

MY THIRD TRIP TO PLEIKU

By [Bernardo S. Paez](#)

One very hot Vietnam day, I had a day off. Must have been in June 1967. I decided to take a trip to the City of Pleiku. I had been to Pleiku twice before to shop for mats made from rice stalks and have some uniforms tailored. I had also taken Montagnards from a village close to base camp to the market, but had not gone into the city.

This was to have been a welcome break from holding myself back,.....holding myself back from any sexual feelings. I was going to go into town and get wasted!,.....After I drank as much beer as I wanted, I would get me the best slut in Pleiku and get laid. I preceded to do just that.

Of course, most every other soldier that had a day off, and was in Pleiku, was doing the same as I.

Sometimes we all do incredibly dumb things. We had been warned not to travel alone, but in pairs. Not to mingle with the indigenous personnel. Avoid large crowds. Avoid being in town after dark. And most importantly, don't get drunk in town. I start knocking down some beers right away.

I wound up in a dust filled, sandy bar with a dirt floor. It was in the outskirts of town. There were more Vietnamese than Americans. Loud rock music was blaring out to the street. I walk into the bar and I feel as if I am in a Mexican Bar. I head directly toward who I considered the pick of the crop of the bar girls.

I buy her a couple of drinks, and we get into an awkward conversation. Neither of us can really communicate with each other. All I know is that I am extremely horny and she understands that. I represent to her about several hundred Piasters, (Vietnamese Money), about \$5 American. She offers and I buy.

She leads me out of the bar, down some alleys, I felt comfortable, because it was only about 4 PM. She leads me by the hand into a large, concrete and tin warehouse type building. The whole building has a dirt floor. In the middle of the room is a queen size bed, around the bed are hanging plastic curtains that can be slid around to hide the bed, like a hospital room, only decorated in pink and white. At the far end of the large room are 3 or 4 elderly ladies, I can see that there is a cook fire going. There are some children running in and out of the house/warehouse and I feel safe. The Ladies know we are there, but ignore us. I get led by the hand onto the bed.

It turns out to be a very unsatisfying time. The chatter of the old ladies and the playful voices of the children only yards away kill any pretense of intimacy. It only takes a few minutes to finish our business and we go back to the bar. I lose track of time and I miss the last bus back to Base Camp. It is getting close to dusk and the sun is setting.

I spot a Cyclo-Cab and contract him to take me back to my Base Camp about 8 miles south of Pleiku. The cab ride is going to cost me \$5 in script.

A Cyclo-Cab is a three wheeled scooter. The driver sits in front, right behind the handle bars and the front wheel. Over the rear wheels is an open area with two seats facing each other. Only the roof is covered. Each seat has room for three people. I am the only one riding in the rear. The driver makes two stops and the seats fill up with Vietnamese men. I think nothing of it, I am still half drunk.

We are traveling down the dirt road toward Camp Enari, (4th Inf. Div, Base Camp), about 8 miles south of Pleiku. About halfway there, in the middle of nowhere, one of the Vietnamese Men tries to start a conversation with me in broken English. We understand very little of each other. He

then says, "Viet Cong number one, G.I. number 10". I thought he was kidding. I answer laughing, "no, no,...G.I. number one, Viet Cong number 10". He starts insisting "Viet Cong number one!" and I can tell he is getting angry. He starts yelling in angry Vietnamese and the driver pulls to the side of the road and stops the cab. They all get out of the cab and I am left by myself inside. The rest of the Vietnamese are trying to calm the angry Vietnamese. The angry Vietnamese pulls out a pocket knife and points it at me and says what I take to be threatening words.

I am armed with a six shot Smith and Wesson Revolver. It is in a shoulder holster beneath my left armpit. It is standard Army issue for all helicopter pilots. I know it has six bullets in the chambers. The thing was, I hadn't fired it or cleaned it in a few months and I didn't even know if it was reliable. I was thinking to myself, "I have six bullets and there are six of them,...I have to make every shot count". I quickly get out of the cab so that I will have room to maneuver. I stand close to the road so that I can run toward the Base Camp if it comes to that. I start to back up down the road when I hear the sound of an engine. I look towards the north and I see a deuce and a half Army truck heading toward us. I stand in the middle of the road. I am going to make the truck stop even if I have to be run over. The truck slows down and I move to the side and jump on the running board yelling to the driver, "get the hell out of here, those guys are Viet Cong!". The driver floors it and I climb into the truck cab.

I glance back and I see the Vietnamese still by the side of the road looking in our direction. I tell the story to the driver of the deuce and a half and we laugh in anxious relief. I don't know how much danger I was in, but I'm glad I didn't find out. I never even paid the cab driver his \$5.

Would you believe I wound up with a case of the "clap" after that little adventure?. I never visited the City of Pleiku again.