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Dear Families, Friends and Members of the CEVG:

I am deeply honored by the invitation received from Mr. McAfee to join you for this important memorial ceremony. One of the special benefits of being a historian is the opportunity to know so many great folks. In the research and writing of *One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam*, I was privileged to become associated with many of you. Through personal meetings, correspondence, and documents I have come to know the truly magnificent and courageous contributions of the CEVG family.

The word "hero" is now frequently used to comment on a wide range of actions. I shall not debate here the appropriateness of such common usage. But, I do know that in 1994 when Jerry Clayton and I climbed to the top of Pha Thi, and surveyed the remains of Site 85, I was in the presence of a true American hero. Not just for what he did during the operation of the site, but what he has endured in the following years. The physical and mental toughness it took to reach the site, and deal with the meaning of it all, were truly inspiring.

So, too, my lengthy discussions with Ann Holland – who has become such a valued personal friend. Ann opened up her life, through thousands of pages of documents, so that I could document this amazing story. The Etchberger family, which graciously provided me with important documents, allowed me to properly explain the courage and determination under enemy fire which caused Dick Etchberger to be initially recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor. I trust this much deserved honor – disallowed at the time because of secrecy concerns - will soon be bestowed on such a deserving man.

In order that this letter be brief, I have not included dozens of other family members, friends, and CEVG veterans who provided me such critical support. To you, please know that I am so very appreciative of your assistance in making this story public. Along with Jerry, Ann, and Cory, you have met great adversity with incredible grace and dignity.

The classified nature of the project, the misguided efforts of the government to cover-up the incident, and the often painful memories of the families and participants, made this a very difficult book to write. It was very tough, as a USAF and Vietnam veteran, for me to remain dispassionate. In the end, however, I remain convinced that your help allowed me to complete the most accurate and comprehensible account available of the actual events at Dong Ha, Muang Phalane, and Pha Thi.

For all these reasons, I am terribly sorry I am unable to attend this special event. I do, however, through the thoughtfulness of Ann Holland, have one of your CEVG coins proudly displayed in my office. It is a wonderful remembrance of the men of the CEVG. You and they are an extraordinary group of Americans – and here the word hero does apply. On 2 October I will have a special thought for all of you.

Warmest personal regards,