

"Pilot requests permission to meet Operator Deering in the DuPont Hotel Bar at 6pm, over."

"Roger, (giggle) 6 pm, over and out."

One day at the Officer's Club I received a phone call from Ruth DuPont whom I had met at Boca Grande, Florida, during Easter vacation, 1940, when I was guest there of Tyson Gilpin. She was a dark, slim girl with a very attractive personality. She invited me to dinner at Winterthur and suggested I bring a friend. I ran into a navigator I knew slightly named McKinney, who hailed from Bee, Texas, and at the appointed hour we drove over to Winterthur. Mrs. DuPont, Ruth's mother, greeted us informally in tweed skirt and cashmere cardigan and was soon playing musical comedy hits on the piano. Then we sat down to dinner in a smallish but beautiful dining room, one outstanding feature of which was 18<sup>th</sup> Century wallpaper showing scenes of the China trade. Needless to say, informality included a footman behind each chair. We had a very pleasant evening. Driving back to the base, McKinney was mind-boggled. He couldn't get over the fact that Mrs. DuPont was so friendly and unassuming. "Why," he said, "she acted just like a nice Texas housewife." I'm sure that, somewhere, McKinney still talks of his visit to Winterthur.

I saw somewhat more of Peggy Ranken, sister of a classmate at Princeton. My father used to come down to Wilmington for Board of Directors' meetings and once, after I had departed from Newcastle, he took Peggy out to lunch and was quite taken with her.

I heard of one memorable incident at Newcastle, which I was only recently able to vouch for. It happened that a Captain Lambert was bringing in a B-25 bomber one day and – it does happen – he neglected one small item on his landing checklist which was to lower the wheels. As result the plane was severely damaged and Lambert soon found himself standing at attention before a court-martial panel of irate Majors and Colonels. He absorbed a great deal of abuse and caustic comment. Finally, overcome with contrition, he said he fully accepted the blame and was full of remorse. He shamefacedly asked how much a B-25 bomber cost. Driving home their point, the panel triumphantly

told him. Lambert then modestly pulled out his personal checkbook and said, "Well, I feel the least I can do is pay for it," proceeding to place a check for the full amount on the table. According to my reports, the atmosphere of the court-martial changed rapidly. Colonels, thinking perhaps of possible post-war employment, became suddenly gracious and solicitous. Sensing that they were in the presence of a genuine Listerine Lambert, they urged him not to feel too bad, boys will be boys, we all make mistakes, etc.!

By July 1944 I was named one of a small number of so-called "check navigators." Airlines, including Crescent, had check pilots who would, without prior warning, board any regular flight with orders to oversee and check out the performance and procedures of pilots. Crescent now instituted the same procedure for navigators. This meant that I was given blanket orders to proceed at will to \_\_\_\_\_, then listing every stop on the long Crescent route to Europe, Africa and India and back again – as I saw fit. Since the ocean crossing was the most relevant leg from a navigational standpoint, I check-rode flights from Newcastle to the Azores and from there to Casablanca and then back again, thus checking out two or three navigators on the way out and the same coming home, all during July. Normally I would wait for the navigator to do his three-star fix and then do my own, and see how close we were.

I went back to regular Crescent flights in August, assigned to such pilots as H.W. Gessner, W.E Ropp, and R. Norton. On October 19, I flew in to Paris for the first time, with return trips there in December. In January 1945, I went back on check navigator duty, now between Newcastle and Paris, riding with Machado, McGilvery, Fulk, and Lederer, and in February with Delamater, Brissey, Lafferty and Keefer. In March I was again assigned to one crew under Major P.T. McCarty for two final runs into Paris. Usually we would layover there only one or two days before turning around, but in January when I was still my own boss as check navigator, I was free to stay over longer.

These Paris flights were memorable for many reasons. Our essential mission was to fly in key personnel or equipment. Radio sets or special artillery fuses, etc, might be needed by combat forces at the front. Crescent would fly them over from the States to

Paris, from where they would be rushed forward, arriving at the front perhaps only 24 hours after the original request. The return trip would be more somber. The plane's interior would be crammed with stretcher racks, with a narrow aisle up the center and then severely wounded GI's would be loaded for return to hospitals in the US. I remember one flight entirely taken over by trench-foot victims. The men would be unhurt except for their bare feet as black as coal, presumably awaiting amputation. Many sights were much more gruesome than this.

Paris itself, at least during my longer stay oversea in January 1945, was as cold as only a city can be when the winter is exceptionally severe and buildings are unheated because there is no coal, wood or oil to burn. Rare exceptions were the Allied Headquarters such as the requisitioned Hotels Meurice and Royal Monceau which had coal specially brought in by the US Navy and Army, but the rest of the population went without. The insides of buildings, although protected from wind, seemed even colder than the streets in that winter of 1944-45 because of the accumulation of dampness. At theatre performances, whether at the Comedie Francaise (where I recall seeing a play titled "L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle,") or at the Folies Bergeres where the performers wore very little, the audience remained in overcoats, scarves and hats.

In this somewhat grim setting, there were many bright spots. Let me, in passing, note that the Parisiennes, after years of slimming diets and bicycle transportation, were more stunning to look at than, I believe, they have ever been since. I had a very brief acquaintance with one Claude Magneant, who danced at the Lido nightclub. She was entranced with a pair of real galoshes which I brought at her request on one flight from Newcastle, but she never repaid me as fully as I hoped, being not doubt well spoken for already!

Unquestionably the greatest aspect of Paris for me was that Chad Breckinridge was stationed there with Naval Intelligence, living in a quite luxurious suite at the Royal Monceau. He had a large circle of friends such as Adelaide Johnson, whose brother Grima was with the OSS and who had a country cottage out at St Nicholas, near Senlis;

Betty Baker of the Red Cross and her fiancé, Major Warner Cosgrove; some fellow naval officers like Bill Stack, a recent captain of the Yale football team, and a host of other people would foregather at Chad's or elsewhere in the Monceau on Friday or Saturday evenings for drinks. One fringe benefit for French invitees at such parties was the unbelievable luxury of slipping away, with the towels they had brought with them, to take a hot shower with real soap.

I had a somewhat symbiotic relationship with these people because I, in effect, had disposal of an aircraft between Paris and New York. Thus I could bring out sweaters knitted by wives and carry back letters and perfume from husbands. I could bring out more important things, too. One day my father asked me to come up to New York where he gave me an envelope to be delivered by hand to an officer of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas. I expressed some interest in what I was carrying. He said that contact had been broken by the war between his law firm and the bank in Paris, and that the envelope did not contain contraband or anything illegal, but was nonetheless crucial and confidential. In due course I faithfully delivered it by hand to a dour-looking individual, sitting in his overcoat in a bare office in Paris, who was expecting it.

My mother had a friend in New York, a Mrs. Vietor, who in turn wanted to send something to a distinguished French lady of advanced age in Paris, a Mme. Tourey-Piallat. She accordingly wrapped up a box of Sherry chocolates and such. I tracked down the address in Paris and knocked at the door. It was opened by a frail and plainly dressed woman who was alarmed at the sight of my uniform. I told her in French that I came from Mrs. Vietor in New York, and gave her the package. When she saw the fancy box of chocolates she had a wry look, as if Marie Antoinette was offering her a cake when she had no bread. Sizing up the situation I took my leave and went directly to the US Post Exchange where I bought a sizable quantity of soap, toothpaste, vitamin pills, Kleenex, aspirin and the like, wrapped them up and returned to Mme. Tourey-Piallat. This time I sensed that the gift was nearer the mark. In any event, Mrs. Vietor got word of it from Paris and was still telling my mother about it ten years later!

I was in Paris on New Year's Eve, 1944. There was a supposedly cut-in dance for US officers. I attempted to cut in on a US medical Lieutenant-Colonel and his obvious "petite amie", an attractive Army nurse. I didn't get too far with that idea! After the dance, since I had no assigned quarters in Paris, Chad had himself arranged, through friends, for me to stay in a most extraordinary place. It may have been a private palace or a former museum. In any case I was given the bedroom, and indeed, bed once occupied by none other than Napoleon and Josephine. I tried to be receptive to any ghostly presence's in this romantic setting, but mostly the place was awfully cold and the bed bumpy, and there was no hot shower.

The growing and valued contact with Chad Breckinridge was destined to continue after the war, when we used to play squash at the Union Club in New York or golf in Maine. He became a friend as close as any brother to me, then and also later when at the CIA in Washington. He died at only 49 years old, when I was out in Saigon in 1956-1957. It was a great loss to me as to many others. I left Paris for the last time during World War II, on April 20, 1945.

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The next entry in my flight log shows a B-29 bomber training mission out of Chatham Field, Savannah, Ga. On July 2, a different job in a different world. A great deal had happened to me in only three months. Returning to Newcastle from Paris in April I had to take stock of my situation. As a veteran check navigator in the Crescent operation I had reached the apex of my profession in the Air Transport Command. This late in the war, the ranks of the Army Air Forces were fully stocked, and it felt no need to promote navigators, whatever their records. The whole group of us from PAAF who had held up our hands on Nov. 1, 1942 as First Lieutenants were still First Lieutenants. By now I had more than 1500 hours of overseas and over water flight time. We were probably as skilled and experienced as any similar group in the world, and our Captaincies were long overdue. As a bureaucratic device to forestall this, it was decreed by the powers that be that all of us, as a class, were to be accorded a merely satisfactory fitness report in 1944,

as a specific device to make us ineligible for promotion at that time – and the maneuver was deeply resented by us all. (Parenthetically, when in 1946 I was attending Harvard Law School, I received a request to enroll in the Army Air Forces Reserve. I promptly wrote to the Adjutant General, Washington DC and said I would no doubt serve the country if a new war broke out, but somewhat reluctantly in view of the way my previous efforts had gone unrewarded. In due course, without explanation I received in the mail a Captain's commission!) More important for me than the disappointment over promotion, I found myself after three years of almost continuous overseas flying, including some 49 ocean crossings, really exhausted and depressed. I wanted a change – any change – and when a call came for volunteers to transfer to B-29 bomber squadrons for duty in the Pacific, I accepted. My last pilot, Major McCarty, questioned my judgement, pointing out that the war was coming to an end, and if I stayed where I was I would almost certainly survive it. Of the group I had started flying with in PAAF, many had been killed in accidents, lost at sea, or died of disease, but we now thought ourselves home free, barring any particularly bad luck. As for me, in my exhausted and depressed state, McCarty's argument carried no weight.

Soon I received my orders transferring me to the Combat Crew Replacement Center at Lincoln, Nebraska. The barracks there were, visually at least, like Buchenwald or Auschwitz, except that we had no work to do except answer roll call in the morning and had plenty of food! The ennui of sitting around in that damp spring weather did little for my frame of mind. I remember arriving at Lincoln after a slow, sit-up train ride across the country, with a murderous head cold and several degrees of fever. At the barracks I was assigned an upper bunk directly under a naked light bulb. The air crew veterans of the place used to sleep in the daytime and stay up most of the night playing poker. The night of my arrival they foregathered as usual, between the double decker to which I was assigned and its immediate neighbor. Sick and sleepless for several days I needed sleep badly and politely asked if they could play somewhere else, so I could put out the light. My plea was totally ignored, and I remember taking out my .45 pistol, pointing it at the light bulb and assuring them that either it would be turned out, or I would shoot it out. This got their attention, and I got some sleep!

Gray weeks went by. Finally I simply went AWOL by train to Chicago to visit Annie Laurie Ryerson, a girl I had been introduced to by Charley Brown, who was later to become my Law School roommate. Annie Laurie came from the Ryerson steel tycoons, was nice, pretty and somewhat fragile. I got back to Lincoln after the weekend without being caught.

Eventually I received orders and took another troop train to Savannah, Ga., and the last chapter of my wartime odyssey.

## AFTERNOON WITH CHE GUEVARA

### India

From May 1959 to June 1961 I served as a CIA officer working out of the American Embassy in New Delhi, India. Many people have a lurid image of CIA operations which does not correspond with my experience, particularly my experience in India, where my role was not much different than that of any overt political officer -- largely keeping an eye on local events and sending back reports for the hopeful edification of policy makers in Washington.

One particular event was not a CIA operation at all, but just a chance encounter which nevertheless provided me with perhaps the most interesting occasion of my entire tour in India, my chance to spend a long afternoon closeted in "one on one" conversation over beer and cigars with Ernesto "Che" Guevara, legendary figure of revolution in Latin America.

It was late 1959 or in 1960 -- a little historical research could confirm the exact dates -- that Fidel Castro sent Guevara on an official visit to Egypt, India and China. After completing his meetings in Cairo, Guevara flew on to New Delhi. It was, I believe, on the first evening of his arrival that I happened to be in the lobby of the Asoka Hotel, a short distance from my office in the American Embassy, and noticed a group of Indian reporters gathered around a figure in battle fatigues and beret who was instantly recognizable as the famous "Che." They were all chattering in French, since Guevara spoke little English. Since I understood and spoke French I walked over to the group and soon found myself close to Guevara. As his impromptu meeting with the reporters seemed to be breaking up, I had the chance to speak to him directly and said that I was from the American Embassy, stationed in New Delhi, and it occurred to me that he might be getting rather fed up with official visits and sightseeing and that, if so, he might not mind a chance to break his routine, have a cold beer or two, and compare notes. I extended him this invitation. He was intrigued, said he was going off to Agra or somewhere in the morning and returned in to Delhi for lunch. Perhaps we could meet after lunch. He said to give my name to his secretary, who would confirm with me later.



From this brief encounter it followed that, about 2 p.m. the next afternoon I drove my car from the Embassy over to the front steps of the Asoka Hotel to pick up Che. He was standing at the top of the steps with another figure in khaki uniform whom I took to be a woman because of the shoulder length hair down the back of "her" neck. (Male long-hairs had not yet burst fully on the scene, at least not in my circles!) In fact he was a personal bodyguard. I offered Guevara to sit beside me in the front, while the guard sat behind us. I presumed the guard was armed.

We drove over to my flat in Jorbagh. It occupied the upper floor and roof of a building, which today houses the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago. Mounting the stairs, I opened the door leading directly to a large living room with a sofa at one end and dining table at the other. I suggested the guard seat himself on the sofa. I then switched on a record player and inserted a record of hot Cuban mambos played by Enrique Jorrin y su orchestra. The guard's eyes started to glaze over with joy. I told him my bearer, Thambi, to serve the soldier a beer, and motioned Guevara toward my study, a smaller room with comfortable chairs adjoining the living room. I ordered cold beers for us, but Che declined his at first. I privately guessed he was a little wary of being poisoned, but as I continued to drink mine, he changed his mind and accepted a glass.

As openers, I told Guevara that I was very interested in his optique on America, if he would be willing to share it. Very readily he said that he had been in the United States and had a high appreciation of our domestic democracy, particularly our strong and independent labor unions. Unfortunately, he said, these are not the aspects of America which it exports to Latin America, where the United States is represented almost totally by what he regarded as a rapacious big-business sector which rode roughshod over the interests and rights of the local peoples.

I then asked him whether he was a Communist. He said he was not, but added that one must take note of the fact that the United States, a free and democratic country, was supporting anti-populist and repressive regimes all over the world, while the Soviet

Union, itself a closed society and a dictatorship, was in fact supporting popular liberation movements around the world.

Guevara then talked for awhile about himself. He was born in Argentina and was a licensed medical doctor. He had become interested and involved in populist struggles for justice and improved economic conditions in Latin America, and supporting such revolutions had become his main ambition in life. He was very candid in saying that his real emotional involvement had been in the failed revolution in Guatemala, not the Cuban. In Guatemala Jacobo Arbenz had been overthrown by Castillo Armas (Note: With copious support from the CIA), and his wife (or mistress) had been dragged through the streets by Armas's troops. That was where his heart still was. Guevara gave a clear impression that he had largely lost interest in Fide Castro's revolution, and he specifically stated that he would soon be moving to Bolivia, Peru and other countries on the continent, to foment and support revolutions there.

Up to this point I had felt a strong measure of agreement with most of what Guevara had said, as well as a liking for his candor and apparent sincerity, but now he introduced a side to his character which was less appealing. He revealed a clear impression of love of power and violence for its own sake. As a striking, and I felt, less than flattering example, he commented (perhaps with the bravado of a few beers) that when he was conducting training exercises involving young recruits in the Sierra Mastre mountains, and someone fell asleep on guard duty, he just had him shot. He mentioned this with more satisfaction than remorse. This example resonated in me with the stories I had read of another handsome and charismatic warrior on Pancho Villa's staff in the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), named Rodolfo Fierro. Guevara was surely no Fierro, who used to line up Federalista prisoners and see how many he could kill with one bullet, but the "macho" streak was there. In other respects Guevara was a very attractive figure.

We talked for about three hours, consuming much beer and many cigars. I think Guevara enjoyed the interlude from his official duties. He may have been disappointed

that I had nothing more to offer him than sincere interest in his opinions, and was not acting as an emissary of the U.S. Government with official messages for him, but he did not confront me on this point. He eventually just said he had to go, so I drove him and his bodyguard back to the Asoka Hotel. When he reached the top of the entrance stairs, he turned to wave, and I said to him "buena suerte a Usted personalmente", which in my perhaps fractured Spanish was intended to mean "Good luck to you personally." He nodded and disappeared into the hotel.

Right away I typed up a report of the meeting for dispatch to Washington. There was never any comment back to me. I presume the report now gathers dust in some file, or perhaps was considered to "politically incorrect" that it was simply destroyed. I do recall that its final sentence said something like "It would clearly be in the interest of the U.S. to have this man as a friend rather than as an enemy." But all this was before the Bay of Pigs. In fact sometime later, Richard Bissell came through Delhi, and I by chanced ended up sitting next to him at a CIA lunch. I had no idea that he was at the time specifically assigned to planning the Bay of Pigs, or even that such planning existed. In the conversation I innocently said to him "I do hope no one in Washington would be so foolish as to invade Cuba." He seemed to stiffen a bit, and said "why not?" I replied that even if we pulled it off, it would outrage opinion against us in all of Latin America. He just commented, "Well there are many people in Washington who would disagree with you."

Guevara, for his part, was true to his word, left Cuba and tried to foment revolution among the rural peasants of Bolivia who were not yet ready for his message. He was captured and reportedly died bravely before a firing squad, preserving his romantic image to the last. One hand was then cut off so that the fingerprints could be checked, and any myths of his survival squashed.

## A TIGER IN THE MOONLIGHT

### INDIA

PLACE: Kicha, Uttar Pradesh

TIME: December 26-27, 1960

Sir Iqbal Ahmed, retired Judge of the Allahabad High Court, had arranged a winter party. Staff had set up some twenty large white canvas tents. Provisions for food and every luxury had been collected. Not least, several huge elephants had been walked in to the camp from as far as 100 miles away- for this was not to be just a delightful "tamasha" in the open air and warm sun of the Indian winter, but also a tiger hunt.

The guests of honor were Brigadier (later Lieutenant General) H.K. Sibal ("Krishen" to his friends) and his brilliant wife Tara, formerly of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. There were also more than twenty distinguished Indian guests and only two foreigners, namely myself and my friend Ann Gooch, both of us from the American Embassy in New Delhi.

Our camp was situated on flat, open ground which bordered the southern limits of the famous Terai jungle which stretched northward all the way to Nepal. Where we were it could be described as a scrub jungle of hardwood trees and thickets interspersed with small open clearings. Since time immemorial the Terai had supported a treasure-trove of wildlife, all protected by the malaria mosquito which effectively closed off the area from excessive human intrusion. After World War II all this changed, when the discovery of DDT spelled the end of malaria and opened the Terai to agricultural exploitation. This process was already under way when we came to Kichna.

Prior to our arrival at camp, small bullocks had been tethered at various places in the adjoining jungle to attract the attention of tigers. Eventually, it was hoped, one bullock would be killed. The tiger would immediately eat half of the carcass, and then drag the remainder off into some dense thickets where it would be safe from vultures or

other scavengers, while the itself would sleep off its feast nearby, intending to return the next night for another meal.

Thus it was that on the morning of December 26, 1960 a Sikh tracker came hurriedly into camp to report that a tiger had killed a bullock during the night. Sir Iqbal immediately invited Krishen Sibal, as guest of honor, to go for the tiger. He, in turn, proposed that I take his place, as his friend and as a guest from the American Embassy. (Parenthetically I should insert here that even in those days of relatively plentiful tigers I was already very conservation-minded and would have preferred to hunt the tiger with a camera, had I had a suitable one. But I was also sensible of the honor being conferred on me which I could not lightly refuse, as well as being not insensible to the excitement of going after a tiger. So I accepted with much appreciation.)

Ann Gooch and I and several of the other guests immediately set off by car to where the elephants were waiting, mounted them and went into the jungle to the place where the bullock had been killed. Then, led by a Sikh tracker, we followed the trail of the tiger and its dragged prey some one hundred yards or so to a massive thorn patch. The tracker took a rope, crawled into the thicket and tied the rope to a leg and crawled out again, whereupon the elephant pulled the carcass out into the open and all the way back to where it had been killed – an open glade between trees. One tree had a horizontal branch about fifteen feet from the ground, and to this branch we tied a charpoy (an Indian bed of wood frame and string mattress borrowed from a village).

It was now about 4:30 p.m. Ann Gooch and I stepped from the back of the elephant and took positions facing the direction of the bullock carcass from which the tiger might come. Our elephant then disappeared through the jungle toward a spot half a mile away where its mahout would await the sound of my rifle, leaving us alone. I had borrowed a superb Rigby 450/500 double barreled rifle from another friend, Brigadier D.K. Palit, in preference to a lighter rifle of my own, as insurance against the possibility of a merely wounded tiger, the most dangerous creature in the Indian jungle except for killer bees.

As the hours of silent waiting went by, we watched the daylight turn to dusk and then darkness. Soon the moon rose as we listened to the forest murmuring of the Indian night and the occasional muffled beat of tom-toms from some far off village.

Finally, at about 8:30 we heard something to our left. It was the slow, measured tread of some soft-footed but heavy animal, creeping along the grassy floor of the jungle clearing. Crunch...crunch...crunch. Suddenly the tiger appeared, looming up in the dappled moonlight until he stood over the remains of the bullock. I slowly raised the rifle and aimed for a point behind his shoulder. I had attached a flashlight to the barrels. Wishing to be sure of my aim I flicked it on. As the beam sighted the aiming point, the tiger's unbelievable reflexes reacted, hurtling him forward even as I fired. Without a sound he loped off to our right and disappeared into the darkness of the jungle.

The roar of the rifle alerted our elephant's mahout a half-mile away. He immediately put the elephant in motion, in due course presenting us with the unearthly and unforgettable spectacle of the great pachyderm emerging like a ghost, swinging majestically and silently toward us through the mottled moonlight of the Indian night. Never will I forget that image.

The elephant stopped alongside our charpoy, and Ann stepped over to his back and took her place. I descended from his side to the ground, anxious to see where the bullet might have hit, or if I missed the tiger. I moved the beam of the light back and forth until finally I saw a red mist that looked as if it had been sprayed by an atomizer. This confirmed that the tiger had been hit, but where? It also meant that there was a wounded tiger nearby, and that the ground was no place for me to be. I quickly climbed up on the elephant for our trip back to camp.

On my arrival Sir Iqbal confronted me for a report. When I had finished he said that I might have hit the tiger in the lower leg, or foot, or higher up on the body. In either case I must return at first light in the morning, track down the tiger, induce him to charge,

if alive, and finish him off, as a wounded tiger would kill any herdsman or villagers who might have the bad luck to pass by.

Accordingly, in the morning a party of three guns – myself, Krishen and another volunteer, plus Ann Gooch as observer – set out by car and elephant to the scene of the last night's action. We found to our consternation that a herd of goats had gone through, obliterating any sign of the spray of blood. The Sikh tracker asked me which way the tiger had run off, and I pointed my hand. He started down that track in a semi-squat, minutely examining every leaf, twig and blade of grass. After about twenty yards he stopped, shouted, and pointed to a single spot of blood on a bush at a level of about three feet from the ground. Clearly the tiger had been hit hard.

The trail continued for about forty yards further until it ran head on into a great wall of elephant grass about ten feet high. We backed off about fifteen yards, and I fired a spray of birdshot into the grass to induce a charge or growls from the tiger. No result, so the mahout took our elephant to the edge of the tall grass, seeing as he did so a cleared patch perhaps twenty yards ahead, and in it the tiger lying dead. The elephant dragged the tiger into the open where we attached ropes and with the greatest effort managed to pull and push his limp 600-lb frame onto the elephant's back for the trip back to camp, where our arrival stirred considerable excitement.

The tiger, lowered to the ground for inspection, turned out to be a male of about five years measuring 9 feet, 10 ½ inches over curves, and in perfect condition. One ear had been notched by a solid ball from a herdsman's shotgun, and it was said that he was a well-known "cattle-lifter." A tiger lives on deer and other wild prey, but when man comes in and destroys his habitat and food supply, he may have to live on domestic livestock. In that case he becomes a "cattle lifter" and target for destruction. Alternatively, if a tiger is shot and wounded, gets porcupine quills in his paws or is otherwise crippled, he may become a man-eater, since only humans are slow enough, weak enough and unwary enough for him to catch. I felt the tiger's forearm. It was like a 4X4 piece of oak timber, and could break the back of a water buffalo at a blow.

Sometimes tigers, passing through a line of beaters at full run, will tap one of them en route crushing his skull like an egg. Tigers have been known to kill a cow, seize it by the spine, toss back its head and jump over a eight foot fence, cow and all!

In accordance with well-worn procedures my tiger's whiskers were first pulled out, counted and given to me, lest they be stolen. It seemed the locals coveted tiger whiskers because they could be cut into slivers and sipped into an enemy's food, causing death, when eaten, by penetrating the intestines. Then the two vestigial collar bones which, in a tiger, float freely in the muscles were removed because of their great magical virtues and presented to me. The skin was scraped, salted and rolled up for shipment along with the head and cape. All this, including the whiskers, was sent to Van Ingen & Van Ingen of Mysore, along with Rowland Ward one of the famous taxidermists of the old British Empire. I wrote to Van Ingen's with instructions as to the tiger's expression. I said the head should be slightly turned, the mouth slightly parted, the expression alert, serene and noble. And that is how he looks today at my West Virginia farm!

Back in camp I apparently failed to exhibit the full measure of euphoria expected after such a memorable event, feeling again regrets that I had killed such a noble animal, and that I had not been able to hunt by camera instead of gun. This was interpreted by some as being lacking in appreciation for the great honor conferred on me. I asked Krishen to explain my true feelings, as well as my gratitude to Sir Iqbal and all the others, and I hope the misunderstanding was aid to rest.

In 1980 – almost twenty years to the day after the tiger hunt – I returned again to Kichna while on excursion with family members to Corbett Park. Alas, there was now no jungle to be seen – only sugar cane fields, tractors and bare ground. No more wildlife to be seen. No deer, no tigers, nothing. "Progress" had arrived.



## THE FAREWELL DINNER

VIETNAM (1957)

In 1956 I went to Saigon, Republic of Vietnam, to join the staff of Colonel (later Major General) Edward G. Lansdale who was on loan to the CIA from the U.S. Air Force. Lansdale served as the principal U.S. advisor to President Ngo Dinh Diem, having been picked for that job by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Lansdale had previously played a leading role in Manila in helping the charismatic Filipino leader, Ramon Magsaysay, to defeat the insurgency of the communist Hukbalahaps. Based on this victory, Lansdale was sent to Saigon in 1954 to render similar services to the fledgling Republic of Vietnam, which he accomplished with great success.

Ed Lansdale was one of the most remarkable men I have met. I used to say that he had the energy of three men and the mind of a woman. As an example of the former, when faced with an emergency task he could hole up in his room at 55 Duy Tan and work all day, all night, all next day and night, with only intermittent sandwiches and coffee. Then on the third morning he would emerge to attend a public ceremony in the hot Saigon sunlight, looking as fresh and bright as a young athlete, after which would return, order up a glass of bourbon, leave instructions not to wake him for 24-36 hours, and sleep right through. His "mind of a woman" refers to his quality of regarding persons as more interesting and important than concepts, abstractions or plans.

Lansdale gave me invaluable advice as to how to operate in Southeast Asia. First, he said, you must always remember that the individual is the key factor. In the U.S., when you wanted life insurance and an agent showed up from Prudential, you felt you were dealing with Prudential, not the agent. In Asia it was the reverse. You depended on the direct personal contact with the agent as the paramount factor, not on anything as distant as a valued American advisor from his sensitivity to personal factors. For example he intuited that Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu (the "Dragon lady")'s hold over Diem was that she had children and thus held out the potential of a Ngo family dynasty which he, as a celibate and ascetic bachelor, could not

otherwise have. Lansdale also noted that Diem's virtually sole hobby was amateur photography, and took pains to provide him with an equipped darkroom. Finally, Ed Lansdale was no doubt a showman and a "metteur en scene" as the French sneeringly (or anxiously) called him, but he was also unashamed patriot, a believer in human freedom and the dignity of the common man. He was known to approach a stuffy Vietnamese high official at a reception and say, with a smile "What have you done for your country recently, Mr. Minister?", leaving that eminence gasping with the shock of being confronted with such a novel proposition.

Lansdale was hated by the local French who, in 1954, were nostalgically still trying to hold on to their lost colonial role in Vietnam. One senior French officer approached him at a reception and came right to the point: "Colonel Lansdale, my advice to you is simple and clear. You should take the next plane out of Saigon." Lansdale replied, "General, I do intend to leave Vietnam some day, but certainly after you. You do not seem to realize that only my influence with the Vietnamese here now protects you." A few days later, a grenade was tossed over the wall into an empty corner of the French officer's garden. Was it a mere coincidence? One never knew in the Saigon of those days. Books could be and have been written about the man who served as the model for Graham Greene's "Quiet American", but perhaps his close colleague Rufus Phillips said it best at Lansdale's funeral in the chapel at Arlington Cemetery in 1987, with the words: "We shall not see his like again, but his ideas will never die."

Returning now to the theme of this memoir which concerns only a minor incident of amusement to the author, it happened that when Ed Lansdale prepared to leave Vietnam at the end of his tour in the fall of 1956, he was invited by President Diem to a small farewell dinner at Doc Lap Palace, "en famille." As Lansdale's aide and interpreter, I was invited, too. We dined at a small, immaculately laid table. Besides Diem and ourselves, the only other invitees were Diem's brothers, Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc and the "eminence grise" and husband of the "Dragon Lady", Ngo Dinh Nhu. The dinner was delicious. One course was served with the traditional "nuoc mam", in which were tiny rings of red-hot pepper. One of these inadvertently ended up burning a hole in my tongue, so I glanced around to make sure no one would notice and then surreptitiously removed one pepper with my finger and put it back on my plate. In due course the sumptuous feast was over and we repaired to a small drawing room where chairs were.

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arranged in a semi-circle, all facing a beautiful lacquer screen which President Diem was to sit between Lansdale on my left and the President on my right. Then excellent cigars were passed around and lighted.

After a while it chanced that a little tobacco smoke got in my right eye, and without thinking I rubbed the eye with my finger – a great mistake. Some of the hot pepper oil still on my finger found its way into my eye, which immediately watered copiously and uncontrollably, with apparent tears streaming down my right cheek on the side facing Diem. He soon noticed and, being a man of sentiment, put his hand on my arm and said, in French, the equivalent of “There, there, Monsieur Williams, I know you are crying because your chief is soon departing, but you must not be so sad, etc. etc.” No one on my left was so gauche as to inquire why my left eye was not crying at all, was I only half sad etc. in a time when I appeared to get my perceived sadness under control, feeling very sheepish!

It was a memorable evening, and although overworked trying to keep up with Ed Lansdale's pace I did feel sad that my boss was leaving, with his contacts turned over to me as necessary for the last six months of my tour in Saigon. Even after his departure he would take time to write notes to me. In one I recall he suggested that I enlist some nice American girl as my hostess and throw a monster party for all the children of our Vietnamese contacts. That was the kind of gesture only Lansdale would think of. The last time I saw him was in late 1986, shortly before his death at age 79. I still cherish the photo of us taken at that time, and the inscription Ed had written in my copy of his book “In the Midst of Wars”, which now resides on my Arlington bookshelf.

## INFIGHTING IN HIGH PLACES

SOUTH VIETNAM – Early Summer 1966

In June 1966 I was reassigned to Vietnam for a third tour, this time to take over and develop the Chieu Hoi Program. This program, which had begun in 1964, was based on experiences of the anti-Communist struggles of Ramon Magsaysay in the Philippines, and the British in Malaya. Both very successfully persuaded communist insurgents in large numbers to surrender in exchange for amnesty and help in starting new lives.

From early summer 1966 until I left Vietnam again in March 1969, some 60,000 Viet Cong returned to the control of South Vietnamese government, of whom 48,000 were armed. Their removal from the battlefield, at the then prevailing kill ratio of 4:1, meant a saving of 10,00 Allied lives (American and South Vietnamese), not to mention the Viet Cong themselves. Chieu Hoi (roughly translated as "invitation to return", and sometimes called the Open Arms program) was considered to be one of the most successful programs in Vietnam. How the program operated is not the subject of this memorandum, which concentrates only on a brief interlude which illustrated the dangers of trying to operate at the upper levels of massive bureaucracies, where ambitions are enormous and internecine power struggles ruthless.

At the same time as I was taking charge of and reorganizing the Chieu Hoi Program, there was another program idea in town called "National Reconciliation." One observer at the time noted that the U.S. Government operated on a basis of permanent nervous breakdown as far as Vietnam was concerned and was constantly coming up with quick fixes, cure all's or magic bullets which would miraculously persuade the North Vietnamese to desist from their long-term aim of conquering South Vietnam. The U.S. had pushed the "strategic hamlet" program (another idea borrowed from successful British experience in Malaya), and now someone in Washington who had no knowledge or experience of Vietnam had the brilliant idea of "National Reconciliation", under which the North Vietnamese lion would be persuaded to lie down with the South Vietnamese

lamb, so that the U.S. could extricate itself without surrendering its basic aim of containing communist expansion which we had successfully done in Europe (Marshall Plan), Greece (Truman Plan) and Korea.

To this end Washington, among other things sent out Henry Kissinger (then still on the Harvard Faculty) to write a report on the possibilities of "National Reconciliation", and to make recommendations for the staffing and operation of this proposed magic bullet. Initially, he and others confused this with the existing Chieu Hoi program which, by contrast did not aim at national reconciliation but was rather intended to persuade Viet Cong to come over to the South Vietnamese side, the better to resist the communist aggression. Kissinger asked to see me, so I invited him and his young assistant and briefcase carrier, whose name I don't now recall, to have lunch at my villa. I recall telling him that the North Vietnamese had only one aim - victory, and the South only one aim - survival, and that national reconciliation was a different concept entirely from the Chieu Hoi Program, and that in any case there was no will for compromise either in the north or the south. We did not discuss any hypothetical staffing of the misbegotten national reconciliation plan.

I gave the matter no further thought and went on improving the Chieu Hoi Program. My immediate superior at that time had come to be one Barney Koren, the no. 3 ambassador under Henry Cabot Lodge (no 1) and William Porter (no 2). After some months Koren ran afoul of Lodge and was banished to a senior regional assignment upcountry in Danang. His files on Chieu Hoi and on the now defunct national reconciliation scheme were now forwarded to me.

One day I casually glanced through these files and soon came across a copy of Kissinger's trip report to Lodge, written after his return to Harvard. In it, referring to the proposed staffing of the national reconciliation idea, Kissinger had said that I would be the wrong man to head up the initiative since I "lacked political experience in Vietnam." (In fact I had served two previous tours in Vietnam, the first one as assistant to Col. Edward G. Lansdale, the principal U.S. advisor to President Ngo Dinh Diem. In 1956-57

I had spent endless hours dealing with Vietnamese officials at the palace level, and in my second tour in Vietnam (1962-64) I had as a senior AID official dealt directly with a broad range of South Vietnamese officials, particularly with those directing civil affairs in all the provinces of the country. Lansdale was perhaps America's greatest expert in Southeast Asian psychology and how to get things done there, and I was confident that I had learned from him at least the basics of this art.)

I immediately wrote to Kissinger, explained how the files had happened to come into my possession by mistake, and admitted to some degree of hurt professional pride. I told him about my extensive previous experience in Vietnam and then said that I realized he had only spent two weeks in the country and perforce had to rely on others for his information, but I believed someone had misinformed him, for whatever reason. He replied expressing regrets and admitted that he had relied on others for his judgements, but of course he could not disclose his sources, etc.

I gave little further thought to all this, as I was entirely busy with the Chieu Hoi program which was becoming more important and successful all the time. Then, some months later, Kissinger's young assistant returned to Saigon, this time without Kissinger. I invited him again to lunch, during which I told him of finding Kissinger's earlier report to Lodge and my amazement at his conclusion that I lacked political experience and contacts in Vietnam, etc. The assistant said he would explain all. Sure enough, Kissinger had based his report on me entirely on what he was told by Philip Habib, then head of the Embassy's political section in Saigon. I expressed astonishment since I had only the briefest contacts with Habib of any kind, and vice versa. So how could he have formed any opinion about me? In due course the story unfolded, as follows:

While in Tunisia in 1965, where I was Deputy Director of the U.S. Aid Mission before reassignment to Vietnam, I had seen a report that Ed Lansdale was returning to Vietnam in some capacity. I immediately wrote to Ambassador Lodge and urged him to make full use of Lansdale, noting that when Lansdale had earlier served in Vietnam he had more contacts and influence among the Vietnamese than the entire political section of the

Embassy at that time. This letter, which Lodge acknowledged, was apparently routed to him through Philip Habib, who was by then Political Counselor. Habib, who was enormously ambitious and protective of his own turf, regarded Lansdale as a possible competitor and a principal threat to his career and influence. He was also an infighter without equal. He not only succeeded in neutralizing Lansdale before I ever returned to Saigon, but when I did, he already had me marked down as a "Lansdale man to be destroyed", of which I had no inkling whatsoever...

Kissinger's erstwhile assistant went on to tell me that in the top level discussion of Kissinger's trip report Lodge said that since Kissinger had found me to be politically inexperienced in Vietnam, etc.. Why not get rid of me? At that point Bill Porter, the Deputy Ambassador, objected. He said I was doing an outstanding job as chief of the US. Chieu Hoi Program support team, that my program was bringing in more Viet Cong returnees each month, whose debriefings provided the U.S. military with their best information on the enemy, and that there was absolutely no reason to remove me. Quite the contrary. So Lodge then said, "All right, let him stay."

I confess I shuddered when I heard of this narrow escape. If Porter had not intervened, I would have been removed from my job and returned to the U.S. as unsatisfactory, without ever knowing why. It would have been as if a complete stranger had approached me on the street, broke both arms and legs with an iron bar, and then walked away without a word. Unwittingly I had been caught in the middle of a high-level feud and almost paid for it with my career and future. As it was I was able to serve out my tour with good luck until March 1969 and leave with honors and reputation enhanced.

This experience helped me realize that the egos of the "great" are more tender than those of ordinary men, and that when elephants contend for turf, it is very easy to be crushed under foot. Thanks to Porter's adventitious presence and intervention, I was casually spared for future successes, as I would have been destroyed if he had not done so, a sobering lesson.



## ONE DAY WITH TONY POE

THAILAND AND LAOS (1978)

Of all the victims of the North Vietnamese victory of 1975, perhaps the Hmong people of Laos have suffered the most – even more than the “boat people” of Vietnam. The Hmong had originally migrated into Laos from China in past centuries. They settled in the mountainous jungles, grew crops and livestock, and cultivated opium as a medical cure-all and cash crop.

The Vietnamese called them the ‘Meo’ – a derogatory term meaning “savage”, and looked upon them about the way white Coloradans looked on the American Indians in 1860. Not unnaturally, the Hmong hated the Vietnamese in return, particularly when they invaded Laos. So when the U.S. became involved in the Vietnam War, it found willing allies among the Hmong and, through the instrumentality of the CIA, recruited, armed and paid them to hold the line in northern Laos against the common enemy.

In the spring of 1978 I went to Thailand to write a story on the plight of the Hmong (which was ultimately printed as a lead article in the Washington Post) I stayed with a young friend of Vietnam days, John Finney, who was then the U.S. Consul in Udon. He was unstinting in support of my project with research and background materials, transportation and vocal expertise.

I spent most of my time interviewing Hmong refugees in Nong Khai, north of Udon and directly across the Mekong River from communist-controlled Vientiane in Laos. Among these Hmong were many former soldiers who still retained ties of trust and affection for the CIA officers who had worked with them, whom they knew by such pseudonyms as Mr. Tony, Bamboo, Kayak, Black Lion and others. So it was that I first heard of “Mr. Tony”, called Tony Poe by Americans, real name Anthony Pochespski (spelling uncertain.) It turned out that after the end of the war in 1975 he had retired and settled down on some land near Udon with a Thai wife, raising crops and fruit trees.

John Finney, indispensable as always, knew Tony Poe and drove me out to meet and interview him one bright morning. (John said it was always best to visit Tony early in the day as he was often in his cups by afternoon, thereby losing in lucidity what he may have gained in local color.) I found Poe sitting on the floor of a raised veranda, wrapped in a pareu and bare from the waist up. I recall that he was of Hungarian extraction, had been a Marine in WW II and, for the CIA, had participated in the rescue and extraction of the Dalai Lama from Tibet. In any case, his authenticity as a soldier of fortune was enhanced by the clear stitch of machine gun wounds across his side and back, a souvenir, I believe, of Guadalcanal.

We spent hours discussing the Hmong and their plight, and his recollections of their war, but one story stood out among the others, engraved in my memory to this day. Here it is:

\*Tony Poe had a Hmong counterpart, presumably a Colonel or Major, who commanded a fighting unit to which Tony was attached. This officer had a son serving in its ranks. It came about that a program was instituted to train a number of recruits in radio transmission at a CIA base in Hua Hin, Thailand, and the commander's son was one of these trainees.

When the young man reached the safety of Hua Hin and found himself exposed to the temptations of Thailand, he reacted as many others have done before and since, and came to place more emphasis on the girls and bars than he did on his radio to Laos, Tony happened to mention this to his counterpart, the boy's father – who said nothing.

A few days later Tony was unexpectedly summoned to attend a ceremony. He found the Hmong unit lined up at attention, their commander in front. Opposite and facing them was his son, standing alone. The commander addressed his troops in the Hmong language – which Poe could not follow – and then ordered his son to approach him, whereupon he handed the boy a coil of rope and pointed to a tree. Without a word the young man climbed the tree, tied one end of the rope to a branch and the other to his neck, and jumped off. \*

Time erases all. One wonders whether Tony Poe is still alive, still on his farm in Thailand. Many of the Hmong now live in the United States. Some are no doubt still alive in the hills of Laos. The dictatorship in Hanoi still survives, but perhaps not for long. Meanwhile, back in the hills of Laos, the monsoons come and go as before, indifferent.

## BEARING A MESSAGE

A Memoir of Cairo – 1942 and 1996

In September 1942 I was employed by Pan American Air Ferries, Inc., based in Miami and living at 8712 Harding Ave. in Surfside, North Miami Beach, and sharing a bungalow with McIlhenny, Gordon Schmitt and Bill Archer. Our job was to ferry military aircraft from Miami 36<sup>th</sup> St Airport down to Natal, Brazil, then across the South Atlantic via Ascension island to Accra in west Africa (Gold Coast), then on to Khartoum, up to Cairo and over to Abadan in Iran. There Russians would sign for the aircraft, put a guard on it, and then fly it up to the Soviet Union.

By late September my aging (37 years old) pilot, H.E. (Jimmy) Hix and I as navigator had arrived in Cairo on our way home after delivering an A20-B bomber to the Soviets in Abadan. After an afternoon on the terrace of the Shepherd's Hotel watching the British Eighth Army on the streets – it was just before El Alemein and the air was tense in Cairo – I betook myself in the evening to Doll's Café, alone. That was a night spot famous for its belly dancers and refreshments, and frequented by U.S. Air Corps pilots, (Officers only, under the British system in which any decent place in Cairo would have a sign on it "“Out of Bounds to Other Ranks”" which meant no enlisted men). These pilots were flying out of Deversoir Field, near Ismailia, in B-25 bombers against the Afrika Korps – held cities of Tobruk and Benghazi, and suffering heavy losses at the hands of the Luftwaffe. Thus they were known in Cairo as being big spenders paid in dollars.

I joined a table of three such pilots, one of them was Capt. Reginald Heinitsh of Columbia, South Carolina. He learned I was on my way back to Miami and asked me if I could write his wife to tell her he was all right, and other messages. So in due course I did that, and promptly received back a letter from Isabel Heinitsh expressing great appreciation and informing me that she was expecting their first baby in December, and

that it was next to impossible to communicate quickly with her husband in the Middle East. I kept the charming letter in a scrap book.

Please shift the scene now from 1942 to 1996. I found myself in Charleston, SC visiting Sims and Muriel Farr, and on March 9 went to the Country Library on King Street and obtained a copy of the Columbia, SC telephone book and looked up the name Heinitsh. Sure enough, there were four entries under that name, one of them for R.D. Heinitsh Jr. When I returned to Arlington on March 10 I called that name and left my number in the answering machine and a brief summary of the above event of 1942.

On March 11 I had a call from Heinitsh from North Carolina where he was in charge of a resort development on Lake Toxaway. He was delighted at my offer to send him the letter I had received in 1942, which he would share with other family members who would also be thrilled to read this memo from their past. He said Capt. Heinitsh survived the war and prospered until his death some years ago, survived by his wife Isabel until 1992 when she also went to her reward. No doubt I will hear from the Heinitsh family again. In any case I feel satisfaction at returning their mother's letter to them, and re-living of events from long ago 1942.