

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
...keeping the memories alive**

Phan Rang AB News No. 117

“Stories worth telling”

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The Guest List

Dave Albright, Royanne Glinck, Jim Ericson, Betsy Ross, Tom and Susie Affricano, Eugene Pellon and Diane Drew, Michael and Carla Reed, Michael Mulcahey and Deanna Young, Alan and Sandy Ash, Neil and Patricia Pillar, Joe Schwarzer, Bob and Bonnie Jaglowski, Fred and Ellen Ciesla, Joe and Nancy Kaukpa, Lou and Susan Matherne, Delbert and Sharon Ping, Wayne Rodgers, Randy and Cindy Weber, Edward Downy and Barbara Brandt, Tom and Marcia Parsons, Bruce Muller, Richard and Carol Long, Lou and Annette Ruggiero, John and Linda Shrank, Paul Minert, Dave and Jean Hooton, Bob and Marcia Jucker, Frank and Cynthia Square, David and Jeremy McGaughy, John and Patricia Ploof, James and Margaret Greenleaf, Bob and Jeannie Holz, Joe and Sandy Jordet, Douglas and Joyce Severt, George 'Skip' and Candy Ruedeman, Myron Janzen, David and Peggy Cox, Larry and Jan Pace, Rex Close, Charles Plagainos and Debbie West, Bob Hoffman, Don and Victoria Chatterton, Elizandro and Lillie De Los Santos,

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Steven Fischer, Kelly and Marilyn Angel, Eric and Mary Tyler, Jim and Patricia Sullivan, Kirk and Kathy Minert, Mike Granese, Ray and Mary Benson, Jack Anderson, Mike Floyd, Gerald and Karen Campbell, Jim and Kathy Holland, Greg and Susie Schmidt, Larry and Louise Martino, David and Laura Peden, Jonathan and Jeanann Buck, Ralph Gorman, David Runells, Anthony Ortiz, Tom and Mary Strait, James Lehse, Tom Clark, Vincent Donadio, Sharyn Flanagan, Don and Nancy Nieser, Myron Janzen, Christopher Boles, Jim and Judy Hemphill, Ryan and Julie Severt, Joe and Nancy Kaupa, Bob Kellington, Lisa Amador, Wayne Pickens, Bob and Bonnie Jaglowski, Larry Mason, Eugene Pellen, Diane Drew, Johnny and Maggie Johnson, George and Patricia Varney and Percy Floyd.

(I hope I captured everyone that attended, but if I left out anyone, please let me know.)

Reunion Recap

The reunion was a success by all accounts. As usual many of us started out days earlier arriving at the reunion hotel to explore the area and to just relax and enjoy a few other comrades that also arrived earlier. At the appointed time a full bus left to tour Tinker AFB and another left for a tour of the Oklahoma state Capital and the Cowboy Hall of Fame and National Heritage Center. That first day was very cold with the winds blowing across the prairies and flight line with morning temperatures in the low 60's. It did warm up very nicely by the afternoon. At the last minute it looked like the Tinker tour might be in jeopardy because the bus driver was refusing to enter the base through the designated gate because of a slight maze with high curbs that he had to drive through. He was afraid he would damage the bus. Finally the representative from the Public Affairs office and a Security Policeman convinced him that they would guide him through. It wasn't an easy task. The policeman had to scold the driver because he wasn't watching him, but instead was looking at his mirrors, but after about five minutes of back and forth movement we finally made it through. We drove directly to the Navy area and had to go through another extensive security check by the Navy, but after standing out in the cold parking lot for twenty minutes we finally got to go to a warm conference room for a mission briefing. After a briefing we went to the flight line to see the E-6B Mercury aircraft up close with briefing stations at different point in the aircraft. After our visit to Tinker, we went to the Cowboy Hall of Fame and National Heritage Center. From all the reports that

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I’ve heard everyone was very pleased with the other tours and that includes the state capital and Wiley Post tour. One interesting note on our visit to the Cowboy Hall of Fame was meeting a Vietnamese woman who was a volunteer hostess. She was a retired school teacher and she said she just wanted to do something for her community. She said she was evacuated from Saigon on a DC-10 without any seats one day before Saigon fell. She also had a relative that flew out of Phan Rang as a VNAF pilot. She had a fantastic sense of humor and the way she was dressed with what looked like a deer skin skirt and vest with fringes she looked like an Indian princess and in fact many guests mistake her for an Indian and even ask what tribe she belonged to. I wish I would have had more time to hear more of her story.

A good time, drinks and snacks was had by all in our visits to the hospitality suite. On display were all the door prizes and items that were to be raffled off as well as the Remembrance Boards made by Joe Kaupa. Bruce Muller also had drafts of his Badge Board displayed and was hoping to get suggestions from everyone. Joyce Severt read a note from Ina Burchett telling us how much Roger loved our group and that he was still with us in spirit. There wasn’t a dry eye in the room. Roger bought ‘Phan Rang AB’ engraved key rings for all attendees and they were handed out during registration. David McGaughey also made beaded key rings for all participants.

The banquet got started with Ed Downey and Barbara Brandt posting the colors and Chaplin Jim Erixson doing the invocation and leading the group in singing ‘God Bless America’. Barbara Brandt read the meaning of the folded flag as Ed Downey assisted by John Ploof folded the flag. Bob Kellington served as the master of ceremonies. After a good meal we had the drawings for the door prizes that consisted of multiple pieces of art work created by Joe Kaupa and two Vietnam Veteran rings donated by Dave Runells as well as coupons for complimentary nights at the hotel. The main presenters were Don Neiser, and Myron Janzen (O-2 Pilot) who gave us a overview of the Skymaster mission in SEA and the status of the remaining O-2’s. The benediction was done by Chaplin Jim Erixson.

During our free time many visited the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Myriad Gardens and the Bricktown area. Probably one of the more popular spots was Toby’s Keith’s “I Love This Bar and Grill” and the Bricktown area because he gives to all veterans a hamburger plate meal. Mahogany Prime Steakhouse was visited by many and probably many were shocked at the prices but I understand the food was very good and some even got a free appetizer because they were veterans. The Bricktown canal and river boats were also enjoyed

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by many and were impressed with the Centennial Land Run Monument, one of the world's largest bronze sculptures featuring 45 heroic figures of land run participants, frozen in motion as they race to claim new homesteads.

As always I'm reminded of a line from the play Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespear; Juliet is saying good night to Romeo. Their sorrowful parting is also 'Sweet' because it makes them think about the next time they will see each other. The most commonly heard phrase Saturday night was **'See you in Seattle'**.

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Bob Hoffman: I'm sitting here thinking about this last week and have realized that in 4 days I have made more friends than I have in four years. The men and women I met were amazing; Brothers and Sisters alike were genuine and connected. As I sit here I smile when I think of the laughs, hugs, handshakes and toasts that we all made together. We all grew together as young people and we are still young at heart when we remember our time at Phan Rang. As we think back on our friends that are no longer with us there is sadness but together we rejoice in our Brotherhood. The struggles we have endured though out our lives seem to fade away as we enjoy each other's company, and that my friends is why these reunions are so dear. As I flew away from Oklahoma City my eyes watered up a bit as I thought about some who may not be with us next time, then I remembered the remembrance wall and smiled, we will all still be present in Heart. I would like to thank every single person, Man and Woman that put so much effort into this gathering as we all know it wasn't easy, but they were as dedicated to this as we were to being good soldiers in that far away place, and it showed every minute we were there. I know this may sound a bit corny but I needed to let my comrades and their Ladies know how much it all means to me. Thank you everyone for such a great time. Till we meet again Brothers and Sisters may God be with you all and keep you safe and healthy. I love you all as only family can.

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Larry Martino Sr: Bob, you are spot on!! It is a remarkable feeling just being around our brothers and sisters! This was my second one, but definitely NOT the last!!! To Bob and all of the fantastic people from Phan Rang, see you next year in Seattle!!!



Betsy Ross: So glad Jim and I had a chance to meet so many of you in OKC., our first time. You are an amazing group of people and I am so glad to be able to call you friends. Look forward to seeing you again in our backyard, Seattle, next year and hope to meet more who were unable to go to OKC.

Michael Mulcahey: It was fantastic, greeted by the "Best" even before we walked through the front doors.

Mike Granese: Thanks for the post Bob Hoffman. We have a fantastic group of friends that is growing every year. I am very happy to share time with all of our Phan Rang family. Every year the reunion is better than the year before. It's not because of the place, hotel, food, or drink, it is due to the people that come, the stories shared, and unexplainable feeling of kinship

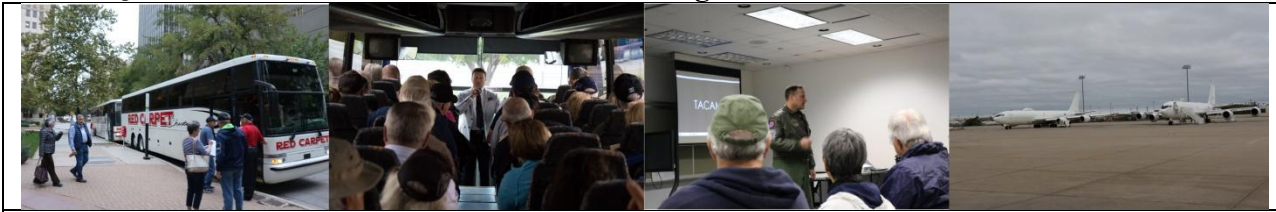


Cindy Weber: Every time I try to say how much you folks mean to me and Randy I get choked up and can't speak. Thank you Doug Severt, Jack Anderson, Lou Ruggiero, and all who make this possible. Nancy and Joe Kaupa you are truly very special people. I enjoyed every moment we shared with everyone! My mementos will forever remind us of this special time and the friendships we have made. It feels like you are my brothers and sisters! Looking so forward to next year and Seattle!

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Doug Severt: I get a lot of thanks for working on the reunions, but I always consider it a labor of love and payback for all that hard work comes when I see everyone having a great time at the reunion. We’ve all tried to express the emotions we feel when we get together and marvel at how we even feel a special kinship to those we just met for the first time, but nothing can compare to being reunited with someone we knew and haven’t seen for 40 plus years. I’ve enjoyed watching others revel in the joy of meeting long lost comrades and this time I’ve experienced that first hand myself. Being able to spend time with Jim Erixson was so special to me and so many memories of the good times came flooding back and I have to ask myself, why did I wait so long?

Joe Schwarzer: I will be leaving to go home shortly and the bittersweet emotions are running through me again. Although it will be nice to see my dog again and sleep in my own bed I feel sadness about leaving all my new and old friends from Phan Rang. Thanks to all involved in organizing this reunion....You all did a great job as usual.

Bob Hoffman: This was my first reunion but won't be my last, It was amazing and all that went into it was incredible. I just hope our efforts can compare with yours next year and thanks to all who had a hand in making it such a success.



Betsy Ross: ... this was our first time and I was somewhat reluctant to go not knowing if the wives were really welcomed. The moment we entered the hotel I realized the reluctant feeling was not needed. Everyone, guys and gals made me feel welcome.

Jim Erixson: I remember a little over a year ago when I was able to find this site and to be able to reconnect with Doug Severt, Ken Levy, and Kenneth Rowsey. What great feeling to be able to communicate with them and making a connection. However, to actually have a physical connect like Doug and I had when met for the first time in over 40 years at the airport was amazing!! It was great to sit down and to talk about our memories of guys we had forgotten and then they become familiar again as their names came up in conversation. Doug also had a DVD of our time at Phan Rang which really blew my mind. All those memories coming to life. I

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have to admit I got misty eyed when I had to say good bye to Doug, but I know we will be able to keep contact now and seeing each other again at next year's reunion in Seattle. Thanks for this GREAT opportunity!!!



Charles Lee Simmons: Doug stated it well in his comment. When I first met some of the guys from 1969 in Dallas in 2003 the years just rolled away. A family tragedy led one of the guys to begin a search for friends from Vietnam. They didn't know my name (just Sgt. Simmons) or where I was from. After losing my boyhood sweetheart and wife of 48 years I began a search. Out of desperation I went on line one night at midnight and typed in Phan Rang Vietnam. I couldn't believe my eyes, up popped a notice from a David Cox looking for members from our prayer group at Phan Rang. I had a group picture that included a David Cox. I contacted him, same guy; after 34 years the time distance was gone, the rank was gone. Just dear friends, along with others in our prayer group. Then later the Phan Rang Group was born. Now here we are 47 years later, older, slower, but still the desire for the friendship that was born in the stink, the heat and the dangers of Vietnam.

Bob Hoffman: This was my first Charles and you are spot on, all those years faded away, and new friendships were made. We even had a Phan Rang trooper from your part of the country, lives in the wilderness North of you. Hope you can make it next year in Seattle. Welcome home Brother.



RW Holz: Jeannie and I have done nothing but talk about how much fun we had at the Reunion. I can't say Thank you enough.

Linda Schrank: Thank all the veterans for their service I couldn't have been in better company.



Mary Benson: Bob Hoffman you made me cry. Thank you.

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Jim Kucipeck: Bob Hoffman well put and certainly from the heart! Take care brother!

Rich Long: Well said Bob, your words brought a tear to my eye just thinking of the great time Carol & I had at OKC meeting such a wonderful group of people!

Joe Kaupa: Dam you Bob you brought tears to Nancy and my eyes. This was so well said and you are one awesome man. We are so glad to have met you and from this point on you will always be family. Miss you already big fella, especial our talks outside taking care of our bad habits. Give me a call.

Tom Parsons: Another fantastic reunion. Seems Doug, Joyce, Lou, Annette, Jack and all the others who plan these get-togethers outdo themselves each year. The tours were great as was the banquet, but the best part was seeing everyone again. Hope everyone had a safe trip home and looking forward to next year in Seattle.



The pictures displayed here represent only a small fraction of the photos posted to the “Happy Valley” - Phan Rang AB Facebook page. Christopher Boles, our Phan Rang AB Photographer, also has some fantastic photos on his [website](#).

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Was That A Mirage I Saw?



Anyone who served at Phan Rang in August 1969 could quite literally say that they might have seen a mirage.

In fact, not one but two French-designed, Australian-made Mirages, belonging to No. 3 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, landed and departed Phan Rang on 10 August and again on 16 August.

Flown by RAAF pilots, Wing Commander Ted Radford in Mirage IIIO(A) tail number A3-92 and Flight Lieutenant Bruce Searle in A3-90, they were normally based at the RAAF's Butterworth air base in Malaysia.

They called into Phan Rang to refuel, courtesy of No 2 Squadron, RAAF, who were regularly flying Canberra bombing missions across South Vietnam.

The Mirages, seen pictured here refueling at Phan Rang in a photo taken by John Richards of No 2 Squadron, were transiting to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines for trials of the ALQ-72 ECM pod.

The pod was “borrowed” from a USAF F-100 squadron at Clark and fitted onto the Mirage's centerline in place of the long-range fuel tank that they carried to and from Clark and which can be seen in the photo.

The Mirages only stayed at Phan Rang for an hour and a half as the pilots relaxed while the refueling operation took place, drinking coffee in the No. 2 Squadron Operations Room.

Strangely enough, John Richards, who took the photo, was also only on the ground for the same amount of time. He was travelling in a RAAF C-130 Hercules transport which had originated in Australia and had come through Darwin en route to Butterworth, Vung Tau and Phan Rang. John, who was serving with the RAAF as a communicator at Darwin at the time wasn't even due to arrive at Phan Rang for his one-year tour of duty with No. 2 Squadron until 4 September

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1969.



Photo by John Richards and article courtesy of Bob Howe.

However, when told that the C-130 was headed for Phan Rang, his supervisor agreed that he could be useful in carrying classified “safe-hand” documents, so John showed up at No. 2 Squadron several weeks early, much to the surprise of his mates. He delivered his secure package, took the photo of the Mirages, coincidentally there as he was, and then returned home on the C-130. He returned on the due date to complete his year’s tour of duty at Phan Rang.

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Year	Month	Date		Year	Month	<i>Date</i>
1967	Aug	9		1969	Jan	2
1967	Aug	13		1969	Jan	9
1967	Aug	23		1969	Jan	16
1967	Nov	1		1969	Jan	23
1967	Dec	13		1969	Jan	30
1967	Oct	25		1969	Jul	3
1967	Oct	25		1969	Jul	10
1967	Sep	13		1969	Jul	17
1968	Dec	5		1969	Jun	5

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1968	Dec	12		1969	Jun	12
1968	Dec	19		1969	Jun	19
1968	Dec	26		1969	Jun	26
1968	Mar	27		1969	Mar	6
1968	Apr	17		1969	Mar	13
1968	May	8		1969	Mar	20
1968	Nov	7		1969	Mar	21
1968	Nov	14		1969	May	1
1968	Nov	21		1969	May	9
1968	Nov	28		1969	Nov	15
1968	Oct	3		1971	Mar	21
1968	Oct	10				
1968	Oct	17				
1968	Oct	24				
1968	Oct	31				
1968	Sep	12				
1968	Sep	19				
1968	Sep	26				
1969	Apr	5		These are the Phan Fare's that I have on file as digital copies and all are available on the Facebook site in the file section. If anyone would like to have the entire library in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format, please let me know.		
1969	Apr	10				
1969	Apr	24				
1969	Aug	1				
1969	Aug	8				
1969	Aug	15				
1969	Aug	22				
1969	Feb	6				
1969	Feb	13				
1969	Feb	20				
1969	Feb	27				

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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.