

VIETNAM

Starry Starry Night Đà Nẵng AB, January 1966

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K-9, 23rd ABG/AP; 6252nd APS; 35th APS; 366th APS/SPS



Starry Starry Night Đà Nẵng Air Base, January 1966 © 2013, by Don Poss

In January of 1966, the rock and roll group *The Association* was harmonizing about [Cherish](#) (is a word I use to describe), Bobby Vinton was singing a ballad [Coming Home Soldier](#), Johnny Rivers was still crooning about the [Poor Side of Town](#), Elvis was driving the girls nuts with [I'll Remember You](#), Nancy Sinatra was singing a song meaningful to every GI, [These Boots were Made for Walking](#), and [J.B. Jones](#) had only a few days to live.

The rainy season was drawing to a close and no prolonged rain had fallen for days. Winter in Vietnam was beginning to end and the days would soon warm. I had thought Vietnam was always tropically hot and muggy, and was surprised to find the nights could be chilly, and if the wind was blowing could be cold.

A crisp wind had swept down from China, nudging the moist Vietnam weather out over the South China Sea and leaving the air so clean you could almost count the trees on distant mountains. USAF Air Police K-9 teams patrolled at night, when danger to Air Bases was greatest. One early-January and cloudless-moonless night, the stars were the brightest I had seen in-country. What made them so stark against a cobalt black sky was the Air Base seemed to settle in for a rare night of minimum activity and lights. For the first time that I could recall, runway lights were turned off, the blue boundary lights for runway and taxi ways were dimmed, and the base was eerily quiet.

Blackie (X129) and I were patrolling between the active runway and the under-construction runway, and I could see the flight line tower and hangers silhouetted against the star-lite horizon. Blackie stopped, I took a knee in the tall grass beside him and looked at him to see if he was alerting on something. Blackie tilted his head up and his muzzle slowly swept the silvery patch of light that is the Milky Way, and the stars of the universe. He rolled his head slightly right-left indicating that he was trying to understand what it was he was seeing. Blackie looked at me, then back to the rare night display as if asking for an explanation.

Raised in a Southern Baptist church, I recalled the biblical words of Isaiah, and thought that if ever there was a night sky for which those words applied, that January night was it:

*“ Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.” Isaiah 40:26*

Although Blackie was highly intelligent, I know that what I said to him was not understood. However, my voice seemed to reassure him, and after a lengthy pause, as we both marveled at the heavenly display, we moved on as-one and disappeared in to the night.

We Take Care of Our Own

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