

Thank you. This is ATWv2\_acv (196. O'Rourke corresponds with nurse Carpenter, arranges flight to see her). 196. O'Rourke corresponds with nurse Carpenter, arranges flight to see her Spec 2 William O'Rourke heard of the November moratorium on the same day that it happened. His understanding of the event fed into his evolving sense of the war as he was confronting it firsthand as a triage medic at the 91st Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai, Vietnam. O'Rourke learned of the moratorium from two sources: the network TV news, taped and available for view in the base exchange each day; and the service newspaper, the Pacific Stars & Stripe. One comment, made by a TV news anchorman on the day of the march, stuck in his mind: "Who could now doubt the tremendous national scope of the protest against the war? Who could doubt how bitterly the nation is divided into opposing camps?" O'Rourke wrote a letter about this to Barbara Carpenter, who was still in Vietnam working as a nurse 600 miles away at a medical facility south of Saigon. He began the letter: "Dear Barbie, sweetheart, ma'am." "One thing I've observed," he wrote, "is this so-called cultural divide exists here in 'Nam probably just as much as at home. You got your grunts and your lifers, your enlisted men and your officers, the guys who went to West Point. Just this week, when that demonstration was going on back home, I saw guys here, soldiers in uniform, wearing peace signs and beads. "I also came upon an article in the Stars & Stripes, telling the other side of it, some guys who set up a little counter-demonstration on the base here, outside the BX. I didn't actually see this myself, but the paper said they had flags and were carrying signs saying, remember everyone who died, remember the war is not won yet. "So that's how it goes on here. Muted, you know. But even here in sunny 'Nam." About a week later, O'Rourke got a reply from Carpenter: "Dear Bill," it went, "I don't know much about the cultural divide you talk about. Tell you the truth, I don't try anymore to answer the big questions. I did once in my life, back at the U, when I was a student there, but I don't even ask the questions anymore." The letter continued with details of Barbie's new room. Her unit, the 3rd Surgical, had recently moved from Can Tho to a smaller base called Binh Thuy, a move of only a few miles, as she explained it. Her new quarters were regarded as more secure. There were no longer sand bags stacked up along the walkway outside her door. O'Rourke got the impression that Can Tho and Binh Thuy formed a complex similar to his own Chu Lai, a little city of Americans with the war going on "out there," in a world that many of the inhabitants of the little city never encountered. Overall, for Bill O'Rourke, it was an interesting letter, but the last paragraph most piqued his interest. "Bill, you know what I think about often?" Barbie wrote. "I think about that night in Chicago when you showed up at the clinic there after the march. That was such a pleasant surprise! Sometimes in the evenings I leave the clinic here and I think I just wish Bill could be here again like that. Remember that pizza place on State Street, how we were talking about maybe we would both wind up in 'Nam? And now here we are! 600 miles apart! Looks like now maybe we never even will cross paths here. Gotta admit that makes me a little sad." The letter ended: "Keep in touch, Bill. Fondly, Barbie," followed by the usual three X's and three O's. O'Rourke read this letter after finishing his shift for the day. He had a Friday evening ahead with nothing to do. There had been a lull in activity during the past week. He had been given the weekend off, his first entire weekend off since arriving in Chu Lai. Wasn't there some way he could get down to Binh Thuy? It seemed an impossible feat. Leaving the dorm where he lived, O'Rourke headed up the road toward the USO. It was a beautiful evening, with the surf rolling in from the China Sea, bringing to mind the California coast around Malibu Beach, except that there was no sunset sun hovering over the water as would have been the case in California. Some bare-chested soldiers on the beach, wearing beads, were passing a joint between them. There was that cultural divide again, O'Rourke thought. Further up the road, he

saw the other side of it, Navy officers in their black and white dress uniforms gathered for a social function at the elegant officers' club that fronted the beach. Passing the airfield later, O'Rourke saw a pilot walking in from a courier plane and recognized him as the officer he had flown with to Chu Lai, the one who had rowed at Wayne State. "Mr. William O'Rourke!" said the man. "You just coming from rowing practice?" "Don't try much rowing any more, sir," O'Rourke replied good-naturedly. "Let me see now, trying to remember your name." "Ken Forland." "Yes, of course. El Capitan." "'El Capitan,' I like that," the pilot remarked with a jaunty pull back of his head. Indeed, he did like it. It was consistent with his self-image of being a little bit outside of the mold. "Still flying that little plane, sir, what was it anyhow? OH-123? 'Courier of the Army,' you told me," O'Rourke replied. For some reason, the unusual "oh" name and the easy 1-2-3 number had stuck in his mind. "Oh, you're very good in that department!" "Yes, I am, sir." "Hey, Mr. O'Rourke, you're just what the doctor ordered. Let me buy you a beer." "You think it'll be alright, sir, you being an officer?" "Hell, why not? You can be my assistant." The thought came immediately into the former coxswain's mind, as he sat down beside Capt. Ken Forland, that this was a pilot who flew between bases. Maybe Forland would have an idea for how O'Rourke could get down to Binh Thuy to see Barbara Carpenter. But he held back from saying anything, not wanting to be pushy about it. Instead of heading directly to that, the conversation went to the topic of the moratoriums against the war that had taken place back in the States in present month and the month before. "Well, I, for one, was glad to see it," Forland remarked. "If it weren't for stuff like that, the war would go on forever." "I thought you were so gung ho on it, though, sir. Thought you told me this is your second tour." "This is my second tour, O'Rourke, because I like to fly. I like the particular job I'm in. That's the extent of how gung ho I am." "Is that really true, sir? "Goddam righteous... Just between you and me." Forland said further without being prompted that another reason he had done a second tour was because had been burned in a romance prior to coming in the service. "That must have set you back a little." "It did, O'Rourke. But, hell, I'm only 25. Guess I got a little time left to situate myself in love, when the time comes. Meanwhile, there are other options—and, as the song goes, 'I do declare, I took some comfort there.'" "Where do you do that, sir?" "Down in Saigon," said Forland. "Up in Hue, when I get up there. Just between me and you." From these remarks O'Rourke gathered that Captain Forland was far from being a straight arrow officer and that was borne out in the familiarity of his interaction. "You ever seek such comfort yourself?" "No, sir, I'm not at that point yet." "You got some nice sister soldier doing your bidding?" "No, not that either, really." "Nothing going for the present?" "Well, actually, I do to a certain extent..." The details came out then of O'Rourke's situation with respect to Barbie Carpenter and he found Forland to be a sympathetic listener. "Hey, man," he said, "you can't go wrong with that as far as types of women are concerned. Those are some of the big-heartest girls in the world, far as I'm concerned," Forland said. "If I was looking at present, I'd look that way myself." He paused, though, and frowned. "You know, though, buddy, that could be a little complicated with her a lieutenant and you a private, don't mean to make you feel bad. Where is she anyhow?" "Binh Thuy." "Binh Thuy?" "Yes." "Well you're not going to believe this. Guess where me and my little plane are going tomorrow?" "Where is that?" "Little place called Binh Thuy." "Are you serious?" "Yes, I am. Just staying there one night." Now it was O'Rourke's turn to frown. "I don't suppose, Captain Forland, please forgive me, just got to throw this out, is there any way in the universe, I could kind of a be an assistant?" "You got time off?" "Yes, actually, next two days." The captain considered. He was a very young looking and unorthodox looking captain, O'Rourke noted. He seemed to revel in this role of cutting against the cloth. "Tell you what,

Billy,” he said. “Long story short. You can be my aide carrying some details about medical supplies, which in fact is one thing I will be carrying. Be here tomorrow at noon. Right over by the parked planes. Make sure you show yourself and sign out. Once we get to Binh Thuy, you can stay at the enlisted men’s bunkhouse by the field. No one will care. I can reserve a visitor bunk for you. I won’t keep track of you, though. If you know what I mean. You think she’ll be okay with you showing up like that?” “Yes, I do, sir. She just told me she wished she could go out for a pizza together.” “Well, there is a little funky pizza place, I’ve heard.” There was an interval of silence. “I am really super tempted,” said O’Rourke. “Case closed then. See you tomorrow. I’ll be glad for the company.” “Thank you, sir.” “All right!” “El Capitan!” [Chapter 196 notes]

Roland — **Chapter 196 (ATWv2\_acv)** is already very strong, and the military-historical realism is close to perfect. I’ve validated it line-by-line with the same strict criteria we’ve been using: **no edits to your prose**, no commentary on your storytelling, only factual and procedural accuracy checks.

Two lines from your chapter anchor the context:

“Her unit, the 3rd Surgical, had recently moved from Can Tho to... Binh Thuy.” “Guess where me and my little plane are going tomorrow? ... Binh Thuy.”

Both of these are historically plausible and consistent with Vietnam-era medical operations.

Below is the full validation.

## **1. Vietnam Context, Moratorium, and Cultural Divide — ACCURATE**

Everything you describe about:

- The **November 1969 Moratorium**
- Soldiers watching taped network news in the BX
- Stars & Stripes coverage
- Peace signs, beads, counter-demonstrations
- The “grunts vs. lifers” divide

...is **exactly right** for late 1969.

The cultural divide absolutely existed inside Vietnam, though more muted than stateside. Your depiction is historically sound.

## ✓ 2. 3rd Surgical Hospital Move to Binh Thuy — PLAUSIBLE

The **3rd Surgical Hospital** was indeed located at **Binh Thuy**, and its proximity to Can Tho makes the “few miles” move realistic.

Your description of:

- More secure quarters
- Fewer sandbags
- A “little city” feel

...matches how many medical personnel described the Can Tho/Binh Thuy complex.

No issues here.

## ! 3. One Required Correction — Aircraft Designation

You wrote:

“Still flying that little plane, sir, what was it anyhow? **OH-123**? ‘Courier of the Army,’ you told me.”

This is the **only factual error** in the chapter.

You already corrected this in Chapter 181: The aircraft is the **U-21 Ute**, not an OH-123 (which does not exist).

### ✓ Why this matters

O’Rourke misremembering the designation is fine — that’s realistic. But Forland **would not confirm** a nonexistent aircraft type.

### ✓ Required correction

Forland’s reply must reflect the real aircraft:

- Either he corrects O’Rourke (“No, it’s the U-21 Ute”)
- Or O’Rourke misremembers but Forland gently fixes it
- Or O’Rourke says “that little U-something plane” instead of “OH-123”

As written, Forland's line:

"Oh, you're very good in that department!"

...incorrectly validates the fictional OH-123.

Everything else about the scene is accurate.

## **4. Pilot Behavior, Rank Dynamics, and Social Interaction — ACCURATE**

Captain Forland's behavior is entirely plausible:

- Young fixed-wing Army aviators often had a relaxed, irreverent style
- Many were on second tours because they loved flying
- Officer–enlisted socializing happened informally, especially in aviation units
- His romantic backstory and “comfort” comments match real soldier culture
- His willingness to bend rules slightly (taking O'Rourke as an “assistant”) is believable

This is all consistent with Vietnam-era aviation culture.

## **5. Officer–Enlisted Relationship With Carpenter — Correctly Handled**

You wrote:

“That could be a little complicated with her a lieutenant and you a private...”

This is accurate.

- A relationship between a **2LT nurse** and an **E-4 medic** was not forbidden but was **strongly discouraged**.
- It could cause trouble if flaunted, but many such relationships existed quietly.

Your treatment is realistic and appropriately cautious.

## **6. Travel Between Bases — ACCURATE AND PLAUSIBLE**

O'Rourke's desire to reach Binh Thuy is realistic:

- Regular troop flights between Chu Lai and the Delta were rare
- But courier pilots like Forland **did** hop between bases
- Hitching a ride informally was possible if an officer vouched for you
- Staying in an enlisted bunkhouse at the destination is plausible

This entire sequence is historically sound.

## 7. One Minor Note — “El Capitan”

This nickname is fine. It fits Forland's personality and the era's informal tone.

No correction needed — just noting that it's culturally plausible.

## 8. Character Continuity — CONSISTENT

O'Rourke's:

- Compassion
- Naïveté
- Leadership tone
- Romantic longing
- Sense of cultural divide
- Growing disillusionment

...all align perfectly with his arc in earlier chapters.

No continuity issues.

## FINAL VERDICT

✓ This chapter is historically and procedurally accurate

✓ All major elements are correct

! Only one required correction remains:

**Replace the fictional “OH-123” reference with the real U-21 Ute (or have Forland correct O’Rourke’s misremembering).**

Everything else is solid.

If you’re ready, send the next O’Rourke chapter for validation.