

# A Soldier's Letters Bridge The Distance



The endless miles between Farmington and Vietnam are spanned for Mrs. Robert Kirsten by some of the most vivid and interesting letters a young wife could hope to receive. Pretty, dark-haired Sally Kirsten, who teaches seventh grade math in Farmington East Junior High, is tremendously proud of her sergeant husband and the important work he does as radio telephone operator in a tactical operations center near Chu Lai.

She also finds great happiness in the letters she receives from him, letters that reveal a remarkably sensitive young man who can describe his strange world of beauty and war with amazing clarity.

is the ultimate reality for all but the fool.

"The people who object to our presence here do so on intellectual grounds, as they may rightly do. But it is a view based on a luxurious life in which thought processes can develop easily, far from the awkwardness of reality and the academic freedom existing."

AND THIS SPRING, on that same theme, Sgt. Kirsten wrote: "Here there is only the great brotherhood of GI's and their humor to offer release from the depression that may easily grow with our position here. There isn't any of the apathy or uncertainty over the state

of civil disorder, or tans or just the petty problems and frustrations. Things are simple and basic. The people and the consequences are real.

"If you savor even the fear, it leaves an impression of reality that is bound to leave a man perhaps a little harder and with a positive perspective to look back upon."

SALLY AND ROB KIRSTEN both grew up in Farmington and graduated from Dunckel Junior High and Farmington High. They were married last June after Sally graduated from Michigan State University. She's now living with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Shaw, on Farm-

ington Road.

Rob, whose family now lives in Birmingham, had two years at MSU and a term at Lawrence Institute of Technology before going into the Army. He has studied engineering and architecture, but at this point is not quite certain of the work he'll do eventually. His letters this year have opened the possibility of some sort of writing career, his wife said.

"They are wonderful to read," she added, "and make me feel mine to him must be rather dull. There isn't much to say about going to school."

THEY'LL HAVE A CHANCE to talk over the future—and a

few other things—when they get together in Hawaii next week for Rob's rest and rehabilitation leave.

After that, they'll come off the days until the sergeant's discharge, due Oct. 11.

A recent interview with Rob, published in the "Army Times," called him "the man in the driver's seat in one of the world's deadliest races."

His job, in the strange sort of warfare fought in Vietnam, is to react quickly to bring in support companies when one of the Sixth Infantry companies makes contact with the enemy.

"The big difference in this war," that story quoted him as saying, "is the vast American

fire superiority. But our firepower is useless without rapid, well-coordinated application."

IN THE MIDST of loneliness and exacting work, Sgt. Kirsten is able to appreciate the great beauty of war-torn Vietnam.

In November, he wrote: "I am sitting here on top of a small mountain from which I can see the ocean on one side and a beautiful valley stretching to the mountains in the west."

"I deeply regret that this place is in an unresolvable situation because it is so beautiful. The sun set with a brilliant palette of color before the darkness. I stepped out of the gloom, and my eyes fell into the inspiring sight of the orange sky mirrored by the great glassy mouth of the river that fills half of the valley below."

And again, a few weeks ago: "The melancholy sets in, and I am again aware of the time and distance that separate us. I suppose in five years (this will be a very distant memory, and I will have forgotten about this land). But then again, I doubt it."

LETTER FROM VIETNAM — A friend named Bismarck joins Mrs. Sally Kirsten as she reads one of the letters her husband, Sgt. Robert Kirsten, sent from Chou Lai.

NOT LONG after getting to Vietnam last October, he wrote of his fellow GI's in one letter she shared:

"All of these men are great. Each in his own weariness has a certain reverence, a nobility. And if I am here and motivated simply out of respect for these men, then it is tough."

"The world we know, and dream of returning to is very distant. We adjust because it



## Concert Will Mark Music Week Start

Farmington student and adult musicians will be featured in a concert in East Junior High at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 5, to kick off observance of National Music Week May 5 to 12.

The Farmington Musicale, affiliated with the National Federation of Music Clubs, is cooperating with music teachers in the Farmington public schools to sponsor the concert.

Plans for Music Week also include several special exhibits and an appearance of the Falconettes and Twelvetones, vocal ensembles from Farmington High School, in a concert in the Livonia Mall at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 9.



Directors for the various groups include Amy Adelman, who will lead a chorus from Kenrook School, Mrs. Hern Barber, Kay Prior and Ronald Sallow, leading the string group, Paul Barber, directing the civic band, and adult group, Larry Dettler, leading the Dunckel band, and Susan Mosshamer, directing the FJS chorus.

PROCEEDS from the concert will go into the Farmington school music program.

Special displays to mark National Music Week are planned in the Farmington District Library and several churches in the area, as well as Our Lady of Sorrows High School and the three junior highs.

In the Livonia Mall, National Music Week will be noted on the marquee and there will be displays in several stores.

## State Visit Planned By Betty Furness

Betty Furness, special assistant to the President for consumer affairs, will visit Michigan May 2 and 3 to meet with Democratic women in Detroit and address the annual meeting of the Michigan Credit Union League (MCUL) in Grand Rapids.

Miss Furness had careers on the stage, in radio and television and as a lecturer before her appointment by President Johnson in March, 1967.

She will be guest of the Michigan Credit Union League at a luncheon at the Veterans Memorial shortly after her arrival in Detroit on Thursday. In the afternoon she will address a "Meet Betty Furness" meeting sponsored by the Michigan Federation of Democratic Women at Northland Theater in suburban Northland Center.

She will fly to Grand Rapids Thursday evening.

## Thursday Golf To Begin May 9

The Womens Thursday Golf Association will start to play at Idylwild Golf Course May 9. Women interested in joining the group may call Dorothy Malasky, 201-2075.

## m.m. memos

For the umpteenth time recently, we watched "The Wizard of Oz" on television. As always, a small blonde head was buried in my lap during the scary scenes.

Over the years, it's been four different blonde heads buried there, but always I have to hold someone during "The Wizard."

It isn't just Judy Garland and company, either. I remember when the youngest was so frightened at a children's theater production that she almost missed her sister's performance as one of the witch's cats. The young cast was convinced the Cowardly Lion got his courage by searing her.

Anyway, I wondered aloud why, with so much violence on television, that story is such a perennial hair-raiser.

"It's because there's a little girl," explained the ones who are now big boys and beyond the terrors of "Oz."

"And a witch," added the small one, and ducked again as that being came into view.

"I haven't had to hide my eyes once," bragged the medium-sized one, but she looked a little apprehensive.

The day is not far off, I suppose, when everyone will be able to watch "The Wizard of Oz" with complete composure.

Come to think of it, I'm not looking forward to that day at all.

## Easter Seal Day Camp To Expand

The annual Summer Day Camp for crippled children sponsored by the Easter Seal Society of Western Wayne County will open this year on June 24 and run through Aug. 16.

Ciro Minella, Special Education teacher at Hillbert Junior High School, Redford Union, has been appointed director.

Carl E. Licht, society president, said the extended season is possible because the Cherry Hill School District is using the first six weeks of the bi-annual Easter Seal summer program as a special summer session for the boys and girls attending classes for the orthopedically handicapped in that district during the school year. Joseph F. Barnes is serving on the camp staff part-time to coordinate the agency-school programs.

Licht emphasizes that the cooperation of the school district broadens the program with the affecting the basic purposes of helping children to maintain the gains they have made during the school year in an atmosphere of recreation and fun, such as that enjoyed by their peers.

"REGISTRATION is open to all physically handicapped boys and girls throughout Western Wayne County," he points out.

## Party Funds Aid Retarded

The Livonia Woman's City Club will hold its annual luncheon and card party at 12 noon Thursday, May 2, in St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

Tickets may be purchased at the club or by calling 422-7229, and proceeds will go to continue the club's work with retarded children in Livonia.

Heading arrangements for the event are Mrs. Charles Weiss, general chairman, Mrs. John Chor, co-chairman, Mrs. Harold Gibson, ticket chairman and Mrs. Howard Cossin, food chairman.

## Redford Girl Takes 2 Top Awards

Two top awards were given to Susan Ann Diamond, 14170 Beech, at the University of Detroit college of business and administrative honors convocation Sunday.

The 21-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. Diamond was named "Future Business Woman of the Year" in the Phi Beta Lambda award and "Business Teacher of the Year," in the Pi Omega Pi competition.

She is president of the Pi Omega Pi, national honorary fraternity in business education, Phi Beta Lambda, national professional and social organization, and Gamma Pi Epsilon, national Jesuit honor society for women.

Miss Diamond also was named to Beta Gamma Gamma, national scholastic honor society.



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