

Dean Allen. Letter to Joyce Allen, July 10, 1969.
(Courtesy of Andrew Carroll / The Legacy Project)

10 July 69

Dearest Wife,

There are many times while I am out in the field that I really feel the need to talk to you. Not so much about us but what I have on my mind. I can tell you that I love you and how much I miss you in a letter & I know you will receive it and know what I mean, because you have the same feelings. But many times like tonight — I am out on ambush with eleven men & a medic — after everything is set up and in position I have nothing to do but lay there and think — why I am here as well as all the men in my platoon — age makes no difference — there are very few kids over here — a few yes but they grow up fast or get killed. Why I have to watch a man die or get wounded — why I have to be the one to tell some one to do something that may get him blown away — have I done everything I can do to make sure we can't get hit by surprise — are we really covered from all directions how many men should I let sleep at a time, 1/4, 50% or what. I know I want at least 50% awake and yet those are the same men who have to hump through the jungle the next day carrying fifty to seventy five pounds on their back and still be alert and quick if they run into Charles the next day. If I have four or five man positions, and only have one man awake per position they like me because they get some sleep. If I have them in two man positions and have one man awake the bitch and moan & aren't worth a damn the next day. If I don't we may all get our shit blown away — excuse the language but that's what they call it over here. Babes, I don't know what the answer is. Being a good platoon leader is a lonely job. I don't want to really get to know any body over here because it would be bad enough to lose a man — I damn sure don't want to lose a friend. I haven't even had one of my men wounded yet let alone killed but that is to much to even hope for to go like that. But as hard as I try not to get involved with my men I still can't help liking them and getting close to a few. I get to know their wives name or their girls and kids if they have any. They come up and say "hey 26 (they call me 26 because that is my call sign on the radio) do you want to see picture of my wife/girl" or "look at what my wife or girl wrote." Like I said it gets lonely trying to stay seperate.

Some letter, huh! I don't know if I have one sentence in the whole thing. I just started writing. Don't worry about what I have said these are just things I think about sometimes. I am so healthy I can't get a day out of the field and you know I'm to [sic] damn mean to die. Now I better close for now & try to catch a few z's. It will be another long night. Sorry I haven't written more but the weather is against me. You can't write out here when it rains hour after hour. I love you with all my heart.
All my love always, Dean