

Synopsis

From my first trip to the Texas Tech Vietnam Archive, in conjunction with the Diem Regime Conference, I departed with a firm intuition, that the archive personnel wished they could attach sensors to all of our mines, in order to stimulate our brains in to remembering a day by day accounting of events, experiences, new equipment, changes in tactics, field expediency and our interface with the local populace. The archive's wished to hear how the indigenous citizens lives were changed exponentially because of the American presence. They wanted to chronicilize every facet of the war from beginning to end. They wanted our first hand knowledge not only from the ground troops in South Vietnam, but from B-52 flight crews stationed on Guam, and the sortie crews that bombed North Vietnam from aircraft carriers, Thailand and South Vietnam bases. The archive staff wanted oral interviews and transcripts from the officers and sailors from the numerous ships plying the coastal waters of the South China Sea, along with the armed forces based in Thailand, that supported the war effort.

The archive's quest for comprehensible information spanned from the State Department's diplomatic initiatives and Paris Peace Talks for concluding the war, to the Saigon Embassy staffers input, and their employed specialists of CORDS (Civic Operations and Revolutionary Developments Support) and the CIA operated Air America. The archive staff wanted wisdom on the United States initiated Pacification and Nation Building Programs, chiefly under CORDS auspices, along with their fruition rate.

The contractors can enlighten us all with aspects of site or job requirements, and technical jargon, such as board feet, asphalt yards and cubic meters of concrete, along with amps, watts and voltage line drop, etc, etc. The archive personnel wanted to hear the knowledge, experiences and events of RMK/BRJ (Brown & Root, Morrison & Knudsen, Jones & Raymond International) that oversaw the building of ports, airbases and most military installations in Vietnam and Thailand. Plus PA&E (Pacific Architects & Engineers) that manned and operated sensitive locations, including communications centers and some psychological warfare sites. These people have memories, facts, figures and data, along with technical expertise in their trade field, which are of critical value and significantly improve the archive documentation of the Vietnam War, with morale support projects and transportation improvement factors.

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Let's not forget the war foes, the anti-war protesters. The Vietnam Archive inherited vast files and extensive quantity of dossiers on the war objectors, the demonstrations and anti-war marches that took place in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Still the archive's thrust for more preception into what caused "Neutral and Hawks" to convert to "Doves", that ultimately forced President Johnson to refuse a re-election campaign is alive. The lust for more insight into the forces and causes on either side, the Viet Cong and North Vietnam saga, the U.S. military, the contractors, the diplomatic corps and the anti-war patronage are all included. In short the Vietnam Archive staff wants testimony of every American affected by the war in Southeast Asia.

Using the criteria outlined in the above text, I've mentally re-enacted and methodologically reminiscenced the exploits I encountered during my approximately 1,000 days spent in South Vietnam, expending nearly two reams of paper while writing the essays and stories for this website. Without fabricating details, I know this website contains exclusive topics found no where within the vast quantities of materials held by the Vietnam Center. The last statement was accentuated with a call to Steve Maxner, The Vietnam Center's Director, that revealed the archive had only a single story concerning "RADIO RESEARCH". Mr Maxner instantly reconized the term "KHAKI MAFIA", but stated the archive had not one story on the subject. I replied I'd write stories on both subjects.

For the Army photographer our own imagination was our only limitation toward story lines. Besides the photographer, the only other enlisted job with remotely the same latitude and flexibility in choosing assignments was the newspaper journalist. However the newspapers were predominately the jurisdiction of division level organizations. Thus the reporters were relegated to covering stories concerning the 15,000 man unit, and rarely expanded beyond internal operations, to cover joint US/ARVN (Vietnamese Army) combat operations, or the truckers that supplied the base with petroleum based products, food stores, new and replacement equipment and everything else essential for installation life and operation.

At MACV Press Camps around the country were scores of Army and sister-service publications. I probably saw a few USARV (U.S. Army Vietnam) command newspapers, but not MACV. As supreme military command, they operated the Armed Forces Radio and in Mid-67 started transmitting television. Therefore MACV opted to use broadcast media rather than print media to inform the service personnel of the news.

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Besides finding topics and subject matter found nowhere else at the Vietnam Center, this website contains stories of the absurd, bazaar, despicable, peculiar or strange, but I attest all stories and essays are true. For example; I discuss hospital patients growing their own food, building their wards and placing the outhouses over the fish pond. I often awoke in laughter, wondering if the fish's palate favored turds or diarrhea? I talked of cooking with explosives. I've written about the infamous Fuck-You lizard. I wrote of the Army taking over a Hippie Nudist College. I've explained combing rats for Bubonic Plague fleas, along with filming at a Leper Colony. I've written of the G.I. term "Biscuit Bitches", along with repatriated Hoi Chanh (Ex-VC) returned to the Saigon side.

My curriculum explores beer can wallpaper, and ARVN's teaching American troops about VC/NVA booby traps. I have commentary on a street beggar that turned into a guardian angel. I discuss bathing with leaches and people sniffers, along with an essay on an inflatable hospital. I talked about "Saigon Tea", along with under aged drinking. I argued the percentage of land mass versus population with access to electric power. I wrote on the effects a MPC exchange had on the Vietnamese society. I relayed the story of a Montagnard tribe so backward, they let the horses run loose, while the tribal females were the beast of burden.

In one story I explained American agriculture advisors effects on the province and the prosperity achieved, devoid of war or any military presence. I wrote about a world record rice harvest, and a peasant farmer unable to feed his family, but sent his son to law school upon heeding CORDS advice. In another essay I told of politicians, pentagon brass and entertainment VIPs that flocked to Vietnam.

Cockswains and pilots are conspicuous in numerous essays, both water borne or marine and aerial pilots of fixed and rotary wing aircraft. I detail the complexity of an Army Harbor Pilots's job, I discuss Army Tug Boat Captain's mission, along with LCVP, LCM and LCU utility. I penned a story of amphibian vehicles as the LARC and BARC. I experienced the flight crew of the Cayuse Helo and a decade long fixation to fly an Air Force T-37, that came to fruition in Vietnam. I lived through the ludicrous idea of flying below tree top without light in the dead of night, to draw enemy fire

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Transportation means were highlighted in various stories. The primary story centered on "The Worst Film In Vietnam." Never seeing the movie script, plus the numskull director that damned the client's desires, he was making his own movie. From the film I shot I can only deduce the film was part logistical, part transpotation. Before going to Vietnam, I was told 20% of all goods arriving in country was useless. That encompasses drained, expired dated products, rotten, spoiled, corroded, rusted, borken, stolen, mishandled etc, etc. Other transportation essays include the De Long Pier, The Walter's Tractor, The GOER truck and the Saigon To Tay Ninh daily convoy.

Medical services comprise a number of essays. I nearly abandoned Male Nurse, until dropping my vanity asking the hospital commander, what a male nurse could perform, that a female could not? Once the facts were known events were so spontaneous, that my mind blurred. A prosthetic Vietnamese boy being returned to Saigon by the DASPO Team was another story. The already mentioned searching for Bubonic Plague, inflatable hospital and Leper Colony story cumulate some medical stories. MEDCAPS abounded all over Vietnam. Americans treating Vietnamese, Americans treating Montgnard villages, Vietnamese Military treating Vietnamese civilians. The first time a MEDCAP team entered a village some enticement was used. I filmed Vietnamese movies and television, even American candy used to gather a crowd, before the medic treated any villagers. A story of Army drug addiction Detox facility rounds out the medical related essays.

Among the strangest events is still a mind boggling mystery, as to why a linguistics, colloquialism, geographical expert was doing half way around the world on the deserted beach at Nha Trang. His speciality was guessing within 50 miles where someone lived, from hearing them speak.

Not including the Bob Hope Christmas show with scores of top name Hollywood performers; dozens of politicians, Pentagon Brass, Corporate Tech Reps, entertainment VIP's, even Ann Landers or Dear Abby and I shared one flight to Saigon. I filmed Gov. Dockings and BG Kinderdine's visit to Vietnam and penned their stories. I also wrote VIP's Bombard MACV listing celebrities that toured Vietnam, But, the grand-daddy of all VIPs took the entire DASPO Detachment to cover President Johnson's Asian tour, with the pinnacle moment was LBJ's surprise visit to Vietnam, during the Manila Conference.

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The diversity of subject matter and topics covered by this website or events I experienced was far from finished. I recall four jobs involving contractors or Combat Engineers. The earliest project was Combat Engineers using the ROAM PLOW, tearing up the triple canopy jungle denying the enemy hiding places. Later the MACV photo team was sent to Dong Tam on the banks of the Mekong River. The site was a low swampy region, requiring the entire 2000 plus acre base to be elevated a good 10 feet for habitation and be above the river's flood stage.

The Dredge New Jersey was floated from Singapore to Dong Tam. Day and night the dredge pumped silt, sand and muck from the river's bottom onto the bank, where acre sized holding tanks were located. Gravity drained the water, and a few days later a front end scoop and dump truck could haul off the dirt to base expansion sites.

Another projects began as a armored combat operation. I left base camp aboard an APC, heading into War Zone "C". Half a day into the operation two Chinook helicopter hovered overhead as engineers climbed down ladders, carrying chain saws, axes and other hand tools to clear a helicopter landing pad from the jungle.

I eyewitnessed the monumental traffic jam created when RMK/BRJ resurfaced simultaneously three lanes of traffic on the main boulevard between Saigon and Cholon.

Nuy Sap Quarry, I visited this site twice. A small outcrop of construction grade rock, the Vietnamese had been mining for eons, using hammer and chisels, the men of Nuy Sap would break away several hundred pound blocks of stone. The village women using hammers would smash the boulder into smaller stones. The entire village might harvest three or four tons a day. The American company RMK/BRJ took the North face of the hill, using rock crusher, pneumatic drills and explosives crushed 100 tons daily.

Enemy caches comprise elements of three stories. During the first combat patrol I was assigned to cover, the battalion of the 1st Inf. Div, I was working with, located a large enemy weapons cache, on the first day of the operation. A month or so later the 25th Inf Div found a massive enemy rice cache. The 25th Div also called the press corp to film them firing captured 122M.M. soviet rockets back at suspected enemy positions. Just the opposite happened when Viet Cong sapper attack the 3rd Ord Depot at Long Binh. I was still there and witnessed the huge explosion and watched the shock-wave expand out from ground zero until it shook our hut some three miles away. My MACV photo team was allowed to film the damage the next afternoon, but the civilian press was kept away for two days.

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Regional and Popular Forces (RUFF/PUFF) My first Vietnam orientation it was stated the Vietnamese Army had three branches. The regular Army, with regional and Popular Forces. The Vietnamese populace couldn't remember the last Regular Army battle field victory, and had lost faith in the military, likewise the average American serviceman had little respect for the Vietnamese combat units. Any lesser trained, equipped troops were no better than clowns in uniform. I questioned why a small country like Vietnam would have three components Army, until realizing the U.S. was set up exactly the same, with Active duty, Reserve and National Guard elements.

I recall one project solely on the RUFF/PUFF and the unit strongly mentioned in another story. Their mission in both cases were defensive in nature, not offensive. In the project RUFF/PUFF Bridge Security, the entire serviceman's family lived at the bridge. The troops family worked, ate and slept right with the military man. Some slept under the bridge or had earthen burms to shoot from. A large flock of geese lived with the RUFF/PUFF. The geese would squack at the slightest provocation neutralizing any surprise attack. Keeping that major highway bridge from being blown up was of vital importance.

In the Candy Story First Release, RUFF/PUFF unit defended the outer perimeter of the Special Forces Camp. The women and children also lived with father soldier. I wrote of making earth huts, did the cooking, with the entire family ate, slept and protected their assigned section of the perimeter wall. While the average G.I. considered the RUFF/PUFF units a joke, I bet countless thousands of Special Forces and Ranger personnel that formed the vanguard of far flung outposts owe their lives to these rag-tag RUFF PUFF soldier and hold them in high esteem.

Other stories at this website focus on the early military phone system in Vietnam, and the woes a Data Processing unit encountered working there. On one combat patrol I describe a Scout Dog with sniffles. In Thailand I tell of the King receiving a SEATO Briefing, and at Chu Lai Gen Westmoreland presenting the Americal Division their colors.

There was always lots of rumor and gossip of corruption in Vietnam. I could only confirm one case where the province chief robbed the school children of school building materials, so that he could build himself a new villa.

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I have written about farmers getting their crops to market. I also mentioned the disappearance of the Buddhist Monks from the city streets, along with Vietnamese cops riding Harleys. I addressed the duties of the house girls and their wages, along with Papasan Shit-Burner. I told of ways the Vietnamese civilians performed some sort of service to the Americans to augment the family income. The above represents a sizeable portion of subject matter and diversity of topics available at this website.

Since beginning this website a few years ago I never heard that anyone ever visited this location. I would like to hear of any comments concerning this website

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