

**Gary J. Rhyne**

**M.A.R.S. Calling Home**

"Dad, can you hear me?, Over."

"Hello, Hello? Damn it, I can't hear you," said a trembling voice."

"You have to say, over, Mr. Rhyne," said a third voice.

"Say what? Who is this? Son is that you?"

pause -

"Dad, you have to say, over when you're through talking, we're using a radio."

"Okay, sorry, over, how's that?"

"Great Dad, I'm calling from Bien Hoa, over"

"Son, it is you, are you okay? Are you hurt? Are you in the hospital? Have you been shot?"

pause -

"Say over, Mr. Rhyne," said the third voice.

"Damn it, over."

"Dad, I'm fine. I called to tell you that I was okay. We had a little rocket attack this morning, the biggest one ever for here, they counted eighty-four incoming. Made quite a mess of the base, over."

"Son, who is that talking, that other voice?"

pause -

"Over."

"Dad, that's one of the ham radio operators helping to complete this call. There's one here with me, he contacted another operator stateside, then that operator called you on the telephone. This system uses both radios and telephones to make calls from here. That's why it's only a long distance call from inside the states, and not all the way from here, they call it M.A.R.S., the Military Affiliate Radio System, over."

"It's so good to hear your voice, son, Trixie hears your voice too, say hello to her."

pause -

"Dad, say over."

"Over, I'm sorry son, I keep forgetting."

"They're used to it, Dad, but it makes things go smoother if you can remember to say, over, each time you finish talking. They both have to key their microphones at the same time for the transmission to work correctly, over."

"I can't hear you too well, son. Tell Trixie hi, she's here on the couch."

pause -

"Over."

"I'll try to speak louder, Dad. Hi Trixie, good girl, good dog. Dad, please tell mom — tell her that I love her, okay, over."

"She just left, son, she'll be so disappointed that she missed you."

Pause, the sound of a man sobbing.

"Dad? Over."

No response.

Dad, I understand. I miss you and mom too," the young man's voice cracked.

"Two minutes remaining, sir."

"Dad, I am going to have to go in a few minutes. Try not to worry about me, we're pretty safe here, we haven't had any ground attacks, yet, over."

"When are you coming home, son?"

pause -

"Over."

"Sometime in January, unless we win first, Dad, over."

"One minute left, sir."

"We got all of that fancy stereo equipment that you ordered, it's in your room. We haven't changed anything, just like you left it. It will all be here when you get home, - over."

Thanks Dad, please don't worry, I'll be okay, I'll keep my head down, over."

"Son, I love you. I'm - so..."

pause -

"Over."

"I love you too. Tell mom—you know, how much I... bye, Dad. Over, and out."

"Son?" Gary? Are you still there?"

"Sir, your connection has been terminated.

"Are you clear, sir?"

"What?"

"Are you finished? If you are, please end this call by saying, over and out, clear, or simply, out.

"Thank you, for letting me talk to my son,"

pause -

"It was my privilege, sir. Is he in the Air Force or Marines? They're both at Bien Hoa."

"Marines."

"I know you're proud of him, sir."

"That I am."

"God be with him, sir."

"God help us all, son, goodbye."

M.A.R.S. Voice Transcript,

August 1, 1972: 1848 hours

From - Bien Hoa, Air Force Base, Vietnam, Cpl. G.J. Rhyne (Marine Corps)

Headquarters, MAG-12; VMA 311, Marine Air Wing

(via - MARS Civilian Operator: L. Mendez - Mobile, Alabama)

To - Denton, Texas, C.E. Rhyne, Residence