

Vietnam War (6)

Category: Vietnam 1967-1968

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Written by dave

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R & R

Like all other men fighting in Vietnam, I was entitled to one 5 day Rest and Recreation break - R&R - outside of Vietnam during the year I was there.

I had several choices - Manila, Tokyo, Hawaii, or Bangkok. Patsy and I discussed meeting in Honolulu, but given where she lived in Virginia, with our three children, it would have been very costly and difficult for just her to get there for just five days. I was sure I would be back in the US within 5 more months or so. 'Extending' my stay in Vietnam past a year to help win the war seemed less and less attractive.

So I chose Bangkok. Ever since I passed through it during Operation Cobra back from Hawaii in 1962, I was fascinated with its unique brand of the Orient.

I was there October 12th to 17th. I chose a better hotel than the contract ones most men were offered. It had airconditioned rooms, nice dining room, view of the city.

I also did not hang out with other officers as some did, although I ran across several classmates. And several officers who had been in the Pentagon when I served there.

Mostly I slept, and lazed around reading all the material I could get my hands on. And I shopped to send goodies home. I promised myself I would go to church on the Sunday I was there, but I was so tired, I overslept and never made it.

And I had a wonderful telephone call home, even though it was in the middle of the night, and all three kids who talked with me were sleepy heads.

I got a typewriter from downstairs and used it to write a longer than usual letter home.

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I also went to a jewelers shop, and since the stone I had in my class ring I got in 1950 was badly chipped, I bought a dark star sapphire stone. Unfortunately the only ones they had were slightly too small for the opening in my ring, so they built it up with metal - badly- around the opening. I took it anyway and its still on my hand.

I shipped several items from stores home for Christmas for the kids. And it was there I got three great 'Tomb Rubbings' to hang on our home walls.

Next Job

Patsy, on the telephone, was curious what my next 'job' would be after I had commanded a battalion. I knew I was being talked about to become a Division level 'G-3' plans and operations officer. A significant 'ticket punch' in a career.

The more interesting part of my R&R trip was that when I passed through Saigon enroute back to Cu Chi, I ran across a number of War College classmates there. Most of them were in the newly formed 'Revolutionary Development' division. - At last, but too late to save the war, serious efforts to support 'developmental' programs were getting started. What I had studied and written about for McNamara while at the War College.

I also visited with Bob Montague who was Ambassador Komer's military assistant. He said I could be a Province Advisor if I wanted - which of course would be closer to the real Vietnam 'people level' where I knew the war will be won or lost.

Unconsciously I knew we were losing the war, for 90% of our efforts - purely military operations - were aimed at defeating 10% of the North Vietnamese and South Korean Viet Cong effort - their 'military' forces. The massive political subversion of people in the south went on virtually unopposed.

I had to think about it.

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Meanwhile I had to get back to command my Battalion and the war. around Cu Chi.

I just wasn't sure what was in store for me, whether I was able to influence it or not.