

'I don't agree with everything she says. Do you agree with your mother on everything?'

What Martha's Boy Thinks of Mother

LZ Excedrin, Vietnam

Martha Mitchell's son has tried to cover up his identity in Vietnam, but he admits ruefully: "It always catches up with me."

A quiet-spoken armored cavalry officer at this remote landing zone in a dusty corner of the Que Son Valley, Lieutenant C. Jay Jennings says he would like people to "treat me just like any other lieutenant."

"But when they find out who I am I get static from the things she says. Newsmen come in hot pursuit. Sometimes I am expected to outperform other officers, and I have to show a great deal of humility."

Jennings, 23, is a son of the attorney general's wife by a previous marriage. He says he would never interfere with his mother's right to speak freely, but he admits some of her statements have proved embarrassing.

SHRUGS

"That's the way mothers are," he observed with a shrug. "I try to understand that my mother is as worried about me as other mothers are worried about their sons in Vietnam."

"Her statements are controversial and of course I don't agree with everything she says. Do you agree with your mother on everything?"

"For example, she wants to come to Vietnam. Well I don't think anyone should be here unless they're doing a specific job, and there's nothing my mother can do out here."

"Remember when she said the war was over. There was a lot of adverse opinion. Yes, it affected me too."

"Well, I wrote her saying war is still a physical reality in this country, but if she was talking in the context of a political issue, perhaps she's right."

VMI

A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Jennings spent his first six months in Vietnam as a platoon leader in the Americal Division's First Squadron, First Armored Cavalry, living in an armored personnel carrier under what Mrs. Mitchell



AP Wirephoto
ARMY LIEUTENANT C. JAY JENNINGS
He is an armored cavalry officer in Vietnam

aply described as "the most primitive conditions."

When the South Vietnamese invaded Laos earlier this year, his unit supported operations around Khe Sanh.

"Combat? I've seen some and enough," Jennings smiled. "I've done a lot of shooting but to my knowledge I haven't killed anyone. But then 80 per cent of the guys go home from here never knowing whether they've killed someone. It's not that kind of war."

Jennings has been wounded once — a head cut suffered when his personnel carrier hit a mine. He didn't put in for a Purple Heart.

Jennings feels he gets on well with his men and is respected by them.

Jennings doesn't live in a "track" (armored vehicle) any more. He is night duty officer at this armored cavalry command post, keeping in touch with operations and units in the Que Son Valley area. At night he monitors communications in the radio

shack at Excedrin — which bears one of the whimsical names battalion commanders are apt to bestow.

Every morning he flies back to the main base in Da Nang to sleep in air-conditioned quarters.

Politically he characterizes himself as "basically independent, generally conservative with an open mind — show me something better than I've got and I'll take you up on it."

Before he came to Vietnam, Jennings divided attention between his mother and his father, Clyde Jennings, a manufacturer's representative in Jacksonville, Fla. He exchanges letters with his mother every ten days and considers it "a normal mother-son relationship."

Jennings expects to be home in Lynchburg, Va., by Christmas. He plans to go back to school when he gets out of the Army, but he doesn't know yet what he will study.

Politics? "Hardly."

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