

## The USO Show

Revised February 13, 2020



It was a hot Sunday in December. Ray Twaro and I had secured our piece of dirt, our perch where we would watch the USO Show.

1968, I saw Bob Hope and Ann Margaret in a USO show at Phu Cat Air Force Base. Ray and I had great seats on the hillside chosen for seating the thousand or so troops that attended.



I remember crowding up near the bus that brought them from the airstrip to the stage. I have some great shots of Bob and Ann, and the Cheerleaders they brought with them. It was a great show and Bob was very funny.

The following is a scene that was written for the novel Redemption but was not included in the final manuscript.

It is written first person in Jon's voice.

### The USO Show

Let's watch Bob Hope's special tonight. Mom and dad loved Bob Hope. Dad always talked about seeing Hope in Europe in 1944. Francis Langford was with him. Mom always accused Dad of having a mad crush on Langford.

Popcorn, that sounds great.

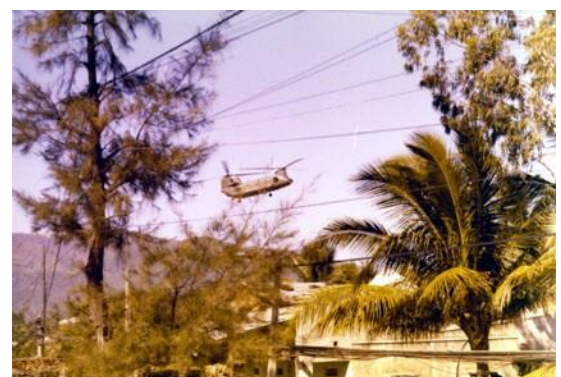
Yeah, I saw Hope in Nam. December of 68. Maddy, it was a day I'll never forget.

My platoon was stationed in a recon camp West of Quang Tri. We'd been doing tactical missions for months trying to keep the NVA from setting up any kind of permanent positions. It was hard duty. We'd taken many losses. After nine months in country over half of the guys I went through boot camp with had either been killed or injured, and sent back home.

No. Hope did not come out into the jungle where we were, we went to him.

Old Bull Anderson.

Bull Anderson, Colonel John (Bull) Anderson, a real



Marine's, marine.

Why Bull? He was as big as a bull, tough as hell too. The troops loved him though. Anyway, Ole Bull came riding into our camp with two Chinook helicopters, picked up twenty-eight of us, and flew us down to Phu Cat Airbase. We flew right over the stage and saw a bunch of troops already sitting on the side of the hill waiting for the show. Bull told the chopper pilots to land right on top of the hill instead of the runway. He said, Screw the Air controllers, my men aren't waiting on the runway for a bus. Then he told us to go down to the front of the stage. The troops who were on the frontline had reserved seating. Well, not actual seating, more like spot of dirt that had been roped off. The Swabs and Wingnuts had to sit farther up the hill.



Oh man, did we have good seats. We weren't more than ten feet from the stage, front and center. When Hope came out you could see his nose hair. And then, there was Ann Margaret, in those black skin tight bell bottoms and low cut top. Wow, she had a lot of freckles and a beautiful smile. It was a great show.

They brought a small show, there was Hope, Ann and Rosie Greer, and some cheer leaders, but I don't remember where they were from.



Dick Weaver and I were good friends and had been in the same Unit since boot. We laughed at Bob's joke and when Bob said that there's no way the Vietcong would dare attack the base today because, then he rattled right off the top of his head all of the Corps and Army units that were in the audience. All of us jumped to our feet and screamed boo- yah. He did the same for the Air Force and Navy, but we were first. What a hoot that was.



Ann Margaret blowing everyone kisses, boo-yah, what a great time. The only thing that could have made it better

is if we could have had a hot shower and clean uniforms. Ann smiled all the time but I'll bet she could smell our sweaty stinking bodies all the way from the stage. There is only so much Old Spice can do on a body that hasn't showered in eight or nine days."

No, that was the last time I saw Dick. He was killed two days after the show. I heard he was hit by a sniper."

Nah, I wasn't there with him. Maddy, this is hard to talk about. I haven't told anyone about this. About two-thirds of the way through the show the Colonel gets called to the side of the stage by this 2<sup>nd</sup> Louie who's the MC. When he got there, an Airman handed him a note. After he read it, he looked over at our squad with an odd look on his face. We all thought something bad must have happened back at our base camp.



After the show, my squad leader took me over to where the Colonel had a tent set up. He told me I was going home.

Yeah, you bet I was shocked. I had three more months to go and did not want to leave my squad. Marine's don't leave their squad in the field. Anyway, I walked into the tent and the Colonel is sitting at a folding table and tells me to sit down. I told him I'm fine standing, after sitting on those wonderful bleachers all afternoon. I thought I would get a smile out of him, but he just stared at me and said, fine. Are your parents Chloe and Anatoli Marzetti? I told him, yes. Then, he looked down at the note and fiddled with it a bit saying nothing. I asked him, what is it sir? I had no clue what this was about. Then, he says, Son I have some bad news to tell you. It is with the heaviest of heart that I have to tell you that both of your parents died in an automobile accident two days ago. There is a helicopter waiting for you on the flight line to take you to Cam Ranh Bay, where you will catch a plane home so you can attend the funeral.

Thanks babe, they loved you too. You were like a daughter to them since we were babies. If you weren't at my house, I was at yours, or Hil's. The three amigos, mom used to call us, or as dad would say the three stooges.

Yeah, it was a great neighborhood, and still it is, but now it is just you, me and Hil.

I love you too.

