Nancy and I regret we were unable to attend this important gathering. Some minor medical issues have interfered with our plans but I’m on the mend and look forward to future gatherings. In my stead I hope this letter gives you a sense of the important milestones in my life since ’68.

Post Belvoir I got orders for Vietnam. I was fortunate to be assigned to MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) as MI (military intelligence) advisor to an advisory team for Go Cong Province. Go Cong (not a football cheer!) is the northern most province in “FOUR CORE” about 40 miles South of Saigon, on the coast of the South China Sea. I say “fortunate” because other advisors were assigned to positions with US units in areas where their operations were defending against highly trained North Vietnamese forces supplied directly from China. These enemy forces were extremely active, supplying their military initiatives in the south with a continuous flow of material down the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Cambodia.

Advisory teams were combined military and civilian providing liaison between Vietnamese and US assets and interest. Because Go Cong was relatively “pacified’ there were advisors who worked in other areas including, education, agriculture and civilian infrastructure, and the construction of roads and bridges. We even had a US teammate advisor from California who was an expert in rice production who dazzled local farmers with his helpful advice.

Our quarters were in the provincial capital city also called Go Cong, which has a population of about 12,000. It had several old homes which were of an earlier period when the French occupied Vietnam. Several of these homes provided housing for our team and our team headquarters.

As a new member of the team I drew the “short straw” and assigned as the team’s PX officer. No kidding, the PX was literally 7X10 feet and open from 1500 to 1800 hours (3-6pm) daily, it had a small selection of hard liquor, cigarettes, toiletries and other sundry items. This assignment turned out to be a God Send. Duties included a weekly restocking trip to My Tho about 12 miles away. It was the PX for the US Ninth Division. My Tho was close enough to complete a round trip the same day. Chuong, my VN interpreter, who was an incredibly savvy guy, was my right hand man. He was a native of Saigon, a sergeant in the VN army, who had a home in Go Cong where he lived with his wife, three daughters and one son.

The ‘pickings” were slim at the Ninth’s PX…they were on the way out of VN at the time.

We had an ‘officers” club which was open to all team’s officers and civilian advisors. It was very cozy, about 400 square feet, open daily from1900 hours to 2300 hours (7-11). One evening I had an idea. At the club, I engaged our province senior advisor, affectively known as “Colonel Knowles”, about a topic dear to his heart- enhancing the team’s relationship with our VN counterparts, and the province chief who had been an officer in the NV army when the French occupied VN. During that time Courvoisier was a coveted cognac… I knew that Courvoisier, currently absent from the PX inventory would be a valuable asset to the team, especially Col. Knowles. There was a selfish motive lurking however, Choung ,a Saigon native, who interestingly was a police sergeant there, pre-war , loved his native city and had few opportunities to visit there. He suggested that we request Knowles to use the Saigon PX for our weekly resupply instead of My THo. Needing the blessing of the Colonel, I approached him at the O club one evening…I said, Colonel Knowles, I know that our relationships with the senior VN civil and military leaders in the province is very important and with the Ninth Division departure the offering at the PX are thinning. I know that the Saigon PX will always have Cognac and if you’d authorize shifting to the Saigon PX it would insure a continue supply of the popular liquor. He responded, “GOOD INITIATIVE DAWSON, GO FOR IT!” So the rest of my tour Choung and I made our dutiful weekly trek to Saigon in our deuce and a half (English transaction: big truck).

From his Saigon Police days Choung has incredible connections in the city. He knew every hotel

owner personally…so he would drop me off at the finest hotels in the city after a personal consult with the hotel manage about who I was and how I was to be treated…Needless to say I was treated like royalty at these hotels…totally undeserved and all due to Choung’s buddies.

Then Choung was off in the “duce and a half” hailing –see you Sunday afternoon.

The abundant supply of goodies from the PX went far to enhance the standing of members of our advisory team in their relations with their counterpart Vietnamese.

War is a bitch…no laughing matter, but there were the light moments.

On the flip side there were obviously very sad events I experienced.

Although most of our province was “Pacified” there were pockets of VC still raising havoc with mostly harassment in the rural areas. There were occasional murders especially among local village officials. This was to create fear among locals that the government did not have the areas secured and were weak in the security of their villages, and therefore ineffective in their governance. On May 29, 1970 our team members, Lt. Dale Reisling and SFC Clayton Savory, were training a VN local force, on ambush tactics. During the day, in a remote part of our province they had “staked out” their location for the team placement along a trail for a possible ambush of know VC in the area…acting on some reliable intelligence, that evening they took up their positions. Sadly, the VC were watching them and when the team took their positions, the VC attached them. Several Vietnamese were killed along with two Americans on our team. They were Clayton Savory from Orono, Maine and Dale Reisling from Ohio. They were the only fatalities on our team during my tour.

With about 3 months left in my tour I went to Saigon and took the Graduate Record Exams to apply for the MBA program at the University of Maine where I had earned my Bachelor’s Degree before the service. With the war winding down there was an “early out” program where those serving “out of country” could be granted early discharge for school prior to their scheduled end of tour. So I arrived in Orono Maine that fall.

Being home was great. There were events that were sad for all Americans at that time however… the antiwar movement was afoot…returning VETS were not appreciated and Kennedy was assassinated. None the less, the future looked bright. Especially bright when I was in the library stacks studying when a beautiful redhead walked by. My buddy who happened to be happily married, saw my eyes following her as she walked down the aisle…he waived to her as she walked by…she returned the greeting. I was impressed that he knew her, he saw my expression of interest said with a grin… “Would you like to meet her?” We went to the lobby of the library for a break where Nancy was just about to leave and Paul said, “Nancy, hi.” She returned the greeting. They chatted. Paul said, “I’d like you to meet a friend of mine “

We chatted for a few minutes. Paul left. I asked her for her phone number…she obliged.

A few days later I called her at her dorm…she was very pleasant…I ask her if she would like to go to the movies Friday night…she said she was busy…I said what about Saturday night? She again said she was tied up…Unrelenting I turned up the heat and said “What are you doing Fourth of July” (this was September). She laughed and we settled on lunch at the cafeteria that next Sunday! (She thought the cafeteria was a “safe” place to meet).

That was the beginning of a long, long relationship that has endured to this day

After graduation I found work in Bangor. I held a position with an economic development group, financed by the US Department of Commerce, called the Eastern Maine Development District as a Project Coordinator. Government funds were available for municipal projects and I assisted in applications for funding for the International Arrivals Building at Bangor Int’l Airport; a sewer system for a rural town in northern Maine and other local projects. I dutifully used VA benefits to buy a two unit apartment house…my first real venture into real estate,

I soon tired of the strains of constantly fighting for Federal funding for projects and acted on my passion for real estate. After becoming licensed I brought into a modest real estate brokerage in Bangor as a partner and brokered real estate, assisting buyers and sellers. About a year later I brought out my partners and moved our newly named company to a new location Nancy and I owned in Bangor. In the meantime Nancy left her teaching position, got licensed and joined me in our new venture. Nancy’s real estate career was interrupted twice in the ensuing years creating two daughters, Julie and Kate. Julie graduated from Bowdoin College and Kate from Colorado College. Both have pursued real estate as a career path.

I taught the real estate licensing courses at our local high school were we met several aspiring real estate agents who ultimately joined our new venture. Soon we were able to capture the major market share in the Bangor Area.

Fast forward to 2005 when our daughter and her husband who both worked in Washington DC decided to move to Bangor where Julie would work for our company, With her husband Brain commuting to DC weekly Julie focused on working in our real estate business and ultimately purchasing it from Nancy and me. After nesting down in Bangor Julie blessed us with two grandchildren. Over the years our recreational interests have been focused on the coast of Maine. Several years ago we brought property on Mount Desert Island the home of Acadia National Park where we have a summer home. Our interests there are hiking, boating and watching the tide go out and in.

We are sorry that we were unable to make this important and historic event…

My heartfelt thanks and appreciation go out to all the spouses of your fantastic group of gentlemen who put up with us and our eccentricities…at least now, having a chance to see all your husband’s buddies, you can better appreciate that YOUR husband’s overall demeanor and affectations are NOT abnormal, and that there are, in fact, others among us with similar senses of humor, affectations and questionable behavior!

And finally know that I ‘ll never regret the toils of OCS that it made us stronger, more respectful, and able to withstand most pressing adversity, with strength, dignity and love of country.

YOU ARE THE BEST!