

*U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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## *The Saga of Samantha*

By

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Squadron One Division 11 was based in the Gulf of Thailand on Phu Quoc Island. The patrol area extended from the Cambodian Border to the Southern Tip of Viet Nam. Dispersed throughout this area are many islands that were inhabited by generations of locals, each one having a village chief (usually an elder). These islands were very remote from the mainland and therefore had little access to medical treatment or any other amenities. Habitation was mostly in thatched huts with some buildings. Some of the bigger islands did have a school building with a teacher who was usually not Vietnamese but Chinese or a missionary. Part of our patrol was to visit the island and make ourselves known to the villagers as many of the junks we boarded came from those islands. Additionally we would distribute candy to the kids and see if there was anything we could do to show them we were friends and win their hearts and minds.

The Squadron had a young newly arrived Doctor, who had just graduated from Medical School and the Navy immediately sent him out to us as the only Doctor we had. Dr. Ron had to stay on the support ship for potential casualties that could happen at any time. We therefore convinced him to make up basic medical kits for us to take on our patrols which consisted of aspirin, penicillin, some antibiotics, bandages etc. basically an emergency kit with some operating tools. He schooled us in the basics, enough to treat minor illnesses but not enough to cause any harm.

On one visit to Isle Tortue (Turtle Island) we visited with the village chief. He took us in to see his son in a room who had a large injury on his scalp probably from a falling coconut. He was running a high fever as infection had set in. We shaved his hair back and cleaned the wound and stitched it together using sail stitching (hey we are men of the sea), injected him with a shot of penicillin and gave the father penicillin tabs with instructions on their use. We accomplished the language difference through the Viet Nam Liaison Officer that each of our 82 foot Point Class Cutters carried.

Several weeks later we again visited the island and found that the boy was fine, fever gone and wound well on its way to healing. The village chief thanked us and went out and came back with a tiny Vietnamese sway back pot bellied pig and handed it to us as a gift. It was about the size of small puppy. I asked the Vietnamese liaison Officer to tell him we couldn't accept and he told me that we could not refuse the gift as it would be an insult. We returned back to the POINT. GLOVER wherein the crew was immediately taken with this small pig. We decided to keep it until we could figure out what to do with it. So we had to give it a name and voted on Sam or Samantha dependent on the sex of the animal. Because it was so young it took a while to determine. Finally we determined it was Samantha.

It didn't take much time to get attached to Samantha as she was playful and would play chase around the Boston Whaler and lick your neck when you held her. Occasionally she would slide off the deck with those hard feet and a crew member would have to dive over to rescue her. She ate and slept with the crew and got her daily bath. As time went by she began to gain a little weight (she ate very well). Additionally, the other boats began to find out about Samantha. Until we decided what to do we didn't want the Commodore, Captain Hodgman on the support ship USS KRISHNA to find out about her but we feared he would as the other boats started poking fun at us calling us the Pig Boat etc. Our call sign was Barbados Victor and another boat would call us on the radio: "Barbados Samantha er correction Barbados Victor this is Barbados Tango"). The CIC on the KRISHNA always wondered what that was about. On one occasion between patrols we were tied up alongside of KRISHNA for refueling and supplies. The Commodore was going to have an inspection on the boat the next day with the crew lined up on deck. We weren't sure what to do with Samantha so we hid her in a crate under the Whaler. As the Commodore passed down the line Samantha let out a sound that was like a gurgle. At that moment the Commodore was opposite our Chief Engineer who had a handle bar mustache and was a little portly. The Chief through quick thinking immediately patted his stomach and said "pardon me sir" which in reply the Commodore replied "very well". The inspection was over and we escaped detection again.



Another month went by and Samantha was growing rapidly. None of us had any solutions of what to do with Samantha. At that time we were scheduled to go on R&R to Bangkok so when the relief crew reported on board we asked them to find a solution for Samantha but not tell us what they did when we returned. When we got back we had to know as Samantha was gone. They told us that they had boarded a junk with an elderly couple in it and offered her to them which they gladly took.

We still believe to this day that she joined them and went home with them and became their favorite pet and she lived happily ever after.

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