A Scary Night on the Town

I could sense that I should not have been there, day or night time. It was a little after midnight after a light rain in Saigon. The air was warm, and the pungent odor of sitting water, and mud mixed with garbage started to seep up from the moist dirt road. What was I doing here? I had walked off the main road and down this narrow dirty street about 50 yards when I felt it. Fear and danger in the dark. There were no lights except for a dimly – lit bulb hanging over four Vietnamese men sharing drinks at a makeshift outdoor counter off to my right, about 20 yards.

One knows when fear and death are nearby. My senses became sharp. God, I could read that it was a 25-watt bulb from here! That the guys drinking were surprised that I was there, as I was. I could hear my boots squishing as I slowly turned around to return to the main road, eyeing the four Vietnamese. I could hear my breathing, shallow, very slow, my heartbeat. Don’t turn your back to these guys. Thank God, I was carrying my 45, holstered, yes, but I could have it out in an instant and I was accurate at 20 yards based upon my firing range scores. But this was no firing range and who knows what these four characters were carrying. Hopefully nothing but I couldn’t tell as I slowly backed out, never once turning my back to these guys. My body was sensitized all over. Nothing to get excited about. No need to be cowboys. I just made a wrong turn, that’s all, but I will shoot all of you if I have to. God, get me out of here safely, I thought.

After what seemed an eternity, I was back at the main road. Back where there were some lights. As I turned around, a long black sedan drove out from the shadows from hell street. Wait, there are 3 stars on the car’s flag. What is MG Young doing at this time of night and coming from who knows what down that road?

The next day, Bruce, my best friend, a Marine intelligence type came into my office. As usual, we joked a bit. Then Bruce asked me what was I doing in that part of town last night? What? How did he know? He knew he said because I was being followed 24/7 due to my clearance and those that I knew back in the states. Well, if that was the case where were they when I encountered those guys last night? It would have been obvious to anyone that I was in a very tense-filled situation. Bruce didn’t answer. Hmm. Could any of those guys last night been assigned to follow me? I’ll never know. And I didn’t care because I was alive.

Joe Tavares

2 January 2014