

12th Cav Reunion, San Antonio, Sep. '18

Recently, I was looking through my father's copy of a book entitled Common Sense Training written by LTG (Ret.) Arthur

Collins. Stuck in the pages was a letter <sup>to my dad</sup> written by the then MG Collins, commander of the 4th Inf. Div in VN, on 16 Dec. '66.

These two officers had been friends since serving together in the Pacific theater in WWI.

Both only in their twenties at the time, LTG

Collins was in command of an Infantry regiment and my dad commanded one of the

battalions. Collins' call sign was "Ripper" and my dad's was "Sheriff". They became

the nick-names for each other that they

used for the rest of their lives.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Inf Div was operating near Pleiku at this time. Collins' letter describes the quality of his young soldiers and, by extension, all the soldiers who served in VN. at that time. So he was writing about you 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment veterans, because you, like the 4<sup>th</sup> Div troops, all came from the same source.

---

AT THE END OF THE EXCERPTS FROM THE  
LETTER ADD :

The letter is signed: "Ripper".

*From a letter written from the then MG Arthur Collins, CG, 4th  
Inf Div, VN, to my father on 16 Dec 1966*

have just been superb and which have accounted for most of the enemy casualties.

Those commanders who have been over here a long time have told me that where we have been fighting is the roughest terrain that anyone has fought in in Viet Nam. It's also the first time that any unit has been confronted with more than one NVA division. Four regiments have already been in repeated contact with us, and we now think we have elements of two divisions in the area. I emphasize this because it has a bearing on how the men have performed and reflects the calibre of young men coming into the service. It was just about a year ago this time that we began to receive our first groups of trainees, and already they have met the first team of the enemy and have given him a sound beating in every action. This generation of Americans are not what you would expect from what you see in the headlines about the "Vietniks," protesters, and draft card burners. The latter are the exceptions - the lads we see - who are truly representative of our youth are just magnificent.

*Near Pleiku*

There are many things one is impressed with over here, and I can't enumerate them all. I am truly impressed with the operation of the Army units that I see in Viet Nam - from the unloading of ships down at the docks right up to the squads in the forward areas. The actions of the young officers and the men who have only recently come into the service are truly impressive. Their manner is business-like, and they have a pleasant air about them. They know there is a job to be done, and they are going to do it and do it well. They are true professionals. All the commanders agree that the quality of these men is unmatched. They are quick to learn, and we could not ask for better soldiers. Just about all the senior commanders are veterans of World War II and Korea - and all of them comment that the soldiers of World War II were great - the soldiers of Korea were better - but these



are the best soldiers we have ever had, and, you know, this is a good thing for people to know when you hear so much about the faults of the younger generation. This really bids well for the future of America.

This country reminds me of the South Pacific in World War II, because you have the same tropical climate, palm trees, beautiful beaches, steep mountains covered with jungle vegetation, the rain that sometimes comes down in torrents and the large supply dumps - all of which were typical of the South Pacific theater of operations.

The fighting is much like it was in the South Pacific except for the helicopters, and this makes a vast difference in our ability to get around and cover the country. The result is that a platoon becomes a most important maneuver element because it can be moved quickly and can get fire support from artillery units that can be lifted into a fire base in isolated areas. This is truly a squad leader's and a platoon leader's war, and we could not ask for better leadership than we are getting from the young lieutenants and captains and sergeants who have so recently come into the service.

From what I have seen here, I have the distinct feeling that I am proud to be an American and prouder still to be a member of the United States Army.

Since I will not be sending any Christmas Cards this year, I will take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Most sincerely,



A. S. COLLINS, JR.  
Major General, United States Army  
Commanding