

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 119

“Stories worth telling”

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315th Wing To Observe Its 27th Anniversary

(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, February 13, 1969)

Feb. 14 is not only St. Valentine’s Day but also the birth date of the 315th SOWg headquartered at Phan Rang.

The unit background of 27 years is rich in combat cargo history for throughout its lifespan, tactical airlift has been its mission.



The 315th crest depicts some of its more noteworthy actions. The ‘Fleur-de-lis’ represents the Distinguished Unit Citation received for actions in the Normandy invasion. Towing gliders and dropping paratroopers, the 315th contributed immeasurably to the crippling blow struck at the enemy forces.

The star comes from the Korean Presidential Unit Citation awarded

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when aircrews supported the United Nations fight against communism.

The area of 10 smaller stars indicate campaign participation credits in World War II and the Korean War. Mission capabilities are symbolized by purple clouds (lower half of the crest) - defoliation, the parachute - airdrop, the garb denoting the necessities of life, and sunburst - the flare mission, and the upraised sword - assault.

The unit flag carries battle streamers from Sicily, Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Central Europe, major campaigns in World War II, plus three other from action in Korea.

Additionally, it carries the Distinguished Unit Citation from France, the Korean Presidential Unit Citation and numerous Outstanding Unit Awards for past performances in Vietnam.

First called to action in Vietnam in December 1962 to fly the C-123 Provider, the 315th has continuously expanded its operations unit it now has four airlift squadrons operating from the DMZ to the southern tip of the delta.

In addition, the wing has the 12 SOSq at Bien Hoa AB, the 12th is responsible for defoliation and although not directly associated with the airlift mission, it has the capability of rapid reconfiguration should their mission change.

The 315th has established an enviable cargo hauling record in spite of the hazards existing in a combat zone.

Recognizing the air crew achievements, General Creighton W. Abrams, commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, has cited the 315th for its outstanding accomplishments on the occasion of its 27th anniversary.

He specifically pointed out the outstanding resupply efforts extended during January, February and March of last year when Khe Sanh was under heavy siege.

A former 315th pilot was among those receiving the Medal of Honor in recent White House ceremonies. He had landed his Provider at Kham Duc airfield to rescue a combat control team even as the Viet Cong were overrunning the strip. (see **C-123 Pilot Earns Medal Of Honor** in this edition.)

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45 Miles to Dalat - a 3-Day Trip -Rains Wash Out Highway 1 (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*,
Thursday, October 2, 1969)

(Spec. 4 Jim Clare left the DMZ Sept. 20, planning to hitchhike to Saigon—a journey of about 500 miles. He had about 135 miles left as he filed this report from Dalat.)

By SPEC. 4 JIM CLARE
S&S Staff Correspondent

DALAT, Vietnam—Dalat, an old French resort in the central highlands, looks more like a vacation center in the Poconos than a Vietnamese town.

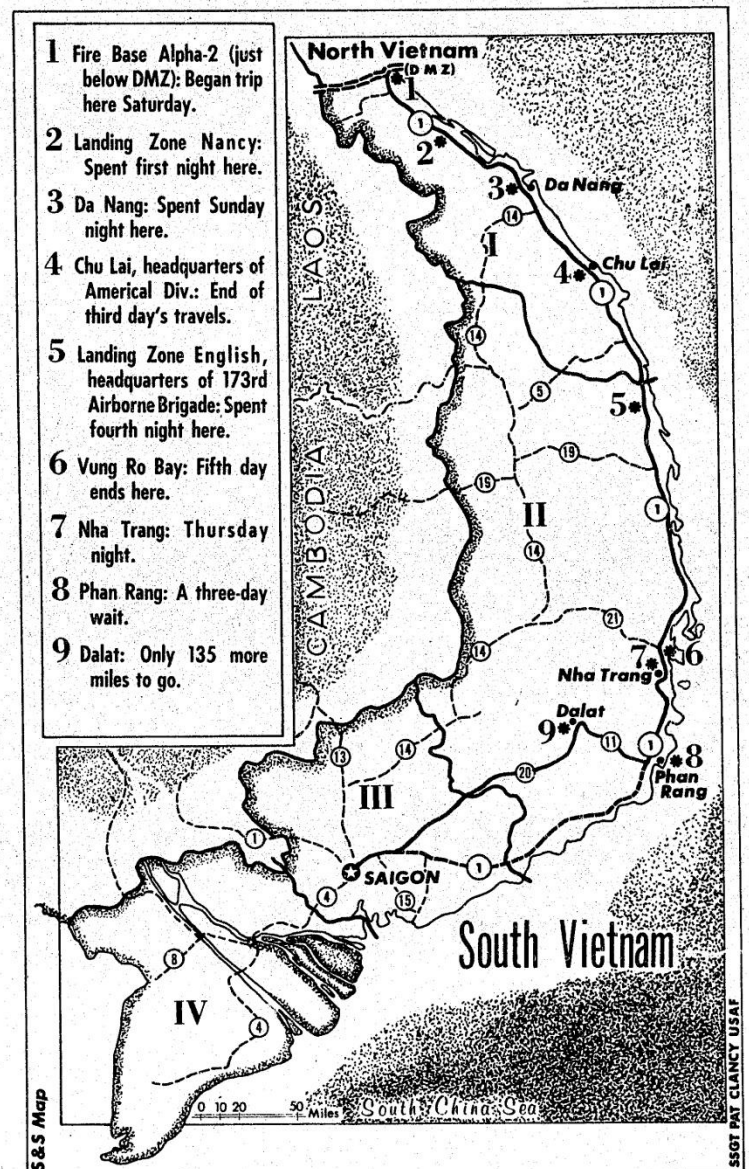
The houses are solid and Western style. The air is 20 degrees cooler than on the coast. There are pine trees everywhere.

Dalat, good place to be, was a long time coming. It was Tuesday afternoon and it has taken three days to get here from Phan Rang, only 45 miles away.

I was trying to hitchhike from the DMZ to Saigon and a Texan working for the Alaska Barge and Transport Co. dropped me off in Phan Rang Saturday afternoon.

Then the shuffling started as I traveled back and forth a short stretch of Highway One, trying to get a ride to Phan Thiet, 80 miles away.

Moving slowly south from Phan Rang, I visited MACV advisers at the village, district and provincial level. The U.S. advisers for President



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Nguyen Van Thieu's home province of Ninh Thuan live right in Phan Rang. Those for An Phuoc District live 10 miles further south.

Riding with elements of the 589th and 593rd Eng. Bn. Working on the road, I made it Monday morning 25 miles south of Phan Rang to Ca Na village and MACV Advisery Team No. 45.

From Ca Na, I rode west 20 miles on armored personnel carriers of A Troop, 2nd Sq., 1st Cav., to Firebase Panzer. Panzer had mountains on three sides and was surrounded by small scrub trees. The firebase itself was mud holes and what remained of a tower and a building from a French soda factory. Men took showers in warm mineral water. And when the creek rose, some of them took a bath.

"The monsoon rains backed up the stream," said troop executive officer 1st Lt. William D. Whitmill, "and flooded us so badly that some of the men floated out of their bunkers on air mattresses."

the monsoon had also washed out large sections of Highway One, under five to eight feet of water. Until two weeks ago, convoys had run regularly from Phan Rang to Phan Thiet. No longer.

Another Cavalry troop west of Panzer now ran dismounted operations because they couldn't get their tanks and APC's out of their firebase.

"If you want," asked troop commander Capt. William Rollins, "you can take a chopper to Phan Thiet."

I said no thank you and went back to Phan Rang and started hitchhiking again Tuesday morning. After three rides and 6,500 feet of elevation up winding Route 11, I was in Dalat.

Alan Ash wrote: *"I noticed a name missing on the **“Phan Rang Remembrance Board”**. His name was Donald Ginart, he was an F-100 pilot and was killed in the spring of 1969. I knew him at LSU and was surprised when I ran into him at Phan Rang."*

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1st Lt Donald F. Ginart *by Earl W. (Buddy) Boatwright*



Donald F. Ginart

On 03 June 1969 1st Lt Donald F. Ginart of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 35th TFW at Phan Rang, flew F-100D tail number 55-3790 on a close air support mission about 10 miles southwest of Quan Long in the extreme southern tip of South Vietnam. During his second strafing pass against VC structures his aircraft was hit by antiaircraft fire and crashed. Lt. Ginart's body was recovered by an Army team.

Donnie and I were kids who grew up in the same neighborhood in New Orleans ... Donnie was a short little chubby guy - kind and generous with a great wit. I could go on but I won't at this point ... It was just ironic that five houses down from Donnie lived George Flynn, he too an Air Force pilot killed in Vietnam ... I lost contact with both individuals when we moved out of the neighborhood - but I didn't forget Flynn or Ginart...

Donald and I were buddies, sole mates. We met at the Air Force ROTC boot camp and immediately had an affinity for one another. He was a stereotypical heavy set, jovial young man with a great sense of humor.

Right from the beginning it seemed that we had so much in common, from our goals and aspirations, to our childhood sweethearts, who we each married.

After boot camp, we visited with one another at our respective campuses (his Louisiana State Univ., mine the Univ. of Alabama), with our wife's, and developed our friendship even further.

One of my fondest memories of Don was in boot camp where, at the end of the camp, we were required to put on an end of camp sketch. Don wrote and directed what I still consider to have been, the best, funniest skit of the camp. He made us all laugh in a situation that hardly lent itself to mirth, and I think he enhanced the respect we all had for him.

There was one crucial difference between Don and myself, however, and this was the fact that he had natural 20/20 vision, while mine was only 20/40. That qualified him for pilot training, while disqualifying me. I remember having real mixed emotions about that at the time - I was concerned for him, because I knew where he would go and what he would be

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doing, but had my own eyes been 20/20, I would have done the same thing.

I don't even remember how I first heard that his plane had been shot down, but I was safely riding a desk job in Biloxi, Mississippi, while he was risking his life flying a bomber.

Over the years, I have often thought of Don and how his too young, snuffed out life, could have very well been my own destiny, had it not been for my imperfect eye sight. I often think, too, about his wife Barbara, who, I understand, was several months pregnant with their first child when it happened.

C-123 Pilot Earns Medal Of Honor (7th Air Force News, February 5, 1969)



WASHINGTON (AFNS)—The fifth Medal of Honor to be presented to an Air Force member for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action" in Vietnam was presented to Lt. Col. Joe M. Jackson by President Johnson at the White House, last month. *Read the citation below.*

Colonel Jackson, a Plans officer in the Pentagon since his return from Vietnam in August, was cited for his actions while serving as aircraft commander of a C-123 during the battle of Kham Duc on May 12, 1968.

Lt. Col. Joe M. Jackson

After three days of heavy enemy fire, the decision was made to evacuate the Kham Due Special Forces camp. More than 1,000 men were evacuated when it was discovered three men had been left behind. An attempt by a C-123 to land on the abandoned airstrip to recover the men was unsuccessful when the plane came under machinegun, mortar and recoilless rifle fire.

Colonel Jackson, piloting a second C-123, was asked if he could attempt the pickup. Having observed the lack of success in a long, low approach to the strip, Colonel Jackson elected an unorthodox diving approach from 9,000 feet altitude, pulling out about 50 feet from the

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ground.

After taking on board the combat control team, Colonel Jackson taxied his aircraft gingerly along the debris-littered runway and through a hail of crossfire on the takeoff roll before applying maximum power.

At the time of the action Colonel Jackson was based at Da Nang AB, commanding a detachment of the 311th Special Operations Wing, headquartered at Phan Rang AB. Others on board the Provider were Maj. Jesse W. Campbell, now at Andrews AFB, Md.; TSgt. Edward M. Treje, England AFB, La., and SSgt. Manson L. Grubbs, Mildenhall AB, England.

Members of the combat control team rescued were Maj. John W. Gallagher, Clark AB, R.P.; TSgt. Morton J. Freedman, Tan Son Nhut AB, and Sgt. James Lundie, since returned to civilian life.

Colonel Jackson, an F-84 pilot in Korea where he compiled 107 combat sorties while earning the Distinguished Flying Cross, entered military service as an enlisted man in 1941. As a staff sergeant in 1942 he was a B-25 crew chief before entering pilot training. He was one of the Air Force's first U-2 reconnaissance pilots at Laughlin AFB, Tex., in 1957.

Medal of Honor citation

Jackson's official Medal of Honor citation for his actions at the Battle of Kham Duc reads: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Lt. Col. Jackson distinguished himself as pilot of a C-123 aircraft. Lt. Col. Jackson volunteered to attempt the rescue of a 3-man USAF Combat Control Team from the Special Forces camp at Kham Duc. Hostile forces had overrun the forward outpost and established gun positions on the airstrip. They were raking the camp with small arms, mortars, light and heavy automatic weapons, and recoilless rifle fire. The camp was engulfed in flames and ammunition dumps were continuously exploding and littering the runway with debris. In addition, eight aircraft had been destroyed by the intense enemy fire and one aircraft remained on the runway reducing its usable length to only 2,200 feet. To further complicate the landing, the weather was deteriorating rapidly, thereby permitting only one air strike prior to his landing. Although fully aware of the extreme danger and likely failure of such an attempt. Lt. Col. Jackson elected to land his aircraft and attempt to rescue. Displaying superb airmanship and extraordinary heroism, he landed his aircraft near the point where the combat control team was reported to

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Senior Controller MSgt. Tonnie Simmons puts it his way. “Our mission is to provide all-weather arrival and departure service to all aircraft using Vietnam-based Air Force GCA unit working daily with a U.S. Army Tower.”

Dalat controllers run from 3 to 5 practice GCA landings a day to keep reaction time honed to a razor’s edge. One example of how their constant training has paid off came last September when OLA radar men guided a single engine O-1 Bird Dog to a safe landing in below minimum weather conditions. At the time, the GCA radar unit in operation at OLA was the old TIN-17. “To pick up an aircraft as light as an O-1 in a burst of inclement weather on any radar scope is remarkable, but on the TPN-17 it amounted to a virtual miracle,” commented one of the veteran radar operators.

In January the TPN-17 was replaced by the more advanced MPN-13. This new unit affords a multi-aircraft handling capability. Technical Sgt. Jack Morris, the chief of radar maintenance, also arrived in January. He “insists” he brought the giant addition over with him. Since his arrival, Morris has installed a modification unit into the system which has greatly enhanced the approach surveillance radar (ASR), painting a clearer target on the radar scope.

The rejuvenated Dalat administrative drop, singleside band radio circuit between OLA and Phan Rang control has taken some of the “lost” out of the lost colony in recent months.

The circuit has been relocated with recut antennas in the 1882nd’s base MARS facility, located atop one of several high peaks on Phan Rang Air Base. The radio is utilized for routine administrative matters as well as needed logistical support from the parent unit.

No GCA location is complete without a compatible tactical air navigation system (TACAN). Here again OLA/Dalat excels. The single unit TRN-6 has less recorded down time than any single or double TACAN unit in Vietnam.

The TACAN unit operates on a frequency preconfigured in the overflying aircraft distance from the airstrip, whether the aircraft is flying to or away, what radial the aircraft is on, and other such essential information needed by the pilot for flight following purposes.

Supplying electricity to the OLA are two MB-17 and one ENU-16 60 kilowatt power generators maintained by SSgt. Joseph W. Dempsey. The three units produce enough power to light up the

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entire city of Dalat.

The airman live in the heart of Dalat, sharing a villa with men of the 14th Aerial Port Squadron. The work day begins at 5:30 a.m. when the first shift travels the road to Cam Ly. Arriving at 6 a.m. they go about the business of controlling four-engined C-123 and C-130 transports that lumber daily into Dalat burdened with supplies for Army units deployed throughout this central highlands province.

The aircraft leave just as heavily laden but with a cargo of a more tranquil nature. From the vast vegetable stores of Cam Ly airstrip, produce grown in the fertile valleys in and around Dalat are palletized and loaded aboard transports to be flown to bases throughout South Vietnam.

Whether the planes are packed with ammunition or vegetables, the enemy, too, recognizes how vital this airlift is to the war effort. This could account for the stepped up attacks on Cam Ly Airstrip in recent months. Somehow from the hundreds of rounds fired at the airstrip, not one has damaged the GCA complex.

When the sun goes down, the airmen return home on the lonely road from Cam Ly. A full day's work behind them, the men look to other interests to occupy their time. In civic action work, OLA/D Dalat is sponsoring Villa Lance, a Vietnamese orphanage in Dalat.

(Note: This same story appeared in Phan Rang Newsletter 21 titled **‘The Lost Colony’** from the Air Force Times, July 23, 1969)

Some Phan Rang Hero's



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Chance Encounter on Veterans Day

Sam Herold posted this story on Facebook about a chance encounter he had on Veteran’s Day with another Phan Ranger. This morning I got up and went to our local Hy-Vee grocery store because they were offering a free breakfast to military veterans and active duty.



Sam Herold and John L. have a chance encounter.

While checking in, I saw they have a huge map for vets to tag to show where they had served. I grabbed a post-it arrow and went down to Phan Rang and noticed there was one other arrow pointing at my air base in South Vietnam. I was actually excited by it and wanted to stand in the middle of the cafeteria and yell who else here is from Happy Valley? I wisely thought better of it, and refrained.

After breakfast I returned to the apartment complex that have been a part of as an employee or resident for over seven years and immediately met up with and got into a discussion with another Veteran, John L. John offered his branch of service years of duty. I asked him if he had served in Vietnam. To my surprise, he was a Vietnam Veteran, so I asked him where he served and to my astonishment he said Phan Rang.

Seven years after having met each other John and I discovered we were both at Phan Rang. It was his arrow on the Hy-Vee map, but by the time I arrived he had already eaten and left just prior to my arrival.

Two Happy Valley Vets finally meet after knowing each other for seven years but not knowing they served at the same base.

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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.