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James Bruce Jones (JB), KIA 25 Jan 1966.

On 24-25 Jan 1966, at Da Nang Airbase (AB), South Vietnam (SVN), a major bombing truce was in effect. James Bruce Jones (JB) was a tent mate and hooch-mate from mid-1965, and a very good friend. The evening of 24 Jan 1966, we were leaving for our assignments as members of the 6252nd Air Police Squadron, charged with guarding the giant airbase and perimeter. We were aware of the bombing truce, and also that the Viet Cong had never honored prior bombing truces. JB told me he was guarding the POL fuel tanks nearby our AP compound. I told him I was posted between the bomb dump and the active runway. My post was as a USAF Sentry Dog Handler, and I would patrol a sector of heavy tangle brush and tall grass between 1000 x 2000 feet in width and depth.

The first part of the twelve hours shift was uneventful. Around 2:00 am of 25 Jan 1966, my dog Blackie and I were near the 3,000 foot runway marker when I heard the first mortar rounds crump east of my post and around the flightline. My war dog Blackie and I took cover in a foxhole. Official reports state Da Nang AB received a Stand Off mortar attack of 20 rounds. U.S. casualties were One (1) Airman was KIA, and six (6) WIA. SVN casualties were five (5) KIA and twenty-five (25) WIA.

Viet Cong mortars were fired from east of and between Da Nang AB and Marble Mountain. The first mortar impacted on the road in front of our AP hooch. The next landed on the road at the POL fuel dump, and JB was KIA. Several mortars exploded on the SVN VNAF (Vietnamese Air Force) SPAD aircraft parking area. Mortars then skipped the taxiway and impacted on the west side of the runway within twenty feet of the K-9 fighting hole (bunker: circle of two sandbags tall and dug out three feet deep), with shrapnel destroying some of the sandbags.

Around 4:00 am, 25 Jan 1966, a response-team in a jeep checked the K-9 posts for possible casualties. The sergeant knew that JB and I were good friends, and told me he had bad news, that JB was killed in the mortar attack. He told me JB had about a hundred wounds above the waist, had lost his right leg, and bled out on the hood of the jeep as he was taken to the dispensary.

My K-9 post was relieved just after daylight. I put Blackie away in the Kennels, and went directly to the medical dispensary. As I entered the medical area two medics were coming out of a back room. When I told them I wanted to see JB, one medic reached back and closed and locked the door. He then told me JB was already flown out to Tan Son Nhut AB, and on his way home.

I felt nauseous and had to set down before leaving. I admit that I was crying and very upset. I felt numb and helpless to somehow make things better. I went back to the hooch and JB's locker was taped shut with a notice not to open. Someone said a graves-registration NCO would take JB's locker contents to be mailed to his family, and anything inappropriate would be removed to spare his family.

I DEROS'd out of the Air Force in July 1966. My nightmares began right after JB was killed, and continue to this day. It is hard to think about this now. The dreams are beyond my control. It is worse today and

when I hear a loud noise I think of incoming mortars and JB dying. Recurring dreams are several times weekly. I can't stop them. In one dream I talk my Squadron Commander, LTC Phillips, in to letting me switch posts with JB and maybe he would live. Truth is, I was glad I was alive and felt guilty he wasn't. Sometimes LTC Phillips agrees, and sometimes not, but when he approves I go to my wooden locker and open it but there are no uniforms in it, and I can't take JB's post for him. The dream doesn't make total sense because JB was not a K-9 handler so we couldn't have actually switched posts. I always think that if we did switch I could change the outcome—he wouldn't die. But truth is I can't change anything and don't think I ever will, *except for just once*, and that was the Uniform Dream.

The Uniform Dream is one I partially solved by trying to "rewrite the ending." That didn't make sense—to *lie to yourself*—as the truth would be the truth no matter what. But at home I decided to take my Air Force duffle bag out of the garage attic and clean it out. I tossed all the useless outdated jackets and winter uniforms, kept the belt buckles, Viet Cong *truck-tire* sandals, and in the bottom of the bag found my old steel helmet and last uniform I wore in Vietnam. I hung the uniform in my closet and put the helmet above it on a shelf. That *sort of worked*, in that the dream slacked off and when it came and I woke up at the part where there was *no Uniform in my wooden closet*—I then told myself *there is a Uniform in my closet*—and a helmet! That was the truth, at least a truth I could believe that wasn't a lie. It hasn't stopped the dream—but it doesn't come round as much anymore. If only I could reason with my other dreams.

To say JB's death, and my dreams, have affected my daily life is an understatement. And yes, I often feel helpless, wake up during the night more than once, get distracted often, miss my off ramps, and have been depressed for longer than I care to remember. I don't want to go anywhere or do anything, and don't go to my grandkids' games, and don't want anyone to come to the house. My daily life is trying to figure out how *not to leave* the house. I've given up making excuses and just refuse to go anywhere that I don't have to. I rarely do any new work on my two oldest and largest Vietnam Veterans' websites (vspa.com and war-stories.com), and can't get motivated to go to VSPA's annual reunions. I just can't motivate myself anymore, and don't care. When the date JB died rolls around each year, I go to bed and stay there as long as possible. Sometimes I wonder just what the use of trying is.

JONES, JAMES BRUCE

A3C - Air Force – Regular
20 year old Single, Caucasian, Male
Born on 12/15/45
From ALEXANDRIA BAY, NY
6252d APS, Da Nang
Length of service 2 years.

Casualty was on 01/25/1966

[Major Truce/Bombing Pause: 1966, 24 Dec 1965 – 31 Jan 1966]
in QUANG NAM (Da Nang), SOUTH VIETNAM
HOSTILE, GROUND CASUALTY
OTHER EXPLOSIVE DEVICE, MORTARS

Body was recovered

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