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NOVEMBER 27, 1970

Three Tragic days in November, 3 Aircraft Crashes - November 1970
This is the first affecting Phan Rangers.

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

This Area's Great Morning Newspaper

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1970

142 Pages

46 Die As Viet-Bound Jet Crashes In Alaska **Runway Abort Fails**

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The pilot of a chartered jetliner ferrying servicemen to Vietnam apparently was trying to halt his takeoff when the DC8 nosed back onto the icy runway, was jolted by explosions, then crashed and burned, investigators said Saturday.

The Alaskan Command said 46 of the 229 persons aboard were killed in the crash, which occurred while the plane was taking off in darkness and a freezing drizzle from the Anchorage

airport.

Larry Campbell, National Transportation Safety Board—NTSB—spokesman in Anchorage, said a series of explosions “followed an attempted abort” as the fuel laden aircraft strained to become airborne. It was piloted by William G. Reid of Napa, Calif.

Witnesses said the plane slithered over the slippery runway, up a small mound and across a depression in the earth, cracking into pieces as it came to rest nearly three-quarters of a mile from the runway’s end.

Survivors and witnesses described a variety of small explosions they said occurred as the plane’s nose lifted, then turned downward. At least two explosions of larger size erupted a few minutes after the stricken plane skidded to a stop, one witness said.

Another said a blast hurled a ball of fire skyward. Others told of seeing bluish flames, of fire in an engine on the plane’s right side prior to the crash, and of what could have been a pressure stall or backfire.

Federal and local authorities, as well as spokesmen for Capitol International Airways which owned the \$12-million plane and chartered it to the military, generally declined comment as to possible cause of the crash or other related matters.

We won’t be able to release any technical data until the NTSB completes its investigation,” Cecil Edmonds, Capitol vice president said in Wilmington, Del.

Campbell declined to say why he believed the pilot was trying to abort the take off or what caused the action.

The plane left McCord Air Force Base at Tacoma, Wash., Friday stopping at Anchorage for refueling and a change of crew. It carried 219 passengers which military spokesmen said were military personnel and their dependents, including a number of children. It was headed for a stop in Yakota, Japan, en route to its Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, destination.

Military spokesmen said there were 174 known survivors among defense personnel and their

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 150 **“Stories worth telling”**

dependents. The survivors included several children and more than 100 injured persons, the spokesmen said.

A stewardess, Birgilla Ekelund of Stockholm, Sweden, was the only crewman killed, a spokesman for the airline said.

Airline officials said there were 10 crewmen. A National Transportation Safety Board spokesman in Anchorage as well as Alaska State Police officials, said there may have been an 11th airline employee aboard as a passenger.

A survivor who suffered minor injuries, William Goerz of Tacoma, said he felt a few bumps when the aircraft was half way down the runway. ‘Like the plane was going over rough spots or as through the tires were blowing.’

Goerz said the engines were revved up, then cut back as the plane neared the end of the runway. He said he and others sitting on the right side thought they saw one of the plane’s four engines fall off.

Joe Heywood of Anchorage, who witnessed the crash from his car near the runway, said he “saw the wings flutter.” “A big ball of flame went up maybe 120-150 feet high,” Heywood said. He said there were “three or four blue-colored flames that sounded like sharp cracks or explosions. ” He also described them as “like a big rumbling hiss.”

Several other survivors told of hearing a series of loud reports just before the crash and of seeing fire in an engine before the plane nosed into navigational lights on the runway and, as one put it, “just kept going and going.”

A pilot at the airport, who declined use of his name, estimated the plane was traveling 170 miles an hour at when it crashed.

John Pedersen, a mechanic at Anchorage International Airport where the mishap occurred, said he and a friend heard two sounds like a pressure stall or a backfire as the plane went down the runway. He said he didn’t see the flash which usually accompanies a pressure stall but that his friend did.

They thought the pilot “had reversed his engines to slow down,” Pedersen said. “It could have been he lost power.”

A spokesman for Northwest Orient Airlines in Anchorage, which handles maintenance work at the airport, said the plane took on about 17,000 gallons of fuel during a stop he said lasted about an hour.

George LaRose, the airport manager, said an Alaska Airlines pilot reported runway conditions as “poor to fair” for braking about 15 minutes before the crash. “There was nothing unsafe about it,” LaRose said of the runway. He said he inspected it “immediately after the accident. There was sand on it and everything.”

Army Sgt. AL A. Henderson of Sumrall, Miss., who was sitting near the front of the plane, said he heard “a series of noises” and “thought the tires were blowing out” as the nose began to lift. The plane seemed to vibrate from underneath,” Henderson said. “The nose fell back down and bounced several times.”

He and Goez told of watching the plane crack open behind the cockpit and behind one wing. Goez said he saw four injured persons sprawled on the runway, one of them a woman.

Pfc. Philip Zimmerman, Jersey City, N.J., said the rear of the plane stayed on the ground. “When the plane broke up,” he said. “gas (fuel) was sprayed all over everyone.”

Henderson said he “Jumped out of the plane” near “where the front exit would have been.” Flames licked the midsection and wings at the time, he said and “the seats were torn up and food containers were scattered around.”

Capt. William Nix, state trooper in charge of emergency measures at the airport during the crash, said most of the bodies were found near the middle of the plane.

**The following is the National Transportation Safety Board’s report of the crash.
Report number: NTSB-AAR-72-12**

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“Stories worth telling”



DC8-63F

ABSTRACT: Capitol International Airways, Inc., Douglas DC8-63F, N4909C, crashed following an unsuccessful takeoff attempt from the Anchorage International Airport, Anchorage, Alaska, at approximately 1705 A.S.T. The flight from McChord Air Force Bases, Tacoma, Washington, to Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of South Viet Nam, with en route fueling stops at Anchorage, Alaska, and Yokota Air Base, Japan. There were 219 military passengers and a crew of 10 aboard the aircraft. Forty-six passengers and one flight attendant received fatal injuries in the post-crash fire. At the time of the takeoff, precipitation, in the form of freezing drizzle was occurring at the airport and the runway was covered with a light coating of ice. Evidence of tire skid marks, degraded rubber and shredded tire casing were found over most of the length of the runway. The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the aircraft to attain the necessary airspeed to affect liftoff during the attempted takeoff. The lack of acceleration, undetected by the crew until after the aircraft reached V1 speed, was the result of a high frictional drag which was caused by a failure of all main landing gear wheels to rotate. Although it was determined that a braking pressure sufficient to lock all of the wheels was imparted to the brake system, the source of this pressure could not be determined. Possible sources of the unwanted braking pressure were either a hydraulic/brake system malfunction or an inadvertently engaged parking brake.

SYNOPSIS: Capitol International Airways, Inc., Flight C2C3/26, of November 27, 1970. A Douglas DC-8-63F, N4909C, crashed and burned at approximately 1705 A.S.T., following an unsuccessful takeoff attempt from Runway 6R at the Anchorage International Airport, Anchorage, Alaska.

The flight was being operated as a Military Airlift Command (MAC) contract flight from

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McChord Air Force Base, Tacoma, Washington, to Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of South Viet Nam, with en route refueling stops at Anchorage, Alaska, and Yokota, Japan.

The investigation disclosed that the aircraft failed to become airborne during the takeoff run and overran the end of the runway. It continued along the ground and struck a low wooden barrier, the instrument landing system (ILS) structure, and a E-foot deep drainage ditch before coming to a stop approximately 3,400 feet beyond the end of the runway.

Here’s some other interesting facts from the report:

The flight departed the ramp at approximately 1654 and, upon request, received clearance to Runway 6R. The takeoff checklist was completed except for the transponder and ignition override items, while the aircraft was being taxied to the runway. The flight was cleared to taxi into position to hold on Rummy 6R at 1700:25, and was cleared for takeoff at 1702:40.

The captain stated that after the flight had been cleared into position he taxied slowly onto the runway and stopped the aircraft with the nose pointed slightly to the right of the centerline. He also stated he did not set the parking brakes while on the runway awaiting takeoff clearance and, further, that the parking brakes had not been reset at any time subsequent to brake release at the terminal ramp.

The first officer had been previously assigned to make this takeoff and while the aircraft was in position on the runway, the captain briefed the flight crew that he (the captain) would handle the brakes, set the take off engine parer, and make the necessary airspeed calls attendant with the takeoff.

The remaining checklist items were completed by the crew and at approximately 1703, the flight was cleared for takeoff.

The captain stated that he advanced the power to 80 percent (N2 compressor r.p.m.), released the brakes (pedals) and said, " lets go to the first officer. He then advanced the throttles to the takeoff parer of 1.87 EPR. The No. 1 engine power was set by aligning the N2 r.p.m., fuel flow, and exhaust gas temperature (EGT) indicators of that engine to correspond with those values obtained on the other three engines.

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In regard to the takeoff, the captain testified: "The aircraft appeared normal, up to approximately 130 - 135 knots. The speed did not appear normal, up to approximately 130 - 135 knots. The speed did not diminish, the acceleration somewhat was decayed or flattened out. I continued to VI. VI was reached and there was no more decay, the acceleration was continuing... and at 145 knots or... somewhere within that area, the speed flattened out. We continued and it appeared that there was sufficient runway to continue the takeoff, rotate, and continue flight...

Two passengers, both U. S. Air Force pilots, stated that the initial acceleration of the aircraft on the takeoff roll appeared to be slow and that after they had proceeded about 2,000 to 3,000 feet down the runway they began to hear a series of loud reports which they believed were the aircraft's tires blowing out. It was their consensus that the aircraft lacked the necessary speed for takeoff and that soon after the rotation occurred the ride became extremely rough. At about this point, the first of three impact jolts was felt. The nose of the aircraft came down and the engine noise ceased. They reported that all lights in the passenger cabin went out and that a fire developed on the left side of the aircraft before it came to a stop. Most of the other survivors gave similar accounts of the events that occurred during the takeoff attempt and crash sequence.

Probable cause: The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the aircraft to attain the necessary airspeed to effect lift-off during the attempted takeoff. The lack of acceleration, undetected by the crew until after the aircraft reached V1 speed, was the result of a high frictional drag which was caused by a failure of all main landing gear wheels to rotate. Although it was determined that a braking pressure sufficient to lock all of the wheels was imparted to the brake system, the source of this Pressure could not be determined. Possible sources of the unwanted braking pressure were either hydraulic/brake system malfunction or an inadvertently engaged parking brake.

Tom Barden wrote on Facebook: A guy with me from Holloman went to Luke AFB for F-100 school. He was a F-106 guy and I was already a F-100 guy so they let me test and go with a Oct 9th port call. He had to stay for the school but was on that plane. I would have been too. He survived and went on to Tuy Hoa. Talked to him once after he got there. I was supposed to go there too but changed my orders to PR after I landed at Cam Rahn Bay. I forget his name but

may have a copy of my original orders. GOD was watching over both of us.

(Doug’s comments: It’s highly likely that there were other Phan Rang connections on this flight, but the biggest impact was probably psychological because most of us took that very same flight path and many of us flew on Capital International. We will probably never know of all the Phan Rang Connections, but my connection with that flight crew was that I drove them to the McChord AFB passenger terminal. I worked at the Rodeway Inn in Tacoma where the contract crews stayed and I drove the courtesy bus as one of my duties.)

NOVEMBER 27, 1970
This is the second event affecting Phan Rangers
The Crash of C-123, Bookie 102

THE MORNING HERALD

Fayette County’s Only Morning Newspaper

UNIONTOWN, FAYETTE COUNTY, PA., MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1970

79 Aboard In Vietnam **Air Troopship Vanishes**

By GEORGE ESPER

Associated Press Writer

SAIGON (AP) - Search aircraft flew in overcast skies Sunday looking for a U.S. C-123 transport (**Bookie 102**, tail number **55-4574**) that vanished shortly after taking off four days ago (Friday, Nov. 27) in South Vietnam's central highlands with 6 Americans and 73 South Vietnamese on board.

Authorities said the Americans include five Air Force crewmen and a military passenger. The Vietnamese are soldiers and their wives and children. Dependents often accompany Vietnamese soldiers being ferried between camps.

The U.S. Command withheld the announcement of the plane's disappearance until Sunday

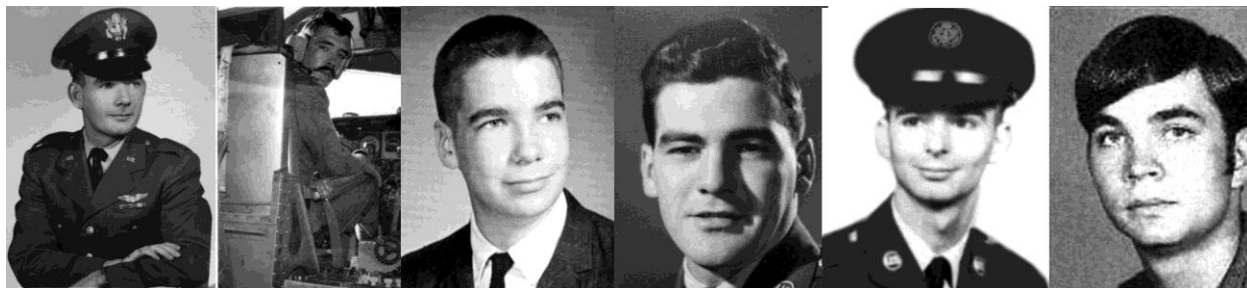
because of security, and even then it declined to give details about the flight or the location of the search, to protect any survivors from capture by enemy troops if the plane is down.

A communiqué said:

A U.S. Air Force C123 aircraft has been missing in Central South Vietnam since Friday, with 79 personnel on board —six U.S. and 73-Vietnamese. It was last heard from... shortly....after, takeoff when, there appeared to be no problem on board. The search and rescue, still in progress has been hampered by bad weather, and the aircraft has not been located.

Spokesmen said the C123 took off under overcast skies with a low ceiling. Shortly after takeoff, it disappeared from radar screens. The Fairchild Hiller C123 "Provider" is a workhorse of the Vietnam War. The Air Force considers it the ideal troop carrier "to operate in a primitive environment such as the combat zone of Vietnam,"

Maj. Ben H. Swett wrote in his diary: Sat 28 Nov - Bookie 102 [tail number 55-4574] crashed at 1330 yesterday in hills west of Cam Ranh Bay. Bob Baker was on it. 79 people, 6 U.S. from the 19th TAS at Tan Son Nhut [Maj Robert Lee Baker, 1Lt Marvin S. Arthington, 1Lt Frederick M. Rader III, TSgt William Brandon O'Kieff, Sgt Allen James Bodin, A1C Frederick R. Neef] and 73 VN. Waited all day for the weather to break so I could fly search with the FAC.



From left to right: Maj. Robert Lee Baker, 1Lt Marvin S. Arthington, 1Lt Frederick M. Rader III, TSgt. William Brandon O’Kieff, Sgt. Allen James Bodin and A1C Frederick R. Neef.

Maj. Ben H. Swett wrote in his diary: Mon 30 Nov - Stood by all day to search for Bookie 102 and 540. Total of 123 people, 38 U.S. Weather in the hills was impossible. No use losing another bird. **But hard waiting.** Glad to hear that Dusty Rhodes wasn't on Bookie 540. [He had finished his tour and was going to Cam Ranh Bay to catch his freedom bird. As he was walking out to

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Bookie 540 his friend Dick Purdum, 310th TAS, said "Why don't you come and ride with me?" so he changed aircraft at the last minute. Dick said "he was really hung over from his fini party and I was flying up in plenty of time for him to catch his freedom bird home, so I said catch a couple of winks and fly up with me which he did."]

NOVEMBER 29, 1970

This is the third event affecting Phan Rangers

The Crash of C-123K, Bookie 540

On November 29, 1970, a USAF C-123K Provider (**Bookie 540**, tail number **54-0649**), Flight Bookie 540, from the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron, was on a routine milk run (passenger) mission from Phan Rang to Cam Rahn Bay when it crashed into a mountain ridge 14 miles outside Cam Rahn Bay. The Provider crashed in poor weather, striking high ground at an altitude of 2700 feet in thick clouds. On board the aircraft were 44 people, consisting of 5 crewmen and 39 passengers. There were 32 U.S. military and 12 South Vietnamese. Two ARVN survivors were found five days later walking toward a road. The crash site was located after a week on December 5th by U.S. Army Rangers and South Vietnamese Rangers. They found two U.S. survivors, Sgt **Vincent J. Fairbrother Jr.** and SGT **Gary Aldredge**, who endured the week with no food or water. Thirty U.S. military plus ten ARVN troops were killed.

The lost crew included pilot CAPT Cecil G. Moyer Jr., co-pilot 1LT James F. Saxby, and crewmen SSGT Grayson H. Newberry, SSGT Harry A. Watson, and CAPT Norbert A. Podhajsky. The U.S. passengers killed were SGT Jack R. Gibbs, TSgt Robert B. Johnson, SGT James E. Stubblefield, SMS Bobby D. Seay, SSGT James C. Starnes, 1LT Elmon C. Caudill II, 1LT Jon M. King, PVT Gary Anderson, A1C James B. Young, CWO Franklin D. Defenbaugh, SP4 Samuel A. Grayson III, SP4 Charles A. Johnson, SP4 Donald A. Slate, 1LT Charles L. Kollenberg, SGT Ronnie C. Teschendorf, SP4 George Beedy, SGT Billy J. Hogan Jr, SGT Raymond H. Gray, SGT Joseph C. Blackwell, PFC Joseph A. Jacques, PFC Arthur J. Menn, SP4 Ronald R. Greenhouse, SSGT Ralph S. Guck, CAPT William D. Kennedy III, and CAPT Robert J. Polniak.

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First Row from left to right: Capt Cecil Gerald Moyer Jr, USAF, pilot, 1Lt James Francis Saxby, USAF, copilot, SSgt Grayson Henry Newberry, USAF, aircrew, SSgt Harry Allen Watson, USAF, aircrew, Capt Norbert Albert Podhajsky, USAF, aircrew and Sgt Jack Ronald Gibbs, Army.

Second row: TSgt Robert Bruce Johnson, USAF, Sgt James Edward Stubblefield, 435th MMS USAF, USAF, SSgt James Cecil Starnes, USAF, 1Lt Elmon C. Caudill III, USAF, 1Lt Jon Marc King, USAF and Pvt Gary Anderson, Army. **Third row:** A1C James Bruce Young, USAF, CWO Franklin

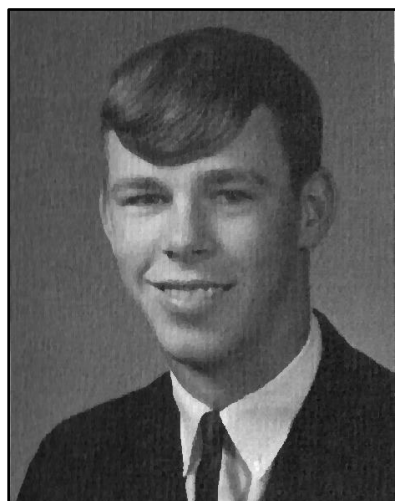
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D. Defenbaugh, Army, SP4 **Samuel A. Grayson III**, Army, SP4 **Charles A. Johnson**, Army, SP4 **Donald Anthony Slate**, Army and 1Lt **Charles Louis Kollenberg**, USAF. **Fourth row:** Sgt **Ronnie Carl Teschendorf**, USAF, SP4 **George Beedy**, Army, Sgt **Billy Jack Hogan Jr**, USAF, Sgt **Joseph Carlton Blackwell**, Army, PFC **Joseph Arthur Jacques**, Army, PFC **Arthur John Menn**, Army. **Fifth row:** SP4 **Ronald Raphael Greenhouse**, Army, SSgt **Ralph Stephen Guck**, USAF Capt **William Daniel Kennedy III**, Army Capt **Robert Joseph Polniak**, Army. *Note: No pictures could be found for SMS Bobby Daren Seay and Sgt. Raymond Gray.*

Gary Ingram wrote on Facebook: “That was a very sad day. We were working in the propeller shop the next day talking about it and just about all us flew from Cam Ranh to Phan Rang on C-123's to start our tours.”



Billy J. Hogan

The Daily Standard, Dec 15, 1970 Cape Sergeant Killed in Plane Crash

CAPE GIRARDEAU - A young Cape Girardeau airman, Sgt. Billy J. Hogan, who had been reported missing following the crash of a U.S. transport plane over South Vietnam Nov. 29, is dead.

Sgt. Hogan's mother, Mrs. Jack Hogan, was notified of her son's death Saturday by officers from the ROTC unit at Carbondale, Ill.

Hogan, 21, was listed aboard a C-123 aircraft that departed Phan Rang Air Base, South Vietnam, Nov. 29, enroute to Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam.

Mrs. Hogan was not given details of the crash. In an official document Nov. 30 concerning her missing son, it was stated that “Radio contact was lost with the aircraft and fuel exhaustion time had elapsed.”

It went on to say that a low cloud ceiling and rain hampered search operations.

Word of the sergeant's death, specified few details. The official notification bears the signature

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of Maj. Gen. R. G. Dupont, Military Personnel Center, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force.

It read that the sergeant “died in South Vietnam on Nov. 29, 1970, as a result of injuries received in an aircraft crash.”

Sgt. Hogan, an aircraft maintenance specialist, had been in Vietnam since May. He completed basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Tex., and was assigned to Sheppard Air Force Base, Tex., where he received training as an aircraft maintenance specialist. He was a 1967 graduate of Central High School.

The associated Press reported Nov. 30 from Saigon that a C-123 had been missing since the day prior to its report. Six Americans and 73 Vietnamese were reported aboard the aircraft.

Crew members carried an emergency radio to broadcast their position if they crashed, but aircraft flying above the clouds had been unable to pick up a signal, the report stated.

Viet Crash Kills Area Co-Pilot

(Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, NY, Dec 19, 1970)

An Ontario County Air Force Lieutenant was one of 44 men killed when the transport plane he was co-piloting crashed in Vietnam, his family was told yesterday.



James Francis Saxby

First Lt. James Francis Saxby, who would have been 24 today, was aboard a C-123 that had left Phan Rang en rout to Cam Ranh Bay Nov. 29 when it crashed, killing U.S. Air Force and Army men and 12 Vietnamese.

His parents are Mr. and Mrs. James E. Saxby of Holcomb.

The 1964 honor graduate of Bloomfield Central School married the former Susan Haberstroh in 1968. He was commissioned Feb. 7, 1969, the day his only child, Jennifer, was born.

He left for Vietnam duty June 30.

Lt. Saxby had been president of his high school senior class when he decided to go on to LeMoyné University.

Survivors in C123 Crash

(Sioux City Journal, Dec 6, 1970)

SAIGON (AP) - The U.S. Command Saturday announced the rescue of two U.S. Air Force sergeants - the only survivors among 30 other Americans and 12 South Vietnamese aboard a C123 transport that crashed into a mountain near Cam Ranh Bay.

Rescuers said Sgt. Gary Lee Aldridge, Navarro, Calif., and Sgt. Vincent Fairbrother, Riverside, R. I., were on the first leg of their journey home when the crash occurred last Sunday. Both suffered leg fractures.

The two rescued airmen were taken to a military hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. There, Aldridge was reported in fair condition and Fairbrother as seriously ill.

Officials said Fairbrother had a fractured knee with infection and Aldridge a broken leg.

2 GIs Survive Viet C123 Crash

(Pacific Stars and Stripes, Monday, Dec. 7, 1970)



By PFC DAN EVANS

S&S Staff Correspondent

CAM RANH BAY, Vietnam- Rescuers Friday found two survivors at the crash site of a U.S. Air Force C123 transport after a frustrating six-day search which saw helicopters repelled again and again by low-hanging monsoon clouds.

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The men were lifted out of the jungle by an Army helicopter Saturday after lying injured without food or medical aid for nearly a week. They were among 44 persons whose fate had been uncertain since the plane disappeared Nov. 29.

Air Force S.Sgt. Vincent Fairbrother, 20, and Gary Aldredge, 22, were both tangled in the wreckage of the C123 following the crash.

"When I finally got unpinned and tried to get up I realized my left leg was broken," Aldredge said as he waited to undergo surgery here. Fairbrother was pinned in the wreckage until the rescuers arrived Friday.

"Both Vince and I yelled and knew each other was alive. It took me two or three days to get to him. I crawled to him but couldn't help. We stayed together for several days. Then I tried to crawl for help, I was weak and kept passing out." Both men said they heard helicopters flying near the crash site several times, especially during the latter part of their long wait. Aldredge said he never gave up hope. "I laid up there and screamed for all I could scream," he said. "It was a nightmare."

"We are the only ones alive," said Aldredge. A spokesman for the U.S. Command in Saigon reported Sunday that search teams had not accounted for all of the 44 persons aboard the plane.

The plane encountered heavy turbulence just before the crash, Aldredge said. "I realized it was going to happen, I don't know why but I knew." He said.

"The only thing I had to drink was rain water I got by laying my handkerchief on my chest," he said. "I chewed the handkerchief dry and then laid it on my chest again," he said. "I guess the only water Vince got was dripped in his mouth from the rain."

The rescue team was lowered into the jungle some distance from the crash site by an HH53 helicopter, according to sources here. The team consisted of about, five Americans and 10 Vietnamese, Aldredge said.

When the team arrived late Friday afternoon, Aldredge said the first man he saw was a

Vietnamese carrying a rifle., *'My imagination, started playing tricks on me," he said. He said he first feared the man was a Viet Cong.

The two men were carried up the side of the mountain and had to wait nearly 24 hours to be airlifted out due to bad weather.

Doctors here said Aldredge suffered a broken left leg and abrasions while Fairbrother received leg injuries and infections of a hand and foot, both men were in satisfactory condition physicians said.

U.S. spokesmen said search and rescue operations were continuing for a second C123 missing since Nov. 27 and presumed down somewhere in the Central Highlands. The plane was carrying 79 persons.

David Wisser wrote on Facebook: “One of our line Chiefs TSgt. Bruce Johnson was on the plane that crashed into the mountain and was killed. I also knew Sgt. Gary Aldredge who was one of the 2 survivors. Those were definitely dark days for all of the C-123 guys!”

The Art of Ronald Dreher



Red Horse Keeps Going

(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, January 30, 1969)

A full turnover in assigned strength with no loss of productivity was completed by the 554th CES (HR) “RED HORSE” during the first weeks of 1969.

Starting on Nov. 5, 1968, a phaseout of the total squadron began. By Jan. 10, 1969, 12 officers and 384 NCO’s and airmen had processed out and returned to CONUS.

During this same period, a totally new “RED HORSE” squadron arrived by C-141 aircraft direct from Eglin AFB, Fla., where they had completed their 45 day combat infantry and engineer training.

The transition phase, and unit training is now complete and the new squadron fully committed to construction projects in the continuing expansion and development of Phan Rang AB.

During this rotation and training period the squadron maintained maximum construction efforts, completing a total of 24 projects with a project dollar value of \$688,865.

Fourteen of the 24 projects were started and completed during the two-month squadron rotation period while the remaining ten projects were started by the old squadron and were 30 to 80 per cent complete at the start of the turnover.

Major projects completed and turned over to the 35th TFW include two airmen dormitories, two officer quarters, a flight line fire station, security police operations building, projective revetments for the base communications building, LOX plant, and power plant; a concrete access taxiway, an armament and electronics maintenance shop, VASI approach lighting system for the runway, plus asphaltic concrete paving for the base supply yard, base perimeter roads, and security fencing.

“RED HORSE” is currently working on 18 major projects which include every type of construction from sewage and electrical lines to steel arch protective aircraft shelters. The

more important of these include ammunition storage revetments, a 300-dining hall for the 315th SOWg, water treatment plant, dental clinic, 25 bed addition to the dispensary, 5,780 feet of concrete protective walls, three airmen dormitories, and the steel arch shelters for F-100 aircraft.

In addition to its construction responsibilities at Phan Rang, the 554th also has a deployed unit that furnishes all new construction for Nha Trang AB, and a second deployed unit constructing new facilities at Ban Me Thuot AS only 18 miles from the Cambodian border.

The combat trained airmen of “RED HORSE: also serve as one of the largest defense forces at Phan Rang, providing perimeter and mobile defense along with the Republic of Korea 1st Battalion, U.S. Army tenant units, Australian Defense Force and USAF Security Police.

Day-Flying Shadow Clobbers Enemy 11 Miles From base

(Fan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, date unknown)

“Shadow” is not just a “fly by night” say the crew who fly the AC-119 gunships, and cite a recent mission as proof of their statement.

A crew headed by Lt. Col. F. J. Rostkowski had completed its nights mission and was relieved for crew rest.

At 11:50 a.m., B Flight 71st SOS, was asked to provide service for troops in contact 11 miles east of Phan Rang. Quickly roused from their beds, colonel Rostkowski’s crew rushed to their aircraft and scrambled their “night attack” AC-119 and were airborne by 12 minutes past noon.

They were over target less than five minutes later and ready to support Republic of Vietnam Marine forces attempting to recover dead and wounded. The night flying crews said they couldn’t tell the difference from their watches, but that a daylight-illuminated target was most unusual.

Shadow hovered over the area while Phan Rang-based F-100 Supersabres bombed and strafed the location from where ground fire pinned down the friendly forces attempting a beach

landing. The crew then expended 21,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition under the direction of the FAC before being relieved by another Shadow.

The crew also felt that they had set a new record in that Sgt. Robert Dunn, gunner, was able to keep the guns hot, expending 18,000 rounds in six minutes.

Although no longer a “fly by night” outfit, the Shadowmen still believe their motto **“Deny Him The Dark”** expresses the primary mission of Shadow.

DEAR BALDY

Dear Baldy,

One of my fellow crew chiefs from another fighter squadron claims one of their top pilots can be easily spotted every time he racks up a KBA on one of his strikes. My friend claims this fighter jock has a black outfit set aside for these occasions and although I’ve never been around flight lines a long time, this is a new one on me!

Unbelieving

Dear Unbelieving,

In my alter ego as “Phan Rang Strike Reporter,” I’ve found the statement to be true. He’s a sterling member of the Yellow Jackets - - we’ve determined the what, but why is still unknown.

Baldy

Dear Baldy,

What’s this I hear about the 45th TFW weekly intelligence briefing at Batson Hall? I’ve heard rumors that they are going to start serving beer and pretzels so the troops won’t go to the clubs to get the scoop.

Wondering

Dear Wondering,

Afraid I’ll have to shoot you down on that one friend, the intelligence people are continuing to rely on straight factual reporting. That gives you a choice-go to the club for suds and rumors or

come to Batson Hall Monday evenings for the straight poop on how things are going here in “The Fun Capital of the World.”

Baldy

Dear Baldy,

I’ve been told that the excavation behind the base library is a new Security Police two-man bunker. It seems too small for that! Could it be a one-man bunker?

Defense-Less

Dear Defense-Less,

Believe it or not, that is the new base swimming pool. From looking at it, I see that it is too small for even a one-man bunker!!

Baldy

Reunion Appeal by Bruce Muller

Our Reunion is only 5 months away. Here is my challenge to each person going to Nashville for our 2018 Reunion. We have always had a RAFFLE table set up in the Hooch (Hospitably Suite for everyone else except Bruce) to raise money for special gifts for our participants at the Reunion." Last year it was the PRAB pins."

Start thinking **NOW** what you might bring to Raffle. It not just a Joe Kaupa Raffle, its everyone's.. If you’re not good at making something, bring a bottle of wine or craft beer from your area of the country. I challenge all my Brothers and sister to help us make this our best reunion ever. Thank you!

Doug’s Comments

In newsletter 75 I commented that the issue was a milestone of sorts for me as I never thought that I would have been able to find enough information for so many newsletters. Well, I’ve now done double that number and the stories just keep coming in, in fact, I already have the next three issues already filled. This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#). Previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter are available [here](#) for download.