

Second Tour

By Larry Hardin



During my second tour, I had a little spin-out (mental episode) and they took away all my guns and wouldn't let me go to the field anymore and gave me the Officer's Club at the HQ Unit in Long Binh. Lt Buckley was my Lt. The O club was a mess, several hundred in the red, inventory all out of whack..... I kicked the guys ass that got it that way as he was soon to DEROS. I'm sure he still had some bruises and cuts when he got home. I almost got court martialed over that.

Lt Buckley and I spent a lot of time and energy building the club up to where we had to have two locals as waitresses. We had a field kitchen wash pot, the kind with the trash can with a heater in it, out front with a stack of towels where the officers could wash up with hot water before they came in for a beverage. This contraption was on a pallet so they wouldn't get their pretty little booties all messy. We had a popcorn machine. We had movies two nights a week, I think, coulda been three. We had Generals, full Birds, and all kinda officers that came in for a drink. Most stayed to enjoy the club as you will discover when you read the rest of this. Keep in mind this was a wood frame structure probably 30X40 with screen walls and slats. On several occasions, we would "assist" some of our clients home to their units.

I didn't have a lot to do during this time, and an idle mind being the devil's workshop, I was driving around one day and found a materiel storage area for the 101st Mechanized Infantry. They had just been deployed north and had all this stuff just laying there in the sun. My very good friend and drinking

buddy, the supply sergeant and I put together a clipboard full of documents, bribed a rough terrain fork lift driver with a case of cold Bud to bring his forklift over to the storage area. We bribed the MP's with more cold beer, and went for a little scavenger hunt.

When we were through it looked like the Klampets headed for California. I had a 5 ton truck and trailer loaded with more stuff that you could believe. We had freezers of every type and configuration, refrigerators, ice makers, if it got cold, it was on the truck.

We pulled into the company area and the CO, a light Colonel, came out to see what was sitting in front of his headquarters. I pulled off one of the smaller units, a miniature refrigerator (remember this was in '67), uncrated it and told the Colonel it was for his hooch. He had a detail there in about two minutes unloading all this stuff. The supply officer came out and was white as a sheet. I handed him the clipboard of paperwork and said 'don't ask and I won't have to lie to you". He got a little refrigerator too.

The EM mess hall got an ice maker that must have been 15 ft long. It make the crumble ice like Sonic has. We put 4 jet engine containers on top of the building to feed the monster. There was a detail that filled all the containers every day, all day with potable water feeding all the ice makers. The O mess got a much smaller one.

The kitchens all got freezers and refrigerators, some freezers were way over 20ft. Up in the O club, the supply sergeant discovered that it qualified as a day room and we got all kinda stuff. We couldn't get flack jackets but we got tables, chairs, sofas, a card table, etc. This crap was sitting on the dock down in Saigon. We couldn't get batteries for our field radios, but I could get parts for my popcorn machine in two days.

Up in the O club, since I stirred this pot, I got two 20ft upright freezers and stuck every piece of glass we had in them. If you wanted a shot, you got a cold shot glass. Your mixed drink was served in a frozen glass. Your beer had a frozen mug. Remember this was in '68 when we still had dirt streets in the company area. I put all the tips in the proceeds and ran it like what I thought a neighborhood bar should be. The first month it was in the black. It made a lot of money. Lt Buckley opened an account in a Saigon bank and he was meticulous in his bookkeeping. We did inventory every night and got to drink our mistakes. Lt Buckley made a lot of really good contacts that helped his career and he made Captain while I was there. He told me he never thought he would. He was not one of the tall, good looking "poster boy" types and got overlooked from time to time.

But NOT THIS TIME.

I had been home for a couple of months, maybe more, and got a package from the DoD. I was living with my Mother in Clinton, OK at the time and I thought what the hell do they want with me now. I opened the package and found my Army Commendation Medal. I had to sit down for a long time. The commendation went on and on about how I was a good soldier and had performed exemplary duty and all that crap, but it was all them freezers that got me that medal. That, and my very good friend Lt Buckley.

If you think the statute of limitations has run and that Lt Buckley is no longer in the service, use this as you see fit.

I have some really good memories of Vietnam and some not so good. This is one of the best

Happy Trails

Larry D Hardin

(405) 570-7590 Cell