

ANIMAL DEN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN #5, 22 September 2012

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To All:

Have been busy with some research projects and lost track of time since last bulletin. One thing I've been working on is the attached map for the Hut 351 neighborhood. As stated on the map, it's not to scale, but I think I have the buildings in fairly accurate relation to one another. I had forgotten how near the Base Theater we were. Thanks to all who helped by answering questions. If you see any errors on the map, let me know as I can make corrections within reason.

Am also attaching three photos of the courtyard behind the Colonels' Trailers. Looks like an oasis in the desert, huh? Colonel Whitaker lived in this compound as did Colonel Homer K. Hansen, Commander of the 3rd TFW until late spring 1969 when he was made General and assigned elsewhere. I have a piece of shrapnel that landed in the living room of one of these trailers in 1969 when a rocket hit in the street nearby. The shrapnel tore through one of the trailer windows, messed up a floor lamp inside and landed on the carpeting, where I picked it up. The trailer was not occupied at that time.

QUESTION: Am I correct in remembering that the Colonels' Trailers were on a side street diagonally opposite the side of the NCO Club? Or were they on the next street that went by the VNAF Club and BX? It seems to me it was the former because that rocket was described as landing "near the NCO Club," and the CTs had to be fairly close by to catch that shrapnel.

On my map of the hut neighborhood, you will see a bunker with note stating that it was the bunker hit on 28 February 1968, during Tet, when 12 mostly career NCOs were killed and 24 injured, probably mostly by the concussion. Rich Moyle and Ron Mahar were at Bien Hoa when this happened and all the men in our hut who were there then, as most of them were when I arrived in July 1968, had some pretty tough memories of that time. You will see that the hit bunker was two huts south of the Animal Den. Thanks to Rich and Ron for helping me locate it, also a group of men who were in the 3rd Security Police Squadron at that time: Pete Piazza, Howard Yates, and Jim Lebowitz especially. I've written Carl Tripp, whose article "TDY at Bien Hoa," is published on the VSPA web site and describes his experience when the bunker was hit, but haven't heard back from him yet. All these men are published on the VSPA site (<http://www.vspa.com/bh-stories.htm>). Excellent site, by the way. Great accounts, and some great photos at Bien Hoa.

For some months I've had it in mind to send you all some statistics about Nam Vets, but have delayed because it's a pretty grim subject. Suffice to say at this time that we are among the approximately 1/3 of Nam Vets, people whose feet were on the ground in Nam, still living. Two-thirds of our Nam Vets have died from various causes, an awful number by suicide over the years. The same thing is happening now with vets from the Middle Eastern wars, except a higher percentage of them are taking that way out.

HOW MANY PEOPLE SERVED IN NAM?

2,594,000 in country, 1965-1973; plus 50,000 between 1960 and 1964.

HOW MANY WERE LIVING IN 2000?

1,002,511

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE US CLAIMED TO BE NAM VETS IN 2000?

13,853,027.

APPROXIMATELY FOUR OUT OF EVERY FIVE PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO BE NAM VETS IN 2000 WERE NEVER IN NAM!!!

These data are from: <http://www.nationalvietnamveteransfoundation.org/statistics.htm>

These figures are based on census data, not on how many people drinking in bars claimed to be Nam Vets. I learned long ago that when I asked a "Vet" where he served and he answered "Oh, I was all over the country," that he was probably telling a tale. Yes, plenty of people did serve in a variety of places, but usually they can give a specific answer of some kind. Amazing figures on this.

The older I get the less I hang back about being a Vet because no matter how removed we were from active daily combat, all of us were exposed and took rockets and mortars, and by damn, we on this list were really there! (For a long time - many years - I didn't feel like I could claim to be a Nam Vet because I wasn't in front-line combat and I felt that the combat troops deserved all the credit.) But they were dependent on our AF bombing strikes and our pilots were dependent on all of us who were support troops, and ALL of us were absolutely essential to carrying on the war. There was not a military unit in Nam that wasn't essential to everybody else over there.

Once a war starts and our forces are committed to it, whether the war is right or wrong (and they are often enough wrong since WW II), our men are fighting for one another more than for anything else. That's where I take pride in being a Nam Vet. I thought the war itself was a crock, and still do, but I believed in the men who were over there fighting it and keeping each other alive. My loyalty then as now was with our fellow soldiers and that loyalty gets stronger with age.

Sorry for rant. Feel free to jump in.

QUESTION: When we flew over there, as well as coming home, did we check our baggage, or carry everything with us? I had three pieces of luggage going over: my overstuffed duffel bag and two suitcases. Did I have it in hand when I got off the plane at Bien Hoa, or did we wait for baggage carts to bring it to the terminal? Surely we checked baggage!? [Checked baggage at Travis; we were allowed one carry-on containing our orders and other vital paperwork, and anything that we had to have during the flight. Max allowed baggage was 100 pounds.]

QUESTION: Does anybody remember A1C Perry's first name? He was a cook. Some of you must have worked with him. Seems it was Bill, but I'm not sure. Where was he from? [Nobody could answer this.]

'Nuff for now. Hope all are well, had a good summer and Labor Day.

Joe

Attachments:

Map of Animal Den area (You'll probably have to enlarge to read it)  
3 Photos of Colonels' Trailers

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In a message dated 9/24/2012 6:12:32 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, tonycard123@gmail.com writes:

hi Joe-

Good to hear from you; I DO enjoy all the info you share with The Bulletins!!!  
I do seem to recall having baggage checked on the flights going to,  
and going from "Nam". I flew round trip to Bien Hua on a Commercial

Chartered Aircraft with Stewardess' and all, from what I can remember!!

Your map brings back a lot of forgotten memories, but I don't remember ever knowing about the "Colonels' Areas at all. I think you knew about them due to working in the Billeting Area, right?

I also never told you, but also enjoyed looking through all the pictures the photog. that recently passed away took that you had forwarded. I spent a short time in the field with the army during my second tour at Phu Cat, and never liked photos then. Now I see that they had a meaningful, important job to do also!! I THANK YOU for allowing me to come to that realization!!

I hope you are feeling well, and managing your health the best you can, and look forward to all your mail!!

Your friend for life and beyond

TONY

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In a message dated 9/25/2012 7:31:09 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, tonycard123@gmail.com writes:

Thanks for your kind words, Joe

No, I guess the only name I even remember from Phu Cat would be Barry Caplan (don't know if I am even spelling it right [Kaplan?]) He was from Philadelphia, and we saw each other after coming home, when we attended an Allman Brothers Concert in Philly. I have lost track after that and wonder if he is still with us?

I am amazed at your prologue. You were assigned a different route than I was getting to "the war". One trip I went thru Hawaii, and then Guam, then Tokyo, and Bien Hoa. The next, we traveled "over the top" as I call it: San Fran.to Anchorage Alaska, then Tokyo, then Cam Ranh Bay. I realize it is not really "over the top" but it was interesting to go thru Anchorage. I always wondered "why" about that route!

Talk to you soon,  
Tony

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