

**PAW POWER/ALLEN**

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"That's right. Here in Alaska this is the time of constant daylight for the next few month it will never get darker than this." The airman explained.

The Air Force mess hall was something else it had the longest serving line that I had ever seen. The food looked great and there was every choice you could think of. It stayed opened twenty four hours a day, you could eat the meal of your choice even breakfast. I was amazed. I never saw a mess hall like this in the Army, not even an officers mess, which I had the privilege of pulling KP in.

"Eat all you want this is set up for you." The mess Sergeant said.

"You gotta be kidding me. All this food just for the few of us." I said

"Not just for you few, but for all transients." The mess Sergeant replied laughing at this stupid grunt.

I stuffed myself as did the others, for some reason it seemed as though my fear was subsiding and I felt a little better. Arriving back at the plane and seeing the equipment brought me back to my senses, and I knew the relax atmosphere of the Air Force base had given a false sense of security. I will never fall for this again I know I should still be scared.

The dogs were really glad to be out of those confining shipping crates. There was some water we were allowed to let them drink but not eat. Sig was all over me we ran up and down the airstrip as I was trying to wind him down a little. We ran back to the Starlifter and Sig began to probe the plane with his keen senses. He jumped up on the front of one of the engines as though he was inspecting it. He went from one to the other until he had checked all four.

"You trying to take my job boy?" The crew chief asked Sig laughing.

"You'd be surprised he might be trying to. He's smart enough to do about anything." I said.

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"Smart dog huh. What's his name?" The crew chief asked.

"Sig. And he is really smart. He don't want to go to Vietnam either." I said.

"How do you know?" The crew chief asked.

"I'll just ask him. Sig do you want to go to Vietnam, or would you rather be a dead dog?" I commanded Sig. Dead dog was the command he responded to. I had taught him this during dog school and it turned out to be the command I would have a lots of fun with.

"He is pretty smart I'd better watch out or I may be the one staying in Vietnam." The crew chief said laughing at and petting Sig as he lay there like a dead dog.

"Put the dogs up." Lieutenant Stockdale ordered.

"OK boy. Lets go back to that old shipping crate." I commanded Sig.

The Starlifter taxied down the runway into take off position. I noticed that everyone's eyes were looking out at the last signs of the real world(what GI's called the states) we would see for a while, if ever again. The faces were glued to the windows until Alaska was no longer in sight.

The pilot must of felt sorry for us it wasn't long that he offered to let each one of us sit up in the cockpit and see the pilots view of the world. It finally became my turn and it was really amazing how different the world looked from up here. So quiet and peaceful. What a trip. Later on that night I asked the crew chief if the pilots would mind if I rode up with them a while longer seeing everyone else was asleep. The pilot let me sit up in the cockpit as long as I wanted. After about an hour I began to feel a little sleepy and returned to the cargo bay. I guess it was all the excitement and anxiety that had started exhausting me. I found a place near Sig's shipping crate and fell asleep in no time.

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The noise of the gears and hydraulics woke most of us again. We knew we were nearing Japan, our next and last stop off before we reached Vietnam. I sleepily looked out the small window.

"WOW. I have never seen so many lights in my life!" I said as the plane banked toward Tokyo.

"You should fly into New York. We have more lights than that." Jonathan Wahl replied.

"You gotta be kidding." I said.

"No. He's right, lots more lights." Frank said.

The Starlifter taxied to its refueling point and lowered the massive ramp and we were allowed to go inside and look around this immense airport. We bought everything we thought we would need and probably not find in Vietnam. The dogs did not get a break this time we were only a few hours out of Vietnam and they would get plenty of exercise there. The hour and a half didn't last long and we were herded back on the Starlifter. Soon the massive plane was giving it full power as we lifted off the ground silently saying our good-byes to the last resemblance of civilization we would see in a while, if ever.

My thoughts drifted back home I was wondering if my parents were going to have to suffer through the horrors of burying a son as my aunt and uncle had. I sure hope not.

I knew now for sure that the next stop will be Vietnam. I slowly drifted off in an unrestful sleep.