



Christmas Star

by : Don Poss

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Đà Nẵng Air Base, South Vietnam - 6252 Combat Air Police Squadron, 366th SPS

Đà Nẵng, flight line, 0001 hours: In 1965, only one Đà Nẵng runway was active. A second runway was under construction. Late Christmas Eve, the field and runways were shrouded in fog that hampered, then stopped takeoffs and landings. As I patrolled with my K-9 Shepherd Sentry dog, Blackie, between the two runways, One-Oh-Five Howitzers could be heard firing support or H&I. VC and their Northern buddies ignored the latest *See if they got the message* cease fire.

Throughout Christmas Eve night, clouds settled to earth blanketing the active runway and across the valley to Hill 327, Freedom Hill, home of the Hawk surface-to-air missile. The fog would teasingly lift... and settle... and rise again, like mom shaking the white tablecloth across the dinner table in slow motion. F4 Phantoms earned their names and would rocket through bubbles of minimum-visibility -- fiddled windows to the stars.

Near midnight, a lone chopper took off from somewhere across the field, but the F4's were grounded for a few hours. On many nights I had watched as million-candle-power parachute flares drifted around the base perimeter, bathing the terrain in brilliant, ghostly candlelight. But no flares would drift to earth this quiet night.

The base was still and quiet--then a single brilliant parachute flared-nova directly over the runway. A galaxy-size halo, diffused by the fog's water droplets, prisms it's white-yellow light into a gigantic-ringed cross. The helicopter's rotors could be heard mutely above, as its psy-ops loudspeakers began to play a Christmas Carole.

As Bing Crosby's melodious voice gently crooned the familiar words of *Silent Night*

... holy night... all is calm... all is bright... the flare-cross danced its wavering magic through the mist. The song finished as the radiant flare-light twinkled, guttered, and its' last sparkling prisms winked out of sight-- and into my heart.

For a few meaningful hours... all was calm at Đà Nẵng Air Base, South Vietnam.

Christmas in Vietnam Mary Garvey's original Christmas-Letters-Home Collection.
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