

I Need a Uniform!!

or

The long way around in a 'borrowed uniform'

by **Patrick R. McKinney**

Tân Sơn Nhứt

8/1968 to 3/1970

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It was the last day of my R&R in Sydney, Australia, in late 1969. I had been up all day and had gone back to the hotel at about 3: 30 a.m. with the intent of getting a little sleep before going to the R&R center at 6: 00 a.m. to catch my flight back to Tân Sơn Nhứt. I asked the desk clerk to give me a wake up call at 5: 00 a.m.

I woke up at 10: 00 a.m. with the phone in my hand. I guess I had answered the wake up call and gone right back to sleep but I don't remember answering the phone. I got dressed and grabbed my suitcase and rushed to the R&R center. Needless to say I missed my flight and there were no other flights that day going to Vietnam. The guy there told me that I could get a flight the next day as long as I was there at 6: 00 a.m. So I had another day in Sydney.

The next morning I got to the R&R center *on time* but I was told there were no flights going to Tân Sơn Nhứt that day but I could get a flight to Phù Cát. Since I was already a day late I figured I had better take the flight.

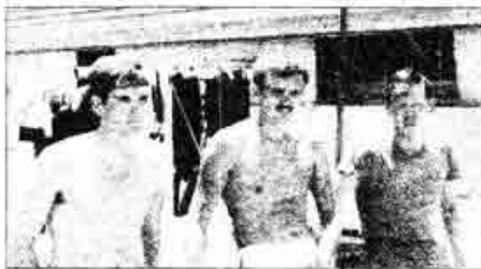
I arrived at Phù Cát, after a long flight from Sydney, sometime in the late evening. I went to the "In Country" flight counter in the terminal to find out about getting a flight to Tân Sơn Nhứt. I was told that there were no flights until morning and that I would have to be in uniform. The uniform thing presented a problem within itself. I had gone on R&R without bringing a uniform with me. So, now I'm back in Vietnam--*a day late*--and without a uniform that was needed to be able to travel on an incountry military flight. I stayed in the terminal area for the night trying to get some sleep and trying to figure out a way to get a uniform.

Sometime during the night an Airman going home had taken off his fatigues and thrown them into the trash can in the latrine. I took them from the trash can. When my flight to Tân Sơn Nhứt was called, in the early hours of the morning, I took those fatigues and put them on. Now, try and picture this: I was 6 feet and weighed 145 pounds. The guy who had these fatigues must have weighed 220 pounds because I was just swimming in them, they were so big. The only shoes I had to wear were a pair of brown Hush Puppies shoes and I had no hat to go with the fatigues, not to mention that the name on the fatigues was not the same as the one on my ID card. As sloppy and funny as I must have looked I was allowed to board the flight and I made it back to Tân Sơn Nhứt safe and sound.

The day that I was late getting back was my regularly scheduled day off so I did not miss any work; therefore, I was not *really* missed by anyone except my cubie. That was a nice piece of luck!! When I got off the flight at Tân Sơn Nhứt I went to the S. P. in the terminal and had him radio for a patrol to take me to the Squadron area. I had enough time to get unpacked and get ready to work my regular afternoon shift and no one *but me* was the wiser.

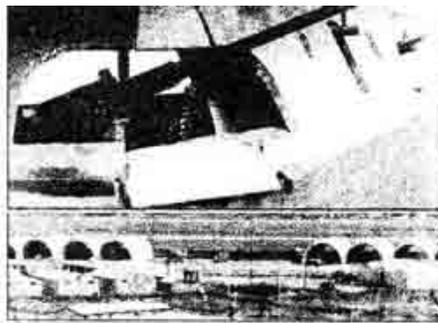
Photos: Guardmount - October 1997





(L. to R.) Doug Meadors from Baton Rouge, LA; Duane Schmitt from Spokane, WA and Don Thompson from PA. Don was one of the first people trained on the V-100 Tank

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Flight line at Tan Son Nhut



Check point at POI area

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1968 to
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