

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 2 "Stories worth telling"

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USL Grads Fly Together

(Seventh Air Force News, February 5, 1969)

By TSgt. John B. Mahony

PHAN RANG-Alumni from the University of Southwestern Louisiana are well represented at Phan Rang AB.

Adopting the name of "**Ragin' Cajune**" are Lt. Col. **Robert D. Hook**, Majors **Philip J. Piccione**, and **Arthur L. Dugas**, Capt. **Francis P. Gauthier**, and 1st Lt. **Robert F. Wendrock Jr.**

Colonel Hook is an F-100 Supersabre pilot and commander of the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS). He has flown 200 combat missions since his arrival in Vietnam last March. In

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1951, he was graduated from USL with a B.A., physics major.



Ragin' Cajuns

Five alumni from the University of Southwestern Louisiana who fight the air war daily in South Vietnam are (left to right) Maj. Philip J. Piccione, Lafayette, La.; 1st Lt. Robert F. Wendrock Jr., Lafayette, La.; Capt. Francis P. Gauthier, Marksville, La.; Maj. Arthur L. Dugas, Iowa, La.; and Lt. Col. Robert D. Hook, Baton Rouge, La.

Major Piccione, a forward air controller and Faison officer, directs strikes from his single engined, prop-driven O-1 Bird Dog reconnaissance plane. A 1953 graduate of USL with a B.S. in math-science, he is a Blue Key holder and is listed in Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities.

Major Dugas is a navigator aboard a twin-engined, prop driven AC-47 Dragonship, which carries three 7.62mm miniguns for close-support missions. He is assigned to the 3rd Special Operations Squadron. He left USL, in 1952 and went to the University of Colorado where he was graduated as a pharmacy major in 1954.

Captain Gauthier pilots the F-100 Supersabre with the 352nd TFS and has flown 28 combat missions since his arrival in Vietnam in December. In 1960, he was graduated from USL with a B.A. in education.

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Lieutenant Wendrock also flies Supersabres in Colonel Hook's "Yellowjacket squadron. Since his arrival at Phan Rang in March, he has flown 201 combat sorties. A 1966 graduate of USL, he earned his B.S. in Zoology.

Recently Joining the Ragin' Cajuns from stateside is 2nd Lt. Edward F. Bergeron Jr., of Metairie, La. As co-pilot, he will be flying jet-assisted twin-engined C-123 Provider transports which are widely employed in Vietnam in cargo and troop carrier roles. He was graduated from USL in 1967 with a B.S. in industrial technology.

All of the men with the exception of Captain Gauthier were commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. Captain Gauthier was commissioned through the Air Force Officer Training School program.

Three of the men teamed up on air strike missions against the Viet Cong recently. As an observer, Major Piccione rode in the back seat of Colonel Hook's F-109 in a strike against an enemy storage area 40 miles southwest of Saigon.

"Gus" Gauthier was also on the attack as a wingman. The Cajun team scored with one structure destroyed, four damaged and two bunkers destroyed.

Phan Rang Spooky Rips Attacking VC

(Seventh Air Force News, February 5, 1969)

PHAN RANG - A U.S. Air Force AC47 Dragonship from Phan Rang AB, recently helped beat back an early morning Viet Cong mortar and ground assault on an ARVN outpost in Ninh Thuan Province.

Lt. Col. Rodney J. Wood, Las Vegas, was piloting the "Spooky" on night alert when a call came from the beleaguered camp.

"It was 2:30 in the morning when the VC mortars started hitting," Colonel Wood said. "We were called in to flare and fire for the ARVNs.

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"At first the ARVNs wanted us to fire up in the hills where the VC were," Wood continued.
"After we hammered away, cloud cover prevented us from firing more."

The ARVN forces then hit the enemy with artillery and small arms; however, the VC continued moving down a road towards the camp. Then the weather cleared enough for the gunship to resume its attack.

"As the fighting got worse," Colonel Wood said, "the ARVNs asked us to fire around the perimeter fence. The camp was in imminent danger of being overrun. The ARVNs went down into their bunkers, and radioed us to strafe across the top of the outpost."

With SSgt, Benny L. Wigley, 24, San Diego, kicking out flares, Spooky, with its mini-guns blazing, swooped down and circled the camp.

"We stopped the VC and drove them back 50 yards outside the camp," Colonel Wood said. In addition to Colonel Wood and Sergeant Wigley, the crew consisted of 1st Lt. John H. Lamb, Ohatchee, Ala., co-pilot; Maj. Arthur L. Dugs, Lake Charles, La., navigator; MSgt. James G. Arnold, Highland, Calif., flight engineer; Sergeants Raymond W. Evans Jr., Cherry Hill, N.J.; and John M. Perry, Tucson, Ariz., aerial gunners. The men are assigned to the 3rd Special Operations Squadron.

WELCOME TO HAPPY VALLEY

(by John M. DeCillo)

Welcome to all of you who have found your way back to the **Happy Valley**. This valley has no bombs, jet fuel, broken parts or Rice Bugs. This valley has no Honey Buckets or chow line it also has no guard towers and snarling k9's. There are no ammo cans or revetments.

"Pedro" doesn't fly over head. There are no emergencies in this valley, no Red Lined faults to be repaired. No "Jammers" or tugs no water Buffalos line trucks. No C-123's to load and send off every morning and then come back home at night.

You won't see Million candle power flares floating under parachutes here. There are no crash trucks, no sirens or "Spooky" shows. There is no red dust to wipe from everything you touch.

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Here there are no Mama Sans to do the laundry. You won't need to thumb a ride. You won't even find one can of Black Label or Tab in this whole valley. No "Strip here. Hmmm, no "Clap Call" either.

You can't catch the Cattle Wagon into town or the beach. There won't be any mail call. There won't be any sets of Chocks. No matter how hard you look you won't find a light cart in this Valley. That's right, no Hooches, no cold showers and not a sand bag will you find. Oh, and the smell, you won't smell the smell.

There are memories in this valley. There are old friends in this valley, some whom you haven't seen, thought of or heard from in 50 years. I hope you find and enjoy them in the Happy Valley of our minds.

NAMES UNKNOWN

(by John M. DeCillo)

I saw them every day and night. I see them now.
They were inside those helmets, behind those crash visors.
They bore Grim Reaper and Soaring eagle patches on their shoulders.
I never knew their names.

They flew bombers, sleek machines, bellies glugged, with seven hundred and fifty pound messages of death for the enemy.
Straining wings, loaded with shining cylinders of napalm infernos.
Twin jet engined B-57's
These knights of the air sat calmly in the cockpits as we charged the cannons and armed the bombs. We were the ones who shouldered the responsibility. Their lives depended on our work. They counted on us.
I never knew their names.

How crushing were the fears that they faced on every mission? They were going out to kill, or be killed.

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When the wheels went up, they knew this flight could take them directly to God, or into the hands of the enemy.

What did they think of us?

Did they take pride in our awe and respect of them?

Did they draw strength from our simple chalkboard messages?

“God speed”--- “Kill the Cong”.

A snappy salute, thumbs up, throttles wide open.

Destiny awaited them. We, were left standing on the ground.

I never knew their names.

We sit in the dark waiting their return. “Spooky” is working over some poor bastards in the nearby hills.

We can see his flares and tracer streams.

All ears are strained. We listen for that tell-tale engine whine.

Did they all make it back?

Are there any wounded?

No crash trucks tonight. We breathe a sigh of relief.

Touch down, taxi in, ground lights on.

Frantic moments,

that must have seemed like years.

George “The Weed”, Donnie, Kulpie, and the rest, we all took our turns.

Just us, and the light cart. Search lights that pointed out to the enemy exactly where you stood, for miles around.

All the pilots could do was sit there helplessly and wait for us to do our jobs.

They were home from the fight and yet they were still potential targets.

The speed with which we dispatched the disarming, kept us from seeing their faces or noticing their fear or fatigue.

What were they feeling?

Were they grieving the loss of comrades?

Were they sharing the thrill of a victory?

Were they elated at just making it back alive?

I never got to share those feelings.

I never knew their names.

Those troubled times are long since past,
Yet in my memory, they will always remain.
Those brave men
Who fought the fight will forever abide in my minds own “Twilight
Zone”.
Some lived, some died, some, may even yet be prisoners.
I felt ten feet tall when I helped send them on their way.
I had no thoughts that some of them might never return.
I know some of their names now.
I’ve seen them,
Etched into a black granite wall.

**Dedicated to: The Air Crews of the
8th and 13th Tactical Bombardment Squadrons, U.S.A.F.
Vietnam
John M. DeCillo**

Presentation to Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam Veterans, Reunion - San Antonio, October 5, 2013

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It is so wonderful to be in San Antonio, don't you think? I got to talk to some true Texans here and asked them what Texas was all about? I mean what's Texas' philosophy?

Some of them postulated that Texans have their own philosophies about life, different from let's say a New Yorker like myself, or a Cajun from Louisiana.

I asked the man in the street here in San Antonio what philosophy is truly Texan?

Someone said, a Texan thinks in philosophical terms that "good judgement comes from

experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment."

Another one told me, "Lettin' the cat out of the bag is a whole lot easier than putting it back in."

And finally, another mentioned, "Always drink upstream from the herd." And someone yelled from a corner, "Never kick a cow chip on a hot day."

Well, I took another sip of my Margarita and pondered these comments and also about my time here with my fellow Phan Rangers.

Maybe some of you like the science fiction genre and remember there was always a time warp whether it was Star Trek, or H.G. Wells classic, "The Time Machine."

A time warp is where what was passed and is in the catalog of times gone past comes together with the here and now. My boss at work always says I'll never be a rocket scientist so I guess time warping is something I'll still have to figure out,

On the other hand, I told my boss a bit of Texas philosophy, which was "don't squat with your spurs on."

Here and now. Now and here. Maybe that will explain Phan Rang yesterday and us today. Did we ever really go to Viet Nam. Are we sure it wasn't a dream. Did we enter some sort of time warp and then come back from it? Well, as a non-rocket scientist, I don't have a clue but well, we have lots of pictures.

Plenty of them.

We were so young then and what was real and not real was sort of confused, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, which--if some of you can remember--of that turbulent time was called "the Viet Nam Era" as well as the "Flower Power Generation."

Some of us were a bit of both. I think my pink bow tie attests to that!

It was truly a warping of our own realities at that time as we enlisted in such states as Texas,

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California, New York, Kansas, Washington State, and others.

We got up one morning and left our homes way back when and entered a state of mind and experience that we absolutely were not familiar with but worked together to function as a brotherhood of soldiers, friends, on our unknown journey into the unfamiliar terrain of Vietnam, meeting fellow Americans of all backgrounds, colors, economic status.

As unpopular as it was at that time, we answered the call to support our country. Right or wrong. We accepted the good with the bad.

I must admit, as just coming out of high school, that I wasn't sure if going to VN was the right thing to do since there was so much push and pull in America about our role in VN.

However, my country asked me to help it, and I went, as we all did.

I lied to my mother and told her I was really going to Japan so she wouldn't get upset at me for signing up for a year in VN.

But somehow she found out, perhaps a letter in the mail, and she cried and cried and so did my brothers and sisters when I left that early morning from Bronx, New York and took the train down to the military center in Manhattan,

I went on a C130 to VN, through Guam I think.

I wasn't sure since most of my world was just composed of the Bronx.

What did I know of foreign ports like Guam and VN. The only things I knew about Asia were fried rice, lo mien, and fortune cookies. Not to mention egg drop soup and a dish called "Happy Ending."

We were all so young then. Our families themselves had risen out of the debris of World War 1 and World War 2 and struggled to build the America we have now.

I'm not sure what to call the years we spent in Viet Nam., Personally maybe we should call

those the "Crazy Times."

So I had to ask, once again, the Texan in the street and she told me, "If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back to make sure it's still there."

...I took another sip of my margarita.

Well it's hard to say what was the one significant recollection of my Phan Rang year from 1970-1971. Of course I remember all my friends, here and not here, and planes and trains and jeeps and so many other things.

Since I was so much into music I remember Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison and Mama Cass; it seemed all our music icons were passing away.

The pictures that we now share, the video, the stories, the looks in our eyes as we recognize each other across a room, bring us all to Phan Rang, the camaraderie, the brotherhood, the friendships we made that remain in our hearts across the blustery winds of time, always there in our hearts speaking to us about the importance of friendships that lasted till today when we can chat about those times that were.

Apparently there is no time warp between what happened yesterday and who we are today.

We have all come together again in spirit and strength that we're always had since the time when our country asked us to serve. We have strength in our steps, joy in our hearts, appreciation of the new, the now.

We went as strangers and we came home as brothers, sisters, healers, scholars, community leaders, civic leaders, church leaders, mothers and fathers following the mandates we were given when we were in Lackland and that was to serve our country and our communities to make them stronger after we served in the world's greatest Air Force.

We all left VN all changed individuals. We took different routes to fulfill our lives; some of us got married; some of us went to college; some of us went to work in different industries, and some of us went into therapy.

VN had a message for all of us, however, and that was there is a reality of being a human being, and that we all have one shared experience here in America and that is basically a brotherhood and sisterhood closing all differences between us.

So I end this just as I begun and asked a Texan, so what all of this? About friendships, military service, going overseas, being in the world's greatest military and he looked at me, raised one big Texas eyebrow, bit on a piece of chewing tobacco and said,

"never miss a good chance to shut up."

Thank you.

Dragonships Defend 3,000th Outpost



Friendly Forces Hero

An AC-47 Dragonship flies over the Truong Son Valley near Nha Trang on a combat air patrol mission. Armed with three side-mounted Gatling guns, the Dragonships recently set a new combat record when they successfully defended their 3,000th outpost.

Dragonships Defend 3,000th Outpost

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969)

By MSgt, Lloyd Richard

NHA TRANG — AC-47 Dragonships, the perennial heroes of Southeast Asia, recently set a new Vietnam combat record when they successfully defended their 3,000th outpost.

Dubbed "Spooky," the AC-47 holds the distinction of never losing an outpost under its protection to hostile fire.

"This record reflects the professional team efforts of all our aircrews and aircraft maintenance people," said Col. William H. Ginn Jr., 14th Special Operations Wing deputy commander for operations, from Atlantic City, N.J.

Armed with Gatling guns, AC47s cover the Republic of Vietnam from the DMZ to the Delta. All are assigned to the 14th Special Operations Wing, headquartered at Nha Trang AB. Col. Conrad S. Allman, from Alexandria, Va., commands the wing. Spooky teams operate from seven different locations.

Spooky close air support missions are handled by two squadrons. The 3rd Special Operations Squadron operates all flying missions south of Nha Trang while the 4th Special Operations Squadron is assigned the northern missions.

Born more than 30 years ago as a C-47 Skytrain transport, the venerable old C-47 continues to make history. On New Year's Eve of 1966, Spooky's first year in country, it defended 500 friendly bases and by June 1967 the count rose to 1,000.

Spooky's defensive wallop derives from its 7.62mm miniguns. Each gun spews a steady stream of firepower at the rate of 6,000 rounds a minute. With all three guns firing, Spooky can douse the enemy with 18,000 rounds a minute. It is estimated that the AC-17's three miniguns field of fire covers an area the size of a football field.

A living example of Spooky's fire power was unfolded in defense of the Due Lap Civilian Irregular Defense Group Camp. During the four-day siege 14th Spookies poured more than 714,000 rounds of ammunition into enemy positions.

A workhouse during World War II, the Berlin Airlift and the Korean War, the ex-transport is doing a king-size job as a gunship too, In 1968 the night flying Spookies chalked up an enviable performance. Crewmen of the 4th Special Operations Squadron alone logged 19,134 flying hours, 5,099 sorties. They supported ground forces on 1,660 occasions.

Spooky's name comes from its call sign. Soldiers on the ground, who were used to the Dragonship's original nickname, "Puff, the Magic Dragon," commented, "It's kind of spooky to see those red tracers pouring down out of the black night, and then hear that weird roar of the guns a few moments later."

F-100 Pilots Support Offensive; Hit Base Camp, Bunker Complex

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969)

PHAN RANG — F-100 Supersabre pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Phan Rang AB, recently combined efforts in two separate air strikes in support of the Allied Toan Thang Offensive.

Commenting on one of the strikes, Col. Glae D. Stevens, Arvada, Colo. said, "We couldn't see much of the target, which was an enemy bunker complex, because it was hidden in the jungle along a trail.

"We put our faith in the forward air controller (FAC) and laid in the hardware where he put his smoke markers.

"We had to be particularly careful because there were friendly forces less than a kilometer away, waiting for us to finish the strike so they could move in."

The other pilots on the strike were Maj. Jack E. Wilhite, Lakewood, Colo., 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron and James E. Williamson, Grapevine, Tex., 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron.

Two other pilots from the 35th TFW hit an enemy base camp earlier in the same day. They were Maj. Donald E. Grostic, Howell, Mich., and Donald W. Houston, Lodi, Ohio, of the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron.

Describing the mission, Major Houston commented, "The target was a Viet Gong base camp hidden in a tree line. It was about two miles from a CIDG (Civilian Irregular Defense Group) camp. "The FAC had a clear area around the target that extended for about two miles, so we struck the target from several different directions. He was a good FAC. He kept us in sight constantly and cleared us on every pass."

The bomb damage assessment for the two strikes was 10 enemy bunkers destroyed and 5 uncovered, 10 fighting positions destroyed and 50 meters of trench destroyed. The FAC also credited Colonel Stevens with a secondary explosion.

Wing Lifts Million Passengers

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969)

PHAN RANG—Did you get a ride in a C-123 Provider last year? If not, many people must have ridden several times, because statistics show that the C-123's of the 315th Special Operations Wing at (Phan Rang AB) here hauled 1,064,564 passengers in 1968.

"The 315th Wing, which controls all C-123's flying seventh Air Force, airlift and defoliation missions has established a very impressive record for 1968," said Col. John W. Pauly, Albany, N.Y., 315th commander.

With squadrons or detachments operating from four different locations, 315th pilots logged a total of 85,783 completing 109,607 sorties while delivering 2911,994 tons of cargo and carrying over one million passengers.

He added. "The number of sorties is most significant in measuring the accomplishments of the Wing and the hazards of our operation. We are proud to have compiled over 109,000 sorties in 1968, particularly since the majority of these sorties were flown into and out of short, unimproved and generally hazardous airstrips."

While the airlift side of the 315th was compiling statistics the defoliation crews of the 12th Special Operations Squadron at Bien Hoa, commonly known as the "Ranch-Hands" were establishing a record of their own.

As was recently reported by U.S. Mission officials, "3,500 square miles of South Vietnam has been defoliated during the war so far by the crews of the 'Ranch'. Defoliation is a complete success in the opinion of American military commanders."

Ex-TB at Phan Rang

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969)

PHAN RANG—A former commander of the "Thunderbirds," USAF Aerial Demonstration Team, recently assumed duties assistant deputy commander for operations, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here.

Lt. Col. Paul A. Kauttu, Annapolis, Md., previously was commander, 559th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Cam Ranh AB, where he flew 111 combat missions in the F4 Phantom, including 30 missions over North Vietnam before the Nov. 1, bombing halt.

During the Korean Conflict, Colonel Kauttu flew 100 missions the F-86 and was credited with destroying two and one-half MIG15s, (the one half MIG kill resulted from another pilot firing simultaneously) and three MIGs damaged.

In 1962, he joined the USAF Thunderbirds and led the team in 272 official demonstrations in more than 30 foreign countries.

An experienced fighter pilot, Colonel Kauttu has flown aircraft ranging from the F-80 Shooting Star to the F-105 Thunderchief.

A graduate of the Squadron Officers' School, the Armed Forces Staff College and the National War College, he was recently selected for promotion to colonel.

First to Reup

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969)

PHAN RANG -The first airman to reenlist in Vietnam for 1969 is the claim of SSgt. **Benny L. Wigley**, San Diego, Calif., who took the oath one minute into the new year.

Sergeant Wigley, an AC-47 Dragonship loadmaster with B Flight, 3rd Special Operations Squadron here was reenlisted by Lt.Col. Andrew S. Dudley, Grandview, Mo., his flight and aircraft commander.

Sergeant Wigley has flown 185 missions in Vietnam totaling more than 650 combat flying hours.

ARVN Interpreters Make Shadow More Versatile

(Seventh Air Force News, September 3, 1969)



(U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Christopher P. Boles)
Sgt. Doan The Hoang (left), Captain Hayes
ARVN Interpreter, Shadow Navigator Team Up

PHAN RANG -Six noncommissioned officers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), who fly aboard AC-119 Shadow gunships, were recently presented certificates of proficiency as combat interpreters.

They are attached to B Flight, 17th Special Operations Squadron here. Their home unit is the Ninh Thuan Province Regional Forces.

The Province Chief, ARVN Lt. Col. Nguyen Van Tu, presented the certificates to the sergeants. U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. William E. Long, Rochester, N.Y., B Flight commander, presided over ceremonies.

Colonel Long described the experimental interpreter training program as being ". . . designed to teach selected ARVN soldiers the techniques of accurately directing Shadow's aerial fire against enemy forces in contact with ARVN ground units not aided by American advisers.

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"This becomes especially important as ARVN units assume a greater role in the overall action here," the colonel said.

Shadow aircraft fly at night, using four high-speed miniguns to neutralize enemy targets and provide illumination with flares and a giant spotlight. Accurately coordinating target information, particularly when, enemy troops are in contact with friendly ground forces, is exacting and vital.

When B Fit. was directed to initiate the interpreter program, Capt. Melvin B. Hayes, East Hampton, N.Y., a Shadow navigator, was selected to outline the training schedule and requirements.

"The whole idea was new," Captain Hayes said. "With no guidelines previously established, we decided to start with two weeks of intensive training on the use of life support equipment, weapons and emergency procedures.

The interpreters were then acquainted with the aircraft communications systems," the captain explained.

Although they were graduates of the ARVN NCO Academy and had a basic knowledge of English, they could not understand technical terms and some of the radio jargon.

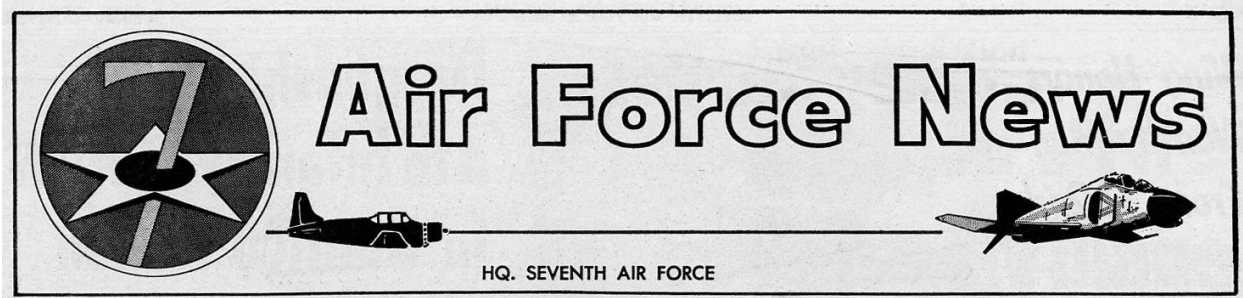
"Miss Dinh TM Kim Dau of the base education office was recruited to help," commented captain Hayes. "She was an invaluable assistant, translating some of our lectures and conducting classes in conversational English for the soldiers."

Capt. John P. Todd, San Marino, Calif., 35th Security Police Squadron, assisted Miss Dau in teaching English. He also provided access to weapons training facilities and aided in their training in that area.

By the end of the second week the interpreters were flying in AC-119 aircraft and learning to coordinate target information. "This last part is the most exacting," Captain Hayes said. "It entails translating directions from ARVN ground forces about enemy locations. These directions must be accurately translated so that our minigun fire is precisely on target." During their two and one-half month training period, each man flew about 30 missions while

gaining proficiency at his job.

"These certificates signify that they are sufficiently skilled in performing their job so that the aircraft commander can be confident in their directions," Captain Hayes continued. "They will continue to work with us to provide Shadow aircraft with added versatility."



Aerial Port Operates Well Under Bad Conditions

(Seventh Air Force News, January 29 1969)

VC Harassment Doesn't Stop Efficiency at Dong Ha Outpost



The Long Gray Line

Passengers board a C-130 Hercules transport at Dong Ha. The tiny site handles more than 27,000 passengers a month from all U.S. and allied services.

HONG HA - A tiny Air Force outpost at Dong Ha -just a scant 5 ½ miles below the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) boasts one of the most efficient aerial port operations in Vietnam, despite almost constant enemy harassment and some of the world's worst flying conditions.

Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron, a 23-man unit led by Capt. Richard J. Gravatt, Bracksville, Ohio,

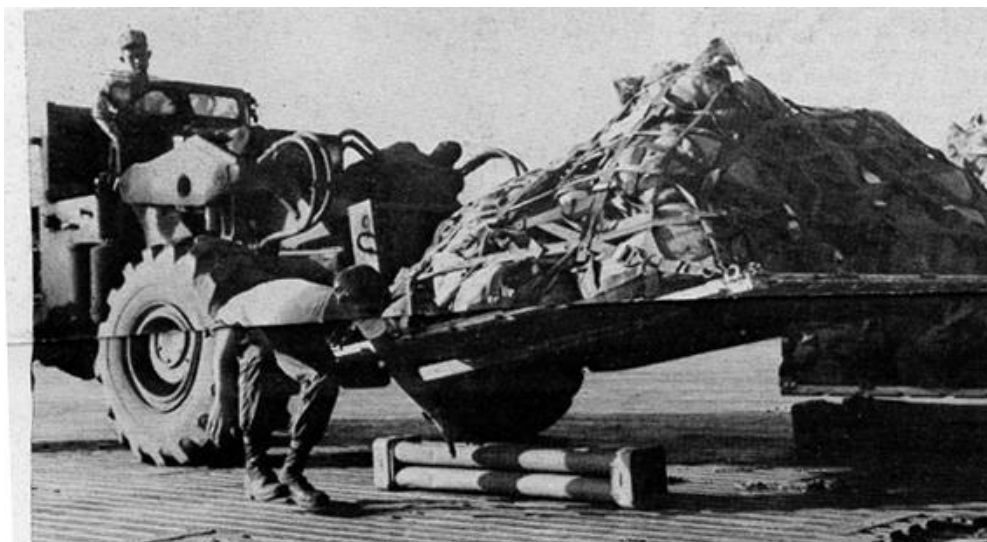
moves more than 27,000 passengers and 3,000 tons of combat cargo each month. Additionally,

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270 tons of mail are moved by the 1,000 aircraft flights to and from Dong Ha monthly.



Unloading

SSgt. Dudley P. Fenn (left), East Hartford, Conn., lowers a pallet of cargo, with the assistance of A1C James M. Williams, McKensie, Tenn. Sergeant Fenn and Airman Williams, together with 21 other men assigned to Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron, move more than 3,000 tons of cargo each month.

"Gravatt's Gorillas," as the group is known locally, often face rocket and mortar fire while accomplishing their mission. Because of such hardships, the men are rotated to other sites after six months at Dong Ha.

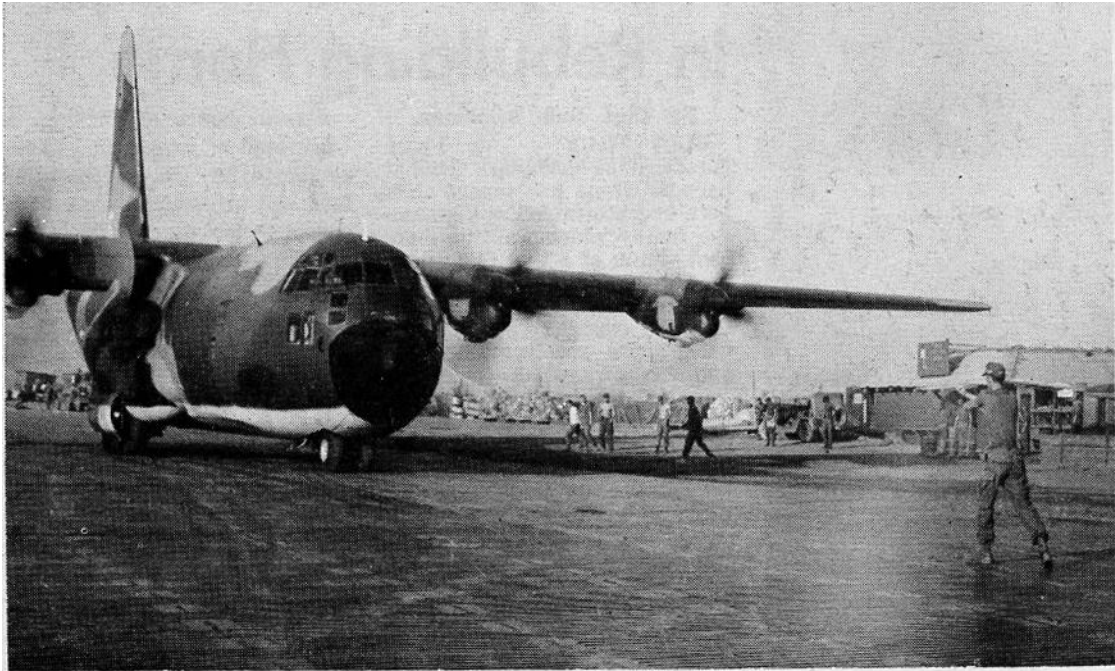
"We operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week," says SSgt. Patric L. Hautenne, Seattle.

"Except for one scheduled flight daily, all our business is unscheduled. Therefore, we have to be ready to go into action at a moment's notice."

The men handle all traffic into and out of Dong Ha for all branches of service. However, although the Marine Corps operate a small Aerial Port operation to move its own combat cargo, Marine passengers are handled by Detachment 3.

Since the greatest portion of their business is unscheduled, passengers are placed upon arriving aircraft on a space-available basis.

In spite of enemy harassment, heat and dust, which becomes mud when it rains, "Gravatt's



Another Landing

SSgt. Patric L. Hautenne guides a C-130 Hercules along a parking ramp at Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron at Dong Ha. More than 1,000 aircraft movements are made into and out of the forward combat base every month.

Gorillas" can unload an aircraft and have it back in the air in about 20 minutes.

However, it's not all work.

"The men have done much to improve their lot here," Captain Gravatt says. "They have built a day room and a weight lifting room. Also, Igor, their mascot dog, has done much for the morale of everyone."

USO shows are always welcome sights to the men. The monotony of the base routine is also broken by periodic trips to their parent unit at Da Nang to take care of administrative affairs. Such trips usually include large shopping excursions for everyone at Dong Ha, who put in requests for items not readily available at the site.

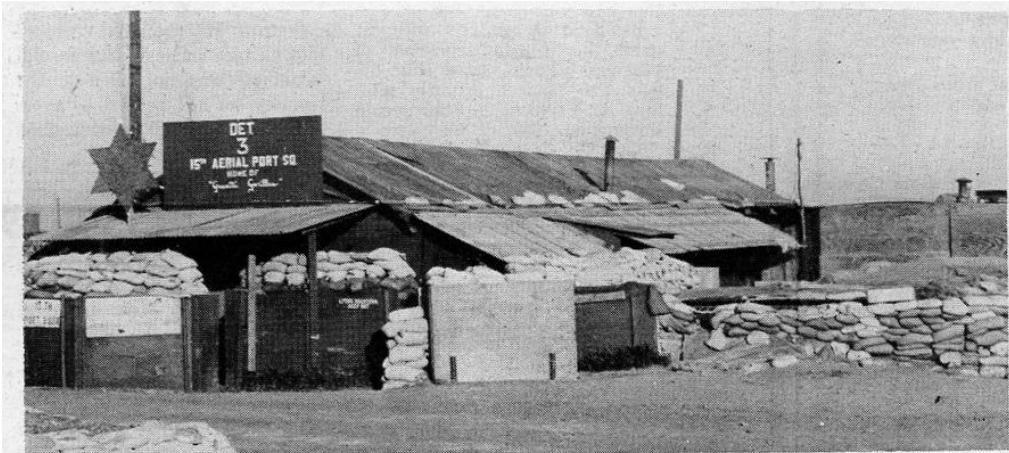
"Duty here could be a lot worse," comments Sgt. Mark E. Headlee, Waynesburg, Pa., "but with everyone pulling a fair share, it's not too bad."

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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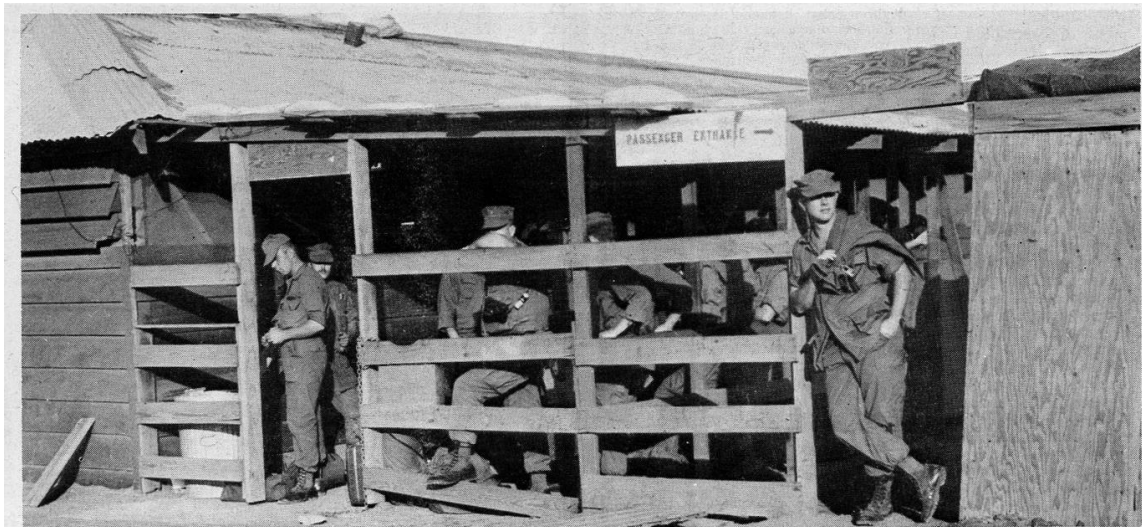
Phan Rang AB News No. 2 “Stories worth telling”

Surrounded by some of the heaviest fighting in Vietnam, the men of the 15th Aerial Port Squadron are on alert 24 hours a day to meet the demands for tactical airlift. "They know what the movement of troops and supplies means to the total Allied effort in I Corps," said one official.



Headquarters

The men of Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron at Dong Ha live and work out of this sand-bagged headquarters building complex.



Passenger Terminal

Because most flights originating or terminating at Dong Ha are unscheduled, passengers are handled on a space-available basis. Here, servicemen wait for an aircraft at the Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron “passenger terminal.”

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Man's Best Friend

SSgt. Dudley P. Fenn, and his unit's mascot, Igor, wait for another aircraft to land to off-load or take on cargo at the Dong Ha Combat Base.



Collecting Passes

A member of Detachment 3, 15th Aerial Port Squadron at Dong Ha collects a boarding pass from an elderly Vietnamese.

Sabre Pilots Destroy Enemy Bunkers, Truck

(Seventh Air Force News, January 15, 1969)

PHAN RANG—F-100 Supersabre pilots of the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron here recently flew three separate missions on the same day in support of Allied Forces conducting the TOAN THANG OFFENSIVE in the III Corps tactical zone.

Of his mission, one of the former Colorado Air National Guard pilots, said, "After a week of hardly any bomb damage assessment (BDA) it felt pretty good to have bit something. All in all it was a pretty good mission."

The final BDA for the strike was eight bunkers destroyed and six damaged, ten fighting positions destroyed with another 15 uncovered, 40 meters of trench destroyed and a 2 ½ ton truck destroyed.

On a second mission, the forward air controller (FAC) reported that the pilots killed one enemy soldier and destroyed a sampan.

One of the pilots was Capt. **James K. Fletcher**, Denver, Colo.

The pilots on the third mission were Maj. **John L. France**, Aurora, Colo., and Capt. **William J. Wilson**, Wray, Colo. Their target was a known enemy location about 25 miles west of Saigon.

"The enemy had practically built a town in there," commented Major France, "and we hit it good. The wind wasn't bad so we had no trouble putting our bombs right on target."

The final BDA for the mission was 14 enemy bunkers destroyed and 6 uncovered, 15 meters of trench destroyed and another 200 meters uncovered.

Like Two-Million Candles Spooky Moonlights for F-100s

(Seventh Air Force New, January 15, 1969)

PHAN RANG AB - Target illumination for night strikes by fighter aircraft has become an

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increasingly important mission in recent weeks for AC-47 "Spooky" gunships of Det. 1, 3rd Special Operations Squadron, Phan Rang AB.

Five times in the past month, Phan Rang Spookies joined with F-1(10 Supersabres from Phan Rang, Tuy Hoa and Bien Hoa Air Bases to hit Viet Cong positions in the vicinity of Phan Thiet. At a pre-selected time and rendezvous point near Phan Thiet, Spooky meets with a forward air controller from Phan Thiet. Together they proceed to the target area where Spook sets up an orbit from which he can drop two-million candle power flares.

In selecting an orbit, the Spooky crews must gain a position to use wind direction for maximum lighting effect and yet not interfere with the bomb runs and strafing passes of the fast-moving Supersabres.

Before the F-100s arrive, the FAC and Spooky coordinate in identifying the target and making adjustments in positioning of the flares. As the Supersabres arrive, the FAC briefs the fighter pilots on the target and procedures planned. As Spooky and the F-100s move into their proper orbits, the FAC fires a marking rocket into the target, providing a quick, accurate reference point.

The F-100s then make their passes with the FAC staying near, calling for minor adjustments when necessary and observing the target for results.

When the fighters have completed their run, the FAC goes in to assess the damages and reports to the F-100 pilots. He then clears Spooky to use his mini-guns on galleys, ravines, possible hiding places or escape routes for the VC.

Two Million Pounds Worth

Port Men Get Runway Workout

(Seventh Air Force New, January 15, 1969)

DA NANG - "We had almost two million pounds of pierced steel planking, which had to be moved to An Hoa," commented MSgt. James C. Hoover, Lexington, Ky., noncommissioned

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officer-in-charge of freight services, 15th Aerial Port Squadron here.

"So the 85 men rigged up some special equipment such as a long timber on one of our forklifts and with a bit of ingenuity...plus a lot of sweat and back straining work... the 942 tons of runway matting were airlifted to its final designation," he added.

What made the effort remarkable was the shipment was handled without disrupting or backlogging the 370 tons of freight that the unit handles daily.

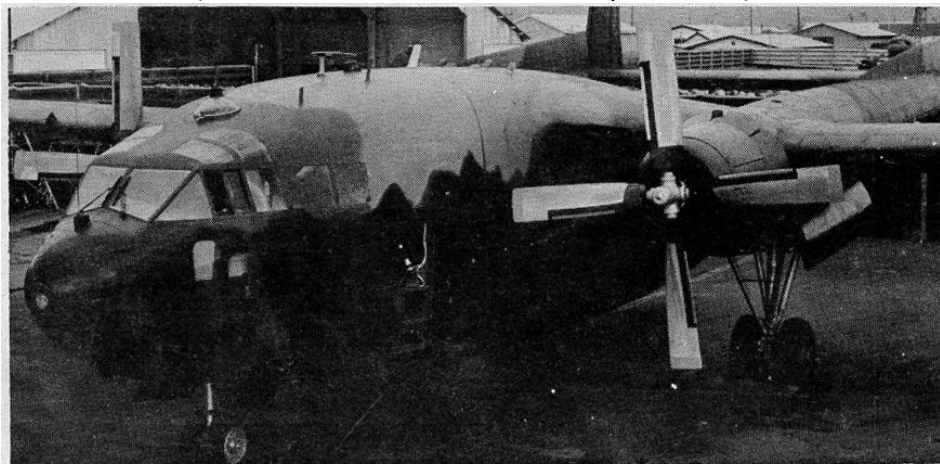
"We turned around the 69 C-130 Hercules and the 8 C-123 Providers in less than 12 minutes ground time per bird," commented SMSgt. Hubert E. Ray, Elk City, Okla., air transportation superintendent.

"And we did the job in two days of daylight operations," added A1C David McKinney, Ferriday, La., forklift operator. "Ingenuity and motivation played a big part in getting this PSP airlifted to An Hoa," noted Sergeant Ray.

"Everyone pitched in and did a little more than their usual share of work as the average loading time of each aircraft was kept to approximately six minutes," he concluded.

Flying Boxcars Add New Kick To Viet Armor

(Seventh Air Force News, January 15, 1969)



New Gunships Arrive for Viet Duty

The above AC-119, a converted cargo aircraft, recently arrived in South Vietnam to begin flying combat missions. The aircraft are equipped with 7.62 mini-guns and will be used to augment the AC-47 Dragonships already in the combat zone.

TAN SON NHUT - The first AC-119Gs, gunship version of the C-119 Flying Boxcar, have arrived for duty in South Vietnam.

The aircraft were recalled from Air Force reserve duty and have been outfitted with four 7.62 mini-guns.

These gunships will be used to augment the mission now being performed by the AC-47 Spookies.

Col. Goold Takes Reins of Phan Rang

(Seventh Air Force News, January 22, 1969)

PHAN RANG - Col. **Robert G. Goold**, Provo, Utah, has assumed command of the Combat Support Group Phan Rang AB.

A veteran of 25 years active Air Force duty, Colonel Goold assumed the base command from Col. **Stanley J. Oharski**, Alexandria, Va., who departed for new duties with the 96th Combat Support Group, Dyes AFB, Tex.

He and his wife, the former Marion Tilton of Concord, have two daughters: Mary Ann 20, and Betty Jane, 15.

Yanks Outshoot Aussies in Sidearm March...Aircrews Victorious In Return Bout

(Seventh Air Force News, January 22, 1969)

By Sgt, George Wilson

PHAN RANG - Not again!

The Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron recently met its "match" again at the hands of the U.S. Air Force 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB.

Trying to regain 'Lost face' and even the score at one all, the Aussies challenged officer air crew

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members of the 35th five tactical squadrons to a pistol “shoot-out.”



Ready, Aim, Fire!

This was the general scene at Phan Rang AB's firing range when air crew members of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing and the Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron competed in a recent pistol “shootout.” After the smoke had cleared, all five of the 35th's tactical squadrons had literally shot the Aussies to “pieces.”

The shootout took place on the Aussie range with air crew sidearm's designated as the weapon. The three phases of competition were: firing from any position at 100 yards, standing position at 50 yards and shooting from the hip at 15 yards.

A total of 180 rounds were fired. With a point for each round hitting the silhouette target, the final score was 352nd TFS, 157, 120th TFS, 150; 8th TBS, 132; 614th TFS, 128; 615th TFS, 122, and in last place, the challengers with 98 points.

Rumors are already circulating around Phan Rang AB. that the Aussies are ready to issue another challenge in a game more to their liking. **Anyone for cricket?**