

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 116

"Stories worth telling"

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Mr. C119 Casts Long Shadow Over Enemy (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, June 21, 1969*)

By TSGT. JOHN B. MAHONY

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — At 53, Air Force Lt. Col. Matthew A. Boonstra, Totowa Borough, N. J., admits being one of the oldest, if not the oldest, pilot flying combat missions in Vietnam.

Boonstra flies AC119 Shadow gunships. The twin-engined, propeller-driven Shadows were designed and built as troop carriers in the late 1940s. "Back then, we called them Flying Boxcars," Boonstra recalled as he gave his Shadow a preflight check on the Phan Rang flightline. "But I didn't begin flying one until 1951 when I joined the Green Hornet Sq, in Korea."

Since then he has logged 5,600 flying hours in C119s.

Boonstra has more than 27 years military service, but only 12 of them have been active duty. Those 12, however, were years when his country needed his flying skills — World War II, the Korean War, the Dominican Airlift of 1965, the Pueblo seizure, and the Vietnam War.

This month, before flying his 80th combat mission since his arrival in Vietnam in January, Boonstra commented, "We're getting more utilization out of the C119 than we ever dreamed possible."

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The AC119 is armed with four miniguns, each capable of firing 6,000 rounds a minute.

Boonstra's love for aviation goes back to 1933 when he was in high school. His dad owned a dairy farm outside Paterson, N.J. It was there that he built an open-cockpit, Heath mid-wing airplane from a kit, adding his own modifications.

Before World War II, he owned a single-engined Waco biplane which he flew . . . "for sport between milkings down on the farm."

Lt. Col. Boonstra A month after Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was sent to Parks Air College, East St. Louis, 111.

Boonstra was assigned duty in the Southwest Pacific, From 1942 till the end of the war he flew twin-engined C47s and later C46s from bases in New Guinea, Hollandia, Biak, and the Philippines.

After earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses and four Air Medals, he went back to dairy farming in New Jersey.

He was assigned to a C47 troop carrier reserve group at Floyd Bennett NAS, New York. The unit was recalled to active duty in 1951, during the Korean War.

The group split up and he went to Sewart Air Force Base, Tenn., where he received flight training in a new aircraft, the C119 Flying Boxcar, From there he went to Ashiya AB in south* ern Japan where he flew airlift missions.

His involvement in the Vietnam War goes back to 1967, when he checked out Vietnamese Air Force pilots and copilots in the C119 at McGuire. Then, in early 1968, he ferried Flying Boxcars to Vietnam for delivery to the Vietnamese Air Force.

Hearing about the Flying Boxcar being converted for combat missions, Boonstra volunteered for active duty to fly Shadows in Vietnam.

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Bespectacled and gray-headed and perhaps not as slender or adventurous as when he taxied that Boonstra "special" around his dad's hay field, "Mr. C119" is still considered tops by those who fly with him.

Here's a short blurb about a younger Boonstra from **The Daily Ardmoreite**, Ardmore, Oklahoma, Tuesday, November 3, 1953: Capt. Matthew Boonstra, pilot attached to the Ardmore Air Base, is so busy flying, he hasn't as yet adopted a hobby, according to his wife, Gertrude. Other members of the Boonstra family, are, Judy Ann, 6, Barbara, 5, and Susan, age 18 months. The Boonstras are both from Patterson, N. J., and commenced their romance while they were young - and neighbors. They live at 424 Pine and worship at the First Methodist Church.

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Sergeant Leaves Someone Special (*7th Air Force News, February 1969*)

By TSgt. John B. Mahony

PHAN RANG - When Sgt. Thomas J. Caputo, of Bronx, N.Y. left Vietnam this month he left a little of himself here in this war torn country.

The security policeman is leaving behind a close friend - a friend who, during a recent attack, saved his life. His best friend, whom he got to know better than anyone else in the 35th Security Police Squadron during his one-year tour.

Fritzie - a sentry dog - was that friend. Sergeant Caputo and the German shepherd walked the perimeter of Phan Rang AB night after night for nearly a year.

To the handler, the 85 pounds of muscle and teeth, was as friendly and playful as Peanuts, a mongrel dog which the airman had for a pet back in his Bronx home.

It all happened rather innocently, Jan. 24. Sergeant Caputo had pulled his final sentry duty. Sunday, he was scheduled to work around the K-9 kennels, helping to care for Fritzie and 68 other Shepherds. But his uppermost thoughts were of his wife, Veronica, and how they would soon celebrate their second wedding anniversary together on Feb. 4.

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On that day he would arrive in New York to spend a thirty-day leave before going on to a new assignment at Andrews AFB, Md.

Sunday Night

About 1 a.m., Sunday the SP night leader came through the barracks, turned on lights, and told the airmen of a suspected attack in "Juliet" area. All off-duty men hurriedly put on their jungle boots, green camouflaged fatigues, and web equipment. Shortly afterward, a truck sped them to the kennels where they picked up their dogs and weapons.

Sergeant Caputo did not have to go. Fritzie had already been reassigned to a new handler. But Sergeant Caputo knew he was inexperienced. The young sergeant grabbed a leash and a weapon and jumped on the truck.

They leaped off the truck at the "Juliet" area and were told that four suspects were, thought to be trapped in the nearby brush. The dog handlers spread out in a line to make a sweep; they combed back and forth without uncovering anyone.

Cracking sounds of small arms fire sporadically filled the air. The pace of shadowy figures picked up. Then. An Air Force "Spooky" gunship began circling overhead, dropping Flares and lighting up the base perimeter. Sergeant Caputo led Fritzie along a dirt road and stopped at a sandbag bunker. A lone SP inside reported he just saw several unidentified men about 30 yard's from bunker.

Just then an enemy B-40 rocket exploded nearby.

Waiting

Sergeant Caputo, his pulse quickened, led Fritzie toward the spot from where he thought the rocket had been fired. At the time, he did not know that three North Vietnamese Army soldiers- crouched in thickets, waiting to ambush him.

Fritzie whined and tugged at his leash. The German Shepherd picked up the strange scents and alerted his master and led him toward the three enemy soldiers.

Suddenly, in the eerie light of flare illumination, an enemy soldier jumped out of the bush and opened fire at Sergeant Caputo.

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Dog and handler immediately dropped to the ground. Sergeant Caputo returned the fire. Explosives, strapped to the enemy soldier, exploded as rounds from the Sergeant's submachine gun whipped into his body. Sergeant Caputo, was hit by the blast, and took shrapnel in his arms and right leg.

Stunned and bleeding, he began receiving more rifle fire from the surrounding thickets. Fritzie at his master's side, was killed by one of the bullets.

Kept Low

Sergeant Caputo, shaken, dared not raise his head up to fire in return; he lay still. Then, during a moment of darkness, he got the break he desperately needed.

He raised his weapon to the left, over Fritzie's lifeless body, in the direction from where he thought the rifle fire came that killed his dog.

When the next flare popped overhead, the airman saw two North Vietnamese Army soldiers, in uniform, crouched in the brush. He opened up and blasted the two off their feet.

Searching

In shock, but conscious, Caputo continued to lay there. Three other sentry dog handlers and two medical technicians searching for him, called out. He did not answer.

"One of them put his hand on my shoulder as he found me," Sergeant Caputo said later from his bed at the base dispensary. "They thought I was dead. Then I stood up as they started to walk away. When they saw how bad I was bleeding from my arms and leg, they made me get on a stretcher. I didn't even know I was hit until they told me."

Sixteen enemy soldiers were killed and one taken prisoner in an unsuccessful bid to penetrate the perimeter of Phan Rang AB.

(This story also appeared in the **Pacific Stars & Stripes**, Friday, February 7, 1969, **The Salina Journal**, Salina, Kansas, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **Ada Evening News**, Ada, Oklahoma, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **Estherville Daily News**, Estherville, Iowa, Tuesday February 4, 1969, **Mt. Vernon Register News**, Mt. Vernon, Illinois, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **North Adams**

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Transcript, North Adams, Massachusetts, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **Press Telegram**, Long Beach, California, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **Albert Lea Evening Tribune**, Albert Lea, Minnesota, Wednesday, February 5, 1969, **Wellington Daily News**, Wellington, Kansas, Tuesday, February 4, 1969, **Washington CH Record Herald**, Washington Court House, Ohio, February 4, 1969 and many others.)

The **Press Telegram**, Long Beach tells an abbreviated version of the story which is essentially the same story that appeared in all stateside newspapers: **GI Tells of Dog Saving His Life** Air Force Sgt. Thomas J. Caputo is celebrating his second wedding anniversary at his New York home with his wife, Veronica, thanks to Fritzie his guard dog, who died in South Vietnam so his master might live.

Caputo, 21, with shrapnel wounds of both arms and his right leg, told Monday how he and Fritzie were on their last mission together in a jungle near Phan Rang.

Fritzie had been reassigned to a new handler when Communist raiders attacked and the Air Force security unit was ordered into action. Knowing the new dog handler was still green, Caputo said, he volunteered.

As dog and man passed a bunker, Fritzie caught the scent of intruders and both hit the dirt as a flare went up and four enemy soldiers opened fire. Caputo returned the fire with a submachine gun, a bullet striking one Red soldier who had explosives strapped to his body.

Caputo fell bleeding and Fritzie shielded his master, taking slugs which killed the 100-pound dog.

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F100 'Gas Stand' A Boon to Fliers (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Thursday, June 15, 1967)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (7AF) —With the completion of more than one mile of fuel pipeline, the thirsty F100 Super Sabres four tactical fighter squadrons' at Phan Rang Air Base are now able to get fuel in much the same way automobiles get gas at a service station.

A new hydrant refueling system employed by the 35th Supply Sq., commanded by Lt. Col.

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Thomas R. Jones, can refuel 12 jets simultaneously at a 'service station' on a ramp of the flightline.

Before the new system was inaugurated, pilots had to wait for a fuel truck to deliver gas.

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SP4 Plays With Snake-and Gets the Shakes (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Thursday, February 2, 1967*)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam Unless one is a connoisseur of snakes, at first glance they all look alike.

So occasionally someone summons up a bit of bravado, grabs a snake, and winds up with a case of mistaken identity. Sp4 Thomas Sturges, of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Div., is no connoisseur, and what he believed to be a boa constrictor— non-poisonous — turned out to be (he found out later) a king cobra —quite poisonous.

It happened in the 101st base camp at Phan Rang. Sturges, of Cambridge, Mass., of the Security Platoon, E Co., Support Bn., was doing a bit of repair work on telephone wires when he decided to take a break. He chose the shade under a small tree and sat down facing a hollow 8-foot stump.

"I was just sitting watching this stump," said Sturges, "when this thing started to come out of the hollow and wind down the stump I just watched it for a few seconds."

He said he decided on the "spur of the moment" to turn snakecatcher, and was quickly joined in his little adventure by several Republic of Korea (ROK) marines.

As one of the Koreans pinned the snake's head; to the stump with a piece of wood, Sturges unwound his quarry from around the stump. He stretched the snake out to its full 8-foot length. The next thing he noticed was that the head had slipped from under the piece of wood, and the Koreans were making a hasty retreat.

"I took off too," said Sturges. "I mean I just let go of that thing and went."

Paratroopers, however, are a determined lot, so Sturges rallied his ROK allies and back they

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went. They surrounded the snake, which was now coiled.

While one of the Korean marines poked at the reptile with a piece of wood, Sturges improvised a noose out of his belt and lassoed the snake. He pulled the noose tight and held up the captive.

"I could have sworn it was a boa constrictor," Sturges explained later. "I know they aren't poisonous."

Sturges and his group went to the ROK marine's camp because one of the Koreans wanted to show off the snake to his commanding officer. Several people posed for pictures, with some brave souls draping the snake around them as cameras clicked away. All this time the reptile was kept in a strangle-hold by the paratroopers belt.

"We really had a good time. We even jumped rope with it," said Sturges.

Then it was time to head home and typical of every soldier who loves his first sergeant, Sturges next presented himself at the orderly room to parade his prize. "I wanted Top to see it but he wasn't in," he said

However, two majors having a meeting when Sturges walked into the orderly room didn't take too kindly to snakes. They told him so. They also told him what kind of snake he was modeling around his shoulders.

"They told me I had a king cobra!" Sturges exclaimed. He gave them an "I don't believe you" look.

The two officers quickly sent Sturges to the 1st Brigade's Replacement Co.'s serpentarium and an expert of snakes—SSgt. Kenneth Thibault, of Salem, Mass.

"He told me I had a king cobra —really, bad news," says Sturges. "Well, my teeth started chattering, my knees started knocking, and I told that sergeant he could have the snake."

"I mean I was profiling (posing), and jumping rope, and hanging that thing around me!" Sturges chanted with disbelief. "A king cobra! And I have only 35 days left in-country!!! Now

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that can shake a guy up!"

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Air Base Given To S. Viets (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Thursday, March 30, 1972*)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (AP)—The U.S. Air Force deactivated its 315th Tactical Airlift Wing Tuesday and turned over to South Vietnam its Phan Rang airbase, built on the central coast six years ago at a cost of \$60 million.

The South Vietnamese air force, said it will move a variety of planes here, including A1 Skyraider bombers, A37 attack bombers, C7A transports and UH1 helicopters.

The U.S. Air Force said Phan Rang's 10,000-foot aluminum mat runway containing 7,800 tons of aluminum was removed for use of American bases elsewhere, saving U.S. taxpayers \$14 million. Fifty-eight buildings also were removed.



Renegade Praised for Saigon Air Raid - Hitting Tan Son Nhut Was Final (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Friday, July 4, 1975*)

SAIGON (UPI) — The South Vietnamese pilot who bombed the palace of ex-president Nguyen Van Thieu and defected to the Viet Cong April 8 led the bombing raid on the Saigon Air Base that paced the final victory three weeks later.

Four other pilots on the raid against Tan Son Nhut were members of North Vietnamese Air Force who were trained in captured American-built warplanes before attacking the base.

According to a lengthy four-part series in the Hanoi Army Daily Newspaper Quan Doi Nhan Dan, the April 28 raid against Saigon Air Base was the signal for the final attack on the capital by

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Communist troops surrounding the city.

It was carefully planned and conducted in strict radio silence so American and Saigon air force commanders could not determine what was happening, the articles said.

The bombing raid was the first ever by pro-Communist forces in South Vietnam. Air Force sources in Saigon had reported the attack was made by captured warplanes, but there had been no official confirmation until this week's articles in the official military newspaper.

Nguyen Thanh Trung, who bombed the Independence Palace office of Thieu April 8 led the four other planes into and out of the Saigon area, the article said.

Trung defected to Communist forces after bombing the down-town Saigon palace in a surprise one-man raid.

The articles in the newspaper contained lengthy excerpts of the debriefing of Saigon Air Force officers who were at Tan Son Nhut during the bombing, including Col. Nguyen Anh Tuan, the final commander of the Air Force after all his superiors had fled with evacuating Americans. Tuan and the other officers described the almost total panic during and after the surprise bombing said.

Analysts are generally agreed that the attack was the final psychological blow to the Saigon Army and leaders. The capital was surrendered 42 hours later before a single shot had been fired inside the city.

According to the official newspaper, Trung in an A38 Dragonfly jet led four other Dragonflies piloted by North Vietnamese Air Force flyers into the Saigon area where he helped attack the air base, and then led them back to safety behind Communist lines.

Saigon Air Force sources had said the attack originated from **Phan Rang**, a major air base on the South Central Vietnam coast about 165 miles northeast of Saigon, but the article did not confirm this.

In any case, the timing and precision of the raid turned out to be perfect. The Saigon Air Force was caught unaware and was not even able to scramble fighters from the so-called hot

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pad before the attacking planes made their getaway.

Tuan said the radio network was a jumble of calls. "Bombing . . . The Viet Cong are bombing us . . . We have been bombed . . . Stay away from Tan Son Nhut," he said the operators were screaming into the radios in Vietnamese and English.

Saigon Gen. Phan Phung Tien, who later left with the panicky American helicopter evacuation 24 hours later, was trying to get antiaircraft fire on to the attacking planes and scramble the fighters, according to the report.

In addition to signalling the final attack on Saigon, the bombing itself was highly accurate, according to both the official reports and officers who spoke to UPI immediately after the raid.

The official newspaper story said 14 planes were destroyed and 12 damaged by the five fighter bombers. Saigon officers had told UPI at least 10 planes were destroyed and there was no report on others damaged.

Tuan's report seems to bear this out. He said even the next morning, there was no complete report on damage caused by the raid. Saigon Air Force officers had fled to their homes to look after their families.

"I don't have any more command power over these men," Tuan told the Air Force commander the next morning. The commander, he said, wearily accepted this.

Minutes later, the general received a telephone call advising him of the final American evacuation and we left for the departure point.

The next day, there was a new Army and a new government in South Vietnam.

Flier Takes the Gamble (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Friday, June 2, 1967)

TUY HOA, Vietnam (7AF) — "there was only one chance to save the airplane, so I had to try it," said 1st Lt. Clarke A. Nelson, 24, of Tucson, Ariz., an F100 Supersabre pilot of the 309th Tactical Fighter Sq. at Tuy Hoa air base.

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Nelson recently landed his Supersabre without power, after intentionally shutting the engine off while still inflight because of a stuck throttle on the aircraft.

After an uneventful takeoff from Tuy Hoa he attempted to reduce power and continue his climb. The throttle control moved normally but there was no response from the engine. It remained at full power.

Nelson made several attempts to reduce the power with controls in the cockpit but all proved inadequate. The only success he had was to reduce the engine power by 2 ½ per cent. This was accomplished by switching to the emergency fuel system.

With the engine still running at near-maximum, he realized he would not be able to slow the aircraft enough for a safe landing. He then flew over an authorized bomb jettison area and dropped his ordnance. By making several hard turns and maneuvers he was able to slow the aircraft below the maximum gear extension speed of 230 knots. After extending the gear and flaps the increased drag also helped to slow the aircraft.

Nelson maneuvered his Supersabre to a final approach at Phan Rang air base. At precisely the right moment he turned off the engine master switch, causing his single engine fighter to flame out. Flight was continued to a near perfect touchdown. Without normal steering and braking capability, Nelson brought the aircraft to a safe stop on the runway.

(Note: I know that acts of heroism of this sort probably occurred on a daily basis in Vietnam, but this young 24 year old 1st Lt. Clarke A. Nelson would head the list in my book...if I had one. I searched and searched the archives for more information on him, but the only thing that I could find was a small article about the same event as above in **Big Spring (Texas) Herald**, Thursday, June 15, 1967 titled "**Former Webb Pilot Makes Emergency Gamble, Wins.**" This article was on page 14 of section B of the newspaper...it should have been on the front page. The only additional information in the article is that he was a 1965 Webb AFB graduate and the last paragraph reads: **Recalling the incident, Lt. Nelson said "There was only one chance to save the airplane and I had to try it."**)



(I've missed Larry's Smiling face and fabulous stories so here is another of the Very Best
Memories by Larry Theurer)

UNDERWATER BOMB LOADING

I'm in one of the new steel revetments on the concrete ramp on the West side of the runway.

I'm sitting on a small low board mounted on 4 rolling wheels, sliding in and out of the B-57 bomb bay, configuring bomb racks to fit the next scheduled load. Jim Avery is up top on the wing working on the guns. It is just the two of us working there.

It was a 90 degrees bright sunny sky, but lots of big storm clouds rapidly rolling through. There would be hot burning Sun for 25 minutes and then incredible downpour rain the next 20. The old perforated steel plate ramp on the East side of the runway had holes in it. The new concrete had no holes for the water to drain out of. It just would just drain downhill.

A really big cloud drifted over and opened up. There was no wind, lightning, or thunder, just a tremendous volume of very warm water coming straight down like 10 fire hoses. Avery just hunkered under a rain poncho and sat on top of the wing waiting it out. I'm under the protection of the wing so I kept on working.

“Just the upper part of my body and my knees are sticking out of the water.”

As I'm working, the water, confined inside three sides of the revetment, is getting deeper and deeper. Avery looked down and asked if I'm OK. I said yes and kept working. Eventually the water is over a foot deep and I look down and it is completely over my lap, up to my belly. Just the upper part of my body and my knees are sticking out of the water. After 15 minutes the

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cloud passed by, the rain stopped and drained away. My boots and wallet were totally soaked. I had to dry everything out later and got a plastic bag to carry my wallet in for the next flood.

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Obituaries (*I've had people write to me saying they didn't know a certain person passed away, so I thought it would be a good idea to put their obituaries in the Phan Rang News to mark their passing and to let the Phan Rang community know. I know of others that aren't included here, but I couldn't find an obituary on line, so if you know of others that have passed recently, please let me know and also send me an obituary.)*

Roger Dale Burchett

LAFAYETTE - Roger Dale Burchett, 67, passed away May 20, 2016 at Lafayette General Medical Center.

Reverend Allan Myers will officiate the funeral services. Nathan Sam, organist and soloist, provided musical selections. Interment followed in Gallant Fields, the exclusive veteran's section of Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Survivors include his wife, Ina J. Burchett of Lafayette; two daughters, Melissa (Kevin) Marks of Gonzales and Heather (Michael) Hebert of Maurice; one sister, Melody Barbieri of Bardstown, KY; two half-sisters, Nancy Gerald of Science Hill, KY and Shirley Robertson of Russell Springs, KY; one brother, David (Alida) Burchett of Altus, OK; and three grandchildren, Sarah Marks, Chloe Hebert, and Ryder Hebert.

He was preceded in death by his parents Buford and Delphia Burchett, and one sister, Nancy Dossett.

Roger was a native of Russell Springs, KY and resident of Lafayette for 36 years. He loved his country, and served in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam Conflict. He later became a proud member of the American Legion Post 69.

He was a gifted mechanic and could fix nearly anything. During his career he worked for

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Petroleum Helicopter for over 35 years before his retirement.

Roger was a loving family man. He was devoted to his wife for 46 years, and was a wonderful dad and Popie to his three grandchildren. Some of his pastimes included working in his yard and music appreciation. He played drums for many years.

But most importantly, he was a true example of a godly man. He was a member of the Gideon Lafayette Camp and of Crossroads Church. He was a kind man who was friendly to all, and will be remembered as a true United States patriot who loved life and loved to laugh.

Pallbearers will be Larry Trainor, Joe Thomas, Todd Dossett, William Marks, David Hebert, and Mike Dartez. Honorary pallbearers include Bill Schnuck, Matthew Barbieri, Ray Silvertooth, Son Nguyen, Robert Mouton, Scott Jones and Kevin Miller.

The family requests that visitation be held Sunday afternoon from 5:00 - 9:00 pm, and resume at 11:00 am Monday morning until time of service.

Memorial contributions can be made in Roger's name to the American Legion Post 69, 1501 Surrey St., Lafayette, LA 70501.

Charles F. Hendry

June 13, 1946 - February 7, 2016

Sunday, February 7, 2016,

Charles F. Hendry, 69, died quietly at his residence in Timberwood Park, San Antonio.

Mr. Hendry was born in Daytona Beach, Florida and grew up in Lake Worth, Florida. He was the only son of Roger and Mildred Hendry, the only brother of Carol Holden, all deceased. He attended high school and college in Lake Worth, then enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1971. Chuck proudly served a tour in Vietnam (Phan Rang AB) then returned to work with Pratt-Whitney for 40 years as an engineer, with 8 of those years as a Service Rep. for the Royal Jordanian Air Force in Amman, Jordan.

He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Roxie and three children, sons: Tracy Wilson and his wife Carol Wilson of Florida and Gregory Wilson and his wife Andrea Wilson of Illinois, and his daughter Beth-Anne Andersen of Virginia. Chuck was Grandpa to five grandchildren: Joey, Gregory, Candace, Alan and Courtney. Chuck was a Great-Grandpa to Molly, Lilly and Jordan. He was an Uncle to three nieces: Heather, Michelle and Maureen, and six great nieces/nephews.

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Douglas "Butch" Springsteel, 68, of Erskine, Minn., formerly of Spokane, Wash., and International Falls, Minn., died suddenly Sunday, Jan. 31, 2016, at his home with his loving wife at his side.

Memorial service to celebrate his life will be conducted at 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, at Johnson Funeral Service, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Military honors will be provided by Ecklund-Holmstrom American Legion Post 117, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2793 and Minnesota Army National Guard Honor Guard.

Douglas Arthur Springsteel was born Nov. 30, 1947, at Littlefork, Minn., the son of Douglas G. and Almira A. (Ames) Springsteel.

He was baptized at the Assembly of God in International Falls.

Douglas was lovingly known as Butch throughout his life.

He was a 1966 graduate of Falls High School in International Falls.

Butch entered into service with the United States Air Force in 1967 and was honorably discharged in 1971. He worked as an air freight specialist, loading and unloading the cargo off of C-123s in Vietnam at Phan Rang Air Force Base.

On March 14, 1970, Butch married Barbara A. Johnson at St. Paul Lutheran Church, International Falls.

To this union, two daughters were born, Michelle and Jennifer. They made their home in International Falls.

Butch worked at Boise Cascade from 1967 to 1983 and was in partnership in C&S Auto Repair from 1983 to 1998, both in International Falls.

After moving to Spokane to be near their children and grandchildren, Butch worked at Alton Tire as mechanic from 1998 to 2006 and TireRama from 2006 to 2015.

In September of 2015, Butch retired and the couple moved back to Minnesota to be close to family, and they made their home in Erskine.

Butch enjoyed fishing, hunting, bowling, walking in the woods and being part of nature, going on cruises, watching football, especially Seattle Seahawks and Minnesota Vikings, watching Gonzaga Bulldogs college basketball, and also enjoyed high school hockey.

Survivors include his loving wife of 45 years, Barbara Ann of Erskine; daughters, Michelle L.

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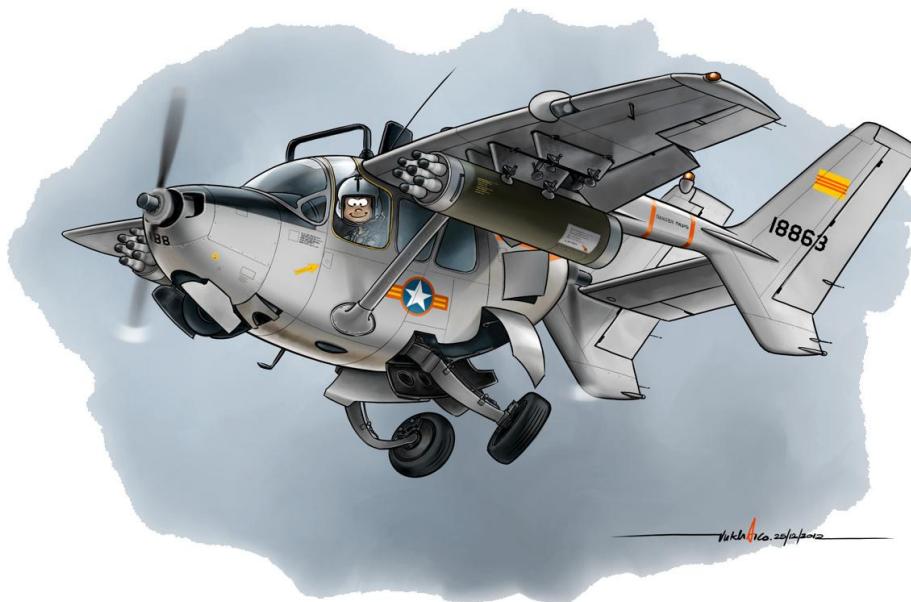
"Stories worth telling"

(Kevin) Huggins of Colville, Wash., and Jennifer L. (Anthony) Hebert of Spokane; grandchildren, Aiden M. Huggins and Abby M. Huggins of Colville; siblings, Richard A. Springsteel of Ray, Minn., Nola (Joe) Mercil of Brooks, Minn., Laurie Ann Bitner (Dallas) of Lennox, S.D., and Taffy Jo (Eddie) Vacura of Pelican Rapids, Minn.; mother-in-law, Ann R. Johnson of International Falls; half-sister, Betty Johnson of International Falls; and his dog, "Freddie" and cat, "Ruby."

Butch was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents, James and Estella Ames and Arthur and Ethel Springsteel; brother, Jonnie M. Springsteel; father-in-law, Gilbert L. Johnson; brother-in-law, Fred Johnson; brother-in-law, Daniel Wright; and several uncles and aunts.

"Share the Memories" at the 2016 Phan Rang AB Reunion, Oklahoma City

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the reunion. If you haven't already made reservations at the reunion hotel (Last day to receive the reunion rate is 6 September.) you still may find a room, but not at the reunion rate and with the extra amenities included. The hotel is the Sheraton Downtown, Oklahoma City.



Lou Ruggiero enjoying the view over Oklahoma City, oh wait, that must be Don Nieser sitting in the left seat, at least I hope so.

I hope that you enjoyed this issue of the Phan Rang Newsletter. This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#). Previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter are available [here](#) for download.