

APC Films the De Long Pier

In the fall of 1965, while on TDY (temporary Duty to Vietnam from the Army Pictorial Center, N.Y. C. I was sent on assignment to Cam Ranh Bay, to film the story of the De Long Pier being installed. Landing on a 10,000 foot runway, I saw nothing from the planes windows, execpt sand dunes and scrub brush. The plane finally stopped and shut down on the tarmac next to a 6X6 CONEX (shipping container). De-planning there was nothing. No terminal, no buildings, no tents even, no squadrons of planes neither cargo/passenger or tactical fighters. One Air Force SGT operating out of the CONEX Container with a fold-up field desk, typewriter with a clipboard was all I saw to the airbase of Cam Ranh Bay in the fall of 1965.

This one sergeant was the control tower, passenger reservations agent, with several fire extinguishers, a one man fire department, base operations, a fort lift, he was also cargo master, with mail sacks he was also the postal clerk and everything else. He was definately an AIR FORCE of ONE. Slides of Cam Ranh Bay on file at TTU.

Besides us two photographers, very few people got off the plane, The AF SGT called out several names and those soldiers got on board the plane, with bags and baggage. We asked the AF SGT if he knew of the De Long Piers. He was ignorant of Army matters. Telling us there were a few Army units scattered about several miles away. Finally an Army MP jeep drove up to our position. Asking the MP's about the De Long Piers, like the AF SGT they too had no idea what we were talking about, but offered to be a taxi service to the base commander's post.

The Cam Ranh Bay Army Base Commander heard the term De Long Pier, but not much more. He accused us of blabbling about classified information, and ordered us detained until he got the facts. Calling the Army Transportation unit at Cam Ranh Bay, the base commander got an identical answer. They heard the term De Long Pier, but nothing more. Contacting the civilian consortium architect and builder of Cam Ranh Bay, and every other U.S. military installation in Vietnam RMK/BRJ (Brown & Root, Morrisson & Knudson, Jones & Raymond Int'l got us off the hook about classified information. However we were told the piers were over due, with nobody having any idea if they were in the South China Sea or on the open Pacific Ocean coming from the states. RMK/BRJ was busy constructing the jetty out into the bay.

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A wasted trip coming here, it was suggested we come back in a week to 10 days. We were informed of an afternoon convoy to Nha Trang. In the mean time the two of us strolled down the beach at Cam Ranh Bay. On the Southern Tip was a Vietnamese Fishing Village. TTU VA 3019631-670 for slides of fishing village.

We jumped on some truck in the convoy that would allow two strangers a lift. We were told the trip was only 15 to 20 miles. However it would take $1\frac{1}{2}$ to two hours to travel the distance at convoy speed. Entering the city of Nha Trang, I saw mile after mile of great looking beach. We were told by others in the truck, that Nha Trang was the Riveria of the Orient. From there we got a flight back to Saigon.

Some three weeks later we ventured back to Cam Ranh Bay. This time when we asked about the De Long Pier everyone including the AF SGT at the CONEX Container knew what we were talking about. We hitch-hiked a ride to the water front and what we saw wasn't a pier at all in the traditional sense, but a barge, large barges, similiar to those used on the Mississippi to transport goods up and down the river. They were the better portion of a football field in size. I'd guess 250 feet long by 75 feet wide, if not larger.

They had three of these barges (De Long Piers) placed end on end in the bay, with the man made jetty or cause-way from land out to the piers. To hold the piers firmly in place the barges had three or four holes on each side of the barge. Into the holes were inserted large sections of pipe which were roughly four feet in diameter. The RMK/BRJ people preferred to call the pipe caison, rather than piling. Several pile-drivings were working pounding the caissons into the sandy soil of Cam Ranh Bay. When the caison was short, the RMK/BRJ crew welded another section of pipe and the pile-driver started all over again.

The piers must have come in about a week after we left the first time. At least we could see progress, and the shape of the pier. I believe in later trips to Cam Ranh Bay I saw an (T) or (L) shaped pier.

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Written July 2004