



Quips and Quotes

Reciprocal Trade

All summer it has been our fate
To harbor guests from out-of-state.
We rolled the welcome wagon out
And gamely chauffeured them about.
We picnicked them on mountaintops
And hunted souvenirs in shops.
We drove to every site historic
And dined our friends on meals caloric.
In fact, the carpet that we spread
Was frankly an expensive red.
Does someone ask what is the reason
We treated guests so well this season?
Our answer, without haw or hem:
Next year we plan to visit THEM.

—Betty Isler

To the casual observer, abstract art
appears to be painted by a person who
didn't know where to draw the line.

—Lavonne Mathison



"Be with you in a moment."

A harried business executive visited his doctor for a prescription. "I can't get any sleep," he said. "I need a sedative."

"I can't give you sedatives," the doctor replied. "You're allergic to them."

"Well, how about that 'twilight sleep' I've been reading about?"

"That's only for labor," the doctor explained.

"What?" cried the businessman. "Isn't there anything for management?"

—Lawrence Mahan

"WHAT AM I DOING HERE?"

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have taken cover, which at least keeps them from making trouble for a while."

It's after a spell in the rear echelons, where many high-ranking Vietnam officers owe their jobs to political pull, not skill, that Tom wonders why he ever left France.

"My most frustrating experience was being sent to a province to observe field tactics," Tom says. "When I got there, the local commander said he would have a search-and-clear operation going out the following morning. When my sergeant and I came to the jumping-off point, though, we found the operation had been cancelled for some vague reason. The same thing happened the next day and the next."

"On the fourth day we went through the same schedule-and-cancel business again, but now there was a clear reason for it. The commander had intelligence of a 'large concentration' of VC three or four miles from his headquarters."

"How many?" I asked.

"Fifty or more"—this against nearly 1,000 men he commanded! When I urged him to send troops out after them, he said he would consider it. But by that evening, the number of VC had grown in his mind to 500, so he just waited until he learned that the VC had withdrawn. I was back home by then."

Life is easier to bear "back home" in Long Xuyen, where Tom isn't plagued by timid officers. When he's not out in the field, he helps train Vietnamese. "They need all the instruction they can get," he says. "They come here with exactly six weeks training, and they don't know much about handling equipment. This doesn't keep them from being tigers in the field, though. They're great scouts, too."

"I don't know how many times they've saved my life by exposing themselves to draw the fire and by keeping me

from walking into punji in the jungle. Punji are booby traps. The worst ones are slivers of bent bamboo with long nails in the end. You spring the trap, and the bamboo whips up to drive the spike into your stomach or chest. I've learned to spot punji by now, but only because the Vietnamese have kept me from tripping dozens of them."

After seven months, the Vietnamese return Horner's respect and affection in full. His appearance on the post is greeted by a ragged cheer and an accolade in the only English the soldiers know: "Number one! Number one!"

TOM'S ONLY RECREATION in Long Xuyen, aside from an occasional ancient movie that finds its way there, is caring for a seven-foot boa constrictor his men gave him as a joke when they discovered he didn't like snakes. He hasn't named the snake, but he has confounded the funsters by building a cage for it and learning to handle it.

Except for the boa, Horner is surrounded by nothing but work, which he doesn't like to abandon even for an occasional "Rest and Rehabilitation" leave. He turned down an "R and R" recently because, "It only interrupts the grind, it doesn't change it. When you get back, it's just as hot and miserable as before, only now it seems twice as bad because you've been cool and safe for a while."

As time passes, results become apparent, too. "You can see changes when you look back over a few months. I was just driving down a road, wondering why I felt strange, and then it dawned on me: I was alone! What progress! When I got here, no one drove that road alone unless he had suicide in mind. Ambush was certain. But not now."

"In the same way, it dawns on you every so often that this or that village hasn't been attacked for months. Or that it has been a long time since a field was burned in a particular area or a farmer killed."

"It isn't a bad feeling to know you might have had something to do with all that peace and quiet."



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