

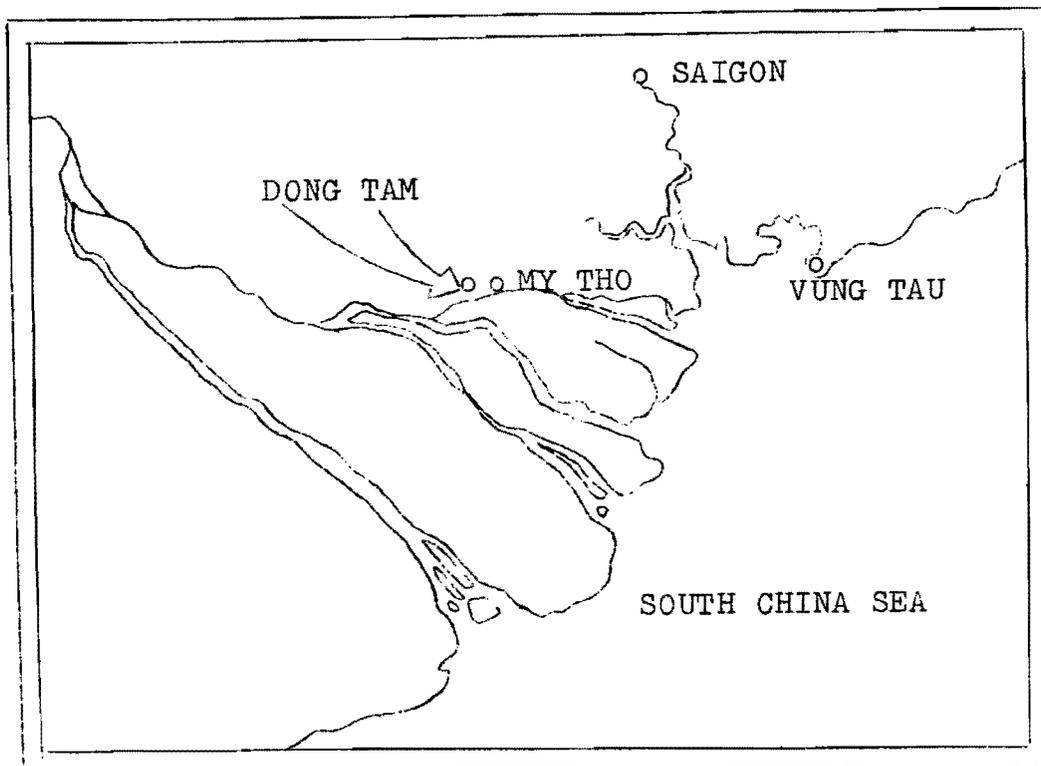
COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE
FPO San Francisco 96601

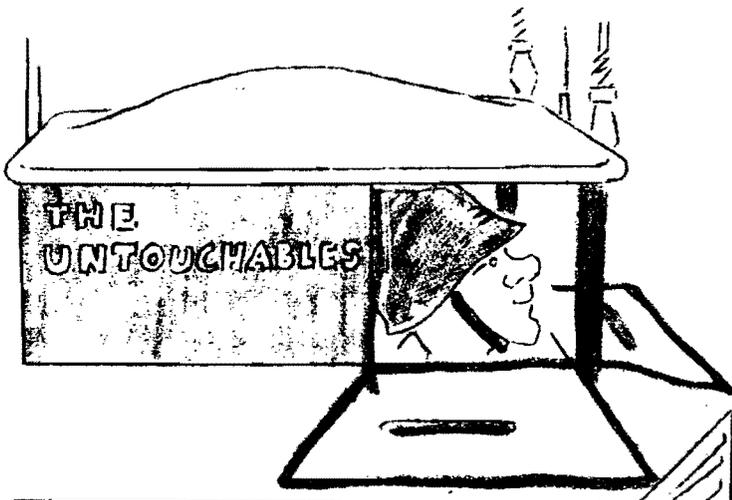
31 May 1967

Dear families and friends of River Assault Flotilla One,

Much has happened since you received my last letter. Our new homes have arrived, one of our squadrons has moved into the Mekong Delta and we have received most of our boats.

During the first half of April, River Assault Squadron Nine left Vung Tau and headed up the Mekong River to the Army's newly-created base at Dong Tam. Built from silt dredged from the river, the base which lies just to the West of My Tho (pronounced Me Toe) is the center of operations in the Mekong Delta for the Second Brigade of the U.S. Army's Ninth Infantry Division. In the Delta, which is largely flooded rice paddy land during the rainy season, the primary means of transportation is by boat over an intricate system of rivers and canals. Since their arrival our boats have been busy providing the Army with the mobility they need to conduct their operations against the Viet Cong in this water-logged area.



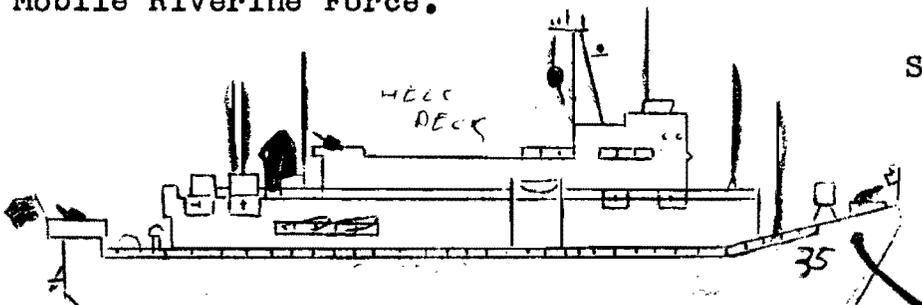


Most of the boat crews are naming their boats. Just a few of the names they have chosen so far are: Delta Dragon, Little Mo, Poison Ivy, 8-Ball Express, The Boat, Swamp Fox, Green Grabber, Granny Goose, The Fugitive.

These units have had several contacts with the enemy during which time their past training has payed off handsomely. As a result they were able to silence the enemy quickly with the weapons installed in the boats. The men performed admirably and so did the boats. I was particularly pleased to see that the special armor protection which we had installed proved to be every bit as effective as we had hoped it would be.

While River Assault Squadron Nine was operating out of Dong Tam our other squadron, River Assault Squadron Eleven continued to operate with other elements of the same Army brigade in the swamp surrounding the main shipping channel to Saigon. These operations have continued to turn up supplies and base camps that the enemy has hidden in the mangrove swamps.

Perhaps one of the most important developments which has occurred since my last letter was the arrival of our permanent base ships. The USS Benewah (APB-35) arrived in Vung Tau on 26 April and was followed shortly thereafter by the USS Colleton (APB-36). These two newly remodeled self-propelled barracks ships provide us with a base from which to operate. Because these ships have a relatively shallow draft they will allow us to move the base anywhere we are needed on any major river in South Vietnam. Appropriately enough the base is called the Mobile Riverine Base and the combined Army/Navy team which operates from it is called the Mobile Riverine Force.



Self-propelled
Barracks ship

Color
it
green

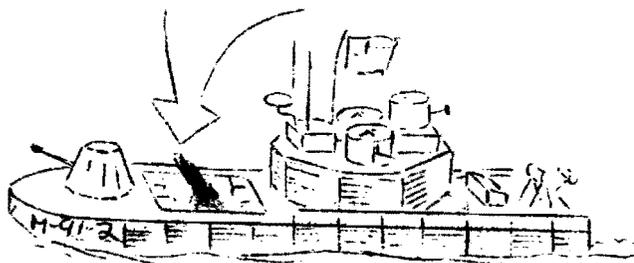
Although the barracks ships would never win a beauty contest, they look good to us and they certainly look good to the Army troops when they come back from an operation in the mud. Each ship is capable of housing and feeding over a thousand Army and Navy personnel. They have a number of built in features that help to make the men as comfortable as possible. There is central air conditioning, a ships store, snack bar, library, and barber shop aboard each ship. They also have music and radio piped throughout the ship and a movie every night. Perhaps of even more importance to the embarked soldiers is that they are probably the only combat troops in Vietnam who can look forward to coming back from an operation and taking a hot shower and who get two hour laundry service.



Would you believe soft ice cream in a combat zone?

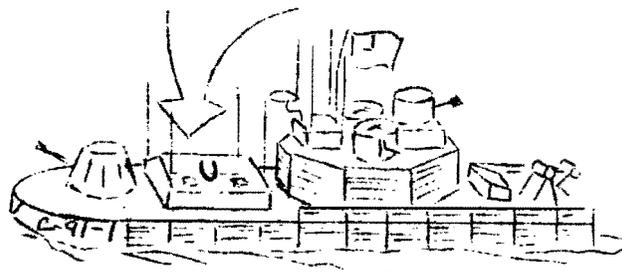
During the last two months we have received most of our boats and the officers and men aboard Askari have been working around the clock getting them ready for operations as well as keeping the other boats in top operating condition. The majority of our boats are armored troop carriers which were illustrated in my last letter. We now have two other types of boats. As you see from the illustrations they look much the same. They both have a 40-mm gun turret on the bow and carry two 50 caliber and one 20mm gun in the after turrets. The one with the mortar pit behind the forward turret is a Monitor and the other one which is called a Command and Communications Boat (CCB) has a communications unit located in the same area.

Mortar



Monitor

Command and Communications Unit



Command and Communications Boat



...And so Mom, the OOD told me to stop by RivFlot One on the APB before reporting to COMRIVRON 9 for duty on an ATC in RAD 92...

Since we are a new unit in the Navy and in Vietnam, there has been some confusion in military circles regarding the various names used in our organization. It occurred to me that some of you may also be a bit confused by all the military jargon used in naming the various units attached to the flotilla and by how they relate to each other. With this in mind I am adding a simple block diagram which shows our basic organization in hopes that it will be clearer to you. You will note on the chart that while we are in Vietnam the flotilla is referred to as Task Force 117.

The continued development of this command since my last letter has not come about without some growing pains; yet, through the outstanding efforts of the officers and men attached to the command most of these problems have been overcome. These men give me great confidence in our future.

Sincerely,

W. C. WELLS
Captain USN

Commander River Assault Flotilla One