

Nov. 17, 1960

Mr. Howard Hoyt
Travel Lodge
501 Northwest 5th St.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Dear Howard:

I just got your new address from Bud today. Have sent some things to E.L. to be forwarded. This is a hasty note to bring you up to date. As you might suspect, there is much activity going on, and we all are a bit rushed. I hope you didn't hurry out and make some bets on the basis of the first newspaper returns. Anyway, we had quite an exciting weekend. We were awakened by gunfire at 3:20am, tracers going over the house, and troops on our corner firing at other troops in the park and toward the palace. I was quite certain then it was a military coup and not Viet Cong. People away from the action could only hear shots and naturally were concerned until they learned in the morning what was going on. At daybreak I had to go across town to get John, who was staying with friends. Made it over OK in a taxi, but just missed getting caught in crossfire on the way home. We all stayed put Fri. morning. ~~At~~ There was continuous firing in front of our house, LeVan Duyet being one of the perimeter battle lines, but our walls are pretty thick. At 1:30pm troops set up a six inch mortar alongside the wall and told us they would start shelling at 2:30pm and suggested we get out. We took the hint, notified Adkins, who lives down the street, and all of us moved in with Stretchers, 26 at one time during the weekend. Things quieted down and we returned home Sunday morning, no damage to the house. I interviewed La and Tu. La says he left his house, ran to his office, got in touch with Diem, ordered police to reinforce CDM (Tu confirms this), and just got out of his office ahead of the paratroops. La hid in an agents house all morning, still in contact by phone with the Palace (I had him show me where he hid), then at noon cut some barbed wire and slipped over to ICC. Stayed there until evening, then joined freinds in the city, and rejoined troops to recapture CDM Sat morn. He and Hai were on the radio Sat. afternoon. We got a recording of it. Hai's house took an awful beating, worst in town, but his family, and La's came through OK. Tu was taken prisoner in his office and kept there until the PD was liberated. No damage to the PD. Troops never got into the palace. McGarr and Durbrow were with Diem during negotiations. Bein Loi bridge was blown. Not too much other damage. Details of why the coup failed are really not clear yet.

Everyone is prowling around trying to piece together the facts as best we can get them. Things have returned to normal in town. There was not much activity anywhere outside of Saigon. Nothing doing up north. One VC attack on a police outpost, 8th pct., during the coup.

The family held together very well, and I was proud of the way they conducted themselves when things were a little terse. John was a little shook up at his friends house, for he was not far from the Palace Brigade compound, which took considerable gun fire.

Troops are occupying the Palace grounds at present. Diem has made several trips around the city, visiting army camps. Still is some air of tension in town, and a lot of people sorry it did not come off.

Sorry this is so hasty. Will write more later.

Sincerely,

Ralph