

*Dearest Kitten*

*It is 19 Dec 1968 and the time in Calif. is 2130.*

*I pray that our first child is a girl. I don't think I could stand to see my son go off to war; not a war like this.*

*I spent about five hours at Travis Air Force Base sitting, thinking, and drinking coffee. For me it wasn't too bad, but I pity the soul who would start off on such a venture without knowing anyone or having a good friend to talk to. Not just anyone but someone you can talk to and know that he understands.*

*We're on the plane now, a Boeing 707. One hundred sixty three strong. Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force. Not a unit here, just individuals, all with doubts fears and memories of what they left.*

*163 people going to a place to fight in a so called war.*

*A war with no end in sight and no gain intended.*

*163 boys, the cream of the crop and the sons of parents who love them.*

*As I look around there can be seen the entire group with their mixed emotions.*

*Those that are loud and raucous for one of two reasons. They don't know what they're going to, or they're so scared that silence would shatter their facade.*

*The quiet who talk of what they've heard about Viet Nam, about their wives, families, their past. And there are the silent who are scared for they know what lies ahead, and talking, to these people only frightens them more. I haven't classified myself yet.*

*163 leaving for Viet Nam for a one year tour.*

*Those that are silent and quiet and loud know that after one year no one could assemble those 163 for a return flight.*

*They instead wonder, how many killed, how many wounded, how many maimed, how many hurt so bad that they'll be vegetables the rest of their lives, and how many will live one more year.*

*I predict nothing but wonder much.*

*There are only three classes, those that make it, those that don't, those that make it back but not all in one piece. Apathy is a scarce commodity right now. They all ask, which class will I be in?*

*We have all of them here. Privates, NCO's and officers.*

*I wonder how the private feels. He probably wonders what he'll be doing and where and will his leader be competent.*

*The NCO's, I imagine, wonder the same thing, but with more responsibility added in. The officers, I know how they feel. Some wonder about themselves, do they know what to do? They'll be given men over there, will they finish with all that they started out with? When everyone looks to him for the answer, the decision, the plan, will he have the right one, the one that will kill the fewest? So young, so new, so much in charge.*

*Now is the time for serious self-evaluation for many.*

*It's 2200 hrs now. I rest, and think and wonder, about them, about the upcoming year and about me.*

*Love, Bill*