

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang AB News No. 3 **“Stories worth telling”**

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General Brown Pays First Visit To Phan Rang

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 11, 1968)

PHAN RANG - Gen. George S. Brown, commander, Seventh Air Force, visited here recently. General Brown was met on his arrival by Col. Herndon F. Williams, Florence, S.C., 35th Tactical Fighter Wing commander, and by Col. John W. Pauly, Albany, N.Y., commander of the 315th Special Operations Wing.

The general's first visit to Phan Rang AB since becoming 7AF commander, was spent receiving briefings on the operations of the two wings at the base. He also presented a Legion of Merit and two Distinguished Flying Crosses to 35th TFW personnel.

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After receiving the 35th TFW commander's briefing the general was conducted on a tour of the large base. The only Air Force flying school in the combat zone, the Forward Air Controller Theater Indoctrination School conducted by Detachment 1, 504th Tactical Air Support Group, was one stop where the general was briefed by Lt. Col. Curtis B. Pinkerton, Cullman, Ala. While visiting the 315th SOWg, the general was briefed by Colonel Pauly and by Col. Noble F. Greenhill, Jr., Montgomery, Ala., the 315th SOWg vice commander. He also met with a C-123 Provider crew, commanded by Lt. Col. William H. Clift, Memphis, Tenn. Colonel Clift, the pilot and aircraft commander, was accompanied by the co-pilot 1st Lt. Richard G. Diehl, Sherman, Tex, and three enlisted crew members--TSgt. Willie J. McCoy, Trenton, N.J., SSgt. William S. Scaf, Baltimore, and AIC Girard G. Preston, Jersey City, N.J.

Unique Police Unit Ready Defense Force For All Viet Bases

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 11, 1968)

PHAN RANG - One of the Air Forces unique units is the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron (TAC) at Phan Rang AB.

Trained in infantry tactics, these security policemen make up a quick reaction force that supplements the normal base security forces at Air Force bases in the Republic of Vietnam. The unit is headquartered here where it assists the normal base defense forces on a regular basis. "Our job," said Lt. Col. Orange D. Steffey, Studio City, Calif., 821st CSPS commander, "is to be ready to deploy to any Seventh Air Force base as directed by the Seventh Air Force director of security police."

The men of the 821st CSPS were drawn from security police squadrons throughout the Air Force and given their special training at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. They were trained in heavy weapons and infantry unit tactics. Many of their instructors were Ranger qualified and much of the training resembles the Army's Ranger Training Course.

While in Vietnam the men are deployed to several bases with frequent training sessions at Phan Rang.

The unit has men stationed at Bien Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay, Pleiku and Tan Son Nhut ABs.

Intelligence teams are located at three other bases.

"While at the bases," Colonel Steffey said, "our men augment the base defense forces. Even though we are a Tactical Air Command unit when we are here we come under the operational control of the individual base security police chief."

Colonel Steffey's men have participated in frequent operations with base defense forces. "Our men at Phu Cat have taken part in sniper ambush patrols," he said, "and a two day sweep operation at Cam Ranh."

Vietnamese people, somewhat reserved and very polite, have great respect for virtue and knowledge.

South Vietnam is uncrowded. The population density varies from 19 per square mile throughout the six high plateau provinces to an estimated 43,100 people per square mile in Saigon, the capital.

AC-47 Crews Form Hill Climbing Club

(Seventh Air Force New, Sept. 11, 1968)

PHAN RANG - No, those fellows in sweat pants and tennis shoes jogging over the hills and dales of Phan Rang AB aren't hopefuls for the U.S. Olympic team.

Believe it or not, they're members of the 3rd Special Operations Squadron Hill Climb Club. Since the harriers are strictly night-time workers, flying their AC-47 Dragonships throughout the night in defense of friendly units in Vietnam, they generally spend their daylight hours asleep. Sleeping all day and flying all night isn't the most agreeable way of life for a group of healthy servicemen, so Capt. John J. Kerwin, Warner-Robins, Ga., came up with the idea of jogging up Nui Duc, the highest terrain on Phan Rang.

Captain Kerwin Was the first member of the ever-growing Hill Climb Club, but he was soon joined by other enthusiastic runners. Capt. Julius M. Kunz, Middletown, Ohio, is probably the

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most consistent runner of the club, having jogged to the top 35 times.

An old Tennessee road-runner, Capt. John B. Strange, Midway, Tenn., presently holds the club's unofficial record of 20 minutes and 10 seconds.

The round trip tour starts at their living quarters and goes past Happy Valley outdoor Theater, the NCO Open Mess, and then the top of Nui Duc., and then back down again. That adds up to a little more than 2.4 miles.

Maj. David F. Guess, Pensacola, Fla., is another ardent runner and the oldest in the club (would you believe 42 ½ ?). Capt. John E. Wurmstein, Atlanta, rounds out the roll call of Phan Rang hill joggers.

A Facebook post by Sam Herold:

So this is my Facebook post to my friends, right after discovering "Happy Valley". Thought I would share.

So excuse me for a second while I sing the praises of Facebook. I know, I know, we all worry about the security of it. But I constantly find so many things that make it worthwhile. (besides the "likes" you all give me for my crap). Here's my newest reason to like FB. It's Veterans Day and I'm sitting around feeling melancholy for a period in my life that I thought would never end. That I was absolutely sure was the worst mistake I ever made. That at points I thought would be the death of me. But no, ultimately none of those things proved true. I'll be damned if it didn't evolve into some kind of a fond memory. My year in Vietnam. Who would of thought?

So what's Facebook's part in this? I still have one of my camo uniforms and even my boots from that time in Vietnam. Yea I know it's been 41 years, they probably won't be calling me back. But it's not about that, really! But I digress. On a whim tonight I Googled “315th SPS Panther Flight” from the patch on my sleeve. Boom! It tells me there's a Facebook page and directs me to it where I find 500 + former base residents already joined in. I didn't know any of those listed from my first read of members, but I do want to be on board. I want the opportunity to see other people's pictures of that place. I'm amazed that while I was there I bought my first 35mm

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camera and used it so seldom and so foolishly. Oh I have pictures of some of the people that served with me, but not many. And not the kind that tell the story of being there's. Mostly I took pictures of mountains and trees and jeeps and buildings. What a waste of film. Mark that up as one of the reasons why today, when I post pictures on Facebook I try to make sure there are people in them. People I will know in the future.

So I sent my request hoping for the opportunity to look through pictures and details and stories of things that I forgot, information I never knew, and people I never met. It's funny getting older, you start to appreciate what you missed. And Facebook is once again giving me the opportunity to fill in some of those blanks.

I've never joined anything military related before. Legion, VFW, etc but tonight I was added to the Facebook group Happy Valley Phan Rang Air Base Vietnam. Social networking...I'm a fan.

A Veterans Day message from Everett Sprous:

I want to give a special thank you to the men of the 71st, 17th and 18th SOS. You all have meant so much to me over the last 14 years.

I had lost direction as far as my Air Force past goes. I, as many of you, consider the year or so of flying the AC-119 Gunships a very memorable time. We were 8 or 10 men alone in the sky. Although we were never really alone, God was watching over us. He had to be to keep as many of us alive as he did. Flying in a plane that many said was not very stable in the air. Flying the crazy missions we flew and coming back with holes in the fuselage and wings and even pieces of wings missing.

I think those who decided to bring the old Boxcar on line as a Gunship never thought many would last as long as they did. I truly believe that we were not looked on with as much appreciation as the AC-47 or the AC-130. We were in a sense, disposable. I love the old girl for bringing us home so many times. I especially love all you men for watching my back and each other.

I by no means think any less of the maintenance crews than the air crews. You men patched

the old gal up and got her ready for another mission. I can only imagine your thoughts and fears as you watched us leave mother earth and the anxiety of waiting to see if and when we would return. I love you men and thank you.

WELCOME HOME!

Another Veterans day message from Ken Miller:

I have always been proud of being a Veteran, a Jewish War Veteran of Vietnam. Never before have I been as proud of it as this year. The amount of activity in Facebook groups of Veterans of all eras is phenomenal. I have met new veterans and, even more special, reconnected to people I served with 43 years ago in Vietnam.

I have connected to others suffering from Agent Orange poisoning from Vietnam and shared our issues and advice and how to battle the monolith known as the Veterans Administration that has put up barriers for the past 50 years for our health care. I have cruised this past week with Veterans from WW2, Korea, Vietnam, Granada, Panama, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and skirmishes too small to be called wars or conflicts.

I have lived in Israel and know many that serve(d) there in a lifetime of wars. I have met many veterans and active duty soldiers from other countries, some that I have battled and some that are allies today.

Today is Veterans Day. The one thing I know is that I have many brothers and sisters out there that deserve to be told, Thank You, from others that served and from those that owe Veterans so much.

Seventh Air Force Units Receive Safety Honors

(Seventh Air Force News Oct. 30, 1968)

SAIGON - Three Seventh Air Force flying units have been awarded the USAF Flying Safety Plaque for their outstanding flying safety record during 1967.

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Selected were the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, Da Nang AB; 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Phan Rang AB, and the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing, Phu Cat AB.

Gen. George S. Brown, Seventh Air Force commander, added his personal congratulations to those extended by the Air Force Chief of Staff and the commander in chief, Pacific Air Forces.

The 20th TASS of the 504th Tactical Air Support Group, was praised by General Brown for having flown over 73,000 accident free hours in O-1 and O-2 aircraft. He added, "This is proud testimonial to the professionalism and dedication of officers and airmen involved."

To the members of the 35th TFW, General Brown said, "Your accomplishments in field of safe, efficient combat operations are indeed commendable. Flying over 45,000 hours and 28,000 combat sorties without loss of a single aircraft an accident is a proud record."

The general told the 37th TFW that, "The accomplishments the wing in safe, efficient combat operations are highly commendable. The myriad tasks developing a major air base, while simultaneously flying over 15,000 accident free combat hours is a record of which you can be justifiably proud."

Recovery Team Frees Mired Plane While Facing Enemy Mortar Attack

(Seventh Air Force News, Oct. 30, 1968)

PHAN RANG - A C-123 Provider, off the runway at Katum, lay mired in the mud with one wing blocking use of the strip to other fixed-wing resupply aircraft. The plane must be recovered or destroyed quickly.

The Special Forces men at Katum said it couldn't be done but Maj. Richard J. Mustico, Ballston Lake, N.Y., and his 12-man maintenance recovery team from the 315th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang AB, thought otherwise.

Arriving at Katum with repair kits the day after the aircraft incident, the team received a hot welcome. Incoming mortar rounds drove off their helicopter before they could complete off

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loading their supplies.

When a lull in the attack gave them the chance to assemble their equipment, Major Mustico's crew surveyed the mired aircraft and found their work cut out for them.

The Provider was deeply mired with all three landing gear off the runway. One propeller was bent and the left jet engine was a scant inch off the ground. The right wing extended 30 feet across the 60-footwide runway.

Using inflatable air bags, the recovery crew went to work raising the aircraft. Their efforts were hampered by sporadic mortar fire and the fact that one after another, the three lifting bags burst under pressure.

Within a short time, additional air bags arrived and the team set back to work, getting as much done as possible before nightfall.

All this time, enemy mortar rounds were landing in the area surrounding the aircraft. When darkness set in, the crew slept for the night on the floor of the only quarters available, the Katum Combat Control Center team bunker.

Early the next morning, work on the aircraft began once again and after two attempts, the Provider was finally raised out of the mud and onto the runway. Harassing mortar fire increased and the Special Forces commander called in fighter assistance.

While suspected enemy positions were bombed and strafed, the repair crew was able to continue its work and the damaged propeller was replaced. The engines were started and everything checked out.

A flight crew arrived from Tan Son Nhut AB and in the early evening, the C-123 that some said could not be recovered took off for Phan Rang.

Mission complete, the major said, "I'm happy to say that we cheated Charlie out of an airplane. The performance of the men was magnificent. As my commander says, 'The ultimate American secret weapon is the wonderful ability of the American men to get things done under fire.' All I

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can say is I don't know what they were thinking of but every time we said, 'Let's go,' 12 faces got out of the mud and started working on that airplane again."

With Major Mostico on the recovery mission were Staff Sergeants Robert L. Peter, Jesus Castaneda, and Eugene Smith Jr., Sergeants Herman H. Wigginton, Willie E. Shaw, and Russell L. Tilton, Airmen First Class James D. Copen, Joseph R. O'Dell, and Joseph C. Mosby Jr., all of the 315th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, and SSgt. Ronald J. Shean, and A1C Richard E. McCoy, 310th Special Operations Squadron.



Source: Seventh Air Force News, Oct. 30, 1968

Chaplains Confer at Phan Rang

(Seventh Air Force News, Oct. 30, 1968)

PHAN RANG - Phan Rang AB, recently played host to the Seventh Air Force Chaplains Conference.

Attending the conference were Air Force Chaplains from throughout Vietnam, including 7th AF Staff Chaplain Col. Stanley W. Spiewak, Watervliet, N.Y., and Chap. (Lt. Col.) William F. Montgomery, Donaldson, Ark., from MACV.

The conference opened with a talk by Chaplain Spiewak entitled "A Chance of a Lifetime." Chaplain Montgomery followed and the subject of his topic was "The Work Only You Can Do.,"

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The reason for this conference," said Chap. (Lt. Col.) John E. Pickering Jr., Crowley, La., "is to be able to talk to each other and share our ideas on the various Chapel programs in Vietnam and to benefit from each other's experience."

Lupe Saenz wrote on Facebook: Does anyone remember "Radio Free" Phan Rang AB? I used to hang around with a group from the aircraft mechanics, POL, and security police who sat around at the BENCH and listened to this "underground" radio running with a aircraft FM transmitter illegally. It would broadcast on certain times to avoid detection and would play long play albums including the "Firesign Theater". Does any remember that? The Firesign Theatre is an American comedy troupe consisting of Phil Austin, Peter Bergman, David Ossman and Philip Proctor. Their brand of surrealistic humor is best known through their record albums, which acquired an enthusiastic following in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Everett Sprous wrote on Facebook: "I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades... Such good men."

Marcia Tucker, wife of Bob Tucker, wrote on Facebook: My husband, Bob and my grandson, Warren and myself just got home from the 2nd reunion of the "Phan Rang AB, Vietnam" held in San Antonio, TX.

What a wonderful reunion for these Veterans.. We met some wonderful guys and their families. This was Bob's 1st time to attend...Be we for sure will be attending more. Next year "Phan Rang #3 reunion will be in Tucson, AZ in Oct. 2014. If any of my Facebook friends, know any

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one that was stationed at Phan Rang between 1966 and 1971..Air Force, Army or other, who might be interested in attending this reunion in 2014..let us know and we will put them in contact with the Doug Severt, one of the organizers.

Even though Bob, only knew one man that was stationed there in his section, at the same time..everyone found connections with the others and became friends quickly. After all these years, many new friendships were formed. Even though most of these men were very young and most unmarried when they were station at Phan Rang, their now spouses and family members enjoyed this gathering just as much as the Vets themselves did. I, myself, having a military retired husband, a military retired son, and a grandson who is active duty military, believe this is a wonderful way to show our loved ones, who gave so much of themselves to our country, just how much we all appreciate what they had to do for our country's freedom. THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SERVICE MEN..OLD AND YOUNG. WE LOVE YOU.

**Tribute to My Dad, Lawrence Kent Hubbell by Marcelle Hubbell
Ehrhart
(And all Vietnam Vets)**



My dad passed at the young age of 45 from a logging accident when I was almost 16 years old. Obviously, this was a very traumatic event in my life--“life changing” as they’d say. When I hear “traumatic,” however, I can’t help but think of my dad’s experience in Vietnam and all that he and his buddies went through while over there. To me that’s “traumatic” and “life changing.”

My dad rarely talked about his time in the war, possibly because young kids didn’t need to hear all the details or

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maybe because he himself wanted to forget. Whatever the reason, he is gone now and I will never know his story. That is why I have been trying to track down those that might have served with him. I want to get a glimpse into that part of his life. This may seem strange to some, but I’m so very proud of his service and all the men who fought in the war, and I want to keep not only his memory alive but also keep the Vietnam War veterans in the forefront of America’s mind. **ALL veterans really.**

I have pictures and slides of his time over there and the military records I had sent to me. These are great treasures, but they don’t tell the stories and experiences. I think they need to be told. I believe even though it was over four decades ago it still matters. As does the World Wars, Korea, and on and on.

I’m supposed to write about what my dad meant to me or something like that. I wish I could go on about some bravery or a great battle, but I can’t, and now that I write this I realize that may not even be what’s important. I knew the man who was a “veteran” and tried to bury Vietnam from his life when he came home. This was a piece of my dad’s life that although he tried to forget, I’m pretty sure shaped a part of him into the dad I knew...loved...and miss terribly.

It comes to me now that my dad was only one of a few people to pass in my life and many men in the war lost scores of friends...brothers...comrades. What grief to carry and from my personal experience a grief that never truly disappears. That is why it is important to have these online groups and reunions. This is still very real for many. I can’t speak for any one of them as of course I was not there, but I feel a connection somehow through my dad, his memory, and the pictures I’m so lucky to have.

All I know is that my dad was a great father, husband, son, brother, uncle, and more. Many letters we received when he passed talked about all the kindness he showed towards others, helping those who were in need, always giving things away, volunteering, and being a great provider and supporter of his family. He taught me to love God, treat others the way I want to be treated, never to think I’m better than someone else, appreciate what I have and not to envy what I don’t, be thankful for all my blessings, and so much more.

I loved my daddy and wish so badly that he could be here to hug, kiss, laugh with, talk to, see his grandkids, and maybe even find some of his buddies from Vietnam to talk to. I am thankful

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there are those who are willing to embrace me as family and care about my dad even though it was over 40 years ago he served and 20 since he passed away. It touches me to hear genuine appreciation from them, and I'm so excited to share what small things I have to contribute.

This is not just a tribute to my father but a thank you to all who served (and currently serve). You are my heroes and to me YOU are family. Keep telling your stories and sharing your lives. It IS appreciated. People DO care. This CANNOT be forgotten. Be proud. You deserve it.

“ My hope is to someday find someone dad actually served with who can tell me things...”

My hope is to someday find someone dad actually served with who can tell me things If they are comfortable with that. Daddy never talked much about it. He mentioned his injury, guarding a downed helicopter with fallen soldiers in it (he said the smell of the burnt flesh stayed with him forever), and a few funny stories I don't quite remember. Other than that, he was very quiet. Of course he died when I was 15 so probably didn't want to share much with us when we were young children. I sure wish he were alive today. Of course I'm lucky to have had him as long as I did and that he came home from War so he COULD have me! I'm 35 by the way.

I can't tell you how surprised and touched I am at how helpful and kind everyone is about all of my questions and photos etc. So willing to help and never feeling bothered by me. I am so thankful! It helps me feel like I get to know a part of my Dad he can't be here to tell me about. From what I'm gathering from his unit awards etc., he seemed to be a part of an amazing group of guys. Of course, I think all the men were amazing. I wish there was more I could do for the Vietnam Vets. I know I'm just a "kid" of one of them, but it holds a very special place in my heart. I'm hoping my photos will be a great treasure to someone out there. I do realize many guys don't want to talk about it or think of it so they are hard, if not impossible, to track down. Chadwell sent a card when my dad died. Maybe I can track him down that way. Anyway, enough talking for now.

All my love and respect,
Marcelle Ehrhart – McMinnville, OR



Charlie Beware

Sgt. **Thomas R. Handler**, Silver Springs, Md., hold his dog, Fritz, on a short leash as a would-be intruder nears his post. K-9 operations strengthen the night-time defense of Phan Rang AB. As Sergeant Handler puts it. “I would slow down too, if I saw this staring me in the face.” Or as Fritz puts it, “WOOF, WOOF!!!”

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 18, 1968)

Only One in Theater FAC School Prepares Pilots for Air War

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 18, 1968)

By Sgt. Sid Blanton

PHAN RANG (7AF) - The only Forward Air Controller Theater Indoctrination School in Vietnam is administered by Detachment 1, 504th Tactical Air Support Group at Phan Rang AB.

The school is designed to familiarize newly assigned FACs with all aspects of their mission in Southeast Asia with academic and practical training during the ten days they are in school.

It began at Binh Thuy AB in August 1966 and moved to Phan Rang in February 1968.

Commanded by Lt. Col **Curtis B. Pinkerton**, Cullmen, Ala., the school has a teaching staff of 18 instructor pilots and 60 maintenance personnel.

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Zeroing In

An Air Force pilot flying an O-2 Skymaster, fires a smoke rocket to mark targets for air strikes by other aircraft. The O-2 is from the Forward Air Controller School located at Phan Rang AB.

Approximately two days are spent in the classroom where students are briefed on all phases of the aircraft, operational procedures, intelligence, combat safety, mission and tactics and rules of engagement.

After the classroom briefings, the students are ready for their actual aerial training, when they will mark targets for air strikes.



A1C Joseph Puleo, an aircraft mechanic with Detachment 1, 504th Tactical Air Support Group, makes an instrument check on the O-2 Super Skymaster used by the Detachments Forward Air Controller School.

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Survival Equipment

Sgt. Royce Holly, Great Falls, Mont., a life support specialist at the Forward Air Controller Theater Indoctrination School, and Capt. Wayne D. Bradley, Christopher, Ill., left, explains use of the FAC’s survival equipment to two pilots.

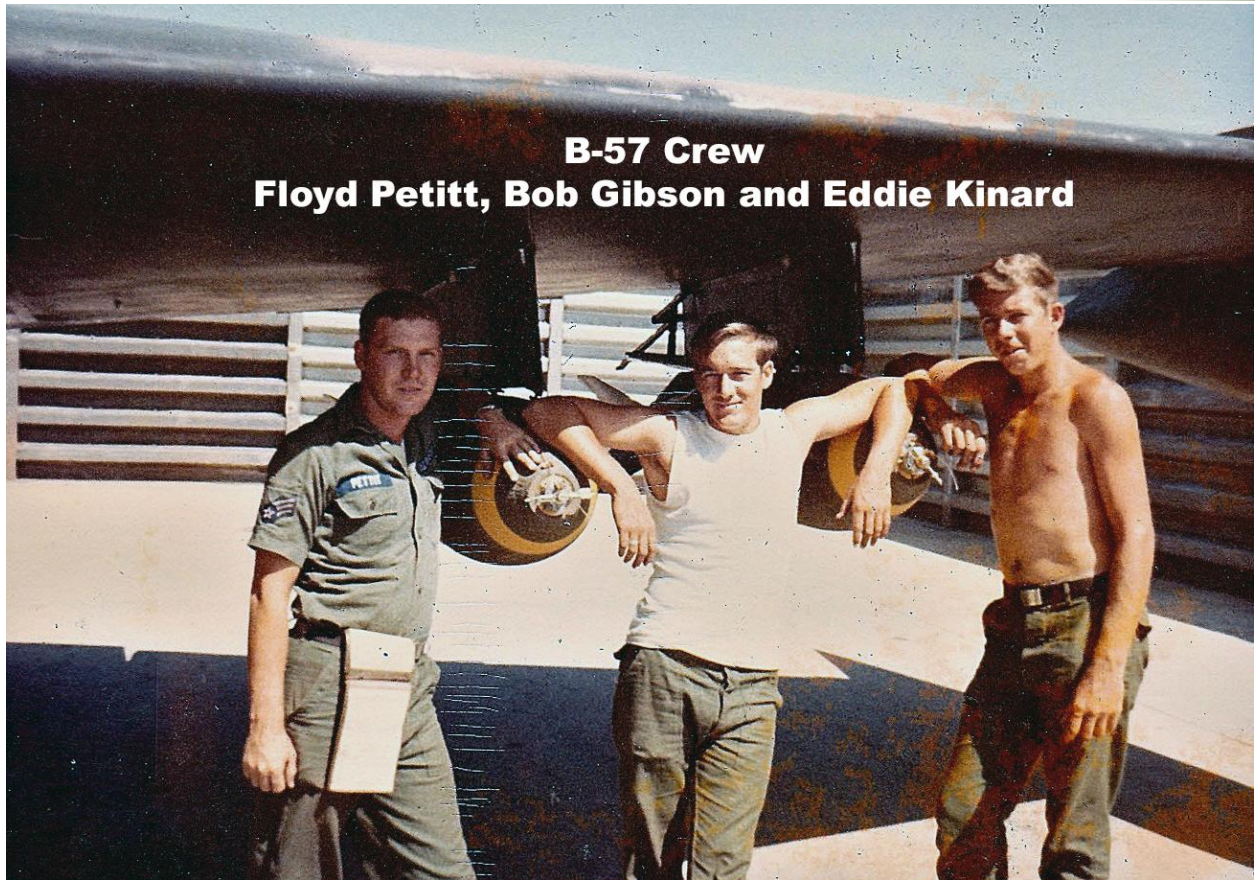


Safety Pin

A1C Joseph Pulco installs a safety pin in the nose gear of an O-2 Super Skymaster used by the Forward Air Controller School at Phan Rang AB.



COLONEL PINKERTON



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