

SICK

35th APS, 366th Air Police Squadron, K-9, 1966

© 2009 by Don Poss, K-9 Blackie 129X

A few more hours and it would be time to go to the K-9 kennels and pick up Blackie. My head is still spinning and my stomach has kept me running to the crappers since yesterday. Someone placed C-Rations and a P-38 by my cot. I felt the rise of bile at the thought of food. The monsoon rains pound relentlessly. Tentmates are rattling around. *Looks like crap...* someone says.

I find my way to the dispensary and asked the medic for something to stop the diarrhea and nausea. *I can't give you anything more*, he'd said. *Your temperature's bumping 102 and if it clicks up a notch then I'm taking you off duty no matter what you say.* I turned and walked back to the tent, and he yells...*next time wear your poncho!*

An unplanned stop at the cantonment crappers. Mamasan's daughter is pissed that I have barged in to a stall she wants to clean. Several retched minutes later I stagger out and she is scowling. I think up an insult like *Clean That*, but could not voice it. I didn't care.



I trudge the gauntlet of tents and stepped off the wooden pallet sidewalk and splashed-slogged through the downpour to the second tent from the last in the first row. I thought briefly of the day I arrived at Đà Nẵng, and being driven to the then vacant dirt field to our waiting tent, and the sergeant pointing to a canvas wad on a pallet covered with red dirt and saying, *There it is.*

Parked C-130s on the apron, across POL road, would begin their taxiing and blast a dust-cloud over the AP tent-city area.

I flipped the mosquito net and collapsed on the cot without taking off my boots. I made it. Humidity was like swimming on the bottom of a pool. The tent sides were unrolled which made the tent like a sauna, but kept the rain out. I wondered if I could drown with the sides down. The neverending torrential torrent pelted the canvas like gravel shoveled into a wheelbarrow.

Eating was out of the question. Blackie is waiting. I stood outside the tent and for several long seconds couldn't remember what I was doing outside. Blackie. That's right...I knew that. I trudged toward the K-9 kennels on the perimeter road. A Navy Duck with giant tires and empty of its bomb load stopped to give me a lift. I couldn't climb up and in, and just continued walking. You okay? called the driver.

I nodded to JB as I passed his Memorial Day room. Somehow I found myself at the kennel's gate post, which really was only a bunch of plywood hammered together as a sorry wind break. The AP's rain poncho was worthless and he was like a drowned rat. The world was a drowned rat. When he told me to set down, I did ... Not in the mud... ! and he lifted and guided me to his sandbag-stool. I finished dry-heaving and retching what little liquid I still retained. The sarge showed up at the gate, talked to the AP, then told me to get my sorry ass in the jeep. He didn't drive me to Blackie, but instead drove me back to my tent. Said something to the cantonment AP ... shoot his sorry sick ass if he tries to leave again.

Wind rattled the flopping tent like four angry old maids dusting a quilt. Rain was a constant calamity like thousands of marbles in mom's clothes dryer. I'm laying still...why is the tent spinning? I close my eyes and lower a boot to the wooden pallet floor. That's better. I've got to go to work. Blackie's waiting. I roll over and dry-heave holding the side of the tent away from the floor as rain clatters against the canvas and my hand like a rogue typist. I take the last of the medic's-whatever, struggling to work up enough moisture to swallow... laid back down on my cot, and dozed off.

Rain. Thunder. 105s. Blackie. Cramps curled me into a fetal position. Sweat soaked. Rain soaked. Puke soaked. I must really be sick. Dark was coming, hell was already here, and I slept through the night oblivious to the sounds of a combat Air Base.

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