

"I wanna go to Vietnam
I wanna kill a Vietcong
With a knife or a gun
Either way will be good fun

But if I die in the combat zone
Box me up and send me home
Fold my arms across my chest
Tell my folks I done my best"

—Army marching cadence

Soldiers marching into combat sing and shout brave words. Inside, the feelings are quite different. Here are two such portraits—an American and a National Liberation Front soldier.

**"A Pawn in the Game: The Vietnam Diary
of Sgt. Bruce F. Anello," U.S. Army,
killed in action in Vietnam, May 31, 1968**

1967

Oct. 21. It seems like a year I've been gone already, but it hasn't even been a month. The ocean is a tiring object, but on occasions it has its beautiful times. Especially at night, but always I wish I didn't have to watch it alone.

Nov. 9. Our ambush—with the rain beating on my helmet. Not a drop coming in, so it trickles around my neck and soaks into my skin. While my finger's on the trigger frozen with fear and from the wind . . . haven't fired a shot yet. Nor has one come my way. Just frustration and harassment . . .

Nov. 21. Lost respect for a bunch of people today. For no reason they tore down this hootch, burnt it, trampled down their garden, ripped out their trees and there wasn't even any suspected enemy. I told him I hope someone kicks in his TV tube while he's over here . . .

Dec. 10. How can I describe an ambush? . . . darkness comes, and the clouds turn black with threatening rain, and the moon can barely seep through. It's the signal to move to the trail where the man died yesterday. An eerie feeling creeps into your whole being as the beautiful trees of daytime turn into laughing demons from the cold night wind.

Dec. 24. Christmas Eve—Ho ho! Today I fought a war. Instead of the Yuletide burning, it was a village. Instead of Christmas light it was artillery. Instead of the white snow, it was rain. Instead of warm smiles, it was a weary frown. Instead of bells ringing out, it was bullets. Instead of laughter, it was mother's pain, it was a man saying, "I'm going home." Instead of peace and good will, it was war and sorrow. But be still, for today Christ was born . . .

1968

Jan. 12. Even here they hound me about a haircut. Like they don't have nothing else to worry about. A guy in our platoon shot a civilian today. He personally was sorry. But the platoon sarge said we should have burnt his I.D. and put a grenade in his pocket. The squad leader put a note on him when the chopper took him away, saying he didn't have an I.D. and he ran.

Jan. 14. A letter came—from Mary even. Today Jan. 14, declared as a new holiday. It was so beautiful I cried. I can't even express how it made me feel. A lot of words wouldn't mean half enough of how good I feel. I was gonna read the envelope for

three days, then open it, read the heading for the next three days, and one sentence per 3 days. It should last me until the next letter.

Feb. 12. . . . I admire the spirit of the V.C. But who wouldn't have spirit? They have a cause to die for, it's their country. We have nothing to gain. We don't even want the country. So what is to win—when we have nothing to win?

Feb. 24. Seems every other thought is of being home. Yet, it's still a long time to go. It only depresses me. But it's hard not to think about it. You wake up in the morning, thinking about what it would be like in a warm bed. You start cooking some cans and you wonder what it would be like to sit at a table with a cup of coffee. You brush the dirt off your clothes and you wonder how a warm shower would feel . . . Then the man tells you to pack up and sling it all on your back. And you wonder what it would be like to be free, instead of always fighting for it . . .

Mar. 1. The captain has no faith in his men whatsoever. The lieutenant said, "If you have any opinions, keep them to yourself." A self-made god. The captain is even higher than God. He told us: "Don't ask me why I tell you something to do, if you don't you'll die."

I got to get out of here. The man drives you insane. I'm no longer fighting the enemy. My mind just seems to be fighting the army . .

Mar. 10. I'm really digging this new company. Digging foxholes

every night. Digging rice out of crocks. Digging a place to sleep

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Mar. 20. Looking back through the pages, I can now make a statement on all the facts I have thus far collected: . . .that is. I've been here for 6 months and still don't know what the hell we're fighting for . . .

April 4. It seems the latest fad is to build up a kill record. Since our platoon got in that battle, we've killed 45 V.C. The other platoons are jealous so now they kill anybody—just to match our record. I've seen—skip it. I'll write about that later. I can say I've seen brutality to the utmost. Grossness, ridiculous and senseless killing. And no conscience whatsoever. I get the usual statement handed down since the cavalry and Indians. "The only good gook is a dead gook."

April 24. The sweat runs down my forehead, as I lie in my mud hole. Ants crawling up my legs. Mosquitoes buzzing around my ears. It's so dark the bushes take odd shapes and play on the imagination. Every fiber in my body feels like a leech . . .

May 2. Walking on point today, I saw a man about 20 years old, so I yelled "La day" (meaning come here). He turned and saw me. His eyes went big—and he tore off running—so I shot him. He ran a hundred yards down some trails with his guts in his hand . . . The thought of what I did made me sick . . . I'm not proud of what I did.