

# The Journey

Lautaro Montes  
THEGOODCOPY S.A.

30 June 1968. It was a warm summer morning. My parents came into my room. "Dan wake up," my father said, trying not to sound so stern. My mother sat on the edge of my bed, "Dan you have a piece of mail from the United States Draft Board." My mother started sobbing immediately. I sat straight up in my bed. I could hardly swallow the lump in my throat. I didn't want to open the letter. My father said, "Dan take it, open it, see what it says". I started opening the letter then stopped; I still had a hard time making myself open it. Once I got it opened, our suspicions were confirmed. I was to be at our National Guard Armory on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1968.

Later that day I called each of my best friends, only Charles had gotten the same letter as I. Charles and I went to hang out together that night, talking, joking. What we didn't talk about was just how scared we actually were. Charles and I talked every day after that, even about how scared we were. We would talk about how proud we were, because we would be second generation soldiers. We tried to find as many positives as possible, because we knew there was no way out.

The day had come. My family was standing in front of the Armory; my dad with his chest out full of pride and my mother crying. Several of our high school friends were there too. We loaded up and said our goodbyes, then the bus started rolling away. I knew as well as all of my family and friends, this could be the last time I ever saw them. I tried to keep from crying; as I looked around at the other fellows I knew it was ok.

4 September 1968. I have not had time to collect my thoughts for weeks. The training was grueling and then came the assignments. They shipped me straight to

Vietnam. I am not sure what has become of Charles. I have made

## The Journey of my Life

some friends. They are putting my platoon with an experienced combat platoon tomorrow so I do not know when I will be able to write more.

26 September 1968. I cannot describe what I am seeing and experiencing. A single word, HELL, simplifies it fairly well. I am proud to be an American but I am not sure that my country is proud of what is happening. I will serve my post for my country and my leaders. Several of the guys over here are losing it; this is some hard stuff to swallow. I keep dreaming of home. The wounded are revered as the lucky ones because they get to leave this hell hole.

9 January 1969. I am missing my family. Thoughts of mom's pecan pie and dad's cigar smoke got me through the holidays. Death is surrounding me. Seven men out of my platoon were killed yesterday in an air raid. The mood of the rest of us is somber. Many of the guys are drinking every chance they get just to try to forget where we are and that we cannot go home. I pray a lot more lately. I do not know if that is a sign of an impending fate but it helps me get some sleep.

14 February 1969. Well, this is the day of love. I want my family to know that I love them. Mom, you were the best. Dad, you made me into the man I am today. I hope that you are proud of me. I love my country and am proud to be a soldier for her. The bullets are soaring around us like fireflies. We are closing in on a target. I do not know if I will get home. There is a feeling in the pit of my stomach that I cannot explain. I think God is telling me something is going to happen. This fox hole is dark and wet and miserable. Fear has never been in my vocabulary and it still is not today. Just know that my thoughts are with my family at home even though I will not be with them again. I love you, mom and dad.