

In this issue:

Enduring Vietnam by James Wright

101st Airborne School Makes Paratroopers of 43 'Legs'

FAC Training At Phan Rang

AF Plane Crashes At Cam Ranh AB

Special Order of the Punctured Provider

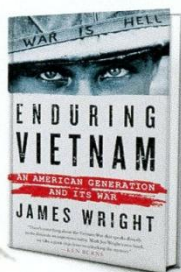
Follow Up

Doug's Comments

Enduring Vietnam

**The sour public opinion about the war led
to a distaste for returning veterans**

By James Wright



*Excerpted from
Enduring Vietnam:
An American
Generation and Its
War, by James Wright,
published by Thomas
Dunne Books,
St. Martin's Press.
Copyright 2017
by James Wright.*

Enduring Vietnam looks at the generation that grew up in post-World War II America and their war. During the 1960s, and likely even more so as the years have passed, many veterans would reject the ownership implicit in calling the American War in Vietnam "their war." But it was that generation's war. As youngsters, most joined older

generations in supporting it at the outset and many served in it. If not always eagerly or even willingly, they served. They may legitimately deny responsibility for starting the war—their parents' and grandparents' generations did that for them—but they cannot deny that this war marked them profoundly. And they marked the war.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

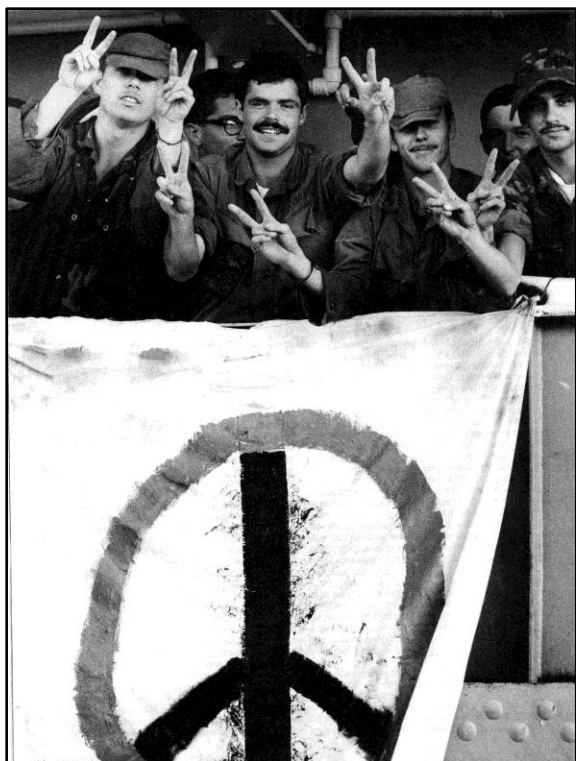
...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

“Stories worth telling”

More than 10 million baby boomers served in the armed forces in 1960s and early 1970s. Nearly percent of the men in that generation went to Vietnam. As the war dragged on in the 1960s, the proportion draftees in the military increased. But the majority of those who served enlisted, willingly volunteers or less willingly in response to or in anticipation of a draft call.

Certainly all Americans knew about the war in Vietnam at the time, but only a small percentage truly knew it. Politically, culturally, morally, the war and its images overwhelmed the period.



A symbol of the times for many people returning home from Vietnam there was little sense that they had participated for a fight for grand goals. These Marines, among the first in the withdrawal that began in 1969 are making peace signs aboard USS Bexar as they arrive in San Diego on Oct. 27, 1969.

People based their views on their assessment of the wisdom—and for some, their judgments about the morality—of this major war. Those opinions seldom were informed by the experience of the generation that was engaging in this war.

The diplomatic and the political developments, the broader global context and the public perceptions of the war are critical elements in understanding it. They all revolved around the question that politicians and their constituents increasingly asked after 1965: "Why are we in Vietnam?" While there had been opposition to the war from the outset, within a few years the war became increasingly a focus of public concern and public dissent. There was growing cynicism about its purported purpose and skepticism about the official narrative of its rationale, its conduct and its costs. Ongoing debates about the Vietnam experience pretty consistently describe it as a mistake—a mistake in commitment or a mistake in execution. Or both.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"



In the late 1960s, the growing dissent against the American War in Vietnam focused on costs and consequences. Critics increasingly pressed the case for recognizing moral costs and moral consequences. As the scale of U.S. involvement grew and the nature of the fighting intensified, so did the volume of reports and accounts from Vietnam. These led to increasingly negative public attitudes toward the war and, for some, perceptions of the men fighting it.

By late 1969, especially following the public disclosures of the My Lai massacre of several hundred Vietnamese civilians in March 1968, some accounts depicted the Americans no longer as victims but as eager perpetrators of the war, perpetrators often high on drugs. Although neither innocent victim nor cruel participant was a majority public view, those perspectives nonetheless often were dominating ones. Each was a condescending and grossly distorted generalization.

For the troops who served there, Vietnam was a pretty basic world in which they focused on survival as a daily goal. Participants in all wars do that, of course, but in Vietnam it became harder to project this personal goal, to imagine the daily experience, within a broader and grander set of military objectives serving critical national needs.

In the summer of 1969, a veteran reporter covered a group of 8,000 men of the 9th Marine Regiment as they prepared to join the first troops in the drawdown of forces. While they waited at Vandegrift Combat Base in northern South Vietnam for flights to Okinawa, Japan, there was "little gaiety." In one tent, James Sterba found the men listening to a tape recorder playing Country Joe and the Fish singing their iconic "I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag." In another tent, men looked at the now-famous June 27 issue of Life magazine with photos of

Americans who died in Vietnam during one week's combat; they found familiar faces. A young Marine said, "The people just don't understand what these guys have been through." He predicted, "No one anywhere from now on will be able to tell them anything about fear and bravery and all that other stuff."

There is an intellectual and even a moral tension in trying to summarize the lives of the Vietnam generation in the decades following the war. One might generalize that despite the searing experience many had in Vietnam and despite the indifferent receptions some encountered when they came home, this generation, by almost every measurement, adapted well. But the tension in this assessment is the danger of a Pollyannaish view that ignores the pain that many felt—and many continue to feel.

They accomplished their successes with little understanding and few helping hands from their contemporaries. Coming home was not a trivial process, and some experienced problems that were more than transitional. And for too many these problems would turn out to be their companions for a lifetime.

Chronic difficulties included physical disabilities, untreated medical conditions, notably those caused by America's own Agent Orange, the nightmares and personal demons of what came to be called post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug abuse, interpersonal tensions, unfulfilled dreams. One Marine, speaking about the 567 Marines and corpsmen of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, killed in action, said: "To this day, it is difficult to fully comprehend and reckon with the tragedy of these losses. For every death there were at least four times, or five times or maybe six times that many of us wounded. There is no way to know exactly how many. And these wounds included horrible losses of limbs and bodily functions—not the kind you see in the old time Western movies. These were wounds that forever changed your life, and inflicted long-term suffering and misery."

Far too many Vietnam veterans carried uncomplainingly the hurt of engaging a country that waited too long to say "Thank you for your service"—and then seemed to think the phrase was a magnanimous gesture that provided an adequate gratuity; a sufficient acknowledgment and apology from which all should then move on. One still-angry veteran said, "They're just trying to make themselves feel better for the way they shit on us 45 years ago. They say it automatically, much the same as people say 'Bless you' when some sneeze." He added, "If those other people

had to spend just one night inside my nightmares, they would fall to the floor with tears in their eyes."

Another said: "People may be more accepting these days, but they still do not want to hear our stories. More recently I am hearing 'Thank you for your service.' Mostly from store clerks who seem to say it as part of their training, or from the children and grandchildren of those who scorned us when we came home. When I hear those words, they really seem hollow. I wish they would just not say anything."

The pain endures. There is a risk of generalizing these lingering hurts into the stereotype of a pathetic, haunted, angry generation. The contrary risk is to ignore the personal agonies of too many. Or perhaps cruelest of all is to dismiss these as personal shortcomings or individual maladies, character flaws that separate the condition from the experience from which it stemmed.

For those who came home in the first years of the war, from 1965 to 1968 or 1969, their encounters and transitions were sometimes strained, generally uncomfortable and often disappointing. But they were rarely hostile. This began to change by 1969, as the image of the men fighting the war was filtered through the more negative view of the war itself. The most common manifestations of this were embarrassing encounters in which the war that had no name was not mentioned. But these sometimes flared into difficult confrontations. From 1969 into the early 1970s, the rapid drawdown of troops from Vietnam increased the number returning at a time when the domestic economy was in a downturn and the stereotype of the Vietnam veteran was the most negative.

Veterans who have felt disappointed or frustrated or angry about their reception are not unusual in American history. But the mutual discomfort and even the abrasions of their homecoming had no precedent, and these were compounded because veterans encountered an American public that too often was disappointed or angry or frustrated about the war itself— its inception, its operations, their perception of its conduct and its conclusion. In retrospect, it is striking that there was not even any pretense of a welcome home except from families and some neighborhoods or communities. These veterans were a symbol of something their fellow citizens and even their family and friends were trying to forget.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"

The distinguished American historian Frank Freidel wrote in 1980 that unlike troops who served in previous American wars, few of those returning from Vietnam were ever viewed as heroes: "What has distinguished Vietnam veterans from most of their predecessors is ... that a considerable part of the articulate abhorrence of the war seemed to spill onto them. They returned not as heroes, but as men suspected of complicity in atrocities or feared to be drug addicts. Not only the underprivileged but even the most prestigious were under a cloud."

By April 1975, those who had served in Vietnam watched on television the last scramble to evacuate Saigon. They were seldom surprised at this outcome, but some nonetheless had an emotional reaction to it. A Marine said simply that he was "glad it was over," and another said, in frustration, "It stinks." One soldier who had risked his life once to save his M16 rifle now watched all of that equipment abandoned. He felt guilty about leaving behind all those "we were trying to help." A veteran watching it on TV with his parents exclaimed: "You got to be kidding me! What a waste." A Hamburger Hill veteran said the fall of Saigon "just cemented the attitude that the whole thing was a terrible loss of life for no purpose." A soldier who had seen a lot of death said: "I was appalled and felt tremendously betrayed. That war cost me two years of my young, married life . . . probably 50 years counting the aftermath. However, for over 58,000 of our KIAs, it is a permanent disgrace." Someone else observed: "I followed the war after we left and wasn't surprised by the fall and pretty disgusted about the whole thing. Lost a lot of friends there."



One veteran would continue to insist, "We didn't lose." He emphasized his point: "We. Didn't. Lose." Instead, "We were withdrawn." Another described this as coming to terms with the conclusion that "it was like everything we did was for nothing. The year I spent putting my ass on the line over there? It was like it didn't matter."

War Protesters fall in behind a sailor at the end of a 1967

Veterans Day parade in Denver.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"

William Ortiz, a Vietnam veteran and vice president of the National Congress of Puerto Rican Veterans, admitted that the war "messes me up." He often believed that the United States "should step back in and do something, but then I think we shouldn't because so many lives would be lost." Beallsville, Ohio, a blue-collar mining and manufacturing community of 450, lost seven young men in Vietnam. In April 1975, it was struggling more with jobs and its economy than with the impending fall of Saigon. One father, looking at a high school graduation photo of his son who had died there, teared up as he said, "This little boy lost his life for nothing." His wife added, "He was our only child."

By a significant margin, most Americans thought we should stay out of Vietnam. In the spring of 1975, only 12 percent thought the United States should send military aid to Vietnam; 78 percent opposed. The veterans of the war did not disagree. They lost again, though, because Americans, in their haste to forget the war, also forget those who had served there. Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory had long criticized the war, but she believed the country had an obligation to those who had fought. She caustically asked the nation at the end of 1975: "You remember the Vietnam veteran? There is no particular reason why you should."



Big Crowds for protest

Anti-war protesters demonstrate at the United Nations Plaza in New York on April 15, 1967

Hardly anybody does. He had the poor taste to fight in an unpopular war, which made little sense while it was going on and none at all when it was lost." The prisoners of war received parades and gifts. "The grunt just came home." McCrory observed that "defeat has vindicated

them and deepened his sense of being had." And, finally, he could not escape the stereotype: "When he sees a Vietnam veteran on a television drama, it's likely to be a drug-crazed time bomb or a cleancut baby killer, and that doesn't add to his self-esteem." She concluded that on top of all of this, the veteran confronted unemployment double the rate of nonveterans of his age, and the GI Bill was inadequate to meet his needs.

That assessment was a pretty comprehensive summary of the world of many Vietnam veterans in the early 1970s. Most Americans did ignore them—many disliked them for what they represented, and some feared them for the dark anger they believed the veterans harbored. One reporter wrote of the returning veteran, "Silently he is slipping thru the back door of the nation which sent him to war." There were no parades, "no frenzied homecoming celebrations." Instead, the veteran has been 'vilified, condemned, ostracized. He has been branded a murderer, a junkie, an undisciplined disgrace." Perhaps most cutting, "for the first time in American military history, he has been labeled a loser." The stories of "heroism and dedication" had "been lost under a sea of public disgust."

Following the Paris peace accords, the POWs returned home in the early spring of 1973. It was a powerfully emotional moment. One reporter sat in a San Diego bar with a group of veterans, including a Marine missing his legs who sat in a wheelchair. They joined an elated nation watching the return being celebrated on television. They saw the emaciated POWs coming down the ramp from an airplane, with military and civilian officials waiting to welcome them and their emotional families watching for them, with military bands playing in the background. One of the men in the bar wept. This scene contrasted so sharply with his own homecoming: "Instead of saying, 'welcome home' they gave me the finger."

One veteran in Chicago spoke of the return home from Vietnam: "When you're over there, it's supposed to mean something to come home—but it don't mean nothing. You feel excluded." Another, who had left a factory job in Yonkers, New York, returned to find his job had been eliminated. "People don't want to be reminded of you. They don't want to know you've been in Nam."

Certainly most veterans received a warm welcome from family and neighbors—but even those who cared deeply for them frequently responded with a cold silence or at least an absence of curiosity about their war experiences. One came home just before Thanksgiving, and at a large

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

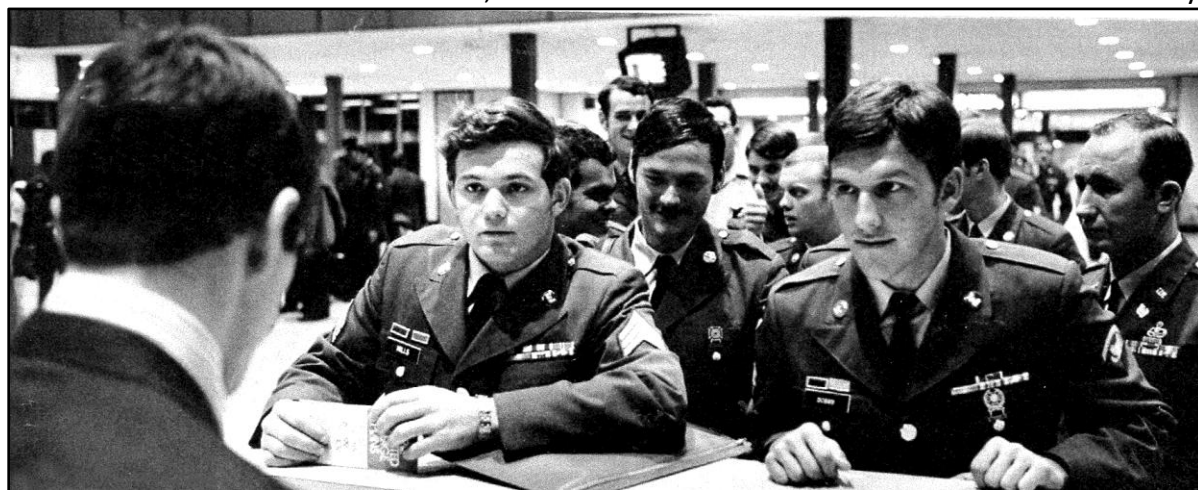
"Stories worth telling"

family celebration he expected to "be bombarded by questions and stuff," but no one mentioned Vietnam. So he never talked about it—for the next 40 years.

One soldier returned home right before Easter in 1970, and his parents had a big family gathering for him. "It didn't dawn on me till a couple of days later, but not one person said one word to me about anything. They would have asked somebody that went to Florida more questions about their tan . . . And that's how it continued. Nobody—when I think back on it—nobody said a word to me about anything." But another recalled, "First thing Mom asked was to show her my wounds."

One soldier said that his dad, who had served with the Marines on Iwo Jima in World War II, never once asked his son about Vietnam. Another said his parents never understood or wanted to know about his experiences or asked him why he was having flashbacks. He admitted that he was "pissed that too many people could care less about Vietnam." An injured Marine "never talked to nonveterans." He knew that they "wouldn't understand and didn't care anyway."

Another veteran found that "there were two kinds of people. .those who were deadset against the war and all of us who were there, and those who were not the least bit interested in my



Almost there

Soldiers at Seattle's airport get in line for tickets to their hometowns.

problems." He admitted that he was troubled by those who "had successfully dodged the draft, how they did it, and what they had accomplished in the last two years." When Karl Marlantes

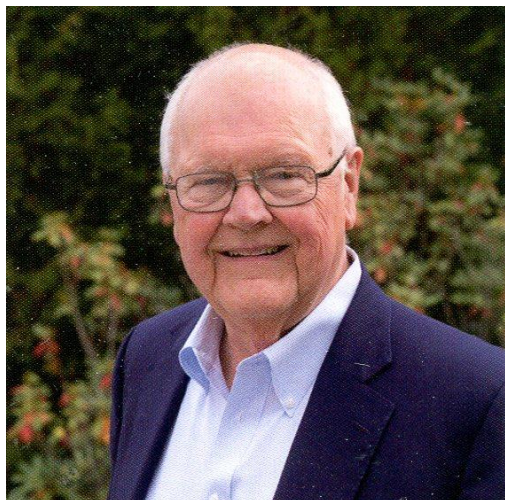
"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

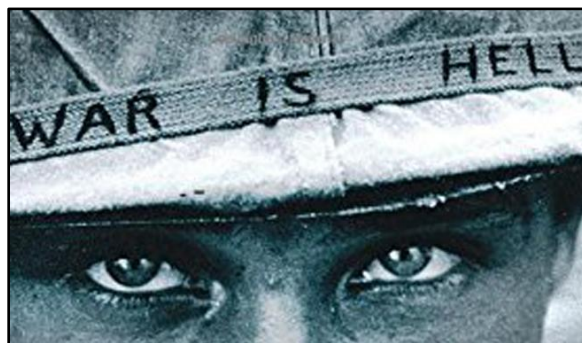
Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"

returned, he was surprised that there were not more people waiting at the airport to welcome him home. "To me, and to my parents, I'd been gone an eternity; to everyone else a flash." V



James Wright is president emeritus and the Eleazar Wheelock professor of history emeritus at Dartmouth College. He is the author or editor of six books. His efforts on behalf of veterans and education have been featured in the New York Times, The Boston Globe, NPR, and more. He serves on the boards of the Semper Fi Fund, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the Campaign Leadership Committee for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Education Center. He lives in Hanover, New Hampshire.



(This article is presented here with the permission of the author James Wright. If you haven't read any books lately this is one that you really should read. If reading is a problem, check with your local library or [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) as the book comes in many different formats. I know it sounds strange, but I myself do not read books very often because my eyesight isn't the best, but I've read some and listened to all of it and it's the kind of book that you just want to hold close to your heart. You will most likely have a greater understanding of how you and your fellow veterans feel. I found these comments from Paul Waibel. "There are many books about the Vietnam War. Many more will be written. The war was a national trauma that we, the generation who experienced it either as soldiers or civilians, will never really get over. It was a major event during a period when what it meant to be an American was questioned and forever changed.")

"Historians have written narratives of the war. They have tried to understand how we became involved in a war that others in the world understood was unnecessary and unwinnable. Few Americans could have found Vietnam on a world map; much less had any knowledge or appreciation for the history or the culture of the Vietnamese people."

"The nation's military and civilian leadership were woefully ignorant, as well. Why else would military forces designed to fight a conventional war in Europe be sent to the jungles of Southeast Asia to fight a guerrilla war. High tech weaponry proved no match for the primitive weapons of the Vietnamese guerrillas."

"President Johnson in 1965 referred to Vietnam as a "damned little pissant country." He and those around him believed that America could bomb the Vietnamese into accepting our plan for their future. If necessary, we would bomb them back to the Stone Age. In pursuit of that goal, we flew over 3.5 million sorties over Vietnam, only 8 percent over North Vietnam, and dropped more than 8 million tons of bombs on an area roughly the same size as New Mexico."

"By 1969, America no longer saw victory in the war as an objective. So why did the war continue until 1975? The lives of American and Vietnamese soldiers and the lives of the Vietnamese citizens meant little in the drama of American politics. Neither President Johnson nor President Nixon wanted to go down in history as the first American president to lose a war. Eventually, both became victims of the war they could not bring themselves to end."

"The real subject of James Wright's book is not why we fought and lost the war in Vietnam. Rather it is what the war did to the so-called "baby boomer" generation, those who served in Vietnam as well as those (myself included) who by luck or design managed to avoid military service. All of us were to some extent changed by the war."

"The extensive research, especially the numerous interviews undertaken by Professor Wright, together with an obvious gift for writing a historical narrative that keeps the reader turning the pages, enables the reader to experience the trauma of the war. We are able to live it, or in some cases no doubt relive it. This is not a book that will leave the reader with a "good feeling." ENDURING VIETNAM is a book that will enlighten all who read it, but will be especially meaningful for those who came of age during the sixties, those who lived with the war day by day, and for those for whom that experience will never end.")

The Screaming Eagle



Vol. 1, No. 6 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div October 25, 1967



Veterans Honor Graduates

New paratroopers of the 1st Brigade receive their parachutist wings as veteran Screaming Eagles fill the skies in a congratulatory jump. (Photo by Spec. 5 Robert Lloyd)

101st Airborne School Makes Paratroopers of 43 'Legs'

PHAN RANG - Forty-three new paratroopers received their wings on Cobra Drop Zone here recently as veteran paratroopers of the 1st Bde. 101st Airborne Div. filled the skies in a congratulatory jump.

The Screaming Eagle brigade completed its second jump school in Vietnam with students

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

“Stories worth telling”

jumping from a jet-assisted Air Force C-123. It marked the first time 101st paratroops have jumped from the modified aircraft in Vietnam.

An earlier jump school conducted in April, qualified 25 students after five jumps from an Air Force C-130.

Veterans Conduct School

Lt. Charles R. Hicks, Ottawa, Kan., brigade parachute officer served as school commandant for the five days of ground training and three days of jumping. CWO Richard J. Spleen, Ridgeway, Pa., was in charge of training and SFC Jimmy Keller, NCOIC, gave much of the instructions. Both are members of the brigade’s Aerial Equipment and Supply Plat. and have more than 800 jumps between them.

Lt. Col. Quinton P. Sunday, Eufaula, Okla., commander of the Spt. Bn., presented the wings to the new paratroopers.

First Jumps

Col. Sunday and Maj. Charles Allen, San Antonio, brigade provost marshal, made the first jumps from the aircraft during a demonstration drop for students on the first day of training.

Col. Sunday also jumped “wind dummy” for the students of their first of five qualifying jumps.

The students made a total of 215 jumps during the training while veteran paratroops made another 315 on other sorties.

Training Complete

The AE&S Plat. added a “swing landing trainer” for the school. The trainer helped students become proficient in parachute landing falls.

Other areas covered during the school were physical training, mock door exits, and control of the parachute during descent, deployment of the reserve, emergency procedures, parachute landing falls and jump master duties.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"



Al Bailey ready for a fun Jump, Phan Rang Oct 1967

FAC Training At Phan Rang

(The Sheppard Senator, Thursday, April 25, 1968)

Since transferring its operations from Binh Thuy to Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, a forward air controller (FAC) training school run by Detachment I, 504th Tactical Air Support Group, has graduated 139 students in five classes.

Lt. Col. Charles J. Servocky, school commander, said the assistance the school has received at Phan Rang is "one of the most outstanding support operations I have ever seen in my Air Force career."

The 18 instructor pilots at the school offer courses on both the O-1 Bird Dog and O-2 Super Skymaster observation aircraft employed by FACs in Vietnam .

"The FAC actually controls the entire air war in the South ." Colonel Servocky said. "Our job is to make him capable both psychologically and academically to do this job." (AFNS)

AF Plane Crashes At Cam Ranh AB



Three Americans were killed today when an Air Force C-123 Provider cargo plane crashed into the South China Sea as it came in for a landing at Cam Ranh Bay. The C-123 was using full flaps during a practice assault landing at Cam Ranh Bay when a flap hinge broke causing uncontrollable roll. The aircraft crashed into the sea almost upside down just short of the runway. Major **Grant Waugh**, Captain **Dwayne Mattox** and TSgt. **Bernard F. Morrill** (see pictures in Doug's comments) all perished in the crash. The loadmaster, **Robert Agrifoglio** survived.



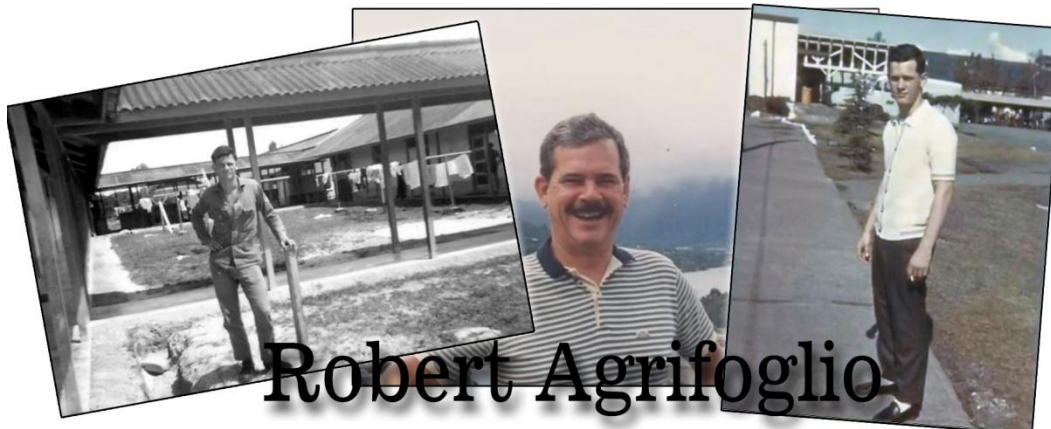
Pieces of the C-123 Provider fuselage are scatter on the beach at Cam Ranh Bay after crashing into the South China Sea.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"



Robert Agrifoglio

Robert passed away December 22, 2017. Robert (Bob) Agrifoglio enlisted in the U.S. Air Force on the 21 February 1961, which was his 17th birthday, and went to basic training in San Antonio, TX. Eight weeks later he received orders to Yokota, Japan, serving 3 years and was promoted from Airman 3rd Class to Airman 1st Class while still under 21 years of age. From there Bob was shipped back to the USA and was assigned to Colorado Springs, Colorado, Ent Air Force Base. He stayed in Colorado for a little over a year and received a special assignment to Bossier Base in Louisiana staying for 3 years. With his enlistment due he elected to apply for Load Master school in Sheppard Air Force Base, TX spending 8 weeks learning the load master aircraft trade. From there he was assigned to the 76th Military Airlift Squadron at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina. After 9 months learning the trade, including flying Presidential support missions, South American Defense Council and numerous support missions for the President (Nixon), his support personnel, numerous air drop missions and several missions to



Robert Agrifoglio

South Africa, South America and Middle East to include the 7 day war in Israel. Bob upgraded to Instructor Load Master and drop qualified in both personnel and equipment in minimum time ever seen before - 250 hours, normally not even considered without having 1,000 flight hours experience.

Bob received orders to go to Vietnam and on his way he qualified on the C-123K aircraft in both air drop and combat logistics, then survival school in Washington State and snake school in the Philippines before arriving in Vietnam in July 1970. He flew several

missions both north and South Vietnam before his accident on 10th

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

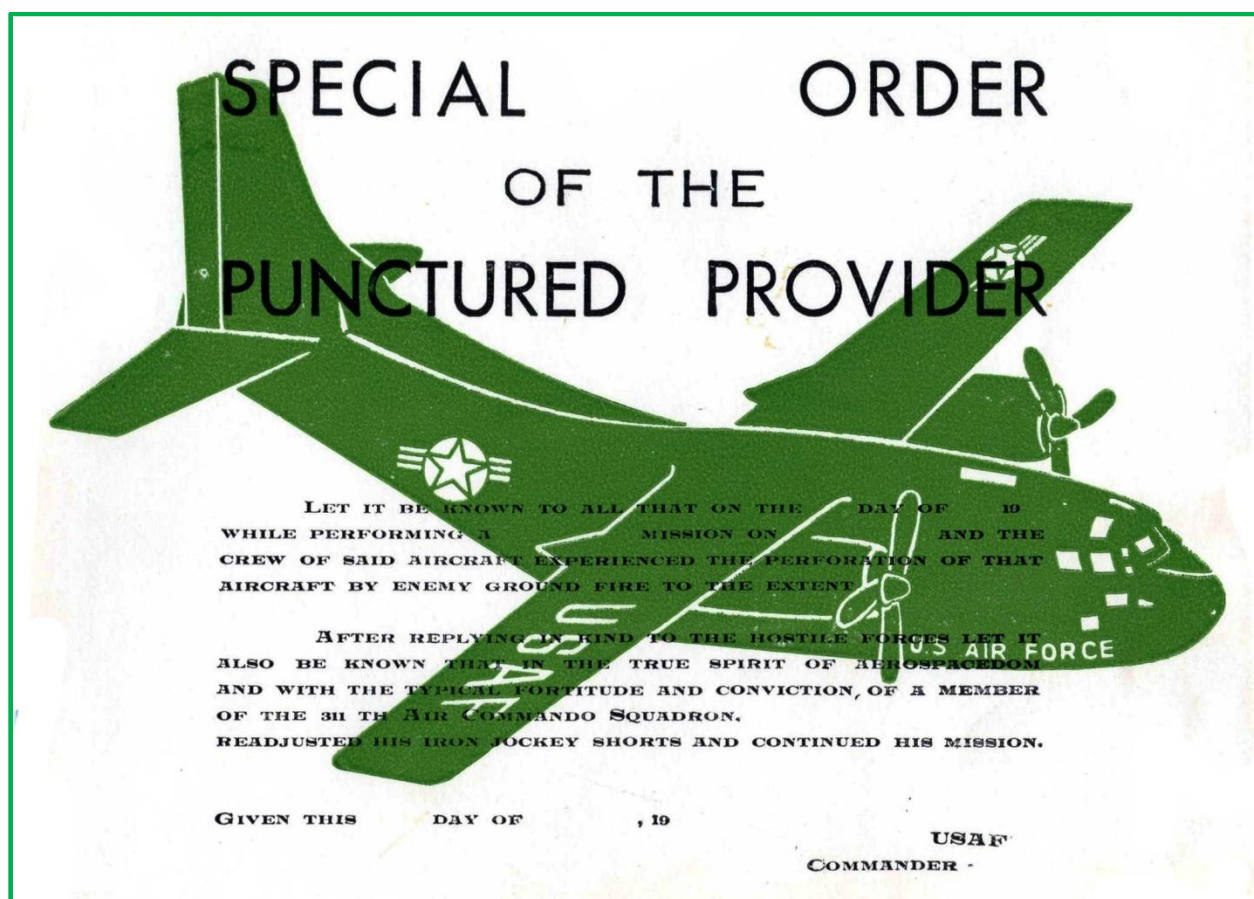
...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"

August 1970. Flying out of Phan Rang to Cam Ranh Bay the plane crashed attempting to land. The mission was to fly north and haul ammo in and support ground troops out, the day did not go well as the crew failed to accomplish the mission. Bob's fellow crew members were not as lucky but they are in a better place now. Bob spent the next 3 years trying to get healed and eventually got back on flying status only to discover additional injuries that would permanently remove him from flying status and eventually to a new career.

He was then assigned to a safety position and eventually to technical instructor in the safety career field for the Air Force Safety School located at Denver, Colorado. Unfortunately, his injuries prevented him from retiring with 20 years service and only wound up with 17-1/2 years. Bob was medically retired and selected for a position with the State of Colorado Highway Safety division where he spent a year before being recruited to the Federal Occupation Health and Safety and then to the Department of Defense (Army/Air Force) Safety Offices for the next 17-1/2 years when he finally retired in 1996.



Special Order of the Punctured Provider

Let it be known to all that on the ____ day of ____ 19__ while performing a ____ Mission on ____ and the crew of said aircraft experienced the perforation of that aircraft by enemy ground fire to the extent ____ .

After replying in kind to the hostile forces let it also be known that in the true spirit of aerospacedom and with the typical fortitude and conviction of a member of the 311th Air Command Squadron. Readjusted his Iron Jockey Shorts and continued his mission.

(Posted on Facebook by J Joseph Mack)

"We were a generation that asked nothing for what we did, and we gave all we had to keep us alive and, in our minds, to keep America safe and free. For us, it was a small price to pay for freedom. Whatever it took, we stepped up and paid that debt in full -- some more than others."

John Podlaski on Facebook

FOLLOW UP

Regarding the Gary Pogue flashback in Phan Rang New 142, I was there in '71 and also heard about the black Army guy on R&R from up country. It seems that he may have bribed a fellow black SP on guard duty along the fence line to let him over the fence to get to the town. At that time, all military were restricted to the base. Like Cinderella, he tried to return after the stroke of midnight (shift change for the guards) and was challenged by two SPs of a lighter skin tone. After he did not respond to several challenges, the SPs, doing their jobs in a war zone, took him down. To avoid raising an issue in the days of the Black Power movement, the two SPs were exonerated and transferred out (to Da Nang?). I never heard that the deceased soldier's DEROS was the next day, I thought he was a day or two away from returning to his unit somewhere closer to the front line.

I also remember the fireworks show on the 4th of July. In the evening, sirens blasted and we all got into our flack vests, helmets, etc., grabbed our M-16s, and clambered into the nearest bunker. We then got to watch the flares and other temporary sources of illumination dropped from Shadow and Spooky (C-130 gunships?). After a couple of hours, all clear sounded and we all went back to bed. In the morning, we were told that a cow had gotten loose in the mine field and tripped several of the alarm wires. So, we were invaded by a loose cow????

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

"Stories worth telling"

A planeload of guys were given a Christmas rollback that year, to get us home for the holiday. I left 'Nam about 3 weeks before my original DEROS and it was sure a good thing. Charlie seemed to get more accurate with his mortars after the base transitioned from a fighter wing to a tactical airlift wing in the middle of the year. Still didn't do much damage but when the freedom bird landed in Saigon, we learned that Charlie had walked mortar rounds down the flight line about half an hour after we took off, planting them right where our plane had been parked among other targets. Made it home and was very happy about that.

(Comments provided by Allan Campbell)

Doug's Comments

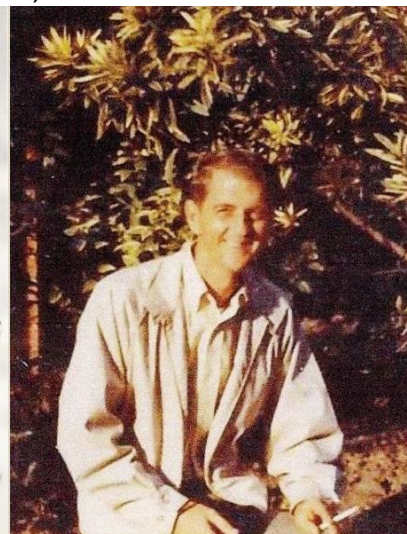
When I was researching the archives for the story of the C-123 Provider crash at Cam Ranh Bay on August 10, 1970 none of the articles that I found mentioned the names of the victims or the survivor of that crash. An excellent source of everything related to C-123's in Southeast Asia can be found [here](#). Aircraft 55-4527 from 310th TAC Airlift Squadron, 315th TAC Airlift Wing from Phan Rang AB was using full flaps during a practice assault landing at Cam Ranh Bay when a flap hinge broke causing uncontrollable roll. The aircraft crashed into the sea almost upside down just short of the runway. Killed were Maj. Grant Waugh, Everett, Wa., Capt. Dwaine Mattox, Virginia Beach, Va., and TSgt. Bernard Morrill, Peaks Island, Me.



Maj. Grant Waugh



Capt. Dwaine Mattox



TSgt. Bernard Morrill

We are a family! I think most of us that after we attended that first reunion in Dayton felt the same way. In a way it was almost like a life changing moment for a lot of us and even our

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 143

“Stories worth telling”

spouses. Each year brings another reunion and more additions to our family. We clearly are a family when we put out an appeal to help out a fellow veteran attend the reunion and we get such an overwhelming response. We are a family when we asked the members to commit early to the reunion and once again the response was overwhelming. We are a family when we invite our spouses and siblings to join us in Happy Valley to learn about our war time experiences. We are a family when we mourn the loss of a fellow veteran.

There have been a lot of new people join us in Happy Valley and I guess this information would be for them. A couple of weeks ago I suspended the sale of our Phan Rang Challenge Coin and all the patches and stickers because of the holidays as I don't have much patients to stand in those long lines at the post office and besides that the “Patchman” has escaped the frozen tundra to the sunny shores of Lower Alabama and several of us are going to be keeping him company for a couple of weeks in about a month. Come Spring we will start selling them again.

Instead of repeating all the reunion information again I will just refer you to [Phan Rang News 142](#). The only thing new is that we now have 130 tickets to the Grand Ole Opry on 12 October 2018. I've also had several inquires if we would have the capability to scan pictures at the reunion. Of course we will...I never leave home without my scanner.

My thanks to James Wright who gave me permission to reprint the article from his book, Enduring Vietnam. Wouldn't it be wonderful if he could attend our reunion? Wow!

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