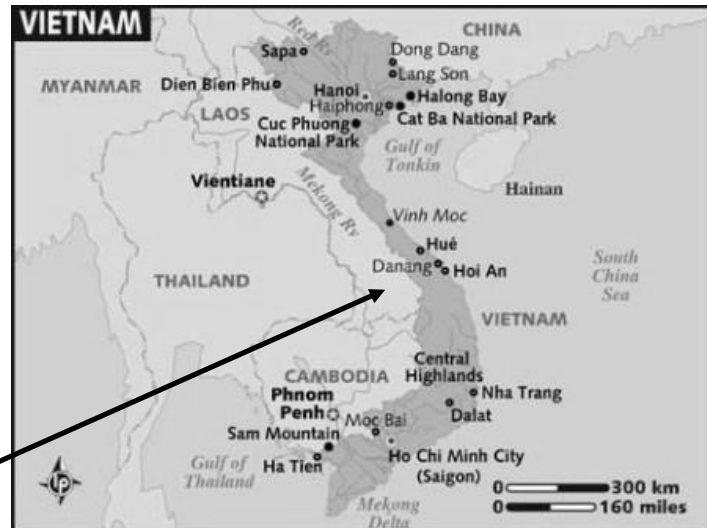


"Chu-lai", Vietnam

As the title suggest, "Vietnam" is about Howard's first experience serving with the Marine Corps during the Vietnam conflict.

For purposes of getting our bearings, the map to right displays Vietnam as it is today - as a unified country, and not divided into North and South regions as before.

As part of the squadron, VMA 224, Cherry-Point, NC; he deployed to "Chu-lai" south of Danang in 1965. Leaving the states, he flew to Danang by aircraft and by helicopter to the final destination, "Chu-lai."



At this airbase, he supported the A-4, Douglas Skyhawk - which was a troop support aircraft also flown by John McCain - former POW and recent Presidential candidate. Located on an expeditionary runway, built by the Seabees, the base was right on the beach of the South China Sea.

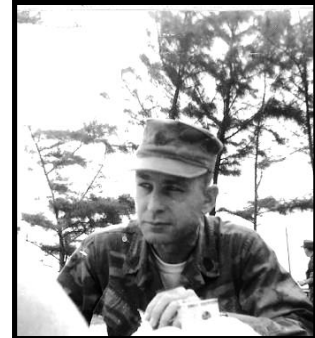
Vietnam is a tropical environment and thus, the weather patterns of rainy seasons and extreme heat was the norm. These elements and living arrangements of tent-living made for a long-term type camping experience - although with rotting equipment and a continual diet of sea-rations was extreme for civilian-type camping.

Each day involved flight operations - which is an intense activity because of the rapid reload and transfer of equipment, repair of battle-damages, and extended shifts and periods without sleep or rest of any kind. These intense operations, coupled with the rough environment and periodic insurgence of North Vietcong, made for a monumental level of danger in his career to date.

A brief reprieve was offered about seven months into the activity when he took leave with a small group to "China Beach." This "oasis" was made quite popular among the troops because it offered some respite in the simple activities of cookouts, games and sports. Nothing like a much desired return to the states however, "China Beach"

did give some relaxation; below, and to the right, Howard is shown enjoying the day.

Among his squadron, He recalls some excellent team work. An Avionics officer named George Oscar Wall is recounted as the "character of the Corp". A WWII veteran - and seasoned soldier - he began his career as a private and, through opportunity, had excelled to the rank of Warrant Officer and Lieutenant. At the time that Howard knew him, he was aging at 50 years or more. An independent spirit and somewhat self-aligned individual, Oscar was the quintessential quality of the old Corp with a creed that "nothing is impossible".



Some other continuing contemporaries included Harry Thorpe, Bill Vinson, and Roger Palmer - all of which would continue to come in contact via other assignments, squadrons and the like.

In spite of the described living conditions and counter-activity of the Con, "Chu-lai" is remembered as a beautiful beach and tropical waters. Such beauty - as the tropic beaches - was seldom if ever used for swimming because of the dangerous jelly fish common to those waters as well as the continuing activity of the enemy. Thus, the beauty could only be admired and not necessarily used - especially for such solo acts of walking, swimming or surfing at the beach.



An operation purposed to "clear-out" the Con activity did not mitigate the threat of such danger. Yet, it was dangerous to be alone on the venture beyond the central quarters and activity of the base. He mentions that several tried it - and some did not return. Yes, the operation was there to address the threat - but not to eliminate it.

As a humorous anecdote, a letter was sent to the state of Florida for some alligators. The "operations" (as described above) included dogs to forewarn of insurgents; but with too few dogs, the local troops decided to request gators from Florida in the form of a letter to the governor. As Howard recalls, the return-letter indicated that gators were on the endangered species in Florida; but the governor's office referred them to South Carolina for same species in more abundance.