



If I Could Change One Thing...

We Lived. They Died.

The Vietnamese Giant Centipede!

© 2003 by Jim Randall

483rd Security Police Squadron

CAM RANH BAY AB

1970



I was reading the Restricted Area section and something clicked in my memory: I haven't thought about this in thirty years.

One night at Cam Ranh Bay AB in 1970 I was assigned bunker guard duty on the night shift, Phantom flight, I was pulling one of the sandbagged bunkers by the sea with the jungle right behind, it was a M60 position, and sometime during the night I noticed these little *feelers*, like

the kind on those big cockroaches, sticking up out of the feed tray on the M60, I thought... *how did a roach get in the gun?*



So I started to field strip the M60 and clean it out and as I took the butt plate off and laid it to the side I saw the biggest centipede in the world uncurl from inside the gun and start to crawl *very rapidly* toward me!

I jumped out of that bunker like a kangaroo and lost sight of the creature scurrying among the sandbags. I had heard these giant centipedes were poisonous, so I quickly gathered up the M60 parts, put it back together, and spent the rest of the night about twenty feet away from the bunker.

In the morning I humped to the pick up point and didn't think much of the centipede afterward... I guess I was just too tired.

The next night a friend of mine, Wheeler, was assigned that post, I didn't get to see him before he got posted and the next morning I heard that he had leaned up against the sandbags and was bitten in the back by some venomous critter. They said Wheeler's back swelled up like the Hunchback of Nortre Dame.

I wish I would have or could have told him that there might be a centipede in the bunker, he got medevacd to Japan and to this day I don't know what happened to him.

I hope he made it home okay... and... *I'm sorry Wheeler.*

Jim Randall
483rd SPS
Cam Ranh Bay AB 1970



Actual Size

The centipede, *Scolopendra giganteus subspinipes*. That's the scientific name for the Vietnamese Giant Centipede, or leach

Courtesy: Iron Horse Maine: <http://home.earthlink/~reynoldslg/rats.html>

Someone else caught a centipede about a foot long. So we put that in the ammo can to just to see what would happen. Nothing, each one backed up into a neutral corner and just stayed there. We got bored after about an hour or so and left them alone. Came back a few hours later to look and the centipede was gone and the scorpion was dead. Our maintaince people put it in a big jar of alcohol and had it on display.

Opinions and comments expressed here are not necessarily those of the Vietnam Security Police Association. Readers' responses to stories may be added as an addendum to the story, or may be forwarded to the author, but will not be posted at the Bulletin Board, nor become public. Nevertheless, no one can guarantee complete anonymity, confidentiality, nor that what is expressed or published here will not make it into the public sector of the web.

© Vietnam Security Police Association, Inc. (USAF) 1995-2018. All Rights Reserved.

We Take Care of Our Own

[Click to Report BROKEN LINKS or Photos, or COMMENT](#)