

An Origin Story

The engines of a U.S. Navy A-7E Corsair II filled the air as it soared over the silent valley. I was nervous. The plane was loud and it was known to attract unwanted attention. I was on my way to bomb the Viet Cong headquarters. Somehow, our commander found the location and I didn't want any Viet Cong to find and stop us.

"Sally Ben to Annie Rey, do you copy? Over," came the voice of my best friend from my headset.

"Yes, Annie Rey to Sally Ben. Over," I replied immediately.

"Looks like we have company at 3 o'clock," Sally yelled, instantly dropping the military format we were supposed to be talking in.

I looked to my right and sure enough there were 10 planes heading toward us. They were Viet Cong, no doubt about it. On each side of the planes was the Vietnam symbol. The planes seemed to glare at us as they advanced.

Cursing, I moved into attack formation. The Viet Cong pilots probably thought that we had no chance. What are the odds that 6 rookie female pilots are going to beat 10 veteran male Viet Cong?

"I'll show you," I muttered.

I flew forward with amazing speed and shot down 3 of the Viet Cong pilots. As I looked around, I noticed that each of my friends had similar results. In a matter of seconds, the Viet Cong were gone.

I pressed my mic, "Nice work everyone. Now let's bomb some Viet Cong."

I led the way without any interruptions to the Vietnam base. Once there, we dropped all our bombs. I heard the cheers of my team, but did not join in.

"Something about this feels unnatural," I whispered over my mic.

Then it struck me.

"It's an ambush!" I screamed, but it was too late.

Viet Cong pilots seemed to appear out of thin air. My best friend, Sally, was shot down into the darkness below me.

“Noooo!” The pain I felt seemed unnatural.

Others quickly were shot down after Sally until I was the only one left.

I turned and fled, but it wasn't that easy. Two Viet Cong pilots decided to follow me. I dodged and maneuvered, but I just couldn't shake them.

Finally, I was shot down into a world of trees.

I lived there in that forest for many years, waiting to be discovered. I was found in that forest when some builders were clearing the land for a park.

I told them my story and showed them my U.S. Navy A-7E Corsair II, which had been impaled on a tree when I was shot down. They called the mayor and took me to meet with him and a few others.

At the meeting, I was welcomed as a war hero. It was my team that had turned the tides and

helped defeated Vietnam. There, the decision was made that my plane should be turned into a

memorial for us. The tree holding my plane was reinforced with cement and displayed in the front of the

park.

My plane stands in the Edwardsville Township Park to this day as a reminder of the sacrifice that

we made.