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 **Know your Airman** 

Christopher Boles

I came into this world on May 12, 1948, Santa Paula California. My mom gave me a Kodak Brownie camera for Christmas at age 7 (still have it). I can recall the first time I used it was to take b/w photographs at Disneyland on the Jungle Ride. It was in high school I signed up for photography classes and found the love of photography. It was that ability to take a photo, process the film, and make prints. The photography class was part of the yearbook staff and I was out for every game of football, basketball and school activity. What photography afforded me in high school, being a shy kid, was a chance to be close to the cheerleaders who in my opinion were the prettiest girls at school. It was through photography I found out that photographers had access to places that the public doesn't normally get to go.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

...keeping the memories alive

Phan Rang AB News No. 151 **“Stories worth telling”**

My mom gave me her Argus A7 (35mm) and that changed my life, as I could get 36 shots on a roll instead of 12 on the Brownie. It was a fully manual camera, meaning you set every setting. In my first year of junior college, I managed to save a few dollars here and there from work to buy a Minolta SRT101. I took so many photos I was hand loading my film from 100 ft. rolls, getting 40 shots into those little canisters and used the Minolta until it quit. I also learned how to process color slide film at home.

I thought I would see if I could get better at taking photos in junior college, but the instructor said I was too advanced for his class, and asked me to drop out. I was afraid of getting drafted into the Army and headed to Vietnam, so my dad and I had a discussion that was short lived. He wanted me to go into the Navy and I said I hated the ocean. My best friend at the time James Jones had a girlfriend that said we should go to Canada to evade the draft. I said to my dad I was considering that, and he said he would find me and drag me home. So that ended that idea!

One day Jimmy said he went down to the AF recruiter and took a test to see what he qualified for. I thought that would be a way to not get over to Vietnam. So in October 1967, I took the test, and the recruiter called me and said that I scored high on manual arts, so that meant fixing things. I received my draft notice in the mail to report to the office to take the physical. That was an experience few won't ever forget! Of course, I passed, and that moved towards the top of the list. The next thing to come in the mail was my draft notice to report in April. I walked it down to the recruiter, put it on his desk and said when can I get in the AF? He said his quota was 3 in April. He walked to the back to check something and said I was #3 and could go on April 12, 1968. My best friend Jimmy had enlisted two weeks before me.

On April 12, 1968, I enlisted in the AF in Los Angeles with a lot of other men there who were drafted and enlisting in other branches of the service. In the middle of the night, we boarded a plane and landed a couple hours later in Amarillo Texas. We boarded a bus that took us to in processing, a meal and off to the barracks. We had to wait for our flight to fill out before we could begin training, so we just sat around and were fed 3 meals a day as incoming “rainbows”. In a few days we had a full barracks and off we went to get haircuts, shots and new uniforms. I did run into my best friend Jimmy in basic (last time I would ever see him) and he told me to “take the by-pass test” and to make sure I kept after the DI's to make sure I got the chance. So I started harping to my DI, SSgt Vargas to let me take the by-pass test. One day on the parade

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ground he came up to me and said you get your chance to take the blanket blank test and you better pass it. The next day I walked myself over to the testing room, opened the booklet and was surprised to see questions on there I never heard of. I did the best I could and left. A few days later, SSgt Vargas called me to his office and said I had passed the test! That meant no tech school and direct to my first base.

I had to wait a week after training to get my orders and they were to Vandenberg AFB, California. I reported there in July and was promptly told that after some flight training I would be most likely going to Vietnam before Christmas. I guess the joke was on me! After attending altitude chamber training, PACAF survival school in Spokane WA in freezing November, my orders were to Vietnam the day after Christmas 1968. The orders were TDY to Jungle Survival School in the Philippine's and then on to Ton Son Nhut AB.

Another world I fell into when I approached the door, felt the heat and humidity arriving at TSN. To make a long story shorter, after 3 days at TSN, I said I wanted out of there and I didn't care where they sent me. So the next day they handed me orders to some place called Phan Rang AB. The following morning I was on a C-123 headed to who knows where. I landed on concrete, dropped at the depot and was picked up by one SSgt Price, one of the admin guys. I was shown around the unit, introduced and off to the barracks to drop my stuff. Over the next couple of days, I was just running around getting uniforms, in processing and settling in. Two weeks later was the big hit on the AB with the sappers coming through the fence (a time and place many will never forget). They opened the Conex, passed out the M16's and two clips. I thought what the heck, two clips is all I get? Our guy on duty that night was under his bunk as rounds landed around the base and planes blew up.

The next day 3 of the 4 of us were assigned to go around the base and photograph everything that was hit, including crater holes. Sergeant Dirksing, William Diebold and the other whose name escapes me were out all day shooting. Sgt. Dirksing was the photographer who went across the street and photographed the dead NVA that were killed that night. He came back telling us that we should go look. I didn't go as I was in the lab making test prints of all those negatives that Leonard Parent our lab tech was processing.

For 3 weeks we printed 25 copies of all those negatives, with stacks all over the lab of prints coming off the print dryer. Those were 12 hour days.

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I did have my moments of going off base, flying all over Vietnam on a C-123, and on the first two flights of the C-119 Shadow/Stinger gun-ships. My photos had me as a top photographer for all of SEA in August 1969. I photographed the president's son in law get his air medal and the cover of the AF Times December 1969. I must have been doing something right as I was given a Commendation medal, and a radio as a gift (still have it). The work for the Army on my off time made me an honorary member of the 2nd of the 1st Dragoons. I decided then I wanted to go to Brooks Institute of Photography and pursue photography as a career, I applied, was accepted with a 3-year waiting list to get in.

I wound up back at Vandenberg AFB after PRAB and finished out my enlistment there in 1972. I got a job as a civilian GS-7 photographer at the Monterey Naval Postgraduate School after working as a mechanic trainee right out of the service. It was in Monterey I found my first wife, graduated Brooks Institute in 1978, was married for 14 years and had 6 kids. As a student, I entered photographic contests and took top honors with the Professional Photographers of America with one of my photographs. I worked in the Brooks color lab for a few months before taking a job at Photomat color labs. Later I was fortunate to work for almost 5 years at Rockwell International Science Center as an in-house photographer. The scientists there were on the cutting edge of electronics during the time of the space shuttle. I burned out working there while trying to run a shop working on Alfa Romeo's at the same time. My wife at the time got a job transfer and I left Rockwell. I fell back on my mechanic skills working for 3 guys importing exotics from Europe that today are multi-million dollar cars. I sold off all my gear to keep the family afloat and it would be 14 years, a divorce and the introduction of the digital camera before I would start to take photos again.

I started substitute teaching as it paid good money, picked my days to work, and had me requested a lot of certain schools. I needed a more steady income, so I went to work in So. Calif as a full-time mechanic, when my dad said he would pay my tuition to get my teaching credential. After 18 years of special education, several school districts, and marrying my wife Linda of 12 years, I retired out. Now living in Arizona the need for teachers beckoned me to come back to the classroom teaching special education.

My oldest and only girl is a leading professional wedding photographer/instructor in Denver, CO (Jewels Gray Photography). My oldest son Rodger is a Msgt in the AF. Rodger after doing a long

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stint with the U-2, just qualified as SMSgt with 18 years as a maintenance supervisor for a jet squadron in Italy, My middle son Kenneth enlisted as a Marine and did 3 tours in Iraq. He was in on the first invasion and each tour followed the bad guys up the road on each tour. He has 50% PTSD and works as a firefighter for the USFS. One of my other sons Sean has worked for United Airlines and is retraining to work in HR for a major airline after several years as a dispatcher.

I still take photographs and taught my wife how to take botanical photos. She has won major awards at the local county fair and I have been published several times in recent years. The only regret I have is that I didn't take enough photographs of everything that was there. No one ever said it was going away in a few years, as that would have changed everything. I appreciate knowing that you are enjoying the photos at the reunions as well as making them a part of your family history.

My dad served on two destroyers in WWII and he said you will know what it means someday to be a veteran, and now I understand what he meant. I am proud of my photos and as a lasting testament to the work, we did at PRAB.

Steve Phillips

Military Synopsis - Steve Phillips 1962-1998

Born 10-24-1944, Leake county ,MS.

Graduated Edinburg High School May 1962.

Enlisted US Army 1 June 1962

Processed Ft. Jackson, SC.

Basic training Ft. Gordon, GA

Lineman School US Army Signal Corp, Ft. Gordon GA

Antennaman School, Defense Communications Agency, Ft. Meyers, VA , Arlington Hall Station, VA, US Army receiver site Sharpsburg, MD.

First duty assignment-US Army Tehran Relay Station, Tehran, Iran, 1963-1965.

Second US Army Stratcom construction team Suitland, MD. Sub assigned US Army Receiver site La Platta, Md

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(TDY)-Kagnew Station, Asmara, Ethiopia.

(TDY)-US Army Stratcom Facility Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

End of army enlistment 1966.

December 1966 enlisted USAF.

Direct duty assignment 1909th Communications Squadron, Andrews AFB, MD

Telephone Equipment Installer Repairman

36274 for all the below.

Volunteered for duty in southeast asia.

1..1879th Communications Squadron, Nha Trang RVN AB 1967-68

2... Further assigned 1972 Communications Squadron, DaNang AB RVN.

3.. Further assigned NCOIC Flamingo Switch, Marble Mountain Air Facility.

4.. Returned to Main base Da Nang for last two months of tour.

1968-69,5th Mobile Communications Group, Robbins AFB GA.

(TDY) George AFB, CA.

1969-1970,1884 Communications Squadron, Tuy Hoa AB RVN.

(TDY) Nha Trang AB RVN.

August 1970 Separated USAF.

1972 employed by Kentron Hawaii Ltd as advisor to VNAF Phan Rang AB RVN.

Later went to Buckholtz Field ,Marshall Islands. Kwajelien Missile Range with Kentron.

16 years later joined Mississippi Air National Guard,172d AW,172d CES with the electrical shop until retirement.

1985 -1998.

Charles Edward Meyer

Sgt (E-4) Charles Edward Meyer

AF17601216, AFSC 57150 Fire Protection

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Spec October 30, 1961, Greenville AFB, Miss.

United States Air Force July 11, 1961, July 12, 1969

AIR FORCE SERVICE

Lackland AFB, TX, July 11, 1961, Squadron 3723, Flight 985.

TI's TSgt. Barber and A1C DeRobert

August 5, 1961, transfer to Greenville AFB, Miss. For fire protection specialty course.

Graduated October 30, 1961.

Kadena AB, Okinawa, 6313 Air Base Group, December 1, 1961 to June 1, 1963.

Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 354 Tac. Fighter Squadron, July 5, 1963 to December 16, 1966.

Phan Rang AB, Republic of South Vietnam

January 15, 1967, 35th Fighter Squadron (CE)

35 days flightline duty - 335 days Containment Station Driver-Engineer.

In that 335 days we moved the station three times. Station Capt. SSgt Johnson. I drove and operated AF530 Pumper. January 20, 1968 I was transfer to Tyndall AFB, Panama City, Fla. And assigned to 4756th Air Base Group, Civil Engineer Squadron.

I did 370 days in Phan Rang and the base was one of the few bases that had fire hydrants..only one! The base water supply came from wells three miles from the base. In March Gen. Westmorland came through. After the hooch's were torn down I got the pleasure of burning 3 million dollars worth of Philippine mahogany that was used in their construction. My time at Phan Rang I got to know that base like I've learned all the bases and cities I worked in.

John Walter

Went in the USAF June 1st 1967 in Los Angeles California. At the airport Three of us were singled out to go to Amarillo AFB for Basic training. After Basic I went to Sheppard AFB for reciprocating engine aircraft school. Spent time in PATS. Or should I say duty sq. While at Sheppard I received orders for Phan Rang Vietnam, assigned to the 309th ACS. Arrived in Vietnam December 23rd, 1967. My year in Vietnam was very eventful. From the long ride to the flight line, watching the truck mounted machine guns working and have to go the other way around base. Working all night, then going to the beach all day. Going to the Strip and Thap Cham. Having to gear up and go flying. Those wonderful WETSU landings, and quick turn around. Took my R&R in Hong Kong. Catching hops to Cam Rahn and Bein Hoa, to visit high school buddies. Taking a C123K to

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China Airlines for IRAN inspection. What a flight, pumping oil to the engines, cold, noisy. Almost got married in Taiwan. Sitting at the end of the revetments watching the other side get mortared. USO Shows. Going to the BX and only beer was Black Label and Falstaff. Paying Mamasan, money, tide, bleek and smokes. My Father died early December, I had my orders to Charleston AFB South Carolina, So they processed me out and I was on a freedom bird out of Cam Ranh on December 17th 1968.

I was at Charleston AFB for four years, 1969 - 1973 working out of the AR shop on C124's and C141A's. Then along came the C5A and the 124 went away. I did receive a second set of orders back to Vietnam to work on A1E's. Lucky for me they got canceled. They were replaced with orders to Dover AFB Delaware. Again I worked out of the AR shop. I was at Dover 1973 - 1978. Received orders to Rhein Main AFB Germany, working at the Enroute Squadron, Turning C5A's C141A/B's and World Airways DC-10's.

The USAF said my 5 year paid vacation in Europe was over and I received orders to Grand Forks AFB North Dakota to work on B52G's. Worked as a Flight Chief and Line Chief for the B52G's. The B52's left and were replaced by B1B's. The last job I had was In charge of the alert pad. There were 3 B1B Bombers fully loaded with nuclear weapons and 6 C135K Tankers ready to go. President Reagan ended aircraft on alert status, so, that meant my job was gone. I had put in my papers so it wasn't that bad.

I ended my career May 1 1992 with the rank of SMG E8. I now live on a Lake in Minnesota.

Michaelangelo Rodriguez

Michaelangelo Rodriguez
Writer/Producer/Photographer

New York born, 1947, now 23 year Delaware resident,

Vietnam Vet Phan Rang 1970-71. Air Force. 35FMS. Fabric Repairman.

Michaelangelo Rodriguez, is a writer/producer/photographer who studied his master's degree

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in Creative Writing with famed author Joyce Carol Oates. He also holds a bachelor’s degree from The Ohio State University in Writing and Literature. His Vietnam photos were in an exhibition at Kennesaw State, GA; as well as in Scripps-Howard newspapers.

He is CEO of Avocado Media LLC a startup media company which has produced three films, the latest being “Delaware Shore the movie” based on his fictional book of same name (avail on Amazon).

He studied acting at Delaware Theatre Company and also enjoys writing in multiple genres which also include his political thriller/novel “Waiting for the Garden of Eden.”

He’d like to give a shout out to the Wilmington Veterans Hospital which helped him restore his life after battling his PTSD, depression, and abuse: unwanted legacies.

His life philosophy is “if you see the glass half empty, I see it half full.”

Robert Agrifoglio

Robert (Bob) Agrifoglio enlisted in the U.S. Air Force on 21 February 1961, on his 17th birthday. After basic training, he received orders to Yokota Japan where he was promoted to Airman 1st Class after 3 years. His next duty stations were Ent Air Force Base in Colorado and Bossier Base in Louisiana, after which he elected to apply for Load Master School in Sheppard Air Force Base, TX. He was assigned to the 76th Military Airlift Squadron in Charleston, South Carolina. His duties here included: providing Presidential support flights, South American Defense Council support missions, and numerous air drop missions in South Africa, South America and the Middle East (which included the Six Day Arab-Israeli War). Bob was selected to Instructor Load Master where he drop qualified both personnel and equipment in record time, 250 hours. For reference, qualifications like these take upwards of 1,000 hours of flight experience.

After receiving orders to Vietnam, Bob qualified on the C-123K aircraft to conduct air drops; which included attending survival school in Washington and Snake School in the Philippines. After his arrival in Vietnam on July 1970, he would fly several missions before his accident on 10th August 1970. Flying out of Phan Rang to Cam Rahn Bay, his plane would ultimately crash upon landing. Bob would survive, but his fellow crew members were not as lucky. He

recognizes, however, they are in a better place. After rehabbing for 3 years to get back to flying status, Bob and his doctors discovered that his injuries would ultimately keep him from ever flying missions again. However, this would eventually lead to his new career.

He was assigned to a safety position and then to technical instructor at Air Force Safety School in Denver, Colorado. At 17-1/2 years of service Bob was medically retired and selected for a position with the State of Colorado Highway Safety 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.

Jim Rabourn

Born: 9 April 1944

Place: San Jose, CA

Places lived: Neodashe, Kansas – 1944 - 1962

Lincoln, Neb

Sioux City, SD

Lake Manawa, IA

Council Bluffs, IA

Graduated High School: May 1962, close to bottom of the class. Joined Military: 30 May 1962 (day after graduation). Basic Training: Lackland AFB, TX (San Antonio). Advanced Training: Sheppard AFB, TX (Witchita Falls) Data Processing Operator

Assignments

Grand Forks AFB, ND Sept 62 – Jul 66

The only way out was to PCS, spend four years or separate. I volunteered for Vietnam, at this time they did not tell you where you were going (classified), but I had a clearance and personnel told me.

Phan Rang AB, Vietnam Jul 66 – 67

While stationed here I worked on Civic Action (teaching English plus other work), plus my regular job at Data Automation. Helped construct the computer center, Civil Engineers put the building up and installed A/C, but we did the rest. Worked three months at the BX while

waiting for our office to be completed. When I left was promoted to SSgt.

Kelly AFB, TX Aug 67 – Jan 68

Phan Rang AB, Vietnam Jan 68 – Aug 69

Again, worked in Civic Action with SSgt Kenny Rogers (NCOIC of Civic Action) – this time working with all the villages around the base in reconstructing homes and taking children 10-15 (at age 16 they had to be in the army) to the base to tear down old buildings. They then got to take this material back to their village for use in reconstructing houses or whatever. This tour was totally different as the base came more and more under attack. First by the Viet Cong and then the North Vietnamese Army, the difference between these two forces was like night and day. The NVA hit what they were aiming for, while the VC just fired mortars at us aiming for an empty field between the flight line. When I returned to Phan Rang I replaced the guy that replaced me on my last tour.

Tachikawa AB Japan – Sept 69 – Jul 71

Worked in the computer center and was put in-charge of closing all the computer centers at bases around Japan that were being closed down. Final job was closing the computer center at Tachikawa.

Yokota AB Japan – Jul 71 – Aug 74

Plattsburgh AFB New York – Aug 74 – Sept 76

Took my son fishing for the first time at the river running through town where he caught the only fish (salmon) but lost it and was also his first fish.

Kadena AB Japan (Okinawa) – Sept 76 – Mar 83

Scott AFB II – Mar 83 – Jun 86

Program Manager for a \$150 million project putting computers at 27 bases around the world. Part of the project was the design of a wireless LAN and hand-held computer. I wrote the contracts for these two items along with a contract for the computers to be installed.

Kwang Ju AB Korea – Jul 86 – Jul 87

Team chief in Combat Communications. We deployed every month on a practice exercise. Took a team to a Japanese Air Base to participate in war games being conducted there.

Ramstein AB Germany – Aug 87 – Jan 91

Program Manager responsible for the establishment of the Joint Analysis Center at RAF Molesworth, UK. Also, established a network that connected all the Intel Centers in Central Europe together, that enabled them to do Video Teleconferencing between each other among other things.

Hurlbert Field Florida – Jan 01 – May 92

Superintendent Operations. Retired on 30 May 92 after serving 30 years in the USAF as a CMSgt.

Department of State

Jan 93 started a new career working for the Foreign Service as an Information Management Specialist.

Jul 93 – Jul 95 – Belgrade, Yugoslavia Information Management Specialist

Sept 95 – Dec 1999 – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan - Information Management Officer

Dec 1999 – Jun 2002 – Tashkent, Uzbekistan - Information Management Officer

Sept 2002 – Sept 2005 – Berlin, Germany - Information Program Supervisor

Oct 2005 – Apr 2009 – Pristina, Kosovo - Information Systems Officer

Retired 30 April 2009

Volunteered at USO 5000 hours

Volunteered at Retiree Affairs Office Eglin

Volunteered at Air Force Armament Museum Eglin

I have lived in or visited 45 countries.

Languages:

Vietnamese – Taught by the students I was teaching English. They said if they had to learn English I had to learn Vietnamese. So for the first half hour of the class I learned Vietnamese.

Japanese

Serbian
Russian

John T. Claybaugh

I am John Claybaugh. I was born in Salem, Illinois August 14, 1948. I went to the public schools; Salem Central, Salem Jr. high, and Salem Community High. I graduated in 1966. I then worked as tail chainman on a survey crew for Rochester, Goodale, Moldovan, and Spain engineers inc. I remember my crew chief called them Runt, Grunt, Moan, and Smiley. We surveyed a lot of pipeline, a few roads and the parking areas and roads at Carlyle Lake in Illinois.

In 1968 I received my letter saying: “Greetings and Salutations. You have been selected”. In March of 1968 I enlisted in the Air Force. I did my basic training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio. I was told that after basic I would have a short leave before my next assignment. NOT! I left Lackland and went directly to Tech school at Lowrey AFB, Denver, Colorado. I was at Lowery for 6 months. Then I took 14 days leave as I went to my next duty station. I went to England AFB, Alexandria, Louisiana. Oh yes, I am a weapons mechanic. At England AFB I worked on the A-37 aircraft, (tweety bird) I was there until I received orders for Phan Rang.

I left England AFB March of 1970. Before I left for Nam’ I got married in February and arrived at Phan Rang in March. I was assigned to the 435th Munitions maintenance Squadron. I worked on the F-100, (lead sled). I was on the loading standardization crew. Our crew received a trophy from 35 TFW quarterly award for outstanding load crew. I was on crew 15. I still have the trophy.

Let me back up a little. When I arrived at my squadron, I was sent to the barracks. This barracks was an open bay barracks. My friend Larry and I, with a few others, went to the commander and received permission to build the rooms on both floors. They were to be rooms that would be for two people. We were able to get a lot of material from the army detachment. There were four of us that decided that upstairs, instead of having the partition between our rooms, we built a counter for our bar. It had a stereo system and we even had a sign outside our door to the hallway that read, “Ghetto Bar”. That is how we spent our free time in our barracks drinking.

Our crew was sent to many bases TDY to help train other crews and learn more on weapons

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systems of other aircraft. When I left Vietnam, I was stationed at Holloman AFB, Alamogordo, New Mexico. I worked on the F-4 Phantom. I was there in 1971-1972 then I was sent to Ubon AFB, Thailand. I worked on F-4s again. Also, we refurbished many gun pods. One day, while in the hangar, we heard what sounded like hail. We saw that it was rounds hitting the hangar. We saw some spinning on the floor. Headquarters said we had a couple of snipers shooting at the runway and hangars. I was there six months when I was sent on emergency leave. My wife and son were in the hospital. I came home and was later reassigned to Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton Ohio. I was transferred there on a humanitarian reassignment. There I was no longer with TAC

but was now in SAC. I was working on the B-52 Strato-fortress. I was at Wright-Patt from the end of 1973 to September 1975 when I was honorably discharged.

My current wife and I have been married 28 years this Feb. 2018 and live in the middle of 75 wooded acres. Mostly hickory's and oaks. We call our property Heavenly Acres. When we got married in 1990, I have three children and Sharon has four. We love camping and traveling. When at home we stay busy with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Steve Curry

I joined the Air Force September 1968 after what seemed like the longest bus ride in the world I arrived at Lackland and the fun started. After Lackland I went to Sheppard for the first Tech school, Medical Fundamentals then to Brooks for 907X0 Preventive Medicine school I arrived at my first base Perrin AFB Tx May of 1969, six months later I received 37 days notice to report to Phan Rang and arrived in country December 1969. I was assigned to the USAF Dispensary Aerospace Medicine Military Public Health Section. Responsible for testing drinking water, swimming pools and beaches, conducting the communicable disease program including the VD program. Collected insects of medical importance. Managed the industrial hygiene occupational health program and conducted occupational physicals on all local nationals that worked on base. This is where I met my wife of 47 years. From there I went to McCellan CA reporting in January 1971 but by February 1971 I had orders to return to Vietnam and arrived in Tan Son Nhut June 1971 after Saigon I went to Charleston AFB, Kadena AFB, Eglin AFB, Howard AFB and back to Eglin. I retired at Eglin 1989 and went to work for the O&M range contractor as the Radiation Safety Officer. In 2000 I was offered a civil service position in the same office I retired from and spent the last 15 years as the Installation Radiation Safety Officer Eglin AFB. I

retired again in 2015 and now spend my time in my wood shop and fishing when i'm not playing with grand kids.

Richard Oelkers

I served at Phan Rang Air Base from late April 1968 to early May 1969. I was part of the Colorado ANG (120th TFS, F-100s) deployment. I joined the Colorado ANG's 140th Tac. Fighter Wing on 10 Sep 1965, and was immediately put on active duty prior to USAF basic training. As background, in 1965, the 140th was one of several ANG fighter units authorized by the National Guard Bureau and USAF to exceed 100% manning. This resulted in a quick buildup of over 100 additional personnel in the 140th. The program was code named “Beef Broth”, which was stamped in bold letters on our personnel folders. Our pre-active duty consisted of half days of classroom instruction and drills, and half days working in our assigned AFSCs under the supervision of skilled NCOs. My AFSC was 647X0, Material Facilities Specialist.

The 140th buildup came at just the right time for me and many other guys who were facing the draft, and who did not want to go into the Army. I had taken my draft physical in June 1965. I passed the physical exam and written test, and was classified “1A”, meaning I was immediately eligible for the draft. This brought my personal situation into sharp focus. I began to explore my options to avoid the draft. I looked at the active Army, USAF, and the Naval Air Reserve. Eventually, I had decided to join the Naval Air Reserve in Olathe, KS, but had not yet taken the oath. Then, just at that time, I received a postcard in the mail from the Colorado Air National Guard. They were looking for people—which I later learned was due to Beef Broth. Apparently, they had obtained a list of potential draftees from my local draft board (Local Board #13, Englewood, CO). I didn't even know what the Air National Guard was. I asked my Dad about it; he was an Army Air Forces veteran of WW II, and an Air Force civilian employee at Lowry AFB. He informed me that the Colo ANG was an Air Force reserve type of organization out at Buckley Field, which was located seven miles east of Lowry AFB. I decided to go talk to them. They obtained my physical and ASVAB test scores from the Denver MEPS. They told me that based on my test scores, I qualified for any position in the COANG, however, most of their openings had been already been filled. I was offered Cook, Baker, Air Police, or Supply Material Facilities Specialist. I picked Supply.

Come November 1965 it was time for me to leave Denver, and travel to San Antonio, TX for

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basic training. This was to be my first ride in an aircraft, but unlike other guys who traveled by commercial air, I and one other guy were transported to our destination in a C-47. And, shockingly, as we boarded the aircraft, they issued us parachutes! Thinking back on this, I suspect the crew was just having some fun at our expense.

We landed at Kelly AFB, where the TIs were waiting for us. I was assigned to the 3710 BMTS, which was an all-ANG basic training squadron. Early in our training, our right guide screwed up, and I was picked to replace him, possibly because I had already learned how to march while back at Buckley ANGB. This was a stressful assignment, but I did my best, and held the position for the rest of our time there. My most memorable experience from basic training was three days of KP at Willford Hall Hospital! We must have been a very bad flight. We spent just four weeks at Lackland and were transferred to our tech school locations early due to a meningitis outbreak (or possibly fear of one?). We completed the final two weeks of Basic at our tech school locations. Even though we didn't actually complete basic at Lackland, the TIs allowed us the traditional day of liberty in San Antonio, which I as I recall included plenty of alcohol. I also remember the night before we left as an all-nighter of poker games. A busload of us traveled from Lackland to Amarillo AFB. It was an all-day road trip. This was in December and as we approached the base, the surrounding terrain appeared very flat, bleak, and windblown, with no trees—apparently the perfect “perfect” for an Air Force base! We actually experienced a few “mud storms” while there, where a light rain was mixed with flying dust!

Tech school was something of a shock, as I figured we had been through the strict discipline phase at Lackland and they would treat us as adult students while in tech school. But no, not so. To me, it seemed more like Stalag 17, locked up in the barracks when not marching to and from classes. We did however have weekends free, unless we had dorm guard duty. I remember the Airman's Club served Coors beer! I tried my best in the Material Facilities Course, received my 3-level, and was the honor graduate. This came as a surprise to me, as several of the other ANG students were college graduates, and I had only completed high school.

In February 1966 I returned to Buckley ANGB as a drill status guardsman and to my civilian job working in a supermarket. In May 1966, I was offered a full-time position in the ANG as an Air Technician employee. I was assigned to the Base Equipment Management Office (BEMO) and worked in Tool Issue and Individual Equipment. I did a lot of work with IBM cards, which were used to compile the various tool lists for each AFSC. I achieved my 5-level as soon as I could and

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was promoted to A2C, and A1C in minimum time. During my time as an AIC (3 stripes), the title of the rank was changed to “Sgt”, and we were supposedly given NCO status, however, we were not allowed to use the NCO clubs.

On 26 Jan 1968 something big happened. The 140th TFW and several other ANG units throughout the nation were recalled to active duty. Ostensibly, this was in response to the North Korean capture of the USS Pueblo just three days prior. However, many of those recalled ANG units were subsequently deployed to South Vietnam. My unit was one of those. We deployed in early May 1968 to Phan Rang AB. In fact, the 120th Tac Fighter Sq. was the first ANG fighter unit deployed to a war zone since WW II. I and nine others were on the advance detachment and arrived a few days earlier, in late April. As I recall, my primary duty after the arrival of the main contingent was to go all around the base collecting the weapons that had been issued to the cargo couriers.

Upon arrival at Phan Rang, I and most of the other Supply personnel were assigned to the 35th Supply Sq. After a short time working in the main Supply warehouse and the open storage area, I was reassigned to the Automotive Supply Point, located adjacent to the Vehicle Maintenance Shop. Vehicle Maintenance was in a sad state of affairs. They appeared to be shorthanded, with a huge backlog of vehicles that were out of commission for either parts or maintenance. Automotive Supply was a storage and issue point, but we didn’t have a computer terminal, so most of our parts were issued “Post-Post”, meaning those transactions had to be physically transported once a day to Base Supply to be entered into the system after the fact. We also didn’t have any research capability—that was done back at the main Base Supply location. Looking back on this now, I can see the flaws in the system, which certainly must have contributed to the poor support that Vehicle Maintenance received.

As my time at Phan Rang, was nearing an end, I, like everyone else, was keeping a short-timer calendar. A commercial jet had been ordered for our trip home to Buckley ANGB, and I was looking forward to a ride home on that big bird equipped with stewardesses! Unfortunately though, I was one of a few who had been selected to be cargo couriers. My freedom bird was a C-141 which left a day after the Saturn World Airways DC-8. My seating position on the C-141 was near the front of the cargo bay. There was a LOX cart positioned directly in front of me which took up most of my foot space. It was a very uncomfortable umpteen hours flying home across the Pacific. We landed in several spots to refuel and change crews. The last en-route

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stop was Eielson AFB, near Fairbanks, AK. I'll never forget how cold it was there. It was overcast and everything was coated in frost and ice.

We next landed at Buckley ANGB, near Denver, CO. I recall how good it felt to be on the ground, and taxiing to the ramp. When we stepped out of the C-141, we were met by a greeting party of Colonels and Generals! There were TV cameras and news reporters. I had a microphone stuck in my face. Yikes, I was not expecting anything like this! Eventually, we were herded into the hangar where our families were waiting. Someone handed me a can of Coors beer. It felt good to be home, but it would take a while to relax. I took six weeks off before returning to my full-time job with the COANG.

As a result of our recall to active duty and deployment to a war zone, by law, our military obligations were eliminated. I never again saw most of my fellow Colorado ANG members who had served with me at Phan Rang. They processed out and returned to their civilian lives. I, too, seriously considered leaving the military, but after exploring the possibilities, decided to remain with the COANG. I was back to working in Tool Issue and Individual Equipment. Later in 1969 I was promoted to SSgt. Then, in 1970, at age 25, I was promoted to TSgt. At this point I was interested in trying other jobs in Base Supply, so, in 1971 I transferred into Receiving, then a year later went to Stock Control, where I mostly managed the munitions account. Then, after a year or so there, I went back to BEMO where I worked in Equipment Management, interfacing with equipment custodians in various shops around the base. Early in 1972 I was encouraged by one of my former supervisors to apply to the ANG NCO academy. I attended that school, located in Knoxville, TN, in the fall of 1972. Again, I surprised myself as I was one of the distinguished graduates of the course. It was at this point in my career that I decided I wanted to become a commissioned officer. In September 1973, at age 28, I enrolled at Community College of Denver, and started working toward an associates degree, which I received in 1977. Later, I eventually received a Bachelor of Science degree from Regis College in Denver.

In the summer of 1975, I was given the opportunity to apply for a commissioned offer position in Base Supply. I took the AFOQT and achieved a good score. I was selected for the position and attended the ANG Academy of Military Science—Officer, which was the ANG equivalent of USAF OTS. I was a distinguished graduate of this course and commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant—this per ANG rules (at the time) which allowed candidates with certain age and experience levels in the career fields to which they were being commissioned, to be commissioned at higher grades.

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My first officer position was as a Supply Officer in the Mobility Support flight. After a year or so there, I was transferred back to the (renamed) Equipment Management Office. As the EMO Officer, I was now in the somewhat awkward position of supervising the guy who, up until recently, had been my NCOIC! But, that’s not too unusual in the ANG. In early 1978, my position at EMO was eliminated and I was offered another position back at Base Supply. Also in 1978, I was promoted to Captain, and later selected for the Budget Officer position at Buckley. This put me in a new career field, and I next attended the USAF Budget Officer course at Sheppard AFB, TX. I was the honor graduate of this course.

My responsibilities as the Budget Officer were to prepare annual budgets, submit them to higher headquarters, and to monitor the execution (spending) of those programs. This entailed coordination with cost center managers, and commanders across the base (and the entire COANG), as well as tenant units. In 1982 I was promoted to Major and later, that same year, after the Base Comptroller vacated his position, I was promoted into it. As Comptroller I was responsible for all financial activities of the COANG. This included Budget, Accounting & Finance, Military Pay, Civilian Pay, and Data Automation.

In late 1984 I noticed a job opening in the Oregon ANG. The ANG and USAF had decided to establish an Air Defense Fighter (ADF) training unit using the F-4 aircraft. They selected Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls for the new mission—due mainly to the excellent and expansive military training air space the base controlled. The job I applied for was Chief of Supply. I was selected for the position and transferred to Klamath Falls with my family in early 1985. My wife and I were eager to leave the congested Denver area for a small city environment to raise our family. My new unit was the 114th Tactical Fighter Training Sq. There was as yet other no wing or group organization established; that would come later. This was a challenging and rewarding assignment. As I later learned, the ANG had not established a new Base Supply organization since 1956. We were starting from scratch with no one still around who had done it before. We had a lot of people to hire and train. It was steep hill to climb, but we managed to get the new Supply account up and running.

In the summer of 1986 I was selected as the first Deputy Commander for Resources at Kingsley Field, ORANG. In my new position, I managed Supply, Comptroller, Transportation, and Logistics Plans activities. And, here again, we had to stand up a new Base Accounting and Finance

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operation—something which (again) had not been done in the ANG since 1956. My previous Comptroller experience helped with this tasking. I was promoted to LtCol in 1988, and I served as the DCR until 1993, when, as the result of a revised Base organizational structure in the ANG, the DCR position was eliminated. The new organizational structure provided for a Base Executive Officer, which became my new job. Here, I worked directly for the Commander as his executive assistant. In early 1995 a new commander was appointed, and he wanted to move some people around. I went to the Comptroller position for two years.

Then in late 1996, the ANG finally decided to make Kingsley Field look just like all other ANG flying units. We were given group status designation, becoming the 173rd Fighter Group, with the 114th Fighter Sq, and all the various support organizations attached. Shortly thereafter, all ANG flying groups were upgraded to Wing status, and we became the 173rd Fighter Wing. The Support Group Commander position opened up and I was selected to fill it. I spent the final four years of my career as the 173rd Support Group Commander. Here, I was responsible for Civil Engineering, Security Forces, Communications, Personnel, Services, and Environmental Management activities. Our final achievement was getting a fully operational Military Personnel Flight (Consolidated Base Personnel Office) established. I was promoted to the grade of Colonel in June of 1998. I retired in December 2000.

Late in the summer of 2000, shortly before I retired, I had the pride and pleasure of administering the oath of enlistment to my daughter, Kristen. She had decided to join the Oregon ANG. Later, she became an AFROTC cadet at Oregon State. Today, she is a Major in the Air Force and flies the B-1B bomber. We are a three-generation Air Force family!

I was very fortunate to have a 35 year military career, mostly in the ANG. My Vietnam service taught me that I could make myself do something even if I didn't like it and didn't want to do it. My NCO academy experience really changed my attitude and put me on a path to achieve higher goals. I thank all my supervisors and commanders, who encouraged me and put their faith in me. I also thank all those great people who worked with me and for me to achieve shared goals. Finally, and most importantly, I thank my wife, Pat, and our entire family who supported me throughout my career. I could not have done it without all of them!

Richard G. Oelkers, Colonel, USAF/ANG (Ret)

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Thomas Petersen

I was born in a small country town in southern Minnesota, the youngest of three children raised by my mother and grandmother. I was an average student in elementary and high school, quiet and into Science. Ham radio was my major hobby as was Science in high school. I have maintained my amateur radio license since 1958.

After graduating from high school I joined the US Air Force in 1966. Air Force training consisted of basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio Texas, after which I was stationed at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio Texas for my training as an aeromedical specialist. The training at Brooks Air Force Base was unique in that Brooks Air Force Base held the Air Forces School of Aerospace Medicine. This was the academic, medical treatment and research branch of the Air Forces’ astronaut program and the Air Force flight Medicine Program. Although proximity to the Gemini and Apollo astronauts, I was not able to personally speak with any of them.

After a year of medical training in San Antonio I was stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls Texas. My medical training continued for another year, after which I was sent to my first field assignment at Grand Forks Air Force Base in Grand Forks North Dakota. “Who would want to go and volunteer to be stationed in Grand Forks, North Dakota;” people would ask me, my comment was that my home town with less than 500 miles away, which meant a crazy weekend drive from North Dakota to southern Minnesota on many weekends. At Grand Forks Air Force Base I was assigned to the Flight Surgeon’s office. My duties entailed giving physical examinations to flight crews and responding to aircraft emergencies. Grand Forks Air Force Base did not have the HH-43 “Pedro” rescue chopper, but did have the Huey chopper to shuttle us off base to emergencies. I also provided medical and psychological evaluations of flight crews and missile crews in the missile silos throughout the northern part of the North Dakota.

I was married to my high school sweetheart while stationed at Grand Forks . She was attending nursing school in Minneapolis, which was 100 miles closer to base.

As is true of most military personnel who make major life commitments such as buying a new car or getting married; two months after getting married I got my orders for Vietnam.

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I arrived in country at Phan Rang airbase the middle of December 1967, and was assigned to Detachment One of the 38th Air Rescue Recovery Squadron.

My normal day consisted of a 24-hour shift on the flight line, in a bunker ready to fly in the HH-43 “Pedro” rescue chopper, within 5 min. of getting a call for service. Day-two consisted of being “on call” for 24 hours, with a 15 minute turnaround time; to be in the #2 rescue chopper as the backup or second chopper and respond to any emergency. During that day I spent my daytime working hours in the base dispensary providing medical care to those who were patients in the dispensary. Since Phan Rang was a fairly busy airbase regarding rescues, I was frequently pulled from the dispensary to the flight line to man our backup rescue chopper. My third day out of three was initially my day off, which sometimes meant working in the field on “Med-Caps”, a humanitarian medical service where a doctor, a dentist and several corpsmen go into the neighboring villages to provide medical and dental treatment to the local citizens. At times like this we were armed with our M-16's. Once we were ambushed by a teargas grenade attack that should have stopped our jeep, but the army driver “put the pedal to the metal” and we escaped the ambush. The tear gas sure did burn all over, I mean “all over.” I also worked around the barracks getting things organized, helping other airmen with filling sandbags and building bunkers around our hooches; but there was also a few times we got to go downtown to the city of Phan Rang or down to the beach with other Gi's and have leisure time enjoying the beautiful South China Sea. Then Day-1 started all over again and so went my three-day shift.

My personal notebook recorded me having flown on approximate 300 sorties during the year I was in Vietnam. Fifteen of which were considered rescue “saves,” where the helicopter was credited with saving a pilot who was shot down or a soldier who was picked up from the battlefield. Sadly, a good number of those who we were sent to rescue were not found alive or later passed away from severe injuries. While at Phan Rang airbase I held the rank of Sgt. an E4 designation. I left PRAB on my 366th day in country, but who was counting (lol).

After Phan Rang, I was assigned to Warner Robins Air Force Base in Macon, Georgia. There I worked in the Flight Surgeons Office, achieved the rank of SSgt. an E5 designation and discharged from the Air Force in 1969.

I returned to civilian life back in southern Minnesota with my wife but then was offered the opportunity for both of us to continue schooling and to work in Southern California. While

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stateside I attended night school to obtain enough credits to get an Associate’s degree. Then I attended Occidental College in Los Angeles and received my Bachelors degree in Psychology, “One may ask why psychology and not medicine; the medical training I had in the Air Force would have qualified me to be an EMT with the fire department, but in Southern California the only way you could become an EMT, was to start out by becoming a firefighter first. So I went into the field of psychology. During my early years in Psychology, I worked at a couple of a community mental health agencies and worked with many different types of psychological maladies afflicting youth, families and adults. During that time I also continued towards my Masters degree at California State University at Los Angeles and received it in 1978. I continued working in the mental health field while studying for licensure as a psychotherapist in California.

During 1978, I started a new position at a local police department where I started the Behavioral Sciences Unit. This unit provided mental health services for the community, which were usually treated by my psychology interns. I provided mental health services to the police officers along with criminal profiling, threat assessment and hostage negotiations. After a couple of years the Chief of police saw a side of me that I had never recognized. He wanted me become a sworn police officer. He sent me to the Police Academy and my role didn’t change much other than I was now also handling criminal investigative cases. Shortly after that my chief, who himself had a PhD, encouraged me to go for my PhD in Psychology, which I received in 1995. I worked at the Police Department for 21 years and retired due to an altercation with the prisoner were I blew out my knee and had to have a knee replacement. After retiring from the police department I taught as a professor at two colleges and then became clinical director of the couple of community mental health agencies in the Los Angeles area. I also maintained a small private practice. I continued with my private practice exclusively for almost 20 years receiving referrals from the Court’s, Probation Department, City Governments, Department of Transportation and referrals from colleagues and prior patients. I retired from private practice two years ago but maintained my licensure as a private investigator. I continue to do some work involving threat assessments for companies and government agencies.

During my retirement I am learning to relax. I play golf four times a week, and try to visit my friends more than I used to. I reestablished a close friendship with a fellow rescue medic from Phan Rang which I am enjoying immensely.

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I attended the Happy Valley reunion in 2017 and was very impressed as I listened to my fellow airmen discuss their work and experiences while in Vietnam. The reunion brought back many good and some past troubling memories of my year in Vietnam. It was a great pleasure meeting those airmen and their loved ones at the reunion and I look forward to doing so again in the near future.

Thomas Petersen, PhD

PRAB 67'-68'

John Deegan

John Deegan was born in Dublin, Ireland, 21 March 1944. Immigrated to the United States on 30 March 1963. Enlisted in the USAF 12 July 1963, retired from the Air Force, 1 Oct. 1986.

Civilian Education

Saint Canice Primary School, Dublin, Ireland

O'Connell High School, Dublin, Ireland

BS Vocational Education, Southern Illinois University

Military Education

Numerous FTD classes on fighter aircraft

USAFE NCO Academy, Kapaun AFS, Germany

USAF SNCO Academy, Gunter AFS, Alabama

After high school graduation I went to work for a private aircraft company, Weston Air Services in Dublin as an airframe technician on Tiger Motor Byplanes and Austers. Both had fabric wing coverings.

Assignments PCS

McChord AFB, Wa (2)

RAF Lakenheath, England

Cannon AFB, N.M.

Phan Rang AB, RVN

Tuy Hoa AB, RVN

RAF Upper Heyford, England

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Soesterberg, AB, Holland
Edwards AFB, CA.

Major Deployments:

Alaska (3) King Salmon AFS, Galena AFS, Eilelson AFB

Lybia (3) Wheelus AB, Tripoli

Turkey (2) Gigli AB, Incirlik AB

Italy (3) Avaiano AB, Grazanizi AB, Decimomanno AB

Thailand Udorn AB (Linebacker2)

Spain Zaragoza

Aircraft Types

F-106, F100, F-111, F4, F15, F-16, A-7

After retiring from the Air Force I went to work for PRC Kentron as an engine mechanic. We supplied aircraft support fro the USAF test pilot school and Edwards AFB, CA. Later transfered to General Dynamics F-16 combined test force at Edwards. Major lay off's in the early 1990's resulted in the demise of the Edwards test faculty. Worked for a janitorial company called Natural Solutions as VP of Operations until 1966 when I moved to Las Vegas. Worked part time as a chauffeur, transportation director and airport greeter until permanent retirement in 2017.

James Wesley Etichson

James Wesley "Jim" Etchison is a Vietnam vet, educator, and businessman.

Since childhood, Jim's ambition was to become a farmer, following in the footsteps of his uncle in North Carolina. As happens with many people, somewhere, somehow along the way, fate changed his plans.

Not comfortable with college life after high school, Jim dropped out and joined the U.S. Air Force in Little Rock, Arkansas as civil rights movement swept the South. Three years later, in 1966, he found himself guarding the perimeter nightly as a sentry dog handler at Phan Rang, Vietnam for a year. Still restless, against orders he illegally volunteered to fly door gunner on the Huey "Slicks" with several army attack helicopter companies also located at Phan Rang.

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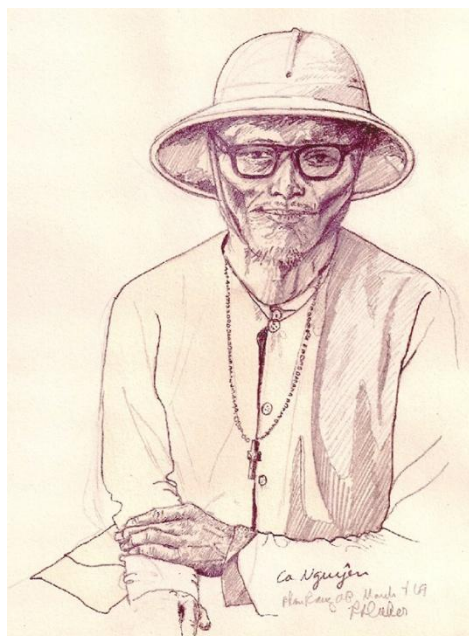
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After being discharged, Jim returned to Vietnam to work with Pan American Airways in Saigon during the Tet Offensive, remaining there for the next two years.

Back in the States, after obtaining his MBA and Commercial Pilot certificate, Jim settled in Queens, New York. He married, had a daughter, and began flying nightly as a “Freight Dog” on the Northeast corridor from JFK (John F. Kennedy International Airport). When the company Jim was flying for went into bankruptcy, he decided to become responsible for his own career. Having to borrow \$35 from his wife, he obtained a business certificate, and Academics of Flight was born. From the school’s beginnings in his apartment, the name materialized as a household word in aviation communities around the globe.

Part One of The Sky is Not the Limit takes the reader through events prior to and during Jim’s Vietnam deployment, which lasted three years, returning to a society against U.S. involvement in the war. His restlessness is apparent during several helicopter missions and events during the Tet Offensive when the city came under a rocket attack on his first night back to Vietnam for Pan American.

Part Two begins with the creation of Academics of Flight and carries the reader along as Jim travels to countries throughout Africa, Europe, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, teaching for various airlines. Jim describes incidents as varied as when he hid in a closet during a coup in Nigeria to avoid arrest to when he was harassed by a fundamentalist on a flight from Dubai to Karachi.



The Art of Ronald Dreher

Doug’s Comments

This is the third newsletter dedicated to biographies of the members. If after seeing these, you would like to have yours included, please send them to me and I will assemble for a future issue. Also, if you’ve already submitted a bio and you want to expand on it after seeing what others have done, send that in as well. This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#). Previous issues of the Phan Rang Newsletter are available [here](#) for download.