

My Tour of Viet Nam

By
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My tour of Viet Nam, actually began in early July 1966. I was still on leave from Fort Ritchie, Maryland. At that time we were having an extreme heat wave. I think the Lord was preparing me for Viet Nam. If you notice, I still write Viet Nam as two words. Because for me, that is the way it was. I had made airline reservations on Eastern Airlines. However, Eastern Airlines went on strike in June, and they were still on strike. Because of that, I had to take a bus from Charlotte, NC, to San Francisco, California. We left on Monday Morning at 9:AM. After we had crossed the Mississippi River, the air condition on the bus went out. Can you imagine going through Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona without air? I still believe God was preparing me for Viet Nam. After we arrived in Los Angeles, we changed buses. Thursday Morning, this bus had air condition. We left Los Angeles and proceeded south to

San Francisco. After arriving in San Francisco, about 4:PM, I checked into a hotel for the night. I didn't have to be at Oakland Army Terminal until midnight Friday. It was now about 6:PM, and after a 4 day bus trip, I was tired. I got something to eat, and rested, then went to bed. On Friday I did a little site seeing. The day passed, real fast! I took a bus to Oakland Army Terminal. I got there about 6:30 PM, check in, and got settled for the week end. I had to get a couple of shots, but other than that, it was a quite week end.

With the week end behind me, we were awakened around 3:AM, Monday Morning. We all fell in, and were told, "get all our gear together, and fall in at 5:AM." We got all our things, and formed up at 5:AM. We then boarded buses to take us to Travis Airforce Base. After arriving at Travis we boarded a U.S. Airlines Plane for Viet Nam. We took off around

6:AM. We landed in Honolulu around 10:AM. We laid over for about an hour, we then boarded another US Airways Plane, and took off around 11:00 AM. We flew from Honolulu to Guam, by now it was Tuesday Afternoon. We had crossed the International Date Line. It was around 2:PM on Guam.

We had to change planes, and when I got to the door of the airplane, the heat slapped me square in the face. That was my first experience with the heat. We were on Guam about 45 minutes. We took off about 3:PM, next stop Saigon, Viet Nam. We landed at Tan Son Nhut Air Port in Saigon around 5:30 PM. We formed up out front, and were told, that busses would be there soon, to take us up to Long Bien. The busses finally arrived about 7:30 PM. We boarded the busses, and we headed north to Long Bien, this must have been about 8: or 8:15 PM. We arrived at Long Bien around 10:00 PM. After we got off the busses, we were told that

they were getting tents and cots set up for us. About 11:30 PM, they told us the tents and bunks were ready. They also told us that about 12 mid night, the 105's would fire about 2 rounds every 2 hours. What they didn't tell us was, that they would be firing right over top of us. We had just gotten laid down, and the first 2 shots were fired. Needless to say it scared the crap out of everybody. And NO, we didn't get much sleep that night. The next morning we were up at 5:AM. After breakfast we were called into formation about 9:AM, some names were called out, and the rest of us were dismissed. This occurred twice a day, each time names were called, they left, the rest were dismissed. On Friday at the 9:AM formation, 6 names were called out. Those 6 were, Keith L. Hittson, Arthur C. D'Amico, Wayne E. Denney, Eral E. House, Max H. Hedrick, Jr, and Richard E. Johnson. Everyone else was dismissed. We were told that we were the advance

group of the 188th M.P. Company.

We were told to get all our equipment together, and report back in formation.

Once back in formation, we boarded a 3 quarter ton truck back into Saigon.

Once back in Saigon, we were issued In-Country Travel Permits. We eat lunch somewhere in Saigon. We left Saigon around 1:PM, and headed for Nha Be. Just before leaving Saigon we picked Sgt Daily. We arrived at Nha Be around 2:45 PM. There was already a company on river patrol. I don't remember what Company it was.

They finished that day, being Friday, and Friday Night. We went on duty Saturday Morning. The company that was there, packed up and left. The rest of the 188th M.P. Company arrived Saturday Afternoon. The advance party of the 188th M.P. Company, began working at Nha Be, around July 15.

In late August, or early September, we began a building project. As ships came in to the harbor at Nha Be, cargo, mainly ammunition, was unloaded

at Nha Be. At that time Nha Be was a main ammo storage area. The cargo on the ships was stored up with 2"X12"s. As the deck hands took up the 2X12's, they through them in to the water. We in turn retrived them from the water and took them ashore. We then used them to build our houch. (See pictures attached.)^{*} Other materials we got from other places. It doesn't really mater, where the other materials came from. It's our little secret! After we completed our houch, we had an R & R Center. At least that's what the Company Commander said. About the most exciting thing that happened at Nha Be, was when me and Wayne Denny took the patrol boat up a tributary, (small creek) on the eastern shore line. Yes, we were shot at. About 5 or 6 rounds went through our patrol boat. Luckily no one was hit, we were lucky. After that everything was just routine. I would have been happy, to have spent the rest of my time at Nha Be, but that wasn't to be.

^{*} Pictures located on Pages 6A + 6B

6A



1- The way it looked when we started.



2- After we got started, sort of looks like rain.

6B



3



4

And as you can see by these pictures, we are making progress. We didn't want ~~want~~ to get caught by the rain, so we would move the tent back as we needed to.



5

On December 1, 1966, I was transferred back into Saigon. We were at Pershing Field, about half-a-mile from Tan Son Nhut Air Field. When I arrived back in the company area, I was told I was leaving on R+R the next day. So on December 2, 1966 I flew out of Tan Son Nhut, bound for Tokyo, Japan. We were taken to Camp Zama, where we had to buy civilian cloths. We were then taken to our hotels. I was in the Hotel Daiei, which, at that time was new. I spent a week in Tokyo. When we left Saigon, the temperature was 135°. When we landed in Tokyo, the temperature there was 35°. Talk about going from one extreme to another, wow, that was extreme! The week past all too fast, and we had to return to Viet Nam. After arriving back at Tan Son Nhut, we were each returned to our duty area. I went back to Pershing Field, that night we went on duty. From Pershing Field, our duty consisted of walking patrols, working gates, and even river posts. Working on the river was great. However I can't swim, I never learned

how. Then one night while being posted, I fell in. I went down twice, but with God's help, I did get out. That was like a warning to me, to stay off the river. After a controversy with a Sargent, I didn't work river patrol any more. I had to sign a paper, declaring that I couldn't swim. So that was my last river patrol. John Sprouse, my good friend, couldn't swim either. So, he was taken off the river too. After that we worked gates, walking patrols, and even jeep patrols. Jeep patrols consisted of 1 American M.P., 1 Vietnamese M.P., and usually a Vietnamese Policeman. I enjoyed that. I made a lot of friends, among the Vietnamese Policemen and Vietnamese M.P.'s. When I was off duty, and down town, someone was always calling me out. Because I was larger, they would call me "Mop," which means fat. I volunteered for Battalion detail, and worked there for about a month. We had a Sargent Tibbs in charge. Mostly we were carpenters, we would put up and take down tents. We would paint and

Pour cement pads. And of course everybody's favorite job, filling sand bags. After about a month on Battalion detail, we were told there was a need to put all of us back on regular M. P. duty. After that everyone was working regular duty. Walking Patrols, gates, warehouse patrol, and of course jeep patrol. I even got to work checkpoints between Saigon and Long Bien. I did that for several weeks. When we were off duty, John Sprouse and myself, would go into Saigon a lot. We tried drinking, but, we found out, we could have just as much fun without drinking. We would go to the local Restaurants and have dinner. There was one, we went to more than any of the rest. We had several yellow alerts, that was when you were on the perimeter with your rifle, but no ammunition. There were 3 Companies at Pershing Field: The 212th, dog sentries, the 188th M P Company, and the other company was the 300th M P company, if I remember right. But as you know, all Good,
(HA, HA, HA)

things must come to an end. At the end of my time in Viet Nam, I turned in everything at Song Bien. This was June 7, 1967, by this time Song Bien was really built up. That is where the famous Song Bien jail was. I spent the night of the 7th there. On the morning of the 8th we flew out, . . . until the plane left the ground, there was complete silence on the airplane. As soon as the pilot came on the air and said, "we have now left Viet Nam air space." Everybody on the plane, let out a cheer, that could have been heard in Saigon. We flew all the way to San Francisco. That was the first time any of us, had set foot on American soil, in about a year. We changed planes, flew to Fort Dix, New Jersey. I got home on the night of the 9th of June, 67.