

Chapter 7

Vung Tau was a town that was to offer female delights never experienced before and after 10 weeks without any female company, this was not happening fast enough. The Padre lectured us prior to leaving of the risks of 'Bar Ladies', risks of STD's like gonorrhoea and other nasties if we did not use condoms or stay within patrolled and certified areas of the town. He had a major warning for married men. Stay away from the bar - girls, as you will learn things that your wives will not be happy to learn but you will want them to. Sex will never be the same again. I thought this must be a single guy's paradise and I was happy to be taught as much as possible, I thought. We were in Asia and their attitude to sex and what happens between consenting adults in the bedroom back in 1972 was nothing like back home. Our magazines had not yet released to the Western Woman the "Joys of Female Orgasm" and her right to an orgasm and sexual liberty. The talk just made most of us keener to experiment with an Asian woman and learn more about sex, where were the trucks. We were also encouraged to wear civilian cloths in the town of 'Vungers' and reminded that at all times we were to conduct ourselves as Ambassadors of Australia and to treat the locals with respect and not to "rip them off". This was their country and we were visitors in a very culturally different country. We were handed a little info on the language and their culture to help us be better ambassadors.

The trucks arrived and we were off. Another Asian adventure for a 21 year old from Melbourne, which could be a steep learning curve in women, battering, bars, American soldiers, Military Police, brawls, sex for money and the joys of the Asian version of sex. I was lucky I was single as the Padre already had the married guys worried.

The trip down Route 23 in our open International Army trucks was like a 'scenic bus tour' in a truck. The magnificent view of rice paddies, rising mountains and the constant stream of local farmers and their families going about their everyday work as if the war did not exist. It was amazing to see water buffaloes for the first time working in the flooded rice paddies. I enjoyed the ride to Vungers and the opportunity to view the Vietnam countryside and take in the sights. I was also like everyone else really looking forward to my R&C and the prospective company of women and being a tourist. The adventure of a foreign lands the sights and sounds other than that of war. We had collected our pay and those of us who had opted to have money sent home still had enough to "play" with. Others would blow their whole pay packet on beer and women or gambling.

The trucks pulled into the Vung Tau based which offered hotel styled accommodation surrounding the Harold Holt pool. Adeptly named after our Prime Minister that disappeared in the surf off Portsea. The Army Base at Vung Tau offered a great holiday atmosphere with the pool, bar, surf beach and great hotel style rooms with house maids who we were absolutely banned from even eyeing off. Checking in our weapons we were then free to experience the Delights of the orient. Town was where we wanted to go and it did not take us long before we were off. Collecting at the gate on the way out condoms, which we highly

recommended. Our only use to date had been to keep our rifles dry. I thought well this is going to be an experience, how do you put them on. Here I was 21 years old, at war and I had never used a condom.

We headed off to another adventure in our very limited wardrobe of civilian cloths. I had a pair of faded jeans, short shirt and casual shoes. We were encouraged or ordered to wear civilian cloths so as not to be identified 'immediately' as an Australian. We were even with all the bravado of young 21 year olds still a bit apprehensive of what we were to embark upon in this little Vietnamese town that existed for Australian troops and to cater for all their needs. The town had rows of bars, one after another in all very bright colours. The streets were alive with people, the pavements overflowed with hawkers, food stalls and young boys with wooden boxes that were filled with cigarettes and all sorts of goodies from jewellery, watches, cigarette lighters, medicines, drugs and introductions to girls who were either their mothers or sisters. At the end of the main street was the market which was jammed packed with vendors selling live animals of the variety of Noahs Arch and dead animals hanging from their tents that were delicacies of the orient.

It was the bargirls who grabbed my attention as they paraded in front of their bars unable to venture onto the street (it was a local by-law for health reasons). Taking up the door space to encourage you in with bare breasts pushing through their braless dresses or plunging through tight tops with the inviting words "ockalou buy me a drink". The girls were checked for Stds and sexual nasties each month and if you failed the health tests conducted by Australia, American and local authorities, your Bar could be closed down if the Medics the girls a risk. There were two bars with enterprising owners whose girls' paraded out the front but were fenced in by a railing like a fence. I can remember these girls adored the Hong Kong Bar and they were absolutely beautiful women, stunning with slender figures that lead you to a small but well rounded and firm breasts. It took all my will power to come to terms with the fact that they were prostitutes and you had to pay. I had never paid and was determined not to.

I was very taken by the local young women who walked the streets on their way to work or school in their French Provincial dresses looking absolutely like porcelain dolls. It was like a scene out of the movies, an Asian version of 'women heaven'; they were such beautiful women, like I had never seen before. Back home it was mini skirts, which looked sexy, here they worn long traditional dresses and looked not only sexy as it flowed tightly over their slender figures but they looked elegant and beautiful as well. These young local women who had been able to avoid prostitution as a means of living would cast their eyes downwards each time they passed you for fear of encouraging you or that you would make them smile. It must have been a "sin" to smile at Westerners. Vietnamese's are deeply religious people and Catholicism had been deeply entrenched into their culture from a century of the French. Those of middle and upper classes of their society had the benefits of money that helped them avoid prostitution to survive and they could afford to be religious and seek an education. I wanted to meet one of these women and enjoy their company. I was determined not to be sucked in by a "whore" but they were so enticing and if you sat down with one, it was all over red rover. Their little hands

would go to work on your little “peepee” giving it a work out while you tried to chat to a mate or have a drink. These women knew every trick in the book.

They were paid by the drink, so the more you drank the more they made. The drinks you bought them were just lolly water because there is no way their little petite bodies could handle the amount of grog they pretended to drink. If you stopped buying drinks for them you suffered their full abuse and angry. It was common for them to announce to the whole bar what a small ‘peepee’ you had or that you were either ‘NumberTen’ or ‘Cheap Charlie’ favorite terms for putting you down for not meeting their needs or providing them with a cash bonus for their ‘treats’.

In our Platoon there were the ‘Go for it’ guys who could drink a lizard under the table, who lived hard and for the day. They were out to ‘fuck’ as many women as they could. Sex to them was a sport or game hunting and these times provided unbridled sexual freedom and ‘game’. ‘I’ll bang you whether you like it or not and you will like it’, was what they offered.

It is hard for the women back home to understand what this need for sex is all about. There are always guys who will “use” women no matter what the circumstances and to them a fuck is a fuck. To others it was maybe their last chance to experience the delights and depths of a woman. The stories of sex with Vietnamese women, how they enjoyed sex but how far and what levels of sexual satisfaction you would enjoy. The thoughts of such unbridled sexual freedom and the steep learning curve about “doing” sex was all too much for most of us. Men would tell stories of being brought to their knees, trembling with sheer satisfaction and learning more about how to satisfy women than any book or back of the shelter shed expert advice from the older boys at school. Even the padres had warned us of the pitfalls of the experience of having sex with a Vietnamese girl would bring. The experience of oral sex was the highlight for those who were game enough to taste the Asian delights. Oral sex in Western societies in the sixties was not a common or discussed sexual pleasuring activity for either male or female. Blokes were ‘blown out’ by the experience that was common sexual activity for Asians, especially prostitutes. Our sexual experiences and new techniques learnt in the Orient were to forever change our perceptions of sexual satisfaction and to knock the ‘missionary’ position down from the most common climax to sexual activity. We were to bring these new expectations of sex home to our partner or future partner who would react in different ways to the new sexual freedoms of the 1970’s. It was very hard for married men or men with permanent girlfriends or engaged to be married because a sexual experience in Vietnam would mean you would forever be different. Your needs and expectations well beyond those experiences of the 1960s Aussie girl or for that matter most blokes back home.

The mix of our first operation that had not only claimed 3 lives from our Battalion but also 4 others from other Units, was a good enough excuse to test our manhood in the sexual delights and the sweet smell of a Asian woman.

I wanted to enjoy this experience but was not ready either out of fear of catching a “nasty” or that my own previous experience with women was so limited. I also never got

drunk enough to give me the courage to “pull a chick” but most of all I did not want to pay.

I was in a new country, my first visit overseas and being Asia it was so different. The people, the language, the architecture and the way of life, it seemed so removed from back home. I wanted to enjoy this experience, exploring this oriental country and taking in some of the culture. So a group of us would sit around the bar just long enough to be sociable and then disappear into the streets of Vung Tau to savour the Asian experience. In time and with the right woman I would eventually enjoy the sexual freedom, the fantasy and the lasting lessons of sex with a Vietnamese woman.

In the meantime until I built up the courage and waited for the right moment and girl, there were temples, markets, shops, food vendors; opportunities to chat to American GIs, watching life in the village go past and the continuous traffic of bicycles, animals, buses and the human horse power of the Vung Tau Taxis fleet. As we explored this another side of Vietnam away from the jungle we were like excited school boys let loose in a chocolate factory wanting to taste everything and savour all in front of us. In time we all agreed that maybe we would mount the courage to savour the women of our choice but the choice had to be better than just a bargirl.

Walking the narrow streets crowded with vendors I enjoyed the kids even the pesky ones who tried to sell you their little sisters or even their grandmothers and anything from cigarettes to dope, if they could. The little girls would want to sell you leas of flowers and I just wanted to buy all of them. These little girls were as young as 4 or 5 years on the streets selling flowers to make enough money to survive. The prostitution and the street kid were a product of the war. It was not just here but back home in Sydney the streets of Kings Cross were alive with “hookers” taking advantage of the American GIs and their money, just like here in Vungers.

After an exhaustive day walking the streets it was back to the ‘Hotel’ for a swim and to rest my feet. I was looking forward to coming back for the night life which was reputed to be wilder at night there was more even more women to choose from, according to the ‘experienced’, certainly the Yanks we talked to, encouraged us to check out the night life.

The Harold Holt pool was a haven for the battle worn from the jungles of the Nam and the streets of Vungers. The girls had a way of tiring many out and the pool was a relief from the temptations of the streets. The only thing missing around the pool was the sight of women in bathers. A short stroll down the back had you on the surf beach manned by our very own lifesavers of the VTLSC. I can remember just running into the water so I could brag when I got home that I had swum in the South China Sea and maybe this might be my only chance. The beach was a bit dirty and we were reminded that only a bit further down the beach the VC often-planted mines. Our beach was mine swept everyday and patrolled by Military Police and their dogs. The blue South China Sea had a refreshing feel on your body after so many weeks of patrolling, sweat and no daily shower for eight weeks.

After a brief swim in the surf it was back to the pool and the bar for a few drinks and to prepare for the big night out. These were good days at Vung Tau on R&C and times when we were most at ease. I can remember this first one as being a time when we sat around the pool and bar and sang a lot and became very jolly. We had survived what had been a long and hard Operation with repercussions un expected so soon into our Tour and the realisation that war really did kill men and it was not just the enemy. The singing and shouting drinks all round was a way of relieving the unspoken tension of deep down how scared we were during that long eight weeks. That we wanted to say the unspoken, “glad you made it mate”, “thanks for watching my back” or “ sorry I was a bastard at times to you”. This was a special time our first R&C at Vungers.

Nighttime in Vungers was as promised the Kings Cross of Asia. GIs must sleep during the day and come out at night because they were everywhere just like the Cross in Sydney. The NightClubs were filled with girls still encouraging you to drink up big and buy them their “drinks”. Their hands were even more explorative at night as there was the cover of the disco lights of the night club scene. At night they seemed more intense to win you over and have their way with you. Money was to change hands more frequently at the disco than at the bars and the girls would whisk you off to a corner or to their place of business around the corner. It was also good for you as a bloke in these times it was not hard to feel like you were ‘valued’ and that the sheer attention they heaped upon you to have their way whether it was real or unreal made you feel real good.

On the way back to the Vungers Resort as the curfew drew close you would collect at the gate the “morning after” (Vibramgian) pills, to protect you from dreaded sexual disease. It did not work for some guys because the Army forgot to emphasis you took it before you went out as it made you feel nauseous and put off sex. Maybe that is why we picked it up on the way back and prayed that the new rubber invention, the condom worked as well on your dick as it did protecting your rifle in the rain from catching rust.