Finding Aid for the Dale M. McGinley Vietnam War correspondence collection
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This collection contains 40 correspondence written by Specialist 4 Dale M. McGinley, United States Army, to his parents and siblings during the Vietnam War. The collection also contains over two hundred photographs that Dale took while serving in Vietnam depicting his camp, fellow soldiers, the field, Saigon, and the Vietnamese people.

Dale McGinley was from El Cajon, CA and began serving in the army at age 20 - it is not clear if he enlisted or if he was drafted. He first served as a PFC, but was later promoted to SP/4 in C company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Division of the Army.

Dale's letters are generally upbeat and positive - it is clear he does not want his family to worry about him. He writes very little about any combat experiences he may have had, but rather about his duties around camp and his fellow soldiers. He was very interested in photography and mentions taking pictures with his camera frequently.

His letter dated June 7, 1968 mentions the assassination of Robert Kennedy. It seems that he and his friends sometimes took turns writing to each other's families. The letter dated August 17, 1968 was written by his friend Gary Scoles, who describes Dale in this way: "The only thing Dale is good for is making us laugh. He is very innocent and very sly." Dale was proud to be a Californian and mentions this from time to time in his letters. The collection also contains a photograph of him with the California state flag.

The letter dated November 2, 1968 says "We heard on the news yesterday that Johnson stopped the bombing of N. Vietnam as of 9:00 last night. I sure hope he knows what he's doing."

The most critical Dale became of the war is evidenced in the letter dated December 9, 1968, shortly after he received a new work assignment off the front lines. He writes, "It sure is a relief to be off line. (for you too I'm sure.) It's really been bad out there the last few months and there isn't any let up lately. Charley company needs people out there real bad but I'm not about to go. I really hate to see what's happening but there isn't much one man can do to help. I figure I did my share and I'm too damn scared to go out there anyway. The only way they could get me out there now is to take me up in a chopper and push me out! The more time that goes by the more I hate this Army and mostly this stinking, useless war! Sometimes I don't know whether to scream or cry."

Shortly thereafter, Dale decided to extend his stay in Vietnam for 50 days so that he could leave the Army earlier after he returned to the United States. In the letter dated January 22, 1969, he mentions listening to Richard Nixon's inauguration address and that he was surprised that Nixon didn't say more about the war.