

VIETNAM

BINH THUY AIR BASE

"My First Night in Vietnam"

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632nd Security Police Squadron
Binh Thuy AB, Vietnam
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I was stationed at Bergstrom AFB, Austin, Texas, in 1968 and 1969 with the 75th Security Police Squadron. I was called to the Orderly Room by then Acting First Sergeant, TSgt Tecumseh T. Lee. I was then informed I had orders to Vietnam. My heart jumped into my throat when "T" Lee informed me of the assignment. I asked him about Binh Thuy and he told me that SSgt Ball had been stationed there so ask him about the base. I was a young kid enroute to an adventure, which really scared the wits out of me. I contacted SSgt Ball and he told me about Binh Thuy. SSgt Ball had been stationed at Binh Thuy in 67-68. He told me stories of how Binh Thuy had been dredged out of the Mekong River and was partially swamp. Man ...*was he ever correct.*



I wrote to several of the gang from my flight (D Flt) to warn them I was coming and to be ready to party. I had some good friends stationed at Tân Sơn Nhứt and they would be awaiting my arrival. I would have to spend several days at Tân Sơn Nhứt going through what was called "In-Country Training". These guys were, Don Shultey, Guy Ellis, Robert Blose, etc. I can't remember them all since it's been 30+ years.

Photo Left: Guy Ellis & Wayne Dezarn, Downtown, Saigon, Vietnam, June 1969

Photo Below: Guy Ellis & Wayne Dezarn, Downtown, Saigon, Vietnam, June 1969. Too many years to recall the other Airman.



arrived at Tân Sơn Nhứt on a hot afternoon in June 1969. I went through customs, in-processed and then found myself a bunk in the transit billets. I then called the Security Police Compound and got in touch with Guy Ellis and he told me how to navigate the base shuttle bus to reach the SP compound. I arrived there around 1800 hours and off to downtown Saigon we went. We ended up in a bar called the "Blue Moon" or "Moonlight Bar". Guy told me this was a "COP" bar and we would have a good time. It was great to see my friends and we began an evening of drinking Budweiser and an oriental beer called "33". The "33" was also referred to as "Bom-de-Bom".

It did not take long to realize that I was really hungry and getting a buzz. I was also suffering from "Jet-Lag" so it didn't take many beers to put me down. As we sat and caught up on old times, we talked about Bergstrom and friends that we left behind, like, Richard Dankirt, Jack Robinson, Carl Murphy, Jerry Woods, John Osterticki (OZ), Lonnie Hood, Joe Allen and many more.

As the night went on I needed to get back to the base. Guy Ellis took me outside and hailed a taxi

that took me to the front gate of Tân Sơn Nhứt. That was quite an experience whizzing through the streets of Saigon in an unfamiliar vehicle, and unfamiliar place and an unfamiliar world. I arrived at the main gate and the SP's helped me get to the transit billets.



It must have been approximately 0200 hours when the first explosion hit. I heard people screaming, "Incoming" - "Incoming" get down.

Photo Left: Captain Mike Wheeler, Binh Thuy AB, Central Security Control.



Photo Left: Captain Mike Wheeler and MSgt Jerry Spragg - Safeside.

As I rolled off my bottom bunk and under it immediately I saw the guy that was on the other bunk under his. A new guy just like us was running up and down the aisle screaming "We are all going to be killed". Everyone was screaming for him to get down. He had lost it mentally. The guy next to me and I reached out and tripped this new guy and pulled him down between the bunks and we held on to him or laid on him. He was trembling just like we were and he was muttering to himself about dying. I guess we were thinking the same thing but this guy was out of his mind. We kept our thought to ourselves. I have often thought we must have been out of our minds also.



I found out later
two 122 Rockets hit
the ground that

night. One landed in the Security Police compound under a tower but no one was hurt. The other overshot the base and landed in downtown Saigon killing several Vietnamese civilians. This was my first night in Vietnam and it scared the crap out of me.



After the all clear siren sounded the medics came and took this new guy away. I heard he had been transferred back to the world. Maybe he was really the only sane one in the bunch. This experience set the tone for me and I listened for loud explosions throughout my time in Vietnam. I will never forget my first night in Vietnam and the sounds that initiated me to a saga I shall always remember.



Old French Tank



11) Close up: French Tank.



Perimeter Road, from Tower Charlie-7.



Sgt Don Hoedinger, beside the Memorial.



Sgt Don Hoedinger - Close up

We Take Care of Our Own

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