

Vietnam

Nancy Mroczek PhD
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It was Vietnam, June 1977. No longer North or South because it seemed there was no such difference these days. Anyway, everybody was going there, especially people who had seen virtually every other part of the world and now wanted to get a quick firsthand glimpse at the country of atrocities and examine each his own responsibility. It was gross, it was unimaginable – God, what a trip!

All around was living hell and then the traffic got so great that the Vietnamese (those who fought with the North) decided to put an end to it. One day a regimen of unusually well dressed soldiers marched up to the steps of the Grand Pavillion, which was the area where the Americans, British, and some French hung around. Americans were by far the most numerous. The Pavillion was elevated quite a ways off the ground with one long wide stairway leading to its entrance. When the soldiers came, they moved in on the stairway, ascending the first few steps. They were about one or two abreast and fifty rows deep. The situation looked extremely irksome since each one carried a bayonet held high whose tips were all at the same level.

The visitor to Vietnam didn't quite know what to do at first. But almost immediately to the vanguard came Mick Jagger who asked, arms outstretched, "What are ya tryin to do?" But the soldiers weren't going to sit down to talk and they weren't going to waste time. They were just going to do a most efficient job

once and for all, cleaning up the problem. And they started forward to get with it. Just then Jagger leaped into the soldiers and impaled himself on maybe five or six bayonets. Now the crowd on both sides got a bit panicky.

For my part, all I can remember is that I snatched up a bag of my father's cookies that caught my eye lying under a couch. I then began to run, gobbling a few cookies as though I was starving until I realized that my starvation hadn't even begun. I ran helter-skelter a while until I could focus some kind of plan. I remembered the deepest cellar compartments under the Pavillion, which contained some ancient storage bins or graves? of mortar and decided these could probably *hide me from death*.

Most of the people were running around following each other and a few, like me, ran by alone. Others were dead, dying, or just being shot as I passed them. I thought, I am determined to get out of this mess for now. By tomorrow I may give up on this game, but for now – adrenalin for my body's preservation!

I had to take a circuitous, sometimes very open path to get to the lower basement. When I was almost there, a Vietnamese lady commander started after me with a pistol. Her face was total kill, and her aim was excellent. The sight of her spurred me to play harder. She kept shooting and I amazingly dodged every bullet. It was so unusual that at one point the lady stopped shooting and quietly wondered at the gun instead.

Finally, I arrived safely at the deepest pit but I was not too comfortable with the situation. The vapor of that room was enough to send me reeling out of control. This just wouldn't do.

So I thought, “what the hell!” and walked upstairs to get shot. When I got there all the confusion had died down and the Pavillion was even swept clean. So finally I walked over to the stairs and out to the daylight.