????

Do you have any contacts down that way?

charlie

San Diego County

Los Angeles Times

58,105 Sunday

Sunday, November 30, 1986



KARI RENE HALL / Los Angeles Times

Resettled Montagnard refugees spruce up a former fraternity house where 16 of them live in

Greensboro, N.C. Below, Montagnards under guard at a Thai refugee camp earlier this year.



Celebrate First Thanksgiving

Montagnard Refugees

in U.S.

Date: The Day After Christmas

To: Dan

From: *Charlie Brown*

I wonder if this is anyone we know? If you remember an earlier LATimes story by Nick Williams about this group when they were in the Thai camp, there were some familiar names.....

Do you know anyone in or near Raleigh?

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Charlie

Freedom in U.S. is Christmas gift for s

United Press International

RALEIGH, N.C. — A group of more than 200 Montagnards who survived persecution in the jungles of Southeast Asia could not tie bows around their biggest Christmas present — a new home in America.

"I think that they feel very fortunate to be here," Karen Zimmer, a North Carolina resident sponsoring several of the Montagnards, said yesterday. "I think that they feel like that is their Christmas present."

The Montagnards, who belonged to various tribes in the highlands of South Vietnam

but did not consider themselves Vietnamese, arrived in North Carolina last month and have been resettled in Raleigh, Greensboro and Charlotte.

During the Vietnam War, they were staunch anti-Communists who fought with the U.S. Special Forces but were left behind when Saigon fell in 1975.

"Before, they were a resistance group for so long, they would just set up their church wherever they were," Zimmer said of the Montagnards, who learned their Christian beliefs from missionaries.

This Christmas, Montagnard Glik Rahlan shares a two-bedroom Raleigh apartment, completely furnished through donations, with three other Montagnards. He has his first Christmas tree, with a small nativity scene beneath it.

Last year, the Montagnards who escaped Vietnam celebrated Christmas in a Thai refugee camp.

"First, we had a story. Then we had a Christmas song and a play. After that, we prayed all night" in a makeshift bamboo church, said Rahlan, 31.

Friday, December 26, 1986

The San Diego Union A-21

surviving Montagnards

Rahlan also recalled spending Christmas several years ago waiting on the Cambodia-Thailand border with fellow Montagnards to hear whether the Thai government would accept them as refugees. At the time, they were surrounded by Communist troops.

"We tried to celebrate. We sang a song. We prayed to God the whole night," Rahlan said. A Thai military officer told them to "sing quietly," reminding them of the surrounding danger.

The Montagnards survived a trek of more

than 300 miles through Cambodia to refugee camps in Thailand before their plight came to the attention of the United States.

Rahlan and his three roommates spent Christmas Eve this year at Zimmer's home, receiving gifts, singing carols and eating a holiday dinner of potato soup, salad and Christmas cookies. They attended services at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Cary.

"For us, it has kind of brought out the real meaning of Christmas, the sharing," Zimmer said.

Now Refugees, Once U.S. Allies

For Mountain Tribesmen, Viet War Memory Lingers

By NICK B. WILLIAMS Jr., *Times Staff Writer*

SITE TWO CAMP, Thailand—A group of Montagnards gathers around the radio here each Sunday night to hear the Rev. John Newman broadcasting from the Philippines.

For more than 15 years, Newman and other radio preachers have been the sole American connection for the mostly Christian Montagnards, the mountain tribesmen who fought alongside U.S. Special Forces during the Vietnam War.

"Until this week, I had not talked with an American since 1968," said a stocky, balding man named Thoraban, a spokesman for a group of 190 Montagnards who recently moved to this refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border.

His last contact with an Ameri-

can, he said, was with a Maj. Lamar, a military adviser with an outfit designated B-50 at Ban Me Thuot, Darlac province, in Vietnam's Central Highlands. It was the year of the Communists' Tet offensive in South Vietnam.

"During the war, we sacrificed many lives fighting with the Americans," Thoraban told a reporter. He reeled off the places his people had fought with their Special Forces (Green Berets) advisers in the highlands—An Khe, Phu Tuc, Ba Sarpa and others near the more familiar highlands towns of Kontum, Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot and Dalat.

He remembered his Green Beret team leaders only by their rank and surnames: Capt. Abernathy, Dan-

Please see TRIBES, Page 7

Nick Williams is the LA Times bureau chief in Bangkok. The address is 7th Floor, Prinya Bldg., 544/11 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok 10500 Thailand.

Charlie

TRIBES: War Refugees Wait in Camps

Continued from Page 1

iel, Wood and Carter and Lt. Chamberlain.

An American here who served in the highlands said, "The Special Forces considered the Montagnards our most effective ally in Vietnam."

The Americans trained the Montagnards to fight against the Communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, but the Viet Cong had occasional success in turning the Montagnards against the U.S.-backed government in Saigon. Relations between Saigon and the tribes had always been tense.

"We don't dislike the Vietnamese people, but they are always trying to genocide us," Thoraban said.

The struggle reaches far back into Vietnamese history, when the Montagnards, who had come from the Malay-Polynesian islands to the south, were pushed into the mountains by later migrations from the north.

The 190 people at Site Two, including 17 women and 23 children, call themselves the Dega people. The name Montagnards, or mountain people, came from Vietnam's French colonialists. The Vietnamese dismissed the tribesmen as *moi*, or savages.

Their history involves sporadic attempts to achieve some sort of autonomy within Vietnam, where the Montagnard population is variously estimated at 700,000 to 1.5 million. The Montagnards here proclaim themselves the Liberation Front of the High Plateau, followers of the late Y-Bham Enoul.

They say they have never stopped fighting the Vietnamese, until now.

"The Vietnam War is over. We are only 190. We don't know where to go. One hundred and ninety. We cannot defeat the Vietnamese," Thoraban said.

He said his group, once part of a guerrilla force of 2,000, was driven out of Vietnam in 1979 and reached the Thai frontier the next year by traveling across Cambodia along the Laotian border. In 1982 and 1983, Thoraban said, groups of his men tried to recross Cambodia (apparently unsuccessfully) with supplies for their compatriots who stayed behind in Vietnam.

Although the Montagnards have occasionally been helped in their travels by Cambodia's Communist

Khmer Rouge guerrillas, Thoraban insisted that the Montagnards do not agree with Khmer Rouge policies. A strong connection with the Khmer Rouge, whose brutal rule of Cambodia was broken by the Vietnamese invasion of December, 1978, could damage their hope for resettlement in the United States.

Want to Go to U.S.

"Our only choice now is to go to the U.S.A.," said Y-Ghok Niek-rieng, the Montagnard leader at Site Two.

Thoraban said they turned their weapons over to Thai soldiers shortly before the Montagnards were moved to Site Two in early October.

In a letter to Thai authorities explaining their bid for resettlement, the tribesmen said, "Because of our poverty, lack of opportunity in every field, we fight with bare hands . . . [with] no aid and support from the foreign countries. We feel that we don't have enough strength and ability to liberate our own people and territory from Vietnamese control."

Refugee officials at the U.S.

Embassy in Bangkok are studying the case. But the Montagnards, the first known to have reached the border, are settling in for what, at best, may be a long wait.

One day recently, the bamboo skeletons of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches were being erected on the Montagnard plot at Site Two. Most of the Dega people are Protestants, converted by an American evangelist named Smith who came to the highlands in the mid-1930s, according to Rmah-Dock, another spokesman.

The radio preachers broadcast in the language of the tribesmen, but the Montagnard leaders want their people to learn English. They eagerly accepted copies of American magazines and said they need grammar textbooks.

There are more than 130,000 refugees at Site Two. The Montagnards occupy only a small corner of the camp—just another group of Indochinese people tossed up on the Thai border by years of war, their years as warriors apparently at an end.

"We stop the struggle," said Y-Ghok.

Date: 3 December

TO: Dan

From: CHARLIE BROWN

Since I clipped this, I have seen another story .
that Site Two is being abandoned and the
refugees moved somewhere away from the border.

The Thais are not anxious to provolk a confrontation
with the Viets, and the dry season is starting...

I am trying to figure out a way to set out a
feeler or two among the Vietnamese community
here to see if anyone was in the trek from
PKU or BMT to the coast when the Montagnards
rose up....I may not want to find out.....

charlie