

TUFFY THE TIGER

Soc Trang, South Vietnam - 1963

In 1963 I was stationed in Soc Trang, South Vietnam with the 18th AOD (Aviation Operations Detachment). During this time the airfield had a Bengal Tiger as a mascot. The photos are mine and the articles are from the Stars & Stripes Newspaper.



Tuffy, official mascot of the 93d Trans. Co. (Light Helicopter) at Soc Trang, Republic of Vietnam, has been donated to the Toledo, Ohio zoo. The 250 pound Bengal tiger has outgrown his "job" with the unit and any day could start working toward his full growth of 600 pounds.

TUFFY'S TOO BIG, HE'S GOT TO GO

SOC TRANG, Vietnam (IO) - Tuffy the tiger doesn't want to leave but he's got his orders.

Tuffy, a Bengal tiger complete with regulation stripes, has spent the last six months serving as the official mascot of the 93d transportation Co. (light helicopter) here.



But Tuffy, who now tips the scale at 250 pounds, has grown too big for the job. Any day he could start working toward his full growth of 600 pounds.

So Tuffy's now waiting to be shipped out. His special orders read for one "Pussycat, Tuffy with papers and cage to report for duty at the Toledo, Ohio zoo, with travel by commercial aircraft authorized."

Military spokesmen here pointed out that Tuffy, who lived as a cub in the American Embassy in Bangkok, performed his duty in a manner that was a credit to the 93d, and to

all Bengal tigers.

Tuffy gave impressive roars from time to time and dutifully posed with generals and other high ranking officials for pictures.

It was Brig. Gen. J. W. Stilwell, commanding general, U.S. Army Support Command, Vietnam, who realized it was time for a transfer for Tuffy. He pointed out that Tuffy was fast growing and would soon reach his full weight of 600 pounds.

Stilwell told the men of the 93d that if they would find a new home for Tuffy he would give them two tiger cubs to take the mascot's place.

Tuffy, got his new home at the Toledo zoo through the help of the wife of one of the men in the unit. The zoo will place a plaque on Tuffy's cage telling of the Army men's contribution.

Although Tuffy has grown too big for his job here the men of the 93d point out with pride that the powerful tiger engaged in many a playful tussle with the men of the unit, knocking over a soldier on occasion, but never seriously injuring a man.

When Tuffy moves on to his next assignment his memory will live on here - for his picture is painted on the side of every helicopter in the 93d as the emblem of the unit. ~~Tuffy was euthanized due to kidney failure in June, 1980.~~



Tuffy's picture on the side of a H-21

Tiger logo on a L-19



Tuffy, the tiger pet of the 93d Transportation Co., in the Republic of Vietnam, reaches for a hot dog held by WO Glenn C. Spakes as he get his last Army meal. Tuffy is being sent to the Toledo, Ohio zoo. The tiger has had the free run of the company's base and flown aboard helicopters. His retirement has decided upon after authorities warned that the 15 month old 253 pound animal might become dangerous upon reaching full growth.

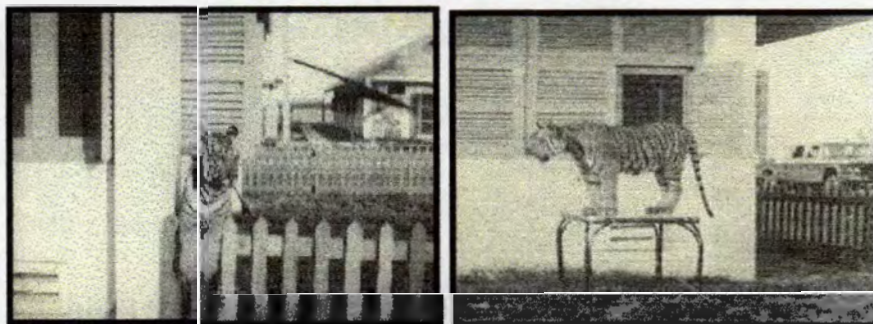
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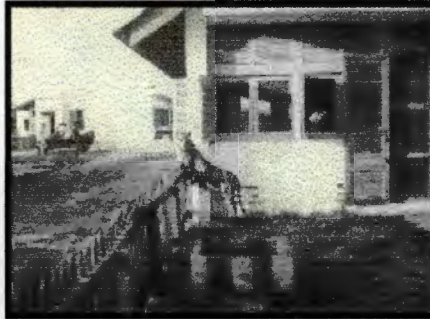
I was on Support Group staff in '63 as the Aviation Supply Officer for Vietnam. Went down Soc Trang one fine day to visit and was introduced to Tuffy for the first time. He was stretched out in the doorway leading from the orderly room into the XO office. I gently tried to make way around him thinking he was asleep. At one point I had to place one foot between his front paws in order to move the other foot over his body to enter the office. At that point he warred his paws around my ankle, opened his jaws and placed his mouth around my ankle and then rolled his eyes up at me as if to say "move, sucker, and that ankle is my supper." I immediately froze. Everyone in the office got a big laugh at my expense. Thank God, the fact that he had been on a vegetable diet came to mind and I went ahead after a moment of contemplation and removed my foot from his jaws.

Another story has to do with Carl Striver and his first encounter with Tuffy. Carl told me all after returning from a visit to Soc Trang. He said he arrived and had to head immediately for the latrine. He was perched upon a john when he had this feeling we were being watched. He got up and was looking into the face of Tuffy who had stuck his head into the stall. Carl's comment was, "Needless to say, I didn't have any problem with constipation at that point."

Tuffy's Photo Album







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