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Vietnam War Veteran Gets Red Carpet Welcome (*Chillicothe Gazette, Monday, August 26, 1968*)

BY JAMES E. LEASURE

Last week's "indiscriminate 'harassing rocket attacks" in Saigon could have been with homemade rockets and rocket launchers made of scrap.

One local participant of the Vietnam War said this is the type of material used by the Viet Cong, making it possible to sneak in, hit, and sneak out again under cover of darkness.



Sgt. Thomas Wikle, son of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Wikle, 624 Commanche Rd., who received "red carpet" treatment on his arrival back in Chillicothe after a year in Vietnam, said the Viet Cong use anything they can pick up to make an attack.

He said the enemy often uses homemade rockets and even knocks together two pieces of board to make a V-trough launching rack to fire their make-shift rockets.

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They sometimes use pieces of pipe stuck in the ground and fire the rockets like mortars.

Sgt. Tom. with his twin brother Sgt. Charles Wikle, made a 17-hour flight from their base at Phan Rang to McChord AFB, Washington Wednesday. Sgt. Charles left immediately for Clovis, N.M. to visit his fiancée in preparation for an early October marriage.

Brother Tom flew into Columbus, arriving Thursday afternoon, where he was met by his parents.

Arriving at 624 Commanche Road. Sgt. Tom found the red carpet was actually rolled out for him. Draped down from the front stoop, the carpet had been rolled out nearly to the sidewalk.

In the front yard was a sign. "Welcome home Sgt. Tom" All he said was, "Gee, somebody must have wanted me home."

Part of the 30-day leave of Sgt. Tom and Sgt. Chuck when he arrives next week, will be spend in describing the scenes in 16 rolls of color motion picture film they sent home and have never seen.

The twin sergeants were with the 552nd TAC Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang.

Discussing the far-off war in the quiet of his home, Sgt. Tom said the first exciting thing that happened on the trip home was the mini-skirted hostesses on the airline that brought them to the states. It was their first dress in more than a year.

The twins underwent a 2 ½ hour Viet Cong attack just before leaving Phan Rang. The sergeant said all he could think of during the attack was that they would miss their plane for the trip back home.

It was the sixth such attack on their isolated base since last March. It destroyed two planes and injured two air police.

Sgt. Chuck decided to take one last swim before they left, his twin brother said, and the Viet Cong nearly got him. At first Chuck and his two companions thought someone was skipping stones on the water near them.

Realizing it was slugs, they started for the beach and five shots struck within a very few feet of Sgt. Chuck before he made it to safety.

The brothers will be headed for separate bases after their leave. Chuck to Kirkland Air Force Base in New Mexico, and Tom to Minot, N.D.

Gunships, F-100s Rout Enemy (*Seventh Air Force News, July 2, 1969*)

7AF—Air Force AC-47 Spooky and AC-119 Shadow gunships and F-100 Supersabre fighter-bombers flew missions recently in support of an element of the 1st Brigade, U.S. 25th Infantry Division 6 miles northwest of Tay Ninh City.

The bodies of 35 enemy soldiers were found during a sweep of the battle area.

At approximately 2:20 a.m. the base started receiving mortar and rocket-propelled grenade fire from all sides. In addition, small arms and machinegun fire was received from all angles.

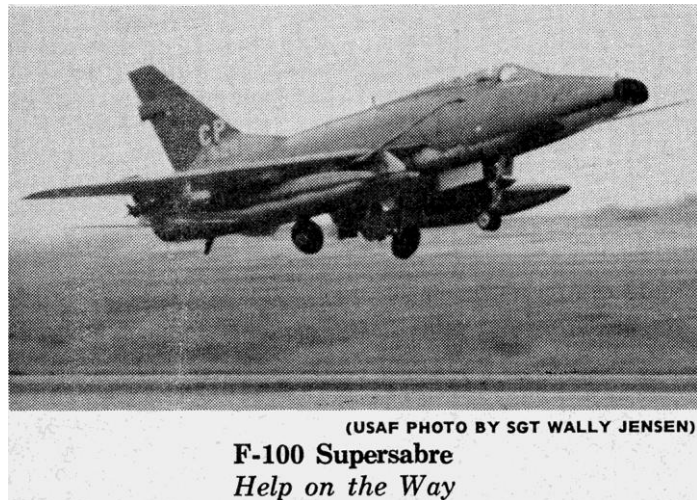
The infantrymen returned fire with organic weapons and point-blank artillery fire. The Air Force gunships directed their fire onto the location in support of the friendly troops.

No enemy were reported to have penetrated the outer perimeter.

Thirteen individual and eight crew served weapons were captured. U.S. casualties were 14 wounded with no fatalities.

Two of the gunships, AG-47s, from C Flight, 3rd Special Operations Squadron (SOS) at Bien Hoa AB, supported the action shortly after fighting began. Supersabres from the 3rd TFW at Bien Hoa were called into the area early in the morning.

Aircraft commanders on the Spookies were Majors Kenneth B. Carpenter, Tacoma, Wash., and Frank L. Hines, Little Rock, Ark.



Maj. Donald M. Kastilahn, Clovis, N.M. and 1st Lt. Howard M. Guiles, Los Angeles, were two of the Supersabre pilots on the strikes supporting the action.

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Birds Get Last Chance Checkout (*Seventh Air Force News, July 2, 1969*)

By Sgt. Douglas L. Christy

PHAN RANG — The F-100 Supersabre taxis to the runway, armed and ready to fly. Its last stop before taking off from Phan Rang AB is a parking apron manned by five men.

The stop is essential to pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing's Supersabre squadrons. It is their "arming and last chance checkout."

"The 'last chance checkout' is exactly that," says Sgt. Howard E. Walter, Panama City, Fla., a jet mechanic assigned to 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron. "Two other maintenance men and I give each aircraft a quick, thorough inspection checking for malfunctions that could prove disastrous in flight." Sgt. Gael D. Epp, Fairview, Okla., 435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron explained their job: "We arm the Supersabre's cannons, check the bomb fuses and pull the pylon safety pins that prevent the bombs from being accidentally dropped before takeoff," he said.

The team works on each block of two aircraft alternately. "While the munitions men arm one aircraft," Sergeant Walter said, "we inspect the other, looking for hydraulic or air leaks, tire cuts or other malfunctions that may have occurred while taxiing. We then log each aircraft on our records.

"If we find something wrong," Sergeant Walter continued, "the team chief has the authority to send the aircraft back to the revetments for repairs."

Unlike munitions specialists, who are assigned to the crew from the 435th MMS, the maintenance men belong to the squadron on scramble alert duty for the week. The five-man teams work 12-hour shifts alternating personnel.



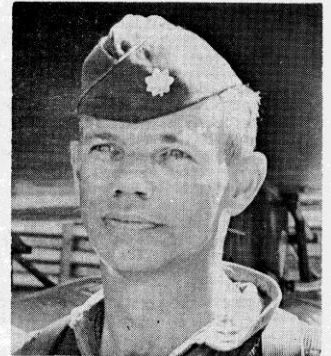
Major Davidson



Major Hammett



Major Hughes



Colonel Klein

Truck Killers Enter Centurion Club

Four B-57 Canberra pilots from Phan Rang AB have been named to the base's famed 'Centurion Club', a club honoring those pilots who have destroyed more than 100 enemy trucks. New entries are, from left, and the number of trucks they have

destroyed: Maj. George R. Davidson, Princeton, N.J., 111; Maj. David M. Hammett, San Diego, Calif., 107; Maj. Frank A. Hughes, Edenton, N.C., 106; and Lt. Col. Donald D. Klein, Shreveport, La., 105 enemy trucks.

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Twins Have Twin Jobs *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

PHAN RANG—The men of 425th Munitions Maintenance Squadron often think they are seeing double when Technical Sergeants John V. Sayago, Clovis, N.C., and Joseph A. Sayago, Goldsboro, N.C., come on duty.

The men are both weapons supervisors with the 35th Tactical Fighter wing here and are identical twins.

"This close resemblance," commented John, "can be either beneficial or to a disadvantage, according to the occasion. For example, when shots come up, one of us may have to take a second one — or one of our names appears continuously on the detail roster, while the other never gets picked!!"

'Spooky' Gun Crews Thwart Cong Attacks On Friendly Hamlets *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

PHAN RANG — Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers and their U.S. advisors in the Phan Ri area have become very much acquainted in the past few days with "Spooky" crews from Detachment 1, 3rd Special Operations Squadron, Phan Rang AB.

The area is a group of hamlets located about 40 miles southwest of Phan Rang along the coast in the Bay of Phan Ri.

For three successive nights, Spooky" crews flying the AC47 Gunships, provided support to soldiers under attack there.

Recently, a "Spooky" was scrambled to the area to support ground troops and medical evacuation helicopters removing soldiers wounded in a mortar attack.

The following night, "Spooky" made two trips to the area on the first flight. "Spooky," under the direction of ground controllers, fired into Viet Cong positions on three sides of a hamlet.

After expending ammunition and flares, "Spooky" returned to Phan Rang where the maintenance crews quickly inspected the gunship and sent her back into action.

"Spooky" then stayed on target, providing illumination until sun-up when a sweep of the Viet Cong positions was made.

"Spooky" was also sent recently to Phan Ri where the VC had entered a hamlet. This night, a U.S. Army forward air controller was in the area helping direct the AC-47's fire. Possibly because of previous "Spooky" night work, VC activity was very ineffective and quickly stopped.

'Spooky' Stops Attack On Airborne Position *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

PHU CAT—An AC-47 Dragonship from C-flight, 4th Special Operations Squadron here recently thwarted an attack at nearby An Khe, before the enemy could muster an offensive.

American forces at An Khe, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, spotted enemy activity outside their perimeter and called on the respected "Spooky" gunship for assistance.

"As soon as we arrived on the scene, the friendly ground troops marked the enemy location with smoke rockets and tracer rounds and we began firing immediately," commented 1st Lt. Herbert Mack II, Baton Rouge, La., navigator. Ground troops told us there were several secondary explosions.

"We continued to saturate the area with our miniguns," Lieutenant Mack continued. "They called back and said that there was no more activity. After they were sure the area was clear, they told us we could call it quits, so we headed for Phu Cat."

"Evidently the enemy was planning an attack on the U.S. base, and thanks to the alert ground crews and the speed with which we were able to reach the scene, the attack never had a chance to begin," said Lt. Col. Albert L. Morse, Colorado Springs, Colo., aircraft commander.

Battle damage assessment for the evening was 20 secondary explosions.

Instructor pilot aboard the aircraft was Lt. Col. Paul G. Higginbotham, Arlington, Tex.

'Spooky' Crewmen Set Record - Fly 1,000 Hours in 74 Nights *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

BINH THUY "D" Flight, 3rd Special Operations Squadron here may have established a new record by flying 1,215 hours, 37 minutes, in 74 nights.

"D" Flight's record began with a "bang" Aug. 24 when Binh Thuy was shelled by the enemy.

TSgt. Wayne R. McNicholas, Bryans Road, Md., night maintenance supervisor, was one of the six men credited with saving a burning "Spooky" then. He fought the fire amid incoming enemy rounds with a hand type extinguisher.

"The 3rd SOS had three operational aircraft after this incident so it was decided that the spare aircraft would be airborne during the critical hours from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. This meant from Aug.

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24 through Nov. 11 all three aircraft were to be flown at sometime during each night," commented MSgt. Forest R. Wessling, Midwest City, Okla., day maintenance supervisor.

"Spookys are airborne all night and with the staggered scheduling, two aircraft are always in the air from sunset to sunrise. The night maintenance shift did most of their work from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. It is to their credit that under extreme pressure, they performed their tasks without fault or accident," said Sergeant McNicholas.

Maintenance crews worked 12-hours shifts, 24 hours a day to keep the three Spookys operational. When an unscheduled fourth sortie was called for, one AC-47 would land, refuel, have flares loaded aboard and was rearmed while another ship went to the target. According to Sergeant McNicholas, the entire operation was always done rapidly and safely.

Lt. Col. Robert A. Davidson, Ventura, Calif., 3rd SOS commander, praised this maintenance crews and stated; "This was the most outstanding example of professionalism I have seen. There was no grandstanding, just guts and lots of hard work."

Members of "D" Flight's maintenance section include: SSgt. Elmer L. Tosi, Fredericktown, Pa.; SSgt. Fred J. Washburn, Mora, Minn.; Sergeants Dennis J. Harkins, Lakewood, Calif.; Paul Q. Ison, Harrison, Ohio; Vaughn H. Morgan, Milford, Del.; Garry L. Overby, Sterling, Ill.; Philip D. Pitts, Augusta, Ga.; and Lonnis E. Smith, Tulsa, Okla.

Also, Sgt. Donald R. St. John, Albany, Ore.; Airmen First Class Larry L. Glaug, Park Ridge, Ill.; Charles L. Guess Jr., Columbus, Ohio; George W. Hayden, Praco, Ala.; Roy K. Hill, Alhambra, Calif.; Laland C. Porter Jr., Denver, Col.; and James R. Thompson III, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Billy Graham Conducts Viet Service (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968*)

TAN SON NHUT - Reverend William F. "Billy" Graham world famous evangelist, and Archbishop Terrence J. Cooke Armed Forces Military Vicar for Roman Catholics, conducted services here yesterday and today.

Mourning services were led by Reverend Graham. Christmas eve mid-night Mass as celebrated by Archbishop Cook. Both services were telecast live via the Armed Forces Network.

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Keeping 'em Rolling Task of Tire Shop (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968*)

PHAN RANG — There are at least two items without which an aircraft of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here can't fly. The first, of course, is an engine. The second vital part is tires.

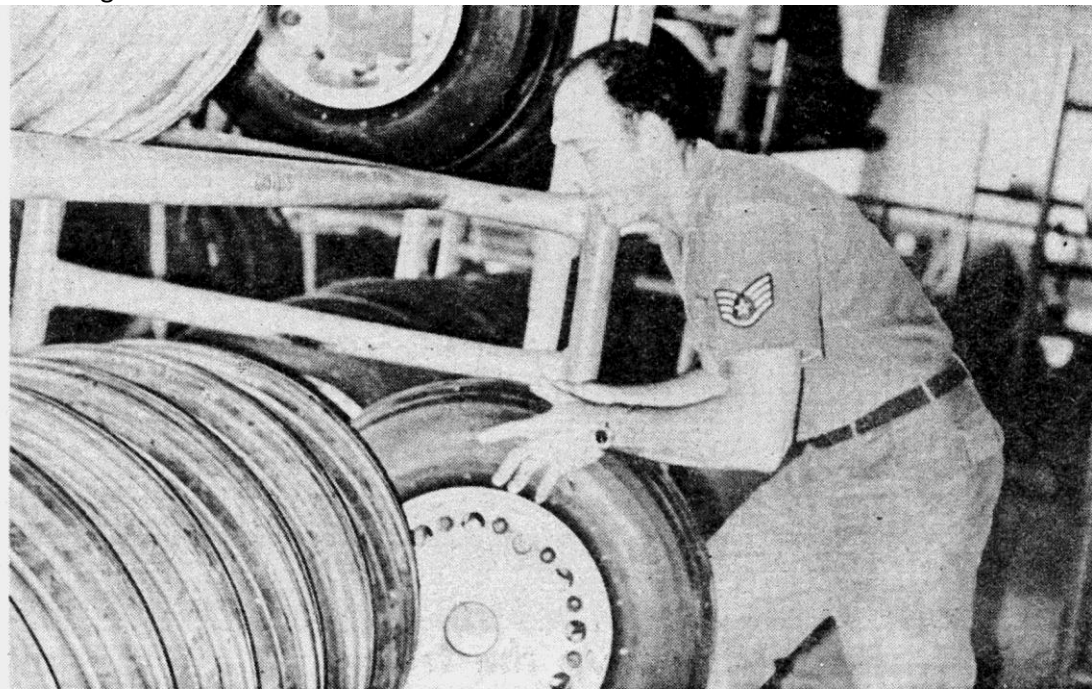
Keeping these tires rolling and filling the tremendous demands, for safe tires, are the men, of the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron's tire shop.

Under the supervision of SSgt. Kenneth M. Turner, Bockingham, Iowa, these men turn out up to 60 tires per day.

"In most cases, the normal requirement doesn't jump over 20 tires per day, but in cross-wind season when the tires tend to rub sideways, up to 60 or more tires have to be finished in one day. That's when it gets busy around: here!" explained Sergeant Turner.

In addition to their regular work, the men have taken time to add various innovations such as tire ramps or racks which speed the mounting of tires and special steel boxes to provide added safety in the inflation of tires.

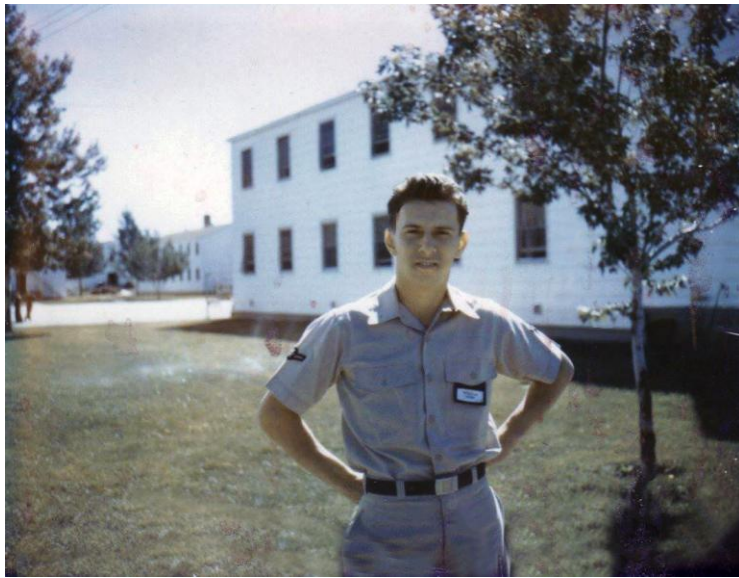
Other men in this section include Sergeants Paul N. Newbanks, Aurora, Colo.; George H. McCayley, York, S.C.; Airmen First Class Thomas F. Lill, Rochester, N.Y.; Stephen A. Maurer, Daly City, Calif.; David F. Kelly Glendale, Ariz.; Wayne A. Porvig; Starbuck, Minn.; Ronald L. Wilson, Hanford, Calif.; and Juan R. Dean, Commerce City, Colo..



One Down, 1,260 to Go

SSgt. Kenneth M. Turner rolls out one of the more than a thousand tires for use on an F-100 Super-sabre of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Phan Rang AB. (Photo by Sgt. Steve Monk).

A2C John M. DeCillo



Ridge Airman On Viet Nam Duty

Airman second class John M. DeCillo, 20, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael DeCillo of 5434 S. Normandy, is serving on temporary duty at Phan Rang Air base, Viet Nam.

DeCillo enlisted in the Air Force in 1966 and received basic training at Lackland AB, Tex. He received further training at Lowry AB, Denver, Colo., and was then permanently assigned at Clark AB, Philippines.

He is a graduate of St. Philip Basilica High school.



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Refugees Receive Clothing *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

PHAN RANG — Nearly 150 pounds of clothing, collected by the 14-year-old daughter of Lt. Col. Boyd D. Williamson, Sacramento, Calif., an AC-47 gunship pilot with Det. 1, 3rd Special Operations Squadron here, was recently delivered to Montagnard refugees.

His daughter, Helen, had collected the clothing throughout her Sacramento neighborhood in her personal civic action project for Vietnam.

Colonel Williamson delivered the clothes to the Montagnard hamlets of Ma Trai and Karon in conjunction with a periodic visit by an Air Force medical team from Phan Rang AB.

English Classes Reach 400 *(Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968)*

PHAN RANG — More than 400 Vietnamese high school students in nearby Thap Cham and Phan Rang City are receiving American pronunciation night classes three times a week through the volunteer efforts of Phan Rang AB officers, non-commissioned officers and airmen.

First Lt, Bryan A. Wolter, Algoma, Wis., base civic action officer, said "ours is the: oldest teaching program among Air Force bases in Vietnam. This is the third year we have been working with the young people of this area.

"Each teacher is a volunteer--the only pay he receives is the self-satisfaction of working with the youngsters and watching their use, their knowledge of the English language, as spoken by Americans, develop," he noted.

Lieutenant Wolter added that only those students selected by their Vietnamese teacher may attend the classes. Selection is based on the student's ability and desire. to progress in his language studies.

"In addition," he said, "we have a few adults, base employees and others, who wish to improve their knowledge of our language."

The 2014 "Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB Reunion

Where: DoubleTree by Hilton, Reid Park, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson AZ

When: October 9-11

Single/Double rate \$99

Banquet 11 October in the Bonsai Room

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**Hilton web site to make reservations is expected to be active by the end of
January 2014.**

[Reunion Web Site](#)

New 315th SOW Vice Commander (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 25, 1968*)

PHAN RANG—Col. Bruno M. Larson, Tempe, Ariz., a veteran of more than 26 years, has assumed the position of vice commander, 315th Special Operations Wing here.

A native of Oslo, Norway, and a 1965 graduate of George Washington University, Washington, D.C., Colonel Larson entered the aviation cadets in 1942 and received his wings and commission in 1944 at Turner Field, Ga.

During the remainder of World War II, he flew as a bomber pilot in the B-24 and B-29. Entering the inactive reserves, Colonel Larson joined Northrop Corp, where he flew as a test pilot until 1951 and recall to active duty.

Note: I know not all of these stores may have a dateline of Phan Rang, but we have a lot of members and readers that have an interest in stores dealing with the B-57, F-100, C-119, C-47 and C-123 aircrafts. Some may have friends or may have even been stationed at one time at these other bases.

Also if you are new to the Phan Ranger mailing list and you would like copies of previous issues of the Phan Rang News, just send [me](#) a note and I'll will send one your way. If you know of a Phan Rangers that would be interested in receiving news about Phan Rang AB, please let [me](#) know or download from this web [site](#).