

..... PARTING SHOT .....



Associated Press

# The Helmets We Wore

American G.I. individuality showed up even in the jungles and rice paddies of South Vietnam in a few ways, including the improvised helmets in these photos taken in 1967. In an environment where so much was standardized and anonymous, a helmet could become a small canvas: a way to stay human, stay connected, and say something without uttering a word.

Some decorated helmets were practical, such as the one with extra machine-gun ammunition wrapped

around a gunner's helmet (*top left*). Some are bluntly expressive, like the band reading, "War Is Hell" (*top right*), three words that don't need explaining. Others are quietly poignant, including the helmet cover adorned with a short timer's calendar (*bottom left*).

And some carry a small piece of home, like the small snapshot tucked into the helmet band (*bottom right*), a reminder of who and what an American servicemember in the Vietnam War hoped to someday return to. ♦