

**AMMONS, CHRISTOPHER D.
(1948-)
PAPERS, 1967-1970**

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INTRODUCTION

The Christopher D. Ammons Papers, 1967-1970, consist of 269 letters, 50 photographs, 4 clippings, and 6 other documents pertaining to Ammons' military service in Vietnam. The papers cover his two tours of duty in Vietnam while in the U.S. Army, November 1967-November 1968 and July 1969-May 1970. The papers were a gift of Christopher D. Ammons, given in several accessions from 1981-1998. There are no restrictions on the use of the materials.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christopher D. Ammons was born in Norfolk, Virginia on April 18, 1948, son of Benjamin Troy Ammons and Ester Magna Randolph Ammons. His father had joined the National Guard in 1928, and when his unit was activated in 1942, he served in World War II. He remained in the army at the close of the war, taking his family to many places around the world before settling in the Clarksville, Tennessee area in 1958.

Christopher Ammons enlisted in the U.S. Army June 1, 1967, one week after graduating from high school. After basic training at Fort Campbell, Ky. and infantry training at Fort McClellan, Ala., he was sent to Vietnam in early November. He was assigned to the First Infantry Division (the Big Red One) in Company A, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry. He began his service with the rank of PFC E-3, receiving promotions to SP/4 in March 1968 and to Sgt. E-5 in July 1968. He was made a rifleman, carrying the M-79 grenade launcher. Base camp was at Lai Khe, near Saigon, but the activities of his battalion took him near Quan Loi, Bu Dop, Di An, Song Be, and finally Dong Tam in the Mekong Delta.

After his first tour of duty ended in November 1968, Ammons returned to the United States, where he was stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C. In July 1969 he returned to Vietnam for a second tour, this time assigned to the 194th M.P. Company (attached to the First Signal Brigade), which was serving as a security force on Vung Chua Mountain near the city of Qui Nhon on the South China Sea coast. The mountain served as a communications installation. When this second tour ended in May 1970, Ammons returned to the United States and his home in Clarksville, where he has continued to reside.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The letters of Christopher D. Ammons cover the period of his two tours of duty in Vietnam, from November 1967 to May 1970. Arranged chronologically, they are addressed to his family, which included his parents and brothers Randy and Tim. The early group of letters, from his first year in Vietnam, give a detailed description of routine infantry activities such as ambush patrols, search-and-destroy missions, guarding the perimeter of base camp, and road clearing operations. Ammons gives especially good information on daily life in an infantry unit and on the arms and equipment used by the soldiers. Also described are more personal moments such as an encounter with Maj. Gen. John H. Hay, Jr., commander of the First Infantry Division, and Ammons' opportunity to see the Bob Hope Christmas Show on Christmas Eve, 1967 at Lai Khe.

Beginning in late March, 1968, Ammons also expresses his feelings regarding the war and America's participation in it. He voices some misgivings about American involvement in Vietnam, stating that it is "not worth the loss of life." He graphically describes the horror of seeing his first dead body as well as some of the losses absorbed by his own company, most notably in action on Jan. 7, 1968.

The letters from his second tour include less information about patrols (although he did participate in some patrols and earned the Combat Infantry Badge on one) and more about the everyday tedium of guarding a single installation. He mentions a few noteworthy events (also reflected in the clippings, Box 1, f. 1), including the crash of an airplane on Vung Chua Mountain which killed a number of Korean army officers, and attacks on installations in the city of Qui Nhon which the soldiers witnessed from the mountaintop. Ammons also describes a visit to Qui Nhon by Miss America and her entourage in late 1969 which was supposed to boost the morale of the troops, but in his opinion had the opposite effect. The letters, however, are dominated by indications of the boredom of life on Vung Chua Mountain, broken only by the occasional movie, trips to Qui Nhon to visit the PX, or swimming excursions to the South China Sea. As Ammons' time in Vietnam grows shorter on each tour, the letters become less frequent and also less detailed.

Also included with the papers are a few other documents from Ammons' service, including a pass (printed primarily in Vietnamese), his training school certificate, a military pay voucher for January 1968, two lists of promotions on which Ammons' name is included, and a telegram to his family notifying them of a "slight wound" he received in March, 1968.

Ammons also took many photographs while in Vietnam. These are arranged chronologically and are primarily from his second tour of duty. Subjects include Ammons himself and some of his fellow soldiers as well as views of the military installation on Vung Chua Mountain and of the city of Qui Nhon. Box 1, f. 21 consists of enlargements of four of the photographs located in Box 2, as well as a photograph of Thomas W. Page, Ammons' friend from Clarksville who was stationed in Qui Nhon.

CONTAINER LIST

BOX 1

Folder

- 1 Clippings
- 2 Letters--November 1967
- 3 Letters--December 1967
- 4 Letters--January 1968
- 5 Letters--February 1968
- 6 Letters--March 1968
- 7 Letters--April 1968
- 8 Letters--May 1968
- 9 Letters--June 1968
- 10 Letters--July 1968
- 11 Letters--August 1968
- 12 Letters--September-October 1968
- 13 Letters--July-August 1969
- 14 Letters--September 1969
- 15 Letters--October 1969
- 16 Letters--November 1969
- 17 Letters--December 1969
- 18 Letters--January 1970
- 19 Letters--February-April 1970
- 20 Other Documents
- 21 Photograph enlargements

BOX 2

Photographs, Nov. 1967-April 1970

- 1 Ammons at C.I.C. training, Lai Khe, Nov. 1967
- 2 Ammons searching canal for Viet Cong weapons in Iron Triangle, Jan. 5, 1968
- 3 Ammons and five squad members, Mar. 7, 1968
- 4 Ammons at Lai Khe, Mar. 17, 1968
- 5 Ammons and Sgt. Eldridge at Lai Khe, May 2, 1968
- 6 Ammons receiving Purple Heart, June 1968
- 7 Ammons with Vietnamese children near Saigon, Aug. 1968
- 8 Ammons on patrol near Ben Cat, wearing Viet Cong hat, Aug. 1968
- 9 Men from 3rd Platoon, Co. A, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, 1st Inf. Div. during combat operations near Ben Cat. Sgt. Ammons in center with towel around neck, Aug. 1968.
- 10 Fire Base Moore, Mekong Delta, Oct. 1968
- 11 Ammons and company interpreter at Dong Tam, Oct. 22, 1968

Box 2 (cont'd)

- 12 Qui Nhon (view from Vung Chua Mtn.), 1969
- 13 Vung Chua Mountain, Aug. 1969
- 14 Burning fuel dump in Qui Nhon, taken from Vung Chua Mtn., Aug. 12, 1969
- 15 Ammons resting during patrol on Vung Chua Mountain, Sept. 23, 1969
- 16 Vung Chua Mountain, Sept. 23, 1969
- 17 Ammons in Qui Nhon, Sept. 25, 1969
- 18 Welcome sign at Qui Nhon, Sept. 28, 1969
- 19 Vung Chua Mountain, Oct. 1969
- 20 Vung Chua Mountain, Oct. 1969
- 21 Vung Chua Mountain, Oct. 1969
- 22 Ammons at installation on Vung Chua Mountain, Nov. 1969
- 23 Vung Chua Mountain at sunset, Nov. 1969
- 24 Vung Chua Mountain at sunset, Nov. 1969
- 25 Qui Nhon at night, Nov. 1969
- 26 Ammons on patrol on Vung Chua Mountain, Nov. 1969
- 27 Skull found Oct. 14, 1969 while on patrol on Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
- 28 Ammons setting out trip flares on Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
- 29 Security platoon, 194th M.P. Co., Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
- 30 Security platoon, 194th M.P. Co., Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
(l-r: Hammonds, Doughty, Clark, Race, Riggle, Manning, Chu)
- 31 Security platoon, 194th M.P. Co., Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
(l-r: Hammonds, Doughty, Riggle, Race, Manning, Clark, Chu, Thomas, Leech)
- 32 Security platoon, 194th M.P. Co., Vung Chua Mountain, Dec. 1969
(l-r: Hammonds, Riggle, Doughty, Baisdew, 1st Lt. Zinn, Race, Clark, Chu, Leech)
- 33 Ammons standing in front of Independence Palace, Saigon, Feb. 1970
- 34 Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 35 Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 36 Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 37 Sunset from Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 38 Cloud cover on Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 39 194th M.P. Co., Vung Chua Mountain, Mar. 1970
- 40 Vung Chua Mountain, April 1970
- 41 Vung Chua Mountain, April 1970
- 42 Ammons on his last patrol in Vietnam, Qui Nhon, April 1970
- 43 Ammons on his last patrol in Vietnam, Qui Nhon, April 1970
- 44 Ammons, a few weeks before leaving Vietnam, April 1970