
SIXTEEN**Boom-Boom!**

The next morning my name was called and I got aboard a C-130 with several other guys.

The headquarters of the First Air Cavalry Division, to which I'd been assigned, and about which I knew absolutely nothing, was located about a half-hour's flight north of Cam Ranh at a place called An Khe. During that short flight, I was amazed at how much the look of the land changed. Whereas Cam Ranh had been basically flat, open land covered with pure white sand, right on the coast of the South China Sea, An Khe was situated inland, in an area of mountain ridges covered with thick jungle vegetation.

The plane landed on a runway that had been built along the base of one of those ridges and ran parallel to it. When we disembarked, there was a truck waiting to take us to the base a short distance from the air field.

Before we arrived at the main base, we rode through the Vietnamese town of An Khe. Actually, it wasn't as much a town as a small village.

From the back of the truck I could see older women scurrying along the side of the road wearing the black silken pants and blouse that we Americans called pajamas, and the flattened conical hats which the Vietnamese are known for. Across their shoulders they carried wooden yokes with large baskets hanging from each end. It seemed amazing that such frail looking people could carry the amount of weight that was apparent from the way the yoke flexed up and down as they trotted along.

Most of the older people paid very little attention to our passing truck, but no sooner were we moving through the center of the village than a horde of children came running out to chase behind us. They all had their hands out yelling furiously.

“You give me money!”, and, “You want my sister? She young and very pretty! She give you boom-boom!”

“Boom-boom” was the term they used to denote, to the American GI, the act of sexual intercourse. These were boys of no more than eight or nine years of age, and there really was a sister or two, somewhere out of sight behind the makeshift corrugated shanties, waiting to perform just such a service for a fee.

Even worse was the fact that those sisters were not much older than these young boys.

General William Tecumseh Sherman wrote, concerning his much criticized “March to the Sea” during the Civil War, that “War, like the thunderbolt, follows its own laws and turns not aside even if the beautiful, the virtuous, and the charitable stand in its path.”

Sherman also stated that “war is hell”, and again, unfortunately, it is much worse than that.