

***Amnesty:
The worst thing I did or saw in the Vietnam War***

No Right to Ask

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What is the OSI jeep doing in the Intel shop?

I entered the door and felt the caress of the cool air. *Some guy in civilian clothes talking to Ken.* Ken says, "Hi Mark. This is Agent O'Mally (for you Cheech and Chong fans) of the OSI, he has something he wants to ask you about." I look at the agent and say, "Okay." Here's the pitch, *in the last three weeks they have received 14 reports of a group of 12 to 21 men with backpacks and armed with AK47's. They have been seen within 5 kilometer of the base along the main road from Ubon to Laos. Would I make a sweep down that road tonight and see what might happen?*

My immediate reaction is to say *areyououtofyourf'inuckingmind? You know I work out there unarmed.* But I hold my tongue. I tell the agent that it would depend on the Thai Police and if they would make a sweep out that far. He would have to ask the driver if he would be willing to do it or not. I also tell him that I am going to arm myself. His only comment is that what he doesn't know won't hurt me. Cool tacit: approval for a fool's errand and a fool to go on it. One small problem... the armorer won't let me have my M16; "Hey you know the rules". (Status of Forces Agreement with Thailand said American military personnel would not be armed off the installation.) s---

Ken got the M79 they "let" us take as well as the buckshot rounds bought on the black market hidden away by those before us (thanks guys). He also has the box of flares for the launcher. *Now where to get a rifle?* Ernie might give me his, he's got the Gofer patrol and won't need it. So I told what was fixing to go down, and called in my friendship card, and asked him to let me have his rifle. With barely a hesitation he said, "Okay" and went and got his rifle and handed it over with out a comment. I also hit up a couple of K-9 troopers for some of their "extra" ammo. So away we went--Ken with the M79, the driver, three Thai cops with worn out M2 carbines, and me with an M16 and 120 rounds. Not exactly loaded for bear but hopefully we would not see anyone.

We knew that radio communications would be a bitch because the Motorola's had a range of about three feet, as you well know. We knew we would likely be out of communication with CSC for most of the sweep. Washington in the other patrol would stay to the side of the base closest to us, hopefully to relay messages if we f'd up and bumped into these guys or they bumped into us. By the time we crossed the river we were out of communication with CSC and we weren't even in the possible contact zone.

Well once we got out in the country and started the sweep that driver floored the gas and we raced down the road. Dark--gawddamn it was dark, s--- night vision what the f--- are we going to do if they ambush us? We won't have any night vision. we won't be able to see them, and they

will be able to see us. *Why is this trip really getting down to being unnecessary?* Well what the f----
-enjoy the ride, cus you won't get out of the jeep alive any way if something happens. Then the
cold realization that the M16 in my lap will get a very good man in a heap of trouble should
something happen to me. Oh s--- what the f--- did I do...?

The ride continues down the highway that seems to go forever. The driver was told to just take
us out to the 5 clicks and turn around, but we keep going until finally we get to a turn in the
road where the direction is east--we are now out about 15 k about half way between Ubon and
Laos. The driver knows of a Thai policeman in the area and we wind up at his bungalow and
spend a few minutes in this very small ville talking with the Thai cop the driver knew. The cop
doesn't know anything; he hasn't had any reports. (Imagine?).

We then head back to the base. Forty-five minutes later the sweep is history. We didn't see
anything (couldn't if we had wanted too) no contact with the bad guys (thank goodness) just 90
minutes of being very tense. We take Ken back to CSC to turn in the M79 and let him get back
to the Intel shop. Now you would think that the OSI agent that thought it was so important for
Ken and I and the Thai police to do something out of the ordinary would have been there to at
least determine if there was anything useful to be learned.

Guess what...yep you got it. NO agent. Guess the joke or whatever was on us.

So what is the point to this rambling story? Simply to recognize some stand up men: Ken Olson
and Ernie Butts and Washington. Ken *cause you went with me when you didn't have to.* You
could have stayed in the Intel Shop but chose to go on this run. Ernie *cause you took a big
chance for me.* You risked getting into a s--- load of trouble because of me and I still owe you big
time. To Washington, *you would have had to pick up the pieces.* To the driver, Sgt Sootah,
because he agreed to take us. The next night a different driver refused to do it. A month after I
came home, the three Thai cops that went without us were killed in an ambush on the Laotian
border--that all but wiped out the Special Action Force for the province..

So that is the worst thing I did over there. I asked a friend to take a risk for me *I had no right to
ask of him.*

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THANKS ERNIE I still owe you.

We Take Care of Our Own

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