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Sunday In Vietnam Is
Unlike Sunday Anywhere

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By Al Morgan
Baptist Press Staff Writer

DALLAS (BP)--Sunday to a Baptist in Vietnam is unlike Sunday anywhere else in the world, says a former Dallasite whose family now lives in Lubbock, Tex.

Captain Charles B. Moore, a soldier since he enlisted at the age of 16 nearly 20 years ago and a Southern Baptist, says he wants to send back to the states impressions of some of the happenings in Vietnam where he is assigned.

In a recent letter to his wife, and three daughters, Moore wrote:

"Sunday is not like Sunday anywhere else in the world. War does not stop for God; but soldiers do.

"Church services are held whenever and wherever possible. Fixed schedules are the exception, not the rule. The house of God is transit in Vietnam. It may be a reasonably, comfortable building, as in the major headquarters areas; a rainy, soggy tent; or, in forward combat areas, just an open field. But services are held, and under the circumstances, are outstanding.

"The old saying, 'There are no atheists in foxholes' is misleading. It implies men become Christians through fear of death. Soldier Christians respect death--they do not fear it.

"Church attendance is not required in Vietnam; encouraged, yes, but not mandatory. Soldiers go because they want to go. Some who would like to go cannot. Such is war. All, however, have access to a chaplain--a preacher just like preachers everywhere--a little younger perhaps, but still a preacher who knows his calling.

"The congregations in Vietnam would be strange to Christian communities back home. Their Sunday best is a pair of jungle fatigues and muddy combat boots. Colonels share hymnals with privates, a Southern white blends his voice in harmony with a Negro.

"A teenage PFC (private first class) is at first hesitant about bringing his rifle, grenades and other weapons of war into even a temporary house of God. The chaplain's helmet, its white cross visible, is nearby in case it is needed.

"No choir leads the singing, just husky, off-key, male voices singing of God. The organist, on his small suit-case-like machine, leads the singing of Battle Hymn of the Republic and Onward Christian Soldiers.

"The chaplain offers a period of silent prayer. A hardened veteran ponders war and death. A younger soldier tries to hide his tears as he thinks of home.

"The collection plate may be a basket, a pan, or even a steel helmet. The men know the Army pays the cost of the chapels, yet they want to give anyway. One man shares his stewardship--his last 50 cents--with a friend who has none.

"The sermon is appropriate: 'Can a Christian Be a Soldier?' The chaplain then challenges: 'Can a Soldier Be a Christian?'

"For most, the service ends too soon. They reluctantly file out. Some go back to their typewriters, some back to preparing food and many go back to the uncertainties of combat.

"Such is Sunday in Vietnam."

In addition to his notes on "Sunday in Vietnam," Moore said in another letter describing a GI's mail call in Vietnam, "The power of mail, a simple handwritten piece of paper, is its ability to stir emotions and capacity to circumvent all else, both for the present and the future. For a letter received today, despite its four to six days travel time, is still 'today' back home. It promises a tomorrow."

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787

Mrs. Moore, formerly a member of First Baptist Church, Dallas, and presently a member of Monterey Baptist Church in Lubbock where the Moore family will make their permanent home when he is retired from the service in three years, says that her husband wants to be a teacher.

Planning to enroll at Texas Tech at Lubbock in 1970, the veteran infantry officer wants to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees. He visited the campus prior to going to Vietnam in July. He is interested in science and education.

Mrs. Moore is interested in her husband's return. Daughters Diana, 14, and Cheryl, 12, want their father home. And, Amy, well, she is only 11 months old.