

Binh Thuy AB

A Funny Thing Happened To Me While On Post

© 2013 by [Jaime A. Lleras](#), CMSgt, USAF, (Ret.)
632nd SPS - 1970

Photo: A1C Jaime Lleras



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This is a story I wrote about my first few months in Vietnam at Binh Thuy AB, and links to the photos I took.

A Funny Thing Happened To Me While On Post

It was January 6, 1970 and I was somewhat okay with getting on a flight to Vietnam, especially since I had volunteered for the assignment. However, once I got to Ton Sun Nut, for in-country training, I started to wonder why I wanted to go to Vietnam. It was hot, (in January) and it was scary listening to the 'booms' (mortar attacks) at a distance and seeing the sky light up at night, while everyone took it as the norm. I also couldn't deal with the amount of and the size of the mosquitoes. I remember the first few nights there when I dressed up for bed – wearing my state-side fatigues, buttoned all up and wore my long black boot socks before getting into my mosquito netted bunk – and they still ate me up.

Once I arrived at Binh Thuy in mid-January, my opinion of Vietnam was getting better, especially since I got a sense of belonging and welcoming. It was easy to set-in with the guys there. Coming from the law enforcement side of the house, working security was interesting, but I really got comfortable with the guys on the 632nd. I don't remember how long I spent on the mid-night shift, but working nights was still very scary.

One night as I stood guard on one of the towers on the perimeter road, facing the *Bassic River* along the *Tra-noch* village (I believe). While using my night goggles, I started to notice that there was some flashing lights going on/off between two trees on the other side of the river bank. It seemed to me as though some sort of signaling was going on. Trying to do 'my job' of identifying suspicious activities, I called it in to CSC. Awhile later the desk sergeant came back on the radio with an 'all-clear' response. Now, that bothered me and I was getting concerned because as I kept looking at these trees, I continued to see the signaling, so about a half hour later, I called it in again. The desk sergeant checked with the 'out-post' and came back with an 'all-clear' response again.

I think it was after the third time I called in this activity when a vehicle stopped at the bottom of the tower. I challenged the person – "Halt who goes there?" – and found out it was my flight chief. He responded and started coming up the tower.

Upon reaching my post he asked me to show him what my concern was, so I explained to him what I was seeing. After hearing my explanation, he took the night goggles and checked out the river bank to see if he saw the flashing lights I was talking about. As he scanned the tree line, he made a grunt sound as if to agree with me. He even said "I see" after checking both trees – [here comes the funny part] he then turned to me and said "boy where the F--- are you from?" to which I proudly said "Brooklyn, NY, sir" thinking he was impressed with my actions. He said, "Brooklyn!" "How old are you?" and I said "19 Sir," to which he said, "You piece of sh--." "young punk-ass kid." "Are you f---ing stupid or just plain dumb?" to which I replied, "NO SIR" while being confused and changing my concern. My look must have been killing him because after shaking his head, he said, "boy, haven't you even seen a lightning bug"? I said "a what?" A lightning bug, you Sh--Head" and I said "NO SIR." He then explained it to me while laughing his ass off. He laughed so much that he almost fell off the ladder as he was going down to his jeep. After that, I was known as 'Lightning Bug' for about a month. The truth is I had never seen a lightning bug during my childhood in New York City, roaches, for sure, but not lightning bugs.

I realized that my flight chief could have handled this in a better way, especially since I was a 'newbie,' however; I also understand how funny this seemed to him and any other person not growing up in an urban city. Needless to say, I have never forgotten this lesson in life, especially when I mention this story and people still laugh.

After a few months on flight, I developed a skin rash which the doctors said was skin malaria and after being treated, I was required to work in air conditioning areas, which is how I ended up in the armory the rest of my tour – another interesting assignment.

Jaime A. Lleras - aka Sgt LQ

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