

Monday, March 18, 1968

# Sergeant's Letter, Opened Posthumously: "Y Dedicate This Letter And My Life . . ."



Sgt. Robert Comstock

(Editor's note: Army Sgt. Robert James Comstock, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Comstock of Lovilla, was killed in action in Vietnam March 9. The sergeant, who was born in Grinnell May 22, 1945, sent his parents a letter dated Feb. 26, 1968, with a request that it not be opened unless he was killed in Vietnam. His parents were notified last Wednesday of his death. Mr. and Mrs. Comstock gave a copy of their son's letter to the Herald-Register. It is here reprinted.)

Republic of South Vietnam  
February 26, 1968

To all my loved ones:

This letter is not merely intended for my parents, whom I love dearly, nor for my girl, whom most of my thoughts go out to as I spend my time here. It goes instead to my fellow citizens of the greatest country on earth.

I realize that I am a very small portion of all Americans. And, if the Lord should see fit that I die here, my death will only be a small contribution to our struggle here.

But to prepare for just such an event, I would like to say something about my country.

## Family

To me, the United States of America stands as a family. Every family has its black sheep, its family differences, its treasured memories. The same is true of this country. We have men and women capable of crime, violence, and disrespect for her colors. Just as some people have no regard for (their) family's name, certain citizens of this country possess the same (lack of) spirit for (their) homeland.

We of the military services

in this conflict and conflicts throughout American history are taught to serve under three small, yet large, words. These are Duty, Honor, Country. We are all bound by these three mighty chains.

Our first and foremost command is devotion to duty. This is not merely doing our duty as ordered by an immediate superior, although this is where it starts. We are bound to serve our country in whatever way we can to defend her shores.

## Note of Pride

Honor is the next step. Above all, we must preserve the honor of this country brought about by the hardship and suffering of so many before us, and to insure that wherever we go we can say "I'm an American" with a strong note of pride.

The third, and I believe the most important, is country: to defend this country so dearly paid for by the lives of our fighting men before my time and at the present time here (in Vietnam).

Many people undoubtedly ask: "Why send me to die in a small country so far from our shores?"

I don't know, but maybe the same question was asked in the first World War, the second, and Korea. But the answer remains the same. To keep the inevitable fight from our shores. As long as man is ambitious there will be wars.

## Dream: To Return

It is my dream to return some day to the shores of America and start a family of my own. This is what I'm striving for over here. That my children will have the chance to say "I'm a free American." If I must give my life over here so that my brothers and sisters may say this, then I feel in the deepest part of my heart that I have not died in vain.

This letter is not to be read by my family alone. I believe they realize what I am here for. But I would rather that some of the so-called American citizens who seem to feel that we are only fighting for some principle that is entirely un-American (would read it).

To them I dedicate this letter and my life. If I should die, please look in a mirror and say "I am a true American."

Sgt. Robert J. Comstock

## Sgt. Comstock, Grinnell Native, Killed In Viet

Sgt. Robert James Comstock, 22, a native of Grinnell, was killed by enemy fire in Vietnam Saturday, March 9, where he had been serving with the 95th Infantry Division in the Saigon area.

The son of Robert & Lorraine Tice Comstock of Lovilla, Iowa, Sgt. Comstock was born in Grinnell on May 22, 1945 and moved with his family to the Albia area in December of 1946. He was graduated from Albia Community High School in 1963.

Sgt. Comstock enlisted in the U. S. Navy following his graduation but was discharged because of a leg injury sustained in high school. On Sept. 8, 1965, he enlisted in the U. S. Army receiving his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He served in Germany for 13 months and re-enlisted and was sent to Vietnam, arriving there Oct. 26, 1967. He had received his last promotion ten days before he was killed in action.

Survivors include his parents and 12 brothers and sisters - Barbara, 20, an nurses training at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines; Dennis, 19, in St. Charles, Ill.; Jeff, 21; Mary 17; John, 16; Kathy, 15; Jeff, 12; Joe, 11; Jeanne Anne, 8; Marla, 6; Mike, 4; and Milo, 3; as well as his paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Margaret Comstock of Albia, his maternal grandparents, Mr. L. Tice of Kansas City and Mrs. Dora Love of Panora.

Sgt. Comstock's body will arrive at the Zimmerman Funeral Home at Lovilla in seven to 10 days. Burial will be at the Chester Cemetery, eight miles north of Grinnell.