

To my dear relatives friends and classmates,

Today, Jan 19, is the first day of the "Age of Aquarius". Please God it will usher in all the virtues mentioned in that illustrious hit song..

NEWS OF THE PAST MONTH...IN BRIEF.

I'm presently completing a tour on board the ammo ship USS Katmai. After leaving SANCTUARY I was assigned (Dec.15) to Camp Tien Sha in Danang. While there I attended a dinner for Catholic Chaplains (Dec.17) (about 40..from all over Nam). Next Day, we held a Day of Recollection at the Danang Minor Seminary; concelebrating with Bishop Chi. The Jr. & Sr. Hi-school boys speak and write English well (Pen-pal anyone?) On Dec.20, I took a "flight" on USS TUCUMCARI (a Hydrafoil boat) for 2½ hrs. Any speed over 40 knots is classified. We zipped over 5 foot plus waves at classified speeds. That same evening I flew on a secret mission of controls of which I had for ¼ hour. About 1400 persons gathered (Dec.21) at Freedom Hill Amphitheater (Army Camp-Danang) to honor Cardinal Cooke at whose mass I was privileged to assist. My classmate, Fr. Ray Schmidt was there too.. My next duty ship was USS NOXUBEE. It was near Quang Tri. On Dec.22, I met a few helo pilots who were going up there. In fact they lived next door to Chaplain Schmidt (Camp Evans-101st Army Airborne). On the way up, Charlie decided to shoot us down. He missed! It WAS rather beautiful, in the pitch darkness, watching those lov-er-ly red tracers whizzing by. 23 Dec. saw us delivering personnel to areas around Hue; I took 2 hours of the greatest aerial photos which include the Citadel and Cathedral at Hue. A small boat almost literally dropped me off at NOXUBEE: I nearly went into the drink as I lept from one to the other. "Work" continued as per usual, including a particularly good Bull Session (I hope my answers were half as good as the guys' questions). We Celebrated a joyous Christmas Mass -nd then stuffed ourselves silly on a sumptuous dinner. Christmas morn found both us and Bob Hope at Danang (Freedom Hill) Leaving a few guards, with rifles and concussion grenades on the ship, off we went (despite the so-called Truce..15 of the VCs were fished out of Danang Harbor Christmas Day by the Coast Guard, as they attempted to blow up a few ships) When the last of our group arrived late at the Hill, we found 50 marines locked out due to an Army Colonel's ineptitude. They were disheveled, dirty and evidently exhausted, having traveled long distances, directly out of battle zones, to see Bob Hope. What a pitifull sight; they stood like dumbfounded sheep not believing what was being done to them..almost too tired to complain. What a great present for Christmas day. It took an Army Major and myself one hour to convince the Colonel he made a mistake. The show lasted another 2½ hours and was great. I shook Neil Armstrong's hand (1st man on the Moon) and got his autograph. Several helo hops and days later, I was back in Subic. I didn't mind one bit opening a whole months worth of (Christmas) mail. Thank you for your beautiful and prayerful cards. I was overjoyed to find that my brother Dante's wife provided a new nephew. Dec.28 was Fil-Am Day at Subic. Workers were needed at the Festival. I must have picked up at least 1000 pop bottles (oh!, my aching back)..but just think of all the flat tires that were prevented. Jan 1. You've got to believe me: I toasted the New Year quietly with Orange juice. Honest! Offered Mass that day on the carrier CONSTELLATION, after which I went swimming (that's right winterlovers!) The Base Chaplain, Fr. Ed Toner got us an invite to an afternoon party at the CO's house. It's nice to hob-nob a little. Jan 2-3. I picked up 2 of the XO's sons for a trip to Baguio City (5 hours north of Subic) to buy some wood carvings. The scenery was grand..the weather, perfect. We made arrangements

at Baguio's Cathedral for Mass next morning. Meanwhile we celebrated mass that evening on a little table in our room; truly an intimate and memorable ceremony. Having mastered the art of doing things with a polaroid camera, I took the kids pictures shaking hands with themselves. Jan. 3. St. Louis Silver School is located near the Cathedral. Its Sisters teach (and pay) the poor children to make artistic silver objects which are then sold at most reasonable prices in the Convent Shoppe. After a bountiful breakfast at John Hay AFB we drove to the famous Igorot Village where the carvings are actually made (and prices are best). The trip back to Subic was as beautiful as before; the Philippino countryside is truly breathtaking. That night I played my first (and certainly not the last) game of Mah Jong. The USS MT. KATMAI had gone from Subic on 3 Jan. instead of the expected 4th, so I hopped a plane to Danang where I was able to deliver a wood carving of the Last Supper I had promised to one of the Protestant Chaplains. Then, thinking that Katmai was going south, I flew to Saigon. A few days and many photographs later, I was informed that she had gone north instead. Catching her proved to be difficult. With the help of several planes, taxis, helos and one small plane, which was capable of landing on a carrier, I arrived on the deck of the USS CORAL SEA. Unfortunately, just as I arrived news was flashed to air operations. Unfortunately, just as I arrived news was flashed to the effect that one of the pilots was downed. He was father to 6.... the oldest of which was 7 years. What a tragedy. In Grand Entrance style, I was literally shoved out of the helo (they said, to avoid hitting its landing gear) onto Katmai's helo pad. Everybody knew that the Chaplain was aboard. To my usual schedule I added an unusual lecture on the 2000 year old "Photograph" of Jesus Christ (The Holy Shroud, now residing in the Cathedral of Turin, Italy) I will write more about that in time for Good Friday, March 27. I was even able to find time to read Mario Puzo's "The Godfather" and Thomas Costain's (long overdue) "The Silver Chalice" Both were excellent.

The happiest news of all was that our Circuit Riders' 1 1/2 year tour has been officially cut to one year, which means that I will probably be in the States by August of this year.

When Katmai's Captain took over this ship, he brought with him a locomotive train whistle and had it installed on our smokestack. Whenever we finish un-reping a sister ship, we sound off with it. It never ceases to amuse and amuse passing ships.

I fear that the weather in the states hasn't been quite the best. That it's been a bit cold. I hope that you have not been inconvenienced by it. At the Good Lord will keep you warm and happy in his embrace. I never cease to pray for you and continually beg you for your prayers.

With all my love.....

In Christ,

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