

Vietnam

Da Nang Air Base

6252nd Air Police Squadron, 1965

The Boy in The Jeep

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Mid August 1965, I was posted at a Da Nang Air Base flightline gate during the midnight shift. Around dawn, Vietnamese civilian workers would come streaming in toward their jobs in the ARVN and VNAF section. Rumors had it that a Village near the base had been hit by Viet Cong and villagers were killed. I would soon have a glimpse of what may have happened.

August 1965 - Combined Action Platoons are formed by U.S. Marines utilizing South Vietnamese militia units to protect villages and conduct patrols to root out Viet Cong guerrillas.

The Boy in The Jeep

Nearly two weeks after trucks loaded with bodies drove through the QC flightline gate ([Scarlet Ribbon](#)), I was reassigned the VNAF gate duty, and QC Tran, whom I had worked with before, was already there. After greetings, I asked Tran if he knew what had happened to the small boy brought through the gate in a QC Jeep the last time we guarded together. Tran reminded me the NCO in the jeep was a cousin. Tran said his ARVN NCO cousin worked in the QC compound, and had told him the following:

The Boy brought in the compound was interviewed by QC Civilian Intelligence. He did not know why Viet Cong had returned to his small village. He only knew his father's orders that if he saw VC approaching the village he was to run and hide in the jungle near the river and not return until they left. So far, the boy had done so twice without getting caught as the VC had always approached on the same rice paddy trail and were easily spotted.

The first time VC came, they were very friendly and an elder with them spoke about foreigners in South Vietnam. The VC were met with a polite but guarded response from the villagers.

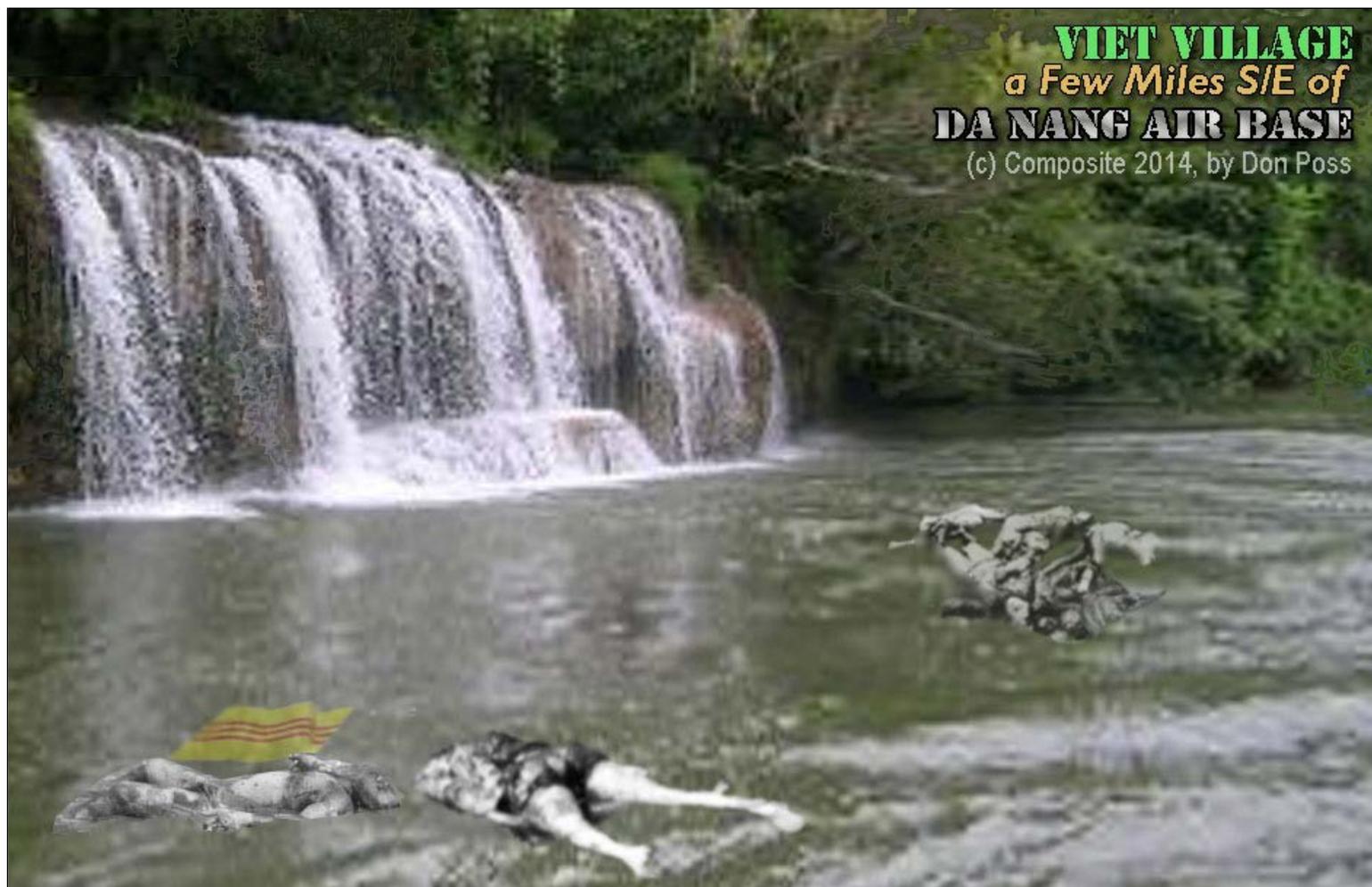
The second time VC came to the village they were a larger group who were polite but openly brandished weapons. They left behind a

political officer who was to observe and "assess" village needs. She was friendly and asked a lot of questions and wrote a lot in a small booklet.

The third time the Viet Cong returned, they approached the village from two directions, and the boy barely was able to hide. They were forceful and herded villagers together where an elder with them lectured that disloyal-villagers would be punished. He then summoned the woman who remained behind, whom he called a *political officer*. She was then wearing a Viet Cong black pajama type uniform and announced that parents and sons called by name would assemble in an unused pig pen, for reeducation.

Seven families, with twelve young sons, were named and grouped in the corral. The elder proclaimed these families were guilty of allowing their older sons to join the puppet government's military. The families were deemed *enemies of the people*.

At first, the seven family's grass huts were pulled down by the VC. The villagers were all alarmed but too frightened to protest. Then several of the Viet Cong formed an L-shaped line on the pig pen fence. The villagers were made to set down, and the female *political officer* shouted at them for several minutes about harboring traitors in their village and they should be grateful for their protection from the puppet government. Without warning she gave an order to shoot the *enemies of the people*. Villagers were then made to bound the hands and feet of the dead, and carry their bodies on poles to a nearby river, then toss them in where the current swept them away.



The boy had watched from concealment near the river bank and forest's edge, unaware his parents and young brother were dead. After the bodies were thrown in the water, the VC escorted the pole bearers back to the village. The boy feared for his family and ran through the tangle-brush to catch up to the floating bodies. He lost sight of the bodies several times, then took a short cut path to the meandering river bank north of the village. He caught up to the floating bodies just as they reached a small waterfall drop, whereas the river joined a faster but narrower flow of water. He saw a South Vietnamese flag floating near the bodies, and thought his father's body near it.

The boy was afraid to return to the village and hid until dark, then made his way to another village that had already received ARVN protection. At dawn he entered that village and told his story.

Later that afternoon, military trucks arrived near the snaking meandering river bank and led to where the current was known to deposit dead animals and whatever debris was being carried by the current. South Vietnam government photographers took film and still photos. Most of the bodies were found, collected, and trucked to Da Nang AB. QC Intelligence thought it might be worthwhile to display the bodies for propaganda.

Someone remembered the small boy and a QC jeep was sent back to transport him to Da Nang Airbase, where he was to be photographed crying before the bodies.

In the end, a political decision was made not to disclose photos or the incident because that would imply government forces could not protect villagers. Plans were made for return of the bodies to the village for burial, and the boy was reunited with his ARVN brother, and then to live with relatives in Saigon.

Within days, the boy's village was openly flying a Viet Cong. VNAF A-1's bombed and destroyed the village.

Tran said the Viet Cong did not have a problem distributing photos of the destroyed village to other villages.



For nearly twenty years, the first-part of this story has been posted. I have tried independently to investigate and discover what happened, and find anyone with first-hand knowledge. I was not successful. I do not know for certain the truth of the events Tran related to me.

Why do I remember the details so clearly after nearly fifty-years have passed? I wrote them down. Secondly, would you remember, and take to heart, an explanation that accounted for your nearly being flattened by a truck loaded with bodies? I did...and now and then it is the night's feature attraction.

So...why post the complete story now? Because what I personally witnessed cannot be dismissed or otherwise explained satisfactorily:

- * I did see QC trucks with bodies enter the flightline gate and drive toward the QC Intelligence compound (Scarlet Ribbons, Scarlet Dreams).*
- * I did see the QC Jeep with the small boy pass through the flightline gate.*
- * Tran's statement to me remains more plausible than any government's spin, or quashing.*
- * I have no reason to doubt what seems circumstantially obvious to me: It is likely the Viet Cong singled out the boy's village because of the number of families with sons serving in the SVN military. They terrorized the village and soon flew a Viet Cong flag over it, knowing government forces would bomb the village and thus provide propaganda for the VC.*
- * Because of my computer skills, I am able to recreate images of what I still clearly recall, such as the night-scene where QC trucks enter the gate, and the day-scene where the QC Jeep approaches the gate (if you look closely, you will see the small boy's head sticking up from the back seat and through the rear window (between the driver and passenger)).*
- * And finally, I will be 70 this October 2014. Someone someday may be curious enough to discover the truth as technology improves research-investigation capabilities.*

[Scarlet Ribbons, Scarlet Dreams](#)

(...the Gate)

I would like to hear from anyone knowing anything about what actually happened, or may have happened, in the above story, or if you experienced an unusual event at the VNAF access gate.

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