

### George AFB:

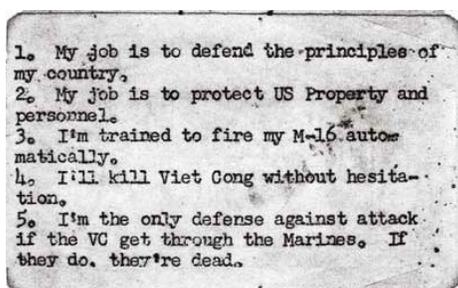
*During 1964/65 F-104s from George AFB were TDY to the 23d Air Base Group at Đà Nẵng AB South Vietnam, and supported the 476th and 479th TFS in regular TDY rotations. Their job was to fly MiG combat air patrol (MiGCAP) missions to protect American fighter bombers against attack by North Vietnamese fighters.*



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### Epilogue by AIC Handy :

Later, when I was back at George AFB, Victorville, CA, I heard that I was put in for a medal. I never had anyone tell me I had done a good job, and never received any medal.



The truth is, I wasn't prepared or trained how to respond to a sapper attack, nor how to respond to any attack, for that matter. It was hell on earth and everything was happening fast. Later, at the dispensary, I was indeed a real "basket-case" and I was scared that I would have to go through that again and I was shaking with a real panic feeling. I believe now, at that time, if I was [re]armed I would have been as much a threat to us as I would be to the enemy.

I was then told I was being medevac and would be flown out on a C-130. We flew to Okinawa. I don't remember how or when I got back to Taiwan.

My "medevac" turned out to be just another flight back to George AFB I was never counseled by any doctor or psychologist that I know of. No one ever explained to me what happened. I think now that is because no one knew what had happened and just assumed the worst [of me] because no one explained it to them either. As a result, they uniformly just treated me like I was a criminal.

Just like the OSI at the dispensary, when they couldn't *make-me-a-criminal* they decided just to get rid of me and ship me out.

On the "med-evac" flight I had hours and hours of reliving the entire nightmare. *And it was a nightmare.* And it is a nightmare. I questioned my own actions. But I did what SSgt Jensen told me to: I called in the attack and I fired at the enemy. That didn't matter -- *OSI accused me of killing Sergeant Jensen.* OSI then put me on a plane out of Vietnam. OSI never told me anything or tried to help me get a grip on the absolute hellish nightmare I was tossed in to and out of. OSI left a cloud of doubt and innuendo and an implied mark-of-Cane on me. *OSI never charged me with anything.*

### George AFB, CA (PCS):

I was put back on Base Police right away – *just like* nothing had ever happened. *Just like* I had only had a long weekend away. *Just like* Sergeant Jensen was not dead.

I was questioned by a 2nd Lieutenant there as to why I did what I did. "*Did what I Did?*" – what the hell does that mean?

He voiced his opinion that he thought I "handled it badly." How the hell would he know? "*Handled What Badly*", exactly? And how the hell would I know – no one ever trained me how to handle "it" let alone how not to handle it. The lieutenant wasn't there.

Soon after the lieutenant laid down his opinion on me, he got his own orders to go to Vietnam. I wished him the best, and *hoped he could experience exactly what I went through.*

One evening as the sun was setting at George AFB, I was working Base Police. It was not dark enough for head lights but still just about when you needed them, so I was just cruising around the base. A car

going the opposite direction back-fired its engine when it was along side me. I ducked down on the seat and when I rose up I had my pistol drawn and my sights on a little boy crossing the street on a bicycle. I almost shot him out of reflex.

I drove back to the HQ and turned my weapon in, and related what had just happened to me. I said I will still do my shift but without a weapon. I needed help but couldn't understand what was happening to me.

**I was relieved of duty and sent to March AFB , CA. for observation.** That was the first doctor I had seen since the dispensary room at Đà Nẵng AB. The Doctor told me that I had a normal reaction to the car backfiring. Nothing ever came from his comments. I don't know what I expected from him. I just wanted him to *explain it all to me*, and make it go away.

**I was honorably discharged** from the Air Force at the end of my 9 month extension.

**Since 1 July 1965**, it is true that I still have bad dreams. When I say "bad" I mean beyond anything I can convey. I am sweating. Choking. Burning. Gasping for breath. My wife is more than concerned. I think I scare her. I asked my wife how often the-dreams happen... *I am not really sure*. Sometimes I think I am in one long dream. *If I only knew what to do* – if I had only been trained, maybe I would know how to handle this in the dream? My wife says I probably have these dreams three or four times a week. I think she is minimizing the numbers because her answer somehow *makes it... better*.

I knew I needed help. *I know I need help now*. No one will help me. No one has ever helped me. I don't know how to get anyone to listen. I went to a private Christian Psychotherapist who seemed to help for a time. I also went to one meeting with a group from the VA.

I relive 1 July 1965, or part of it, nearly every day or night. I know I'm not the same person I was before the July 1, 1965 event. I'm on my 5th marriage and I know I won't let people get close to me but I can't help myself. It's like, *if I just do something*, it will be alright. I don't know what that *something* is.

I read Sgt Bush's account of that night, and know Sgt Bush gave the best report he could, but he was not there the whole time. Also, I was a three stripper, not two, and I was TDY from George AFB, CA. (Victorville).

Time passes. I think writing or talking about it helps. And I have now put in a VA claim for PTSD presently and am waiting for Oakland to respond. The VA wants to know if I was *exposed to Agent Orange* at Đà Nẵng AB. I don't know if I was exposed to Agent Orange while at Đà Nẵng AB. [The Ranch Hand aircraft at Đà Nẵng AB were used in the Agent Orange program.] I know there were AO barrels on the flight line and around the base. My assigned person, I don't know if he is a Doctor or not, at the VA Center, says that if there is any written documentation that I was put in for a medal then I'm entitled to that medal. I don't know if there is documentation, or even if there ever was, just that is what I have heard or been told.

Respectfully,

Al Handy

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