

## KILO 69

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Phan Rang Vietnam 1970-1971

**First I must say that I am not a story writer, but want to try and pass on one of my experiences in Vietnam.** After returning from my first VSPA reunion in Pensacola, I felt that I had met with old friends that I should have been in contact with for all those years after Nam. But a lot of water has gone over the dam since then, and hindsight is always 20/20. I had been on the computer looking for a buddy of mine named John Rader who was stationed with me at Phan Rang in 1970-1971. After finding him and talking one Sunday, we had both decided to make the reunion a reunion for us also, and so we event.

It was a lot of fun and we talked into wee hours of the morning every night, I still had a lot of memories of people I can't find. But I still have a lot of things I can't and probably never will be able to clear from the 'ole memory bank. And one of those is about to be made public in the following article. I never talked much about that *one night* but maybe this will help me forget about it, maybe! As all of you know, the days were as slow as watching for water to boil and time crept by as slow as it could. I now feel as if I put myself in a coast mode or some kind of stupor, like a dream, and let the days go by while I slept. Aw yes, sleep. One of the things that I did to pass the time. It beat driving and having a hang over the next day, all to hell. As I lay in my bed waiting for that voice to step inside, and yell that the truck was there, I thought of my wife of less than a year and my parents and their failing health. Then came the yell and off to work we went.

Some nights when you showed up for Guardmount you just had a feeling in your bones about the night that was about to unfold in the dark before you. Something I learned about the moon and stars while in Nam, was how dark it can get when the moon is not there in the sky. I learned how many days, or should I say nights, that the moon would be out in a month. Then I could say I had only *3 more moons* till I would be out of the dream and back to the real world.

Some posts had a lot of character and some had a lot of reputation that had been passed on to the NEWBEEES and left an impression on them that they would never forget. My post was Kilo 69, Aw yes the STRIP GATE!!! It had a lot of neat places you could hide, but it had this 8 foot high rock that sat behind the guard shack. You could walk up the backside and get on top for a bird's eye view of the whole post. It was the favorite spot to be on that post. As the posting truck came to a stop up on the Bravo road three guys would get off there and walk down to their post and settle down to their gourmet *in-flight* lunch, in a cardboard box. That night I did not follow the normal, let's all go down to the post marker for 1969-70 by the Officers' Swimming Pool, as we called it. It was actually a sewage sediment pond. Nice place to dine out, as long as the wind was blowing up from the Wells that was straight off my post. Instead I went to my rock and the other two went to the Poolside Diner. As I settled in for the night I had watched my best bud sit and take notice of something off the fence line. Chinook 747m was an Alaskan Malamute that was around 100 pounds and was a retrain from Sentry to Patrol that had all the needs and wants of a k9 handler. Nook, as I had nick named him, was standing then sitting and then standing again. I knew he had something in his sights, but I couldn't see anything. The strip gate shack had this big spot light on it that lit the whole area off the fence for 50 yards, but I kept looking, saying it must be a Mongoose or something. Well it was *something* or he wouldn't be trying to point it out to me.

The night grew older and I sat on my ammo can and ate my peanut butter and jelly sandwich that was in the box, when I noticed something *different* the next time I looked at the Gate. Still, my eyes couldn't pick it out but Nook was now on "FULL ALERT" standing on his hind feet perfectly balanced and his hair all raised with this *"I want to bite your ass"* look. I slid over behind him and looked down his nose like sighting a strike-point and then I noticed this BUSH that wasn't there before. Then I realized that it was two bushes. *Hum, was that there and I hadn't noticed it?* Now my hair was on end! As I reached for my radio to call in an alert, the BUSH made a move toward the strip gate and the post that it swung off of.

As I had been programmed to do, I yelled "HALT! DUNG LIA!" which only made things worse. One dude runs to the fence post and draws his pistol and the other dude runs up his back and grabs the top of the post and is about to be on my side if I don't do something quick! I decided to *shoot first and make the radio call later*, as soon as I could so I could get some support. Things

went so fast, as I stood with my CAR-15 I pushed it all the way to rockin' roll (automatic) and came up with a complete 45 round burst that broke the silence of the night. Then everybody was on the radio wanting to know what was going on and where it was coming from. As I stood in my complete disbelief that this was not one of my dreams, I yelled into my radio that I had two people coming over the fence at the strip gate. Next thing I heard was the Track from the Bravo Road bunker come crashing to a stop through the bushes to my left. Then my buddies in the middle of their dinner came running down the fence to back me up. I had always liked to use tracers in my clips, I guess so that I could see where I was hitting at night. It worked real well that night. As I had stood up and let go with that big burst, I saw one on the many rounds that first came out there into the road below me and had ricocheted up and into the forearm of the guy on top of the fence. It was a strange feeling to shoot another person, then to see him fall back over the fence and jump to his feet and along with his partner disappear into the moonless night. So just for good measure I loaded another 45 round clip and scattered it all over the area. My way of saying, "and don't you ever try that on my post again!"

As we all lay in the grass waiting for those higher ups to take charge of the situation, I thought back to how long I had let that alert go on before I finally agreed with Nook that something was really there. From that night on, I always believed my Partner and I let anybody that wanted to know, know that I had an alert and that this was Chinook Saying something isn't right and let's take a look. Within a couple of hours the Australian ambush team showed up. Aw yes, "Watch Dog 22" went out on Patrol and looked for anybody that might still be in the area. All they found that night was blood and some bushes that had been tied together with shoe laces. Of course they had got them straight from the NCO Club and a lot of them could barely walk, Who knows, maybe they walked right by the same bushes I saw.

All I really care about is being able to come home, and write about it.

*Dale and his wife Nancy retired to the mountains of North Carolina on Oct 1st, 1997*

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