

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam**  
**...keeping the memories alive**  
Phan Rang AB News No. 136      **“Stories worth telling”**

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**Aussie Unit Gets U.S. Decoration**  
*(Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, July 26, 1969)*



**PHAN RANG AB**, Vietnam (Special) — The U.S. Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation was presented recently to the Royal Australian Air Force No. 2 Sq.

At a flightline ceremony at Phan Rang Gen. George S. Brown, commander, U.S. 7th Air Force, made the presentation.

"I served with your 77 squadron in Korea," Brown told the officers and airmen of No. 2 Sq. standing before him in dress formation. "So it is doubly pleasurable for me to serve with the No. 2 Sq. here in Vietnam."

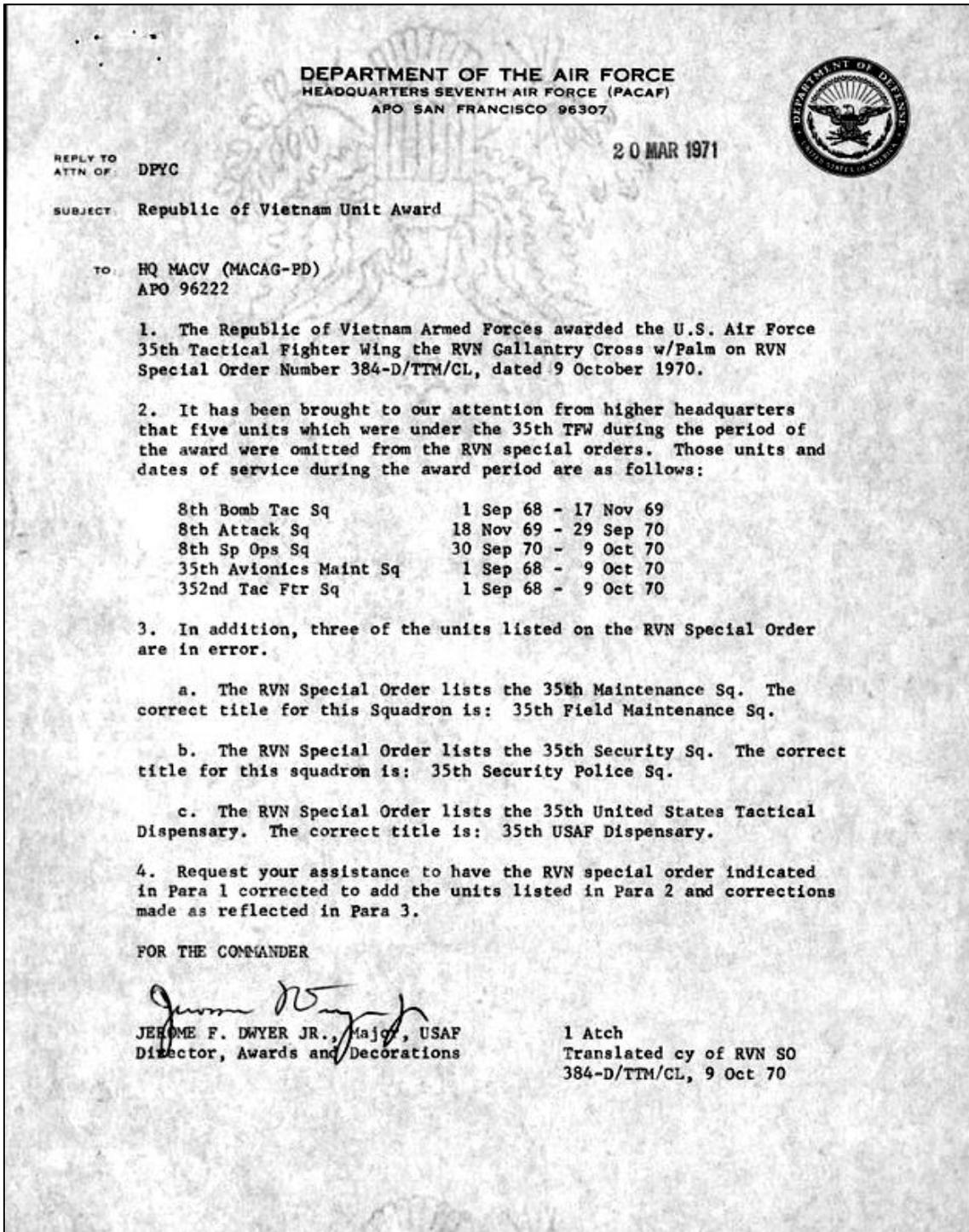
R.L. Harry, Australian ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam; Maj. Gen. R.A. Hay, commander , Australian Forces, Vietnam; and Air Commodore F.S. Robey, commander, Royal Australian Air Force, Vietnam; made up the official Australian delegation at the ceremony.

The citation was awarded to Australia's No. 2 Sq. for its many successful attacks against Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific at the outbreak of World War II.

The 27-year delay in the presentation was due to several factors such as the disbanding of the squadron after World War II and the Australian requirement that a unit be in continuous existence for 25 years before it can get its own standard or banner.

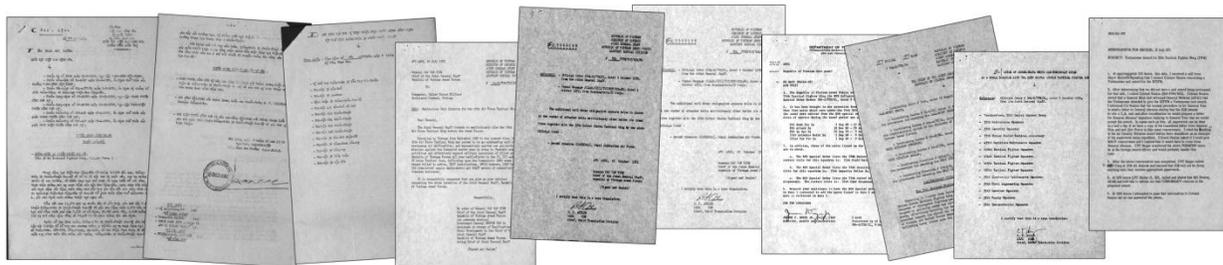
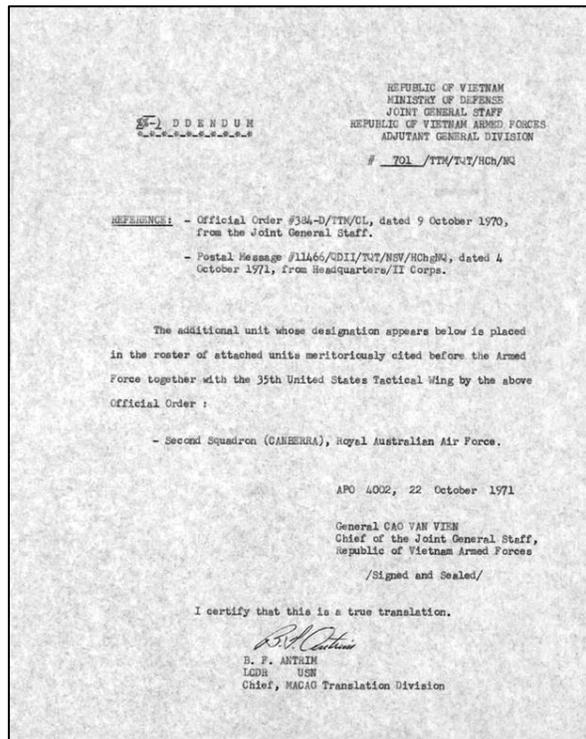
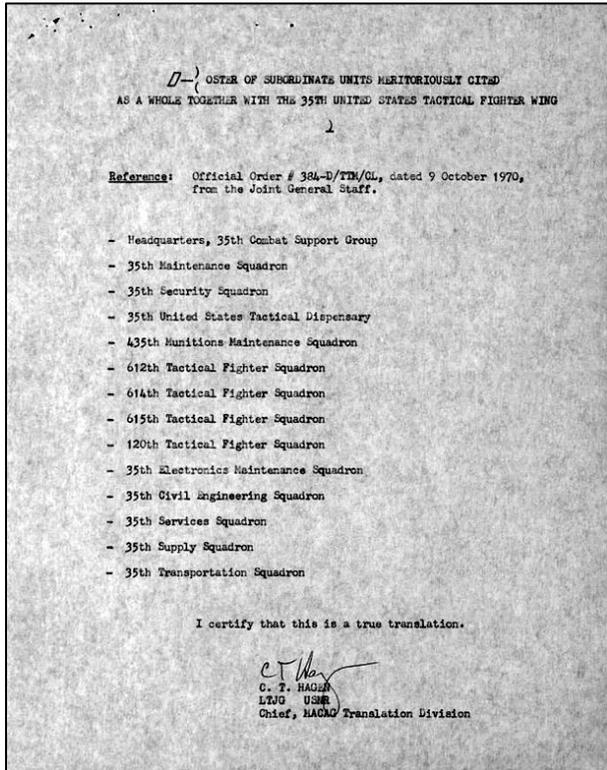
(Doug's note: It's interesting to note that Wikipedia does not list this.)

**The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Awarded the 35<sup>th</sup> TFW  
The RVN Gallantry Cross w/Palm**



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**35<sup>th</sup> TFW Subordinate Units defined and Including 2<sup>nd</sup> Sq. RAAF**



All pertinent documents, including those pictured above and associated with this order are available in the file section of the Happy Valley Facebook group.



Vietnam Gallantry Cross



Gallantry Cross Ribbon with Palm

## **14<sup>th</sup> SOW Moves to Phan Rang AB**

*(Seventh Air Force News, 22 October 1969)*



**PHAN RANG** - A third combat unit became part of the base here with the recent arrival of the 14th Special Operations Wing, one of the largest U.S. Air Force combat wing in the Republic of Vietnam.

Commanded by Col. Clyde S. Cherry, the unit was formerly stationed at Nha Trang AB. The move to Phan Rang was to make more facilities available to the Republic of Vietnam Air Force's 62d Tactical Wing and the air training center at Nha Trang.

The 14th SOW is responsible for all Air Force gunship and psychological warfare operations in the Republic. Arriving with the 14th SOW is the 4th Special Operations Squadron, the only Air Force AC-47 Spooky gunship unit in Vietnam.

Already here is the 17th SOS which conducts all AC-119 Shadow gunship activity. Both squadrons have aircraft here and at other bases.

More than 700 men made the move here with the 14th SOW. Other Nha Trang units were moved to various bases throughout Vietnam.

The 14th SOW joins the base's host unit, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, and the 315th SOW.

Under the command of Col. Walter T. Galligan, the 35th TFW flies combat strike missions in the F-100 Supersabre fighter-bomber.

The 35th TFW also has operational control of the Royal Australian Air Force's Number 2 Squadron which flies the Canberra jet bomber. The 315th SOW's mission is tactical airlift and defoliation. Col. Leslie J. Campbell Jr. commands the 315th.



### **Shadow’s Light Aids In Rescue**

**By Capt. John Hathaway**

**TAN SON NHUT** - An airborne illuminator was used for the first time by an AC-119 Shadow gunship crew recently to aid in the pickup of downed pilots.

Capt. John I. Parish piloted the mission in the southern part of the Mekong Delta.

Captain Parish and his crew, assigned to C Flight, 17th Special Operations Squadron here, were told two pilots of an Army Mohawk aircraft had been forced to bail out due to a fire in thier cockpit 32 miles southwest of Binh Thuy AB.

The Shadow crew responded and within 15 minutes were over the site. The area was completely covered with heavy rain clouds.

The clouds were too low to allow safe operation of the aircraft below the overcast, so the Shadow crew stayed in the clouds and beamed the powerful light through.

With the aid of the light, rescue helicopter crews started a search pattern covering the area where the pilots were downed. Radio contact was established and the pickup of the first pilot was made with added light from flares dropped by the AC-119 crew.

The second pilot was harder to find and all the aircraft were getting low on fuel. Two of the helicopters had to leave.

Captain Parish informed the helicopter pilot he had to return to base. He dropped his remaining five flares and headed for Binh Thuy.

As he left the helicopter pilot spotted the downed pilot. The five flares did the job and the second pickup was made.

Members of the Shadow crew were Lt. Col. Paul J. Buckley, Maj. Richard L. Stoner and Capt. William R. Joyce Jr.

Also TSgt. John J. Bergin, SSgt. Claude E. Newbold, SSgt. James D. Rice and Sgt. Russell R. Steffensmeier.



**F-100s Strike Bunkers**

*(Seventh Air Force News, 22 October 1969)*

**PHAN RANG**-Two Air Force F-100 Supersabre pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here recently struck an enemy bunker complex 50 miles north of Bien Hoa City in Phuoc Long Province.

They were credited with destroying 22 bunkers, 5 military structures and uncovering 12 other bunkers.

The pilots on the mission were Maj. Donald F. Brackett and 1st Lt. James D. Davies II.

"We rendezvoused with the forward air controller and he told us there were Allied troops 50 meters from the target area waiting to sweep the area after we got through bombing it," stated Major Brackett.

"We each made four passes over the target," continued the major. "Lieutenant Davies, my wingman, laid his bombs right in the middle of the FAC's smoke marker every time. It was one of the finest displays of precision bombing I have seen since I arrived in the Republic of Vietnam."



### **315 SOW Pilots Augment Roadrunner Airlines Roster**

*(Seventh Air Force News, 14 May 1969)*



### **Beep, Beep!**

**1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Dennis J. Lessard is ready to start number one engine. Lieutenant Lessard is the first of six copilots from the 315<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, C-123 Providers, at Phan Rang AB, to**

**complete the C-47 checkout program. He will augment the pilot roster of “Roadrunner Airlines” at Phan Rang which has been short-handed since the departure of an AC-47 “Spooky” flight.**

**PHAN RANG** - Roadrunner Airlines, the C-47 support aircraft for Phan Rang AB, acquired the first of six U.S. Air Force co-pilot augmentees recently from the 315th Special Operations Wing, also stationed there.

Usual pilot manning for the airlines' "Gooneybird" is normally provided by local base resources. However, a critical shortage of "behind-the-lines" pilots necessitated a search for assistance.

Previously, members of "B" Flight, 3rd Special Operations Squadron, who flew the AC-47 "Spooky" gunships helped out when needed, but their relocation to another base ended this arrangement.

One untapped resource of trained transport pilots remained - the C-123 squadrons. Base officials sought and obtained approval from Seventh Air Force to permit C-47 co-pilot qualification for a selected number of C-123 pilots.

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Dennis J. Lessard, Prescott, Ariz., was the first selectee to complete the C-47 copilot upgrading school at Nha Trang Air Base.

Commenting on the school, Lieutenant Lessard said, "Each student attends two days of classroom studies followed by three days of flying. We complete 16 to 18 hours in the air before receiving a checkout."

Other C-123 Provider men selected to attend the C-47 course include 1st Lieutenants William D. Robinson, Whittier, Calif., and Stephen T. Balogh, Inglewood, Calif.

Serving as C-47 co-pilots allows the officers to build up their proficiency and flying time when not working in their primary crew position with the Providers. Unanimously, they agreed it was one of the "best deals" they had been offered in the Air Force.



### **35<sup>th</sup> CES Dredges River**

*(Seventh Air Force News, May 14, 1969)*



**PHAN RANG**-With the arrival of the dry season in mid-autumn, the Kinh Dinh River becomes little more than a shallow stream, presenting a yearly problem at the Wells, the primary source of water for Phan Rang AB, a mile away.

The Wells are a small compound of guard bunkers, four 500-gallon-per-minute pumps and a structure housing several generators.

"When the dry season comes, not enough water can be pumped unless we take corrective action," stated MSgt. Charles R. Schrall, superintendent of the base water system, operated by the 35th Civil Engineering Squadron.

Recently, earth moving equipment from the 35th CES made minor alterations to the riverbed.

"The pumps are encased in wooden cribs sunk 15 feet into the river bottom. These contain gravel to filter out debris," Sergeant Schrall explained. "We used a diesel shovel to remove from the sides of the cribs sand which had accumulated there. This exposed more of each crib to the water current."

Meanwhile, a bulldozer fashioned a 100 yard-long channel to divert the river water directly to the cribs. "We had to deepen the riverbed, which was only about a foot deep, so a greater volume of water would hit the cribs with more force, causing faster penetration," the sergeant said.

"With the trough beginning at the far end of a bend in the river," he commented, "we can be sure the Wells will get enough water for the base, even if the river level drops."



**Phan Rang Photo Takes 1<sup>st</sup>**  
*(Seventh Air Force News, 22 October 1969)*

**7AF HQ** - A1C Oswald Gooden, Phan Rang AB, and Sgt. Wallace Jensen, Bien Hoa AB, won first and second prize respectively in the September Seventh Air Force news photo contest.

The first place winner received a watch and the runnerup a transistor radio for their outstanding photographs.

The contest is open to anyone. All entries must be submitted through unit information offices who will forward them to 7th AF's combat news division. Only photos released to news media are eligible for prizes.

A short paragraph must accompany each submission identifying any people in the photo, giving their rank, full name, unit and hometown. It should also tell in a sentence or two what is taking place.

For further details on how you can become the owner of a new watch or radio, contact your unit information officer for full details on the 7th AF news photo contest.



*Photo courtesy of Mac Singleton*

**‘Is That You, Charles? They Say you’re Dead’**  
*(Pacific Stars & Stripes, Thursday, 16 March 1967)*

SAIGON (AP)—A military chaplain told a young sailor's parents he was dead. Then his wife talked to him on the telephone. But a telegram came from the Pentagon confirming his death.

Tuesday a U.S. Navy spokesman in Saigon said the wife was right and the Pentagon was wrong — Radioman 3C Charles S. Wall, 27, of West Monroe, La., was not-killed in the crash of a Navy transport plane north of Saigon on Friday.

The spokesman said the sailor had been scheduled to fly on the plane and his name was carried on the manifest, but he did not make the flight, The spokesman said he had no more details but thought Wall was now with a Navy unit at Cam Ranh Bay, about 180 miles northeast of Saigon.

Officials in Saigon said they understood the Pentagon had sent another telegram to Wall's family expressing their regrets for the mixup.

The young man's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley A. Wall of West Monroe, were told Sunday by a military chaplain that Charles had died in the plane crash.

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Their telephone rang Monday. It was their daughter-in-law, calling from Chelsea, Mass.

"I just talked to Charles," she shouted into the phone. "Charles missed the plane. He's still alive. They put him back on a destroyer."

The parents were overjoyed. Then came the telegram—the Defense Department making official the report that their son had died in the crash.

Tuesday the Navy spokesman in Saigon confirmed that the Defense Department had been mistaken.

The plane that Charles missed, a two engine C-47 Navy transport, crashed near Phan Rang Friday afternoon and all 25 aboard were killed.

When told Tuesday his son was alive, the father said "We had not lost hope. We have our Lord on our side. We have always been that way."



### **Transport Wing Selects Top Airman for Month**

*(Seventh Air Force News, 22 October 1969)*

**PHAN RANG** - AIC Frederick C. Plaskett was recently selected the 315th Special Operations Wing's airman of the month here.

Airman Plaskett is an instrument repairman who trouble shoots Instrument malfunctions and checks flight equipment on twin-engined C-123 Provider transports.

He was graduated from Del Campo High School, Fair Oaks, in 1967. He joined the Air Force in November 1967 and arrived in the Republic of Vietnam after an assignment at Luke AFB, Ariz.



1960s Era Phan Fare Masthead

### **Class of Over 100 Vietnamese Stuns Airman**

*(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, 25 October 1967)*

Airman Third Class Tim Ramsey, 19, from Cross Creek, Pa., a munitions handler and driver in the 435<sup>th</sup> Munitions Maintenance Squadron who entered the English Teaching program of the base Civic Action program a month ago, recently received a severe shock when he walked into a classroom in Phan Rang City.

“I expected to see about 20 to 30 students, but to my surprise I was faced by over 100 students...For a few minutes it threw me, and I was completely lost.”

“I managed to salvage the situation because I would have to do something ridiculous and humorous...I then ran in, jumped on the platform in front, and acted by class out in a way to keep their attention...We did get a few laughs this way.”

Once he had the attention of the crowd of youngsters crammed into the classroom the airman got down to business.

“I worked first on simple phrases and simple conversation, such as ‘good morning’ and ‘How are you?’ I then had a student come to the front of the room and we held conversation together. This way when they are approached by a G.I. or a civilian, they know how to act.”

Airman Ramsey has been teaching a class of 14 youngsters in the town of Thap Chap three nights a week. Recently he decided to spend another three nights a week in the English program at Phan Rang City, and on his first night there he went as a substitute teacher. Airman

Ramsey is one of 20 English teachers from Phan Rang who devote their off duty time teaching 407 Vietnamese students our English Language.

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### **Firemen’s Monkey Has a Pet Cat!**

*(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, August 23, 1967)*

Lieutenant Tom, a small six pound Vietnamese Spider monkey, is the mascot of the Phan Rang Air Base Fire Department and is probably the only monkey in the world with a full grown “Tom Cat” for a pet.

The small grey monkey receives nothing but “VIP” treatment and in return gives the 58 member fire brigade one laugh after another. Lieutenant Tom likes the cat who is also grey has to watch out for Tom, who loves to fight with the cat and bite at his tail; but the cat always comes back for more.

To a visitor, it’s almost seems like the cat and the monkey love each other.



**Not the Real Lieutenant Tom, but once you've seen one Vietnamese spider monkey you've seen them all.**

Lieutenant Tom, is an excellent swimmer and goes with precision into the big black rubber tanks which are near the fire station. According to Master Sergeant Harold L. Engle, 41, of Corbin, Kentucky, the base fire chief, Lt. Tom was a departing gift from the U.S. Army’s 87<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion which has rotated back to the states.

According to several members of the pumper squad, Tom is also good at making a shambles out of their living quarters, and can enter the small houches without any help, much to their dismay, but they still love the little primate.

Many of the fire brigade members feel that without his daily antics and Vietnamese charm, their days would be much lonlier, and there would not be so many smiles around the old fire house.

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As for the cat, who shall remain nameless (largely because he has no name); Chief Engle, says “Before the cat joined the brigade, six inch rats made their home around the fire station, but in the short space of a few months, the cat has been the demise of the pesky rodents.

The Cat has been observed by some of the hose and bucket brigade members using dead rats for Basketball practice. He bounces them off of the fire house walls with his paws and has a great time.

Although the cat is not as smart as the monkey, he is just as valuable and continues to do his part for Phan Rang Air Base.

Lieutenant Tom, is much more selective about what he eats than the cat, but then monkeys are smarter than cats.

Life around the old fire station is not all fun and games. This tireless and energetic organization has nine pieces of fire fighting gear which are on stand-by 24 hrs. a day to serve hundreds of incoming and out-going aircraft daily. Many aircraft with an emergency have been saved by the gang at the old fire house.



**Air Force Cadet Commandant Here**

*(Garden City Telegram, Garden City, Kansas, Thursday, April 1, 1971)*

Highlight of the Seventh District American Legion Convention this weekend will be an address by Brig. Gen. Walter T. Galligan, commandant of cadets at U.S. Air Force Academy.

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General Galligan is speaker for Saturday’s banquet in Knights of Columbus Hall at 7 p.m. Some 200 Legion and Auxiliary delegates are expected to attend.

A 1945 graduate of West Point, General Galligan was assigned as the Air Force Academy’s seventh commandant of cadets in February of this year. He is responsible for instituting military training programs for the more than 3,700 young men presently enrolled in the Academy.



General Galligan has served as commander of the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, **Phan Rang Air Base** and then as director of Tactical Air Control Center at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon. He recently was presented t h e Distinguished Service Medal for “exceptionally meritorious service” in both duties in Vietnam.

His other military decorations and awards include two Distinguished Flying **General Galligan** Crosses, eight Air Medals, three Air Force Commendation Medals and the Medal of Humane Action (Berlin airlift).

Preceding General Galligan’s address, Legion and Auxiliary delegates will be entertained by Garden City Sweet Adelines. The chapter’s chorus, quartet and double quartet will perform. The director is Larry Nystrom.

Main event of the afternoon will be a parade at 3 p.m. The Air Force Academy’s Drum and Bugle Corps will be among tile units marching in the parade down Garden City’s Main Street.

Thirty-three counties make up the Seventh District of American Legion, which will be in convention.

**PHAN RANG STAFF MEMBERS**

**Robert Kellington & Joseph Burkhart:** Master of Ceremonies

**Jack Anderson:** Treasurer

**Lou Ruggerio:** Site coordinator/Contract negotiator

**Douglas Severt:** Reunion Coordinator

**Ed Downey/Barbara Brandt:** Drill & Ceremonies

**Christopher Boles:** Photographer

**Kirk Minert:** Aircraft Historian

**Bob Tucker:** Keeper of the Rolls

**Joe Kaupa:** In Memoriam

**Bruce Muller:** Badge Board

**Jim Erixson, Mike Maleski & Charles Simmons:** Chaplains

**Bob Howe:** Australian Ambassador

**Skip Ruedeman:** Place Reunion info in VFW Mag.

**Lou Ruggerio:** Place reunion info in AFA Mag. & VVofA Newspaper

**Doug’s Comments**

This will be the last newsletter until after the reunion. It’s hard to believe that this reunion has been so easy, but I guess that’s because I really didn’t do much of anything like in previous years. Jack Anderson, Art Braden and Bob Hoffman have done most of it so kudos to them. As you can see from the above list of staff members I don’t have the state representatives listed. I haven’t given up on representatives, but it’s a subject I would like to discuss at the reunion. My idea is to give representatives a list of every Phan Ranger in their state or portion of the state and they would make periodic contact with primarily those that are not connected on line because those are the guys that really don’t know what’s going on. Not only that, but we’ve had guys pass that were active on Facebook and after they passed no one seems to know anything about them. **Kirk Minert** who is always doing research on the membership questions why a certain member hasn’t been active anymore and if we had guys in the local area they could reach out to these people because usually at our age it’s a health related issue. I guess in a small way we can be our brother’s keeper or Phan Rangers helping out Phan Rangers.

**Bob Tucker**, Keeper of the Rolls, is doing a fantastic job in capturing guys names and other data for the Roll Call. **Kirk Minert** has meticulously gone through the roll call and is trying to get members to fill in the missing pieces. If every member would jot down everyone that they can

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remember from Phan Rang and give the list to Bob to add or check to see if they are already listed we can really keep him busy. Full names and organization is very important and if you don't know the date just put the year that you knew they were there. Also look through old duty rosters or orders for more names.

This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#). Previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter are available [here](#) for download.

**ON OUR WAY TO SEATTLE!**

*Lou & Annette Ruggiero, Tom Petersen, Joe Schwarzer & Chris Eyer, Michael Mulcahey & Deanna Young, John DeCillo, Joe & Nancy Kaupa, David & Jeremy McGaughey, Ed Downey & Barbara Brandt, Tom & Marcia Parsons, Jim & Betsy Kucipeck, Dana Anthony, Vernon & Marty Stephens, Charles and Bonnie Simmons, Bob & Joleen Hoffman, Bob & Marcia Tucker, Lee & Terri Moore, Jim Lehse, Rich & Carol Long, Bruce & Mary Muller, Dave Albright & Rayanne Ginck, Tom & Mary Strait, Marlin & Sandra Jordet, Larry & Louise Martino, Ernest Peters, Lou and Sue Matherne, John Deegan, Dennis Hawley, Jim and Judy Hemphill, Michael & Carla Reed, Eric & Mary Tyler, Frank & Cynthia Square, Ray & Mary Benson, Dean Harrison, Delebert & Sharon Ping, Scott Hamilton, Dennis and Gayle Collins, Steve Phillips, Jack & Judy Anderson, Elizandro & Lillie De Los Santos, Donald, Betty, Gordon & Barb deMeurers, Jim Erixon & Betsy Ross, Don and Joyce Casto, Henry Valentine, Ralph Gorman, Gerald & Bernetta Sandvik, Greg & Susie Schmidt, Jonathan & Jean Ann Buck, Robert & Sandy Spence, David & Peggy Cox, John & Jenny Davis, Doug & Joyce Severt, Charles Plaginos & Debbie West, John & Linda Shrank, Mike & Robin Crowder, Kelly & Marilyn Angel, Ronald & Virginia Adkerson, George & Kathleen Haskett, Carol Clarke, Christopher and Linda Boles and hopefully many more.*

**SEE YOU IN SEATTLE!**





**2012 Dayton**



**2013 San Antonio**



**2014 Tucson**



**2015 Charleston**



**2016 Oklahoma City**

Friends and comrades come and go, but with a precious few you should hold on. Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle, because the older you get, the more you need the people who knew you when you were young.