

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 "Stories worth telling"

In this issue

Posted on Facebook by Sam Lewis

Flooded Platoons 'Pedroed'

Canful of Dirt

Randal G. Weber At Phan Rang AB

Facebook conversation: Subject the bomb dump

Team Work Spares SP's Life - Phan Rang Tenants Respond

Sabres Destroy Complex

'Lucky Devils' Kill 20 VC

Dragons Receive Praise

Re-up Rate Jumps 600%

Supersabre Pilots Fly Together Against Communist Gunner Site

Security Policeman Risks Life for C-123

Posted on Facebook by Sam Lewis: Some time about the middle of my year at Phan Rang as I was working with B Flt Security, 35th SPS we were pulling the 4 a.m. till Noon shift. I was with SAT one morning just before dawn right after the K9 units were relieved from their night shift.

We received a call from CSC to check out the perimeter at the huge trash dump which was on the North Perimeter. It was reported by Republic of Korea Troops just outside the base that there was some type of activity around the perimeter and in the trash dump itself. When we arrived at the dump we saw several dark objects looking like 55 gallon drums passing through the wire and disappearing into the dark on the other side before we could get to them. We reported what we had observed and were ordered to keep an eye on that area for the remainder of our shift.

Nothing else happened that shift but the next morning the same thing happened with a similar results. On the third morning we were ordered to set up an observation post inside the dump and out of sight and were instructed to take our M12 Riot Shotguns, the ones we used to shoot dogs who wondered into the areas around the runways".

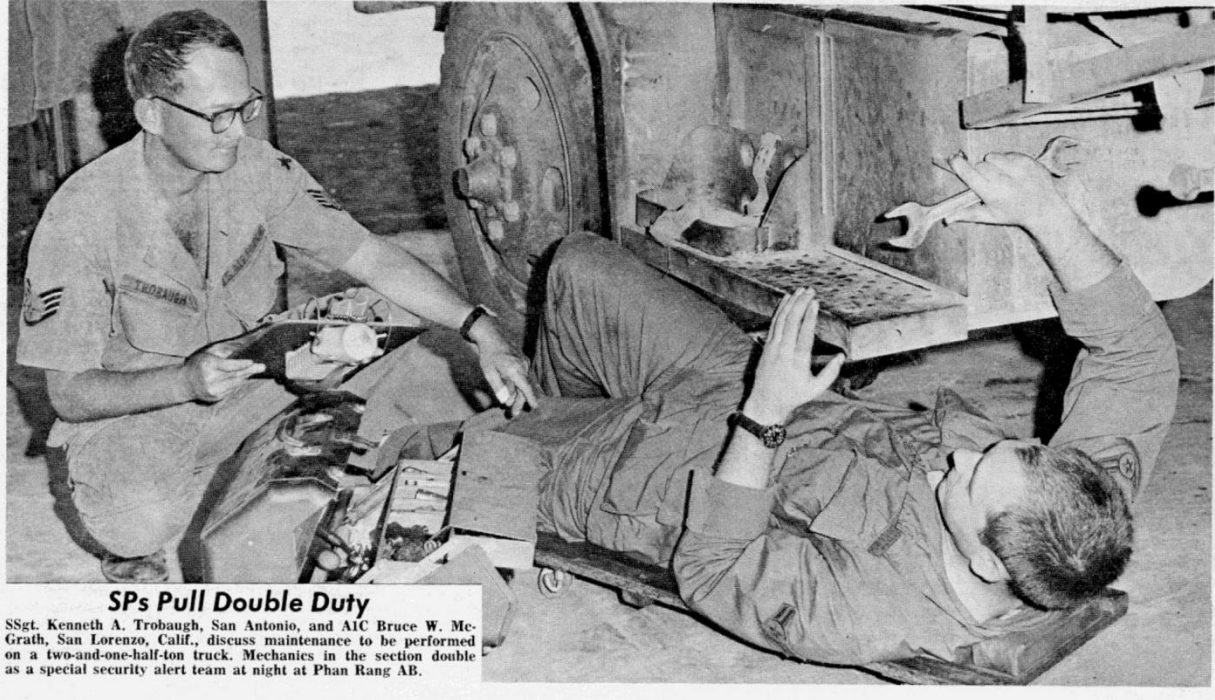
We arrived inside the dump around 4 a.m. and set up our post concentrating on the huge pile of 55 gallon oil drums that were discarded there. As I remember petroleum products had been shipped in those drums and the tops were cut off, the contents poured into tanks at the POL area, then the drums were taken to the dump and discarded into a huge pile.

Just before dawn that day we observed several dark figures inside the dump, we reported what we saw and were instructed to observe them to see if we could see what they were doing there. What happened then was something I really didn't believe when I saw it happening and have never forgotten. Those little Vietnamese, several of them, picked up the drums, raised them up and put them over their heads and down to their ankles then lined up to move out. One little fellow was in front guiding them and two more were at the wire with 2 by 4

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN
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Phan Rang News No. 6 "Stories worth telling"

boards to separate it making an opening large enough to get through walking the barrels. Just after they started moving the SAT Leader gave the order to open fire on those drums with those M12 Riot Guns. As the pellets showered the drums with loud PING PING sounds the little Vietnamese threw the drums straight up into the air, yelled out in that language they only knew and darted through the wire like it wasn't even there. It was a sight to behold.

We were told later that the Vietnamese stole the barrels flattened them out and along with slats from shipping pallets they also stole to build dwellings with.



SPs Pull Double Duty
SSgt. Kenneth A. Trobaugh, San Antonio, and AIC Bruce W. McGrath, San Lorenzo, Calif., discuss maintenance to be performed on a two-and-one-half-ton truck. Mechanics in the section double as a special security alert team at night at Phan Rang AB.

Picture Source: Seventh Air Force News, Nov. 20, 1968

Flooded Platoons 'Pedroed'

(Seventh Air Force News, Nov. 20, 1968)

PHAN RANG - Aerospace Rescue and Recovery service Phan Rang AB is usually orientated toward the safety of fighter, bomber and transport crews flying in the vicinity of this base. Circumstances, however, recently brought them into a unique rescue role.

Heavy tropical storms pelting this central South Vietnam coastal area caused considerable flooding. Among the victims were two platoons of the Republic of Korea White Horse Division conducting a sweep of suspected VC areas south of here.

After rapidly-rising waters left them stranded on a small piece of high ground, an HH-43 rescue helicopter from Detachment 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (MAC) here went to their aid.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 "Stories worth telling"

Three flights by the HH-43 Pedro" crew plus an assist from a U.S. Army CH-47 helicopter from Cam Ranh Bay AB were needed to complete the rescue.

Canful of Dirt

(Seventh Air Force News, Nov. 20, 1968)

PHAN RANG - The 315th Special Operations Wing at Phan Rang AB is accustomed to unusual requests. With their C-123 Providers, they have moved livestock, fresh fruit, innumerable passengers, ordnance, rations and an endless listing of supplies.

But, when a U.S. Navy request arrived, its sheer simplicity was a shock - fill the attached can with dirt and return.

It could not be just any soil. The dirt had to be pure substance uncontaminated by aircraft exhaust, motor vehicle or booted GI foot.

Again, not any instrument would serve to deposit the soil in the plastic-lined can - only the can lid would do.

Project completed, the soil-filled can was returned to the Department of the Navy, Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, Calif., where it would be analyzed to aid in design criterion to assure that "oncoming weapon systems are designed to withstand what they will encounter in worldwide service."

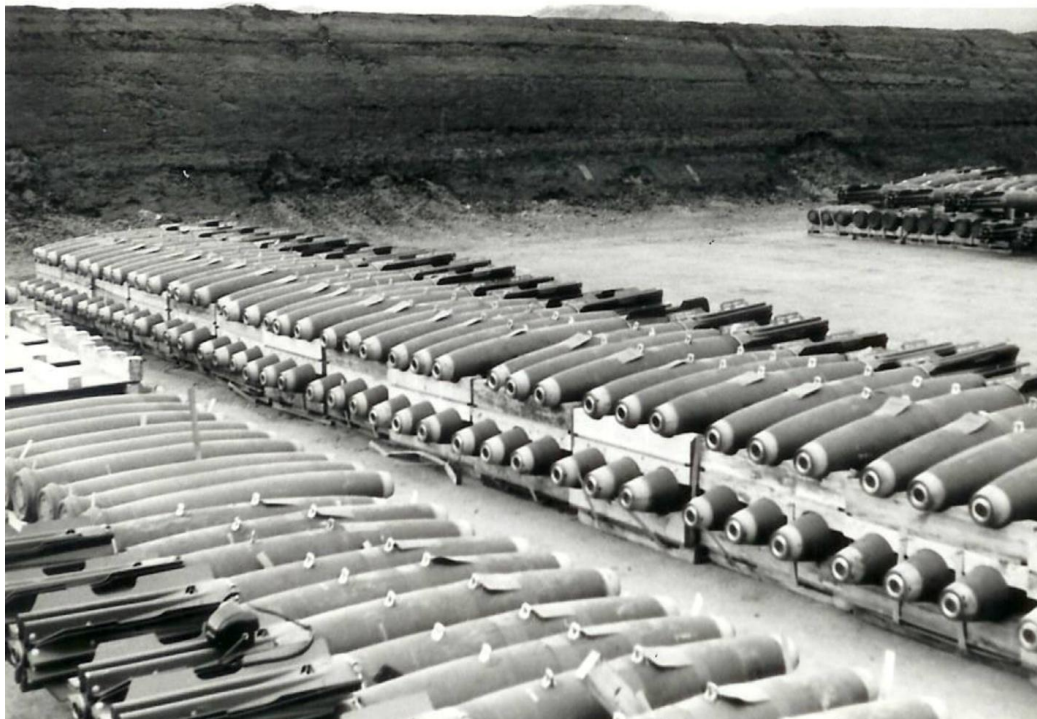


Randal G. Weber At Phan Rang AB

Airman First Class Randal G. Weber, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur B. Weber of 124 N. Seventh St., East Carondelet, Illinois is on duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam.

Airman Weber, a jet engine mechanic, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Vietnam, he was assigned to Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. The airman is a graduate of Dupo Community High School.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN
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Phan Rang News No. 6 “Stories worth telling”



Facebook conversation: Subject the bomb dump

Archie T. Pickley commented: Can you imagine the VC taking unexploded bombs and melting the explosives out of them??? Brave little Buggars !!!!

John Hennigar commented: Archie, the VC did cut bombs apart with a hacksaw. The Air Force had a classified captured film called, "Getting to know Charlie" which showed them cutting our bombs apart.

George Carrie commented: I always wondered why they called it the dump? That's where I take trash to. Just wondering but what would happen if a VC mortar landed there? My only recollection was these pretty (nasty-thingies) on my revetment bomb racks when I arrived at 6 a.m. on the flightline. I even polished some of the napalm to make them go faster! HA!

David Knighton commented: On night shift there would usually only be two of us loading trucks. We would hook up the bombs and ride them over to the truck and then hang from the hooks to go back. Naturally that was frowned upon but there weren't any "lifelines" to bug us. The senior NCO's that were on nights just wanted us to complete the mission and didn't care how we did it, mostly.

Ken Miller commented: I was loading CBU's one night and after loading the truck I began to pull away the empty containers. The next stack fell over (it had been stacked incorrectly) and 2 bombs, 1600-2000 pounds, fell over and pinned me to the ground by my leg. Four hospital visits and a lot of problems and I still have issues. The hospital never made a single notation in my medical records and I am fighting the VA on it.

Ronald S. Zulkiewski commented: Everyone knew me as 'Ski' or 'Ronz'...

Ken Miller commented: I knew a Ski in the bomb dump. He drove the trucks and I loaded them for him. I remember one day he had trouble pulling into a narrow lane between my crane and the stacks. I asked him to let me try and he got pissed but got out. I hopped in the cab, swung out around the revetment and back in, pulled straight into the slot. He stood there with his jaw hanging and I nonchalantly hopped into my crane and started loading. He did not realize I had been line delivery about 9 months of my tour and could back those rigs up straight or pull into anything.

David Knighton commented: No one counted our trucks when we re-loaded them at night that I can remember. Maybe I just didn't pay attention. I know they didn't count the 7.62 ammo cans I took out one night and gave to the Aussie's. Drove right up to the front door of their Club and went inside and found a guy I knew. He almost shit his pants. Got some steaks, bread and cans of peaches out of it though. When I went back to the Holding area my supervisor looked at the stuff and said "I don't even want to know how you got this stuff". Pretty funny.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 “Stories worth telling”

Ken Miller commented: I traded a case of 12 gauge to the K9's for a case of dog food for my mutt out in the bomb dump. I just scribbled some BS signature.

David Knighton commented: Just a Midnight Requisition.

Charles W. Johnson commented: My supervisor told me to grab my M16 and ride Shotgun to Cam Rhan Bay on a Ammo Run to Port. I told him I wasn't going. He said what do you mean you ain't going? I told him to look around the room at the replacements that had come in. I said, I have two weeks left in Charlie Country and wanted to go home alive so send one of the newbies and if you have to Court Martial me then that's fine too. He sent a new troop and let me stay at the Bomb Dump. I figured I was going to Jail but didn't. Do you remember the long building that you processed out in? Started at one end and finished at the other. VC put some 2.75 Rockets thru top of building one morning and wasted some troops that were out processing. That's what I had on my mind when I told my supervisor no. The shorter I got the more scared I got, go figure....

David Knighton commented: I think most of us had those types of feelings. Especially since 1/2 hour after I processed in CBPO took a rocket hit and a guy who had 18 days left was killed. I was nervous my whole year.

Ken Miller commented: David, that sergeant was handling tracing my records that did not show up with me. I walked over there after the attack to check on things and just saw the hole in the wall where his desk had been, and him at it. I guess I got to Phan Rang a week or so before you.

David Knighton commented: Yeah Ken. We had to go back the next morning to finish up and his desk was outside the front door. What an eye opener that was. That was a pretty sad day indeed.



Team Work Spares SP's Life - Phan Rang Tenants Respond

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

PHAN RANG - Two tenant units of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here cooperated to save the life of a seriously wounded Security Policeman recently after the base came under attack.

The 3rd Special Operations Squadron (Flight B) and the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Detachment 1, combined to evacuate a man wounded while defending the base's water pumping station one mile south of the base.

First Lt. Henry S. Daniels, Olympia, Wash., the pilot of an AC-47 Spooky, and Sgt. George M. Haskett, Olympia, Wash., an aeromedical technician attached to the rescue unit, were instrumental in the saving of the life of the security policeman.

Lieutenant Daniels indicated that the Spooky gunship was preparing to relieve a sister ship Which had been firing in support of U.S. Army positions near the air base.

"About this time," Lieutenant Daniels said, "the rescue helicopter was scrambled for a medical evacuation of a wounded man at the base's water pumping station. The man had to be evacuated immediately and flares were needed so the helicopter could find a landing position.

Sergeant Haskett was the Air Force Medic on board the helicopter.

"We received a call from the command post that one man at the water pumps had received a severe chest injury. We flew out to the area and the Spooky gunship was giving us cover and flare support. We finally found a place where we could set down and the flight engineer and I got out and went into a bunker where there were two men who had been wounded in the rocket and mortar attack.

"There were no lights and I had to work with flashlights held by some of the other Security Policemen in the bunker. Somebody fortunately had put a dressing over his chest which had a great deal to do with saving his life. He had lost a lot of blood.

"The bunker had been blown up and we had some trouble getting him out on a stretcher. A second man had more than 100 shrapnel wounds in his back but he could walk. I helped him out to the helicopter."

"We went directly to the Phan Rang Dispensary where the emergency room crew fixed him up so he could make the trip to Cam Ranh Bay AB."

Doug Severt commented: I would like to know the guys names and how they recovered...or the rest of the story. Maybe someone who see's this will know.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 "Stories worth telling"

George Haskett commented: Me too. Amazing, that whole deal lasted just a couple minutes, but seemed much longer. I think Capt Walther and Overton were the pilots.

Robert Spence commented: I can tell you about this. The two SPs medevaced from the Wells were **James Perry** and I, **Robert Spence**. Both of us recovered from our wounds. Perry had a sucking chest wound, head wound, and bad leg wound. He was medevaced to Cam Rahn and 2-3 weeks later to Andrews AFB hospital. I was at Phan Rang a week for 10 days then Cam Rahn. Later transferred to Andrews. My wounds were not as serious as Perry's, but there were 100 or so wounds and both eardrums gone. I couldn't hear shit. Both of us served the balance of our time with the 1002 Security Police, Andrews, AFB. I have lost touch with Perry and have been unable to locate him. I would love to talk to him. I have 100% VA rating due to that incident and Agent Orange exposure. Anyone wanting to talk, get in touch.

George Haskett (*note: Sgt, George M. Haskett was one of the aeromedical technician attached to the rescue unit*) **commented:** Surprised to see this. Amazing that Lt. Daniels and I were from the same hometown. Amazing, that whole deal lasted just a couple of minutes, but seemed much longer. I think Capt. Walther and Capt. Overton were the pilots.

Rich Luckhaupt commented: I know you guys but hard to place a face. I need a refresher. I was on golf 3 that night. Glad you made it Robert and welcome home.

Robert Spence commented: I had worked Golf 3 for much of my time, but a Major came to the squadron and replaced the 3-4 of us who manned that post. You must have been one of them. I vaguely remember calling Golf 3 at the time of the attack.

Ken Swickard commented: I remember that night well. (no pun intended). Myself and SSgt Von Kluegl (Medics under Bluebeard One and Bluebeard Two handles) and were on patrol. We were told to respond for a possible rescue at the "Wells". By the time we all assembled at the fence line, the wounded had been air lifted out and those at the "Wells" said that they had everything under control until morning. Looks like us medics from the 35th Dispensary had all sides covered. Thank you for your service George Haskett.



Robert Spence, still in the hospital being presented the Purple Heart. Robert said, "The ceremony was very perfunctory. If memory serves, Jim Perry the other wounded SP, was pinned at the same time.

Sabres Destroy Complex

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 28, 1968)

BIEN HOA - Two F-100 Supersabre pilots from the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing here recently struck enemy fortifications 61 miles southwest of Can Tho leaving the area in flames. Maj. Clarence I. Langerud, Gig Harbor, Wash., and 1st Lt. Hugh E. Gommel Jr., Tucson, Ariz., were the pilots.

"The target was located along a canal," said. Lieutenant Gommel, "and' we were instructed by the forward air controller to hit targets on both sides. Firing his smoke rockets to the south of an intersection in the canal the FAC told us the area from his smoke to the crossroads was our target.

"Major Langerud's first bomb on the east side of the canal touched of a secondary ammunition explosion," continued Lieutenant Gommel. "My first run on the other side of the canal was equally successful and I started a petroleum oil and lubricants fire that sent gray smoke 50 feet in the air. The flames were clearly visible for several miles."

The pilots continued to drop their ordnance destroying 3 to 4 fortifications with each delivery.

"The FAC then observed several camouflaged sampans under a tree cover so we attacked with our 20mm cannon," Lieutenant Gommel said. "After the major came off of his run the FAC radioed us and said, 'you didn't get the one I wanted but you got another one.' On the next pass we destroyed the one he was after."



F-100D 56-3024 VP 614th Pilot getting ready to board acft
1968/1969 Photo by Paul & Kirk Minert. Added by Kirk Minert.

'Lucky Devils' Kill 20 VC

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

PHAN RANG - Two F-100 pilots of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron and 355th Tactical Fighter Wing here accounted for 20 enemy soldiers killed by air, five fortifications destroyed and five damaged in a recent airstrike in the IV Corps tactical zone.

The "Lucky Devil" Squadron pilots were Captains Gerald G. Potter, Vida, Ore., and Ferdinand J. Funke, Evansville, Ind.

Captain Potter described the mission: "We were scrambled when the FAC spotted

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 “Stories worth telling”

enemy activity and structures along both sides of a canal. The enemy began running for cover as soon as they saw us.

"We came in with our first bombs and the FAC said they were right on target. The FAC saw other Viet Cong running for a rice paddy, trying to hide. We came in with our last bombs and then strafed," the captain said.



“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 “Stories worth telling”



Rick Dixon

(This photo and the previous two are by Rick Dixon)

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN
...keeping the memories alive
Phan Rang News No. 6 "Stories worth telling"



Robert Kellington left and L to R: SSgt Frank; Sgt Irby; A2C Broot; A2C Rooney and MSgt Burel.; Photo by Robert Kellington.

Dragons Receive Praise

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

TUY HOA - Four F-100 Supersabre pilots here have drawn praise for recent combat missions. The "Dragons" are all members of the 308th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Praising the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing pilots was the commander of the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron at Bien Hoa AB.

Cited were Maj. David P. Kling, Brodmall, Pa.; Captains Robert J. Fanthorpe, Kankakee, Ill., and James E. Sue, Cuba, N.Y., and 1st Lt. Stewart E. Cranston, Whittier, Calif.

Major Kling and Captain Fanthorpe were lauded for a mission last month against a confirmed enemy position 15 miles west of Saigon. Despite radio difficulties, both Air Force pilots put all bombs on target followed by pinpoint strafing runs which accounted for 15 bunkers destroyed.

Captains Sue and Cranston were praised for a mission when they supported friendly troops in contact with the enemy. The target was located 15 miles east of Truc Giang in the Mekong Delta.

Re-up Rate Jumps 600%

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

PHAN RANG - The re-enlistment rate for first term airmen here has increased almost 600 per cent during the past four months from 7.5 per cent in April to 42 per cent in August.

Since April there have been 33 first term reenlistments and according to SMSgt. Joel L. Pritchard, Orlando, Fla., base career information and counseling NCO, September is developing into a very promising month with 1 first term airmen presently projected to reenlist.

Sergeant Pritchard feels that more airmen are choosing the Air Force as a career due to the many advantages offered the first term air. "Many are also separating early in order to reenlist and take advantage of the tax break on their bonus while in Vietnam," he added.

Note: I know not all of these stories have a dateline of Phan Rang, but we have a lot of members and readers that have an interest in stories dealing with the F-100, C-119, C47 and C-123 aircrafts. Some may have friends or may have even been stationed at one time at these other bases.

Supersabre Pilots Fly Together Against Communist Gunner Site

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

By SGT, JIM WHITE

TUY HOA - The distance between the antagonists dwindled. Suddenly, their guns blazed. As the distance separating them continued to shrink, the staccato flashes from their gun muzzles punctuated the near-darkness.

As abruptly as they began, the guns stopped firing. Capt. Robert F. Cassaro Jr. pulled back on the stick of his F-100 Supersabre and radioed to his wingman, Capt. Jerry N. Williams, "I'm off the target. Your turn." As Captain Williams rolled in, the communist anti-aircraft gunner on the ground below swiveled his weapon around to meet the new threat.

Captains Cassaro and Williams, both from Albuquerque, N.M., members of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing, found themselves in the showdown with the enemy gunner during an air strike 16 miles southeast of Chu Lai.

Receiving clearance from the FAC to go for the gun position, the two pilots began making strafing passes with their 20 millimeter cannon.

"Just one thing disturbed me," smiled Captain Williams. "The only way we could see him was to get him to fire at us. We were diving against his position, opening up early so he could spot us and then concentrating our firepower on his muzzle flashes."

After seven passes, the gunfight ended. "There was no more ground fire coming at us after the last pass," Captain Cassaro said, "so we assumed we had gotten him."

Security Policeman Risks Life for C-123

(Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968)

PHAN RANG - "I guess you don't think of personal safety until it's all over." Those were the words of TSgt. James W. Jeffress, Jr., Beaumont, Tex., as he spoke of the recent mortar attack on Phan Rang AB where he was credited with saving a C-123 "Provider" aircraft.

The recent mortar attack by a hostile force will be a night remembered by Sergeant Jeffress, a security police flight leader with the 35th Security Police Squadron, for a long time.

Around midnight the first mortar rounds exploded in the immediate area of Sergeant Jeffress and peppered a C-123 aircraft with numerous small shrapnel holes.

"The only reason I headed for the aircraft was because I heard a moan and thought someone might be injured inside," explained the sergeant. The moaning Jeffress heard was later found to be a severed hydraulic line.

Reaching the aircraft, he entered and discovered smoldering wires and insulations. Disregarding his own safety, he tore out the smoldering items that were threatening to burst into flames. He also discovered the number one engine had sustained a fuel leak.

