

VIETNAM

Binh Thuy AB/Can Tho
My Augmentee Duty Story
Photos by [Terry Sasek, LM 687](#)
632nd CSG (Fire-Truck Repairman),
AUG DET 632nd SPS
1968-1969
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Forward: Most of the pictures are of Security, Fire-trucks, base pictures looking down from the Fire Department, or pictures of me around the base. I don't recall any pictures of Agent Orange barrels, but I do have a [letter](#) that I got from the US Army in response to an inquiry I made for any knowledge they had of agent orange spray missions that occurred in the Binh-thuy AB or Can-Tho areas, during November 1968 to November 1969. To my surprise, I got an [Official Letter](#) from them stating that there had been three missions in those areas in the last two months of 1968 . They were even nice enough to send me the five (5) agent orange aerial maps ([map1-1966](#), [map2-1967](#), [map3-1968](#), [map4-1969](#), [map5-1970](#)) of the missions, and shaded in the heaviest sprayed areas around there, and stated that if I was in any of those areas on those dates listed, this would confirm my exposure to Agent Orange. They suggested I visit the VA in my area for an evaluation of my skin condition. I have included these documents here as they may help members who were at Binh Thuy AB or Can-Tho prove their exposure also, during that time period.

My Augmentee Duty Story



I enlisted in Feb.1968, took basic at Lackland AFB, TX. and was suppose to train as a flight engineer for B-52 bombers, but only made it through three weeks of tech school when they decided to recheck my eyes for color blindness and shade blindness. It seemed I could tell primary colors, but similar colors and shades all looked like a primary color to me. You see when and if you were to get battle damage from one of those cute SAM's, your had to be able to tell what color was what since everything on those big guys were color coded, I was washed out and given the choice of being a cook, or a Heavy Duty Special Purpose Vehicle repairman. I chose the latter of the two and specialized in Crash-Fire and Rescue Trucks and also V-100 Four Wheeled APC's for Security Police SAT teams.

While waiting to go to tech school at Chanute AFB, IL, I had to kill several weeks at Lackland and was offered a chance to take a heavy weapons course, since I knew I was going to Vietnam at the completion of tech school, and the only other choice for the three weeks was to pull KP duty. I went for the heavy weapons course, figured it would come in handy at Binh Thuy from what we had heard of the place.

I was trained on the M60, the M-2 Browning .50 cal. and M-79 thumper (40mm). I left for Binh Thuy AB, Vietnam on Nov. 14th 1968 and was assigned as an advisor to the VNAF to help them with their American supplied Crash-Fire Trucks, and to assist the SSgt working on the AF Crash-Fire Trucks.

Upon arriving in Vietnam I was told the guy I was replacing was extending his tour, and I was then reassigned to the 632 SPS as an Augmentee because I had taken the heavy weapons course (What was I thinking back then at Lackland?). So, I was a tower-target at the Hilton Compound off base by Tra-Noch Village. I was then assigned to guard bunkers on the perimeter with the Delta Devils and also was on the V-100 APC SAT vehicle as an M60 gunner for a little over a week.

I left in Nov. 1969 and spent my last two years at Scott AFB (MAC) in Ill. I was in a critical carrier field and was offered the \$10,000.00 bonus to re-up (\$2,500.00) on each anniversary date of the re-up date) but a real good buddy in personnel called me the night before my re-up meeting and informed me my orders to Naples, Italy were cancelled and new orders were sending me back to Binh Thuy AB, Vietnam a second tour. For the new guys who don't know me, a lot of heavy things happened there and I lost a couple of orphans to a nasty mortar attack on the playfield at the orphanage -- I just could not go back there then and I still wouldn't today if I had a chance. So I took my discharge instead with only four years, two days, six hours and ten minutes of duty.

I went back to the US Postal Service where I worked before I enlisted, but seem to have some problems with authority figures and got out of there and became an inner city truck driver, since 1973.

When I arrived in the Mekong Delta on a C-123 Provider cargo plane, we were told that we were going to land at Can-Tho Army Air Field about 8 miles south of Binh Thuy AB, because Binh Thuy was under attack and we could not land there. Upon arriving there an old TSgt from the Army walked over and asked if I was going to Binh Thuy AB. I told him that I was and how soon would we get there? He told us as soon as they got an all-clear signal they would run me up there in a jeep. He could see that I was nervous and a little upset about the change of plans, so he said to me that everything would be okay in a while, and they'd get me there. Then he told me that there was only one thing that I really needed to know when I got up there, and being that I was only 19 and somewhat semi-stupid at that moment, I just couldn't seem to keep myself from asking for his fatherly advice as to what I needed to know, after all, with all the years this guy had in the Army I figured I would be grateful for any wisdom he could share with me as to how to survive my year in Vietnam. He leaned over, looked left and then right, then looked in square in the eyes, and said, "When you get up there at Binh Thuy, If you hear a really, really loud bang, just bend over as far as you can and KISS YOUR ASS GOODBYE, CAUSE YOUR GOING TO DIE FLYBOY!"

Well needless to say I wasn't too thrilled to be *the laugh of the day* for the ground pounders. I felt that this was a really embarrassing way to start a war, but at least things will get better when I get to my brother wing-nuts at Binh Thuy. Upon checking in at the 632nd CSG, I found out that a lot of things could get worse and in a hurry. First I found out that they had a Crash-Fire Truck guy who extended his tour for two months, and now they didn't need me and didn't have any slots open elsewhere, so I was going to be loaned out to another unit on base. Here I asked for Vietnam, when the other guys were trying to stay out of there, I mean I was John Wayne Gung-ho and now they didn't even want me. And to make things worse I saw that they had a new P-2 type Crash-Fire Truck on the flight line the beauty that I just spent six months training on, and I couldn't even touch her. With great dismay I asked the First Sergeant where I was assigned to, and he said the 632nd Security Police Squadron -- your going to be a perimeter guard. *Holy s*&#!*

Hey I mean I was John Wayne Gung-ho, but John Wayne was just an actor, and nobody was really going to shoot real bullets at him. Geez man, you could get killed *out there* -- I wasn't trained back stateside for this. Relax airman, they are going to train you for all that you need to know, and besides the base is so small you can get killed just as easy as anywhere else on the base.

After a couple days of orientations and weapons refresher classes, I was now assigned to the southeast guard tower at the off base Hilton Compound east of Binh Thuy by Tra-noch village along the Bassic River. I was given an M60 machinegun and a couple of boxes of 7.62 ammo and told to challenge anyone who might come up from the river's edge. I asked what my rules of engagement were and was told just *don't kill yourself or shoot any of our guys, and remember we're the ones wearing the green uniforms*. I found out later that this guy was a really Short-Timer from Alabama who disliked Yankee's more than the VC. Great now, I'm in two wars for the price of one. I kept thinking to myself that this was crazy, here they got a green Augmentee up in a 25-30 foot tower sticking out like a sore thumb for every VC for miles around to take pot shots at and punch holes through this plywood siding of the tower.

About 2200 hours, one of the Sgts. brought me some black coffee and it was by far the worse coffee I had ever tasted, but was greatly appreciated. He asked how I was doing. and I said I was scared s(tuff)less, and was really thinking for the first time in my young life that I could get killed over here. He smiled as we sipped some coffee and told me that I would be alright and just keep cool. Sure that was easy for him to say, he already had two tours over here and knew what he was doing. Then I told him that I was scared because I never really thought about having to pull the trigger on another human being before and didn't know if I could really do that. He told me look kid, *don't over think it*, when and if the shooting starts you'll be able to shoot because you have to protect your brothers, here and on the base, and besides, after a couple rounds whizz by your head you won't hesitate at all to fire back. I also shared with him my feelings of being up so high in the air and that everyone and his uncle could blow holes through my tower, and kill my ass. He laughed and said that he was going to let me in on a secret -- the towers have 2 layers of plywood on the sides of your box, but in between the layers of plywood was a 1" thick armored steel plate, so they can't get to you with their AK-47s, but you can chew them to pieces with your M60. It was nice being 19 and believing what your sergeants told you in order to prop up your confidence in your abilities. He also gave me a little variation of the prayer he said he always said when things would get tense: *Yea though I walk through the delta in the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for I am the badest mother f-cker in the delta.*

It was months later after he had rotated home, that I found out that there was really just one layer of plywood on the sides of my tower. I wanted to believe that In the span of 1 week I had gone from a scared kid to a fearless warrior ready to take on anyone who

tried to mess with my brothers. But in reality I was always scared there, but not really of Charles, but that I would let down my brother Airmen who put their trust in me to protect them as they slept, and especially that I would not measure up to the abilities of my sky cop brothers who also trusted me to do it right. You guys and your professionalism out there gave me the self-esteem and confidence to do it right every time. And because of all of you I not only looked like I knew what I was doing, but your efforts got me home safely and in one piece.

To my brothers at Binh Thuy: I thank you for your help and understanding that allowed me to be one of you if only for awhile. As much as I liked tinkering with my Crash-Fire-Trucks 'till I was honorably discharged in 1972, it would never again mean as much to me as the time spent with the Binh Thuy Sky Cops.

Terry A. Sasek
Binh Thuy AD 632nd CSG and 632nd SPS, 1968-1969

Check out [Terry Sasek's Binh Thuy AB Photos](#)

[Agent Orange Maps](#)

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