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**Hun Combat Excerpts from “Hun Pilot” by Vic Vizcarra**



**HUN COMBAT by Vic Vizcarra**

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### **Assignment after Recurrency**

**T**he F-100 recurrency course at Luke was short and fast, flying only 17 sorties for 23.5 hours in less than a month. I immediately felt right at home, the unique engine fumes in the cockpit was like a shot of smelling salts arousing all my sensory perceptions of the Hun, even after an absence of six and a half years. It felt so good to get back in a fighter cockpit; all the natural reflexes peculiar to flying the Hun came back quickly. During my third flight, the first solo in a "D", the left wing dropped just as we broke ground while I was on the wing of a formation take-off. I surprised myself when I instinctively used right rudder to pick the wing up!

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The course was cut short when the last two phases, air refueling and night weapons delivery were waved. F-100 operations in South Vietnam did not require air refueling support; when tankers were not available for the air refueling phase, it was easy for higher headquarters to wave this training. Waving night weapons delivery on the other hand was not as logical. Night missions were being conducted by Huns in South Vietnam so this was training that should have been accomplished. As unbelievable as it was, there were no flares available to conduct the training. The phase was waved on the grounds that our graduation could not be delayed waiting for flares to become available.

There were only four of us in the class, all destined for the 35th TFW at Phan Rang. I knew George Weeks from a previous assignment in Japan six years earlier. Bob Hoover was a test pilot I knew from Edwards AFB. We finished our recurrency training the third week in March, giving me about twenty days before having to leave for Vietnam.



**F-100 1970 Recurrency Class, Luke AFB, Arizona.**

**Left to Right: Maj. Weeks, Maj. Graf, Capt. Vicarra (Author) and Maj. Hoover**

*"...I guess I didn't realize how much we all had become accustomed to me being home"*

When that day came, it was one of the hardest departures of my career. The family had gone through a lot of separations when I was assigned to F-105's in Japan, none of them as difficult as this one. These last 33 months at Edwards had been wonderful for the family; I guess I didn't realize how much we all had become accustomed to me being home. The drive from Edwards to Fox Field in Lancaster took about 40 minutes on a long straight road. We were all pretty quiet in the car as I drove to the airport to be dropped off. I didn't realize how difficult it had been for Pat. I didn't find out until I returned from Vietnam that she had tears running down her cheeks most of the drive back to Edwards. The Beatles' "Hey Jude" was playing on the radio and to this day, whenever I hear it, it reminds me of that long drive, it was a very sad day.

It didn't get any easier. My parents met me at the Los Angeles airport during my layover waiting for my chartered flight. This was the first time I was saying good-bye to them as I was leaving for combat. When it came time for me to board, my Dad who was getting along in age, hugged me and said he hoped he would still be around when I returned. I didn't think of my Dad as being that old and it surprised me he said that. I responded positively with, "Of course you will". As I finished hugging my mother, she touched my face and just gave me a smile; I don't think she could say anything. I kissed her on the cheek, turned and walked down the passageway to board the plane wondering if I had done the right thing to volunteer to go back.

First stop on the way to Nam was Clark AB, The Philippines, for Jungle Survival Training better known as "Snake School". In the classroom phase, we were taught what was edible in the jungle, the various poisonous plants, snakes and animals that might be encountered, and techniques for surviving in the jungle.

*"If you ain't cheating, you ain't trying!"*

The classroom phase was followed with a field exercise out in the jungle where we had to evade being caught by the negrito (indigenous natives to the area) populace who were rewarded with a small sack of rice for each "capture" made. My partner and I survived not being captured which was very unusual. It wasn't that we were that good at evading but more

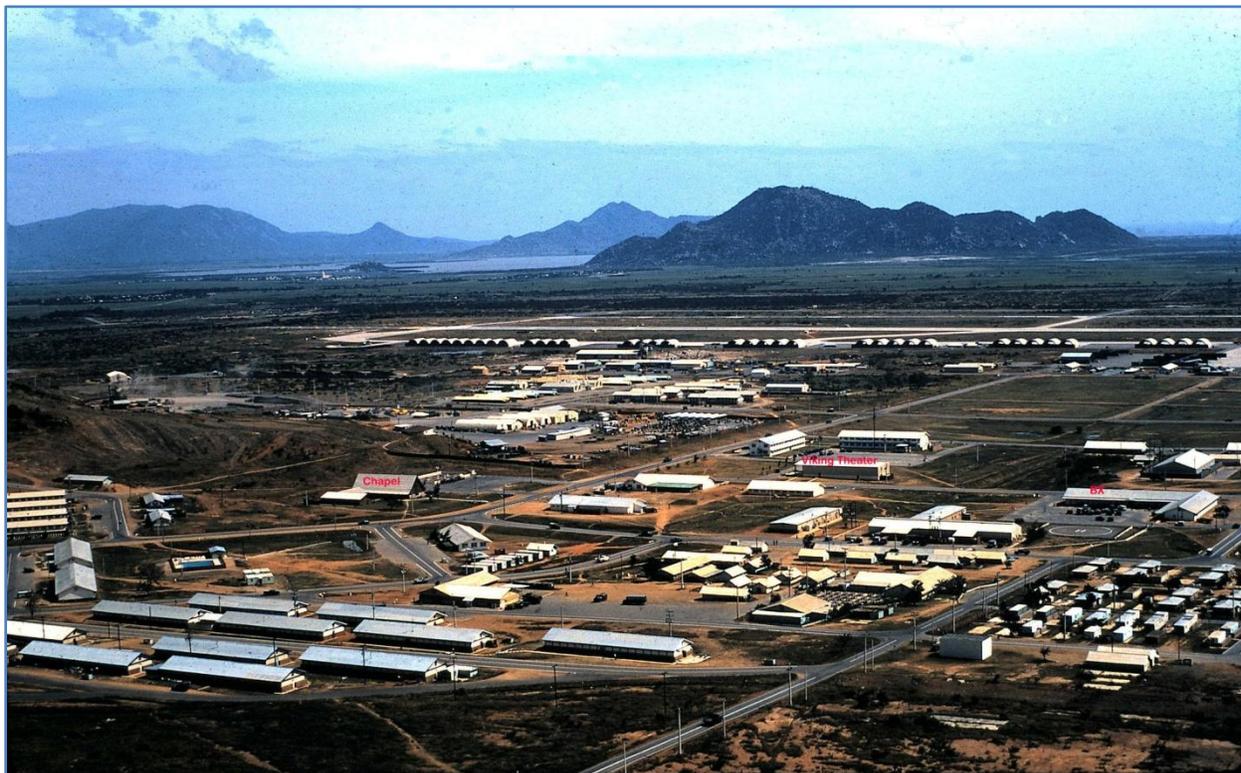
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likely because we might have pressed the gaming area borders when we traveled about a third of the way down into an off limits deep canyon. "If you ain't cheating, you ain't trying!"



**Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam**

Reporting to Phan Rang, I was assigned to the 35th TFW in the Wing Safety Office, attached to the 352nd TFS for flying. In the 352nd, I was shocked to find out my 470 hours of 100 time made me the third high time F-100 pilot in the squadron! Eight years earlier, when I reported to my first operational F-100 squadron, most of the older pilots had a couple thousand hours of F-100 experience; the F-100 fleet experience had certainly been diluted. The fact I was relatively high experienced may have been my saving grace; usually Wing Wienies were not highly thought of. I was assigned a bedroom in the 352<sup>nd</sup> building, which also helped establish camaraderie with the squadron members. Each squadron building had a small lounge in the center with bedrooms down hallways that branched out either side of the central lounge. We had a small bar in the lounge where most of the guys hung out socializing after the day's flying. The bartender was a shapely attractive young Vietnamese lady who poured the drinks from behind the bar. The squadron commander took me aside one evening and chastised me, accusing me of ogling her bodacious tatas (I thought that's what fighter pilots did!). I got the feeling he didn't like me. He let me know that she was the flight surgeon's girlfriend and that

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she was off limits. I wasn't happy with his little lecture and I was insulted by his insinuation I was interested in doing more than just admire a shapely young lady! I was glad he wasn't representative of how the rest of the squadron felt towards me but this was not a good relationship with a commanding officer. I got along fine with the other guys and developed some special friendships in the unit.

The squadron had a mascot named "Beaver". Fighter pilots haven't changed through the ages and always seemed to have the same thing on their minds. Twenty-six years earlier, my brother's squadron, the 345<sup>th</sup> Fighter Sqdn, in World War II had a mascot named "Snatch".

Soon after getting settled in the squadron, I received a letter from a friend at Edwards informing me that Jerry Gentry had ejected from the F-4 modified for the spin test project when it got into a spin and the spin recovery chute separated from the plane upon deployment. What an unfortunate accident and fickle fate, the spin chute was successfully deployed at the end of each flight and the one time it really was needed, it failed!

Combat in South Vietnam seemed so benign compared to what I had experienced flying Thuds over the North, yet, we still suffered losses. A young Lieutenant had just returned from a few days' visit to a small Army outpost to experience a ground pounder's life. He told the grunts he would come by and put on a little air show for them on his next flight. On his first low-level pass over the outpost, he pulled up, did a barrel roll, and hit the ground at the bottom of the maneuver, killing himself. The accident was complicated by the fact that the wingman on the flight was my future boss in the Wing Safety office who was new and had just recently arrived. They tried to pin supervisory error on him since he was the ranking man on the flight. But he was too new, not in command of the flight, and didn't know the Lieutenant was going to do the barrel roll. There was no way he could be held responsible, the Lieutenant had briefed they would only do a low level pass; but still, not a great way to start out in a new assignment.

### **Beginning a new assignment**

**M**y first sortie was a local area check out in the front seat of an "F" with "Chestnut", a high time crusty senior Major in the rear cockpit. Two days later, I flew my second combat mission, this time as number two in a "D". Our missions were either preplanned hitting lines of communications, small bridges, or structures in areas controlled by the Viet Cong, or scrambled

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off alert to provide Close Air Support under the control of a Forward Air Controller (FAC) for troops in contact with enemy forces.

Because of my relative high F-100 time compared to others in the squadron, I was quickly upgraded to flight lead status. My check ride consisted of me leading the check pilot, "Chestnut" again, on a preplan two-ship flight. The mission called for us to rendezvous with an O-1 Birdog FAC and strike whatever target he designated. When we reached the rendezvous point, the area was covered with a low broken cloud deck. I made contact with our FAC on mission frequency and spotted two O-1s in the general area so I asked the FAC to rock his wings for positive identification. He acknowledged, "Rocking my wings." I immediately picked him out of the two O-1s. "Tally Ho" I said letting him know I had him in sight. He acknowledged, "The target is up ahead, follow me". He continued his mission brief, giving us a description of the target, direction he wanted us to attack from, location and altitude he would be holding, etc., all while heading towards the target. We were high at his seven o'clock following him. When he disappeared under a good size cloud, it presented a good time for me to take my eyes off him and do a quick check of the cockpit, fuel check, weapons arming etc. After he came out from under the cloud he said, "target dead ahead, rolling in to mark". I waited to see his smoke. Next transmission was "Okay, hit a 100 feet past my smoke, I'm breaking right for holding". The O-1 I was watching hadn't done a thing, it was still pressing on straight and level! I said "Rock your wings, I might have lost you when you went under that last big cloud". He acknowledged and the O-1 I had my eyes on wasn't rocking his wings. Evidently, when he had flown under that last huge cloud, he must have crossed paths with another O-1 and I picked up the wrong one as they came out from underneath the cloud. What an embarrassing screw up, especially during a Flight Lead check ride. After a few more radio calls, we reformed on the correct O-1 and executed the mission. Luckily, we hit his target and he was pleased with the results and gave us a good Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) report.

"Chestnut", usually a very serious guy, chuckled as he debriefed the rendezvous portion of the check ride. He thought I recovered well reconverging with the correct FAC, attacking the target and leading him. I came out of the debriefing room a Flight Lead. After being in country a month, I had flown 28 combat missions and accrued 40 hours of Hun time. Also, in that period, I'd flown four Night Owl missions, a totally new experience. Three of the Night Owl missions were on consecutive nights. This was only the beginning. My reputation from Edwards of never saying no, or enough is enough followed me because the squadron dumped the night missions

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on me. I ended flying 17 more Night Owl missions for a total of 21 sorties dive bombing at night under flares. The Wing Commander had taken note of how much night flying I had been doing. At my going away party he got pretty good laughs when in his speech, he mentioned every time he called the squadron in the evening to speak with me, he'd be told I was night flying. He followed that with, "That was pretty drastic measures to take to avoid having to speak with me!"

Although I didn't have data to substantiate it, it felt like the squadron also scheduled me a disproportionate amount of times in the "F"; why not, give it to the Wing Wienie and save the "D" slots for the "regular" squadron pilots! But actually, it really wasn't that bad since I had been upgraded to an IP which always made me the pilot in command in an "F". I was surprised that the IP upgrade program consisted of only a single check flight. My check ride was scheduled with Doug Lea, a pilot who would become a great friend in later years when we served together in an F-5 Tac Fighter Training Squadron. Doug briefed that he needed to see me do three landings from the back seat when we returned from our mission. Other than the fact that I had never done a back seat landing in the Super Sabre, what would be the big deal? Except for the weapons delivery, I flew the entire mission from the rear cockpit, including making the take-off.

Then the moment of truth! It was time to do what I had never done before in a Hun. Ask a fighter pilot to do a roll, invariably, he'll do it to the left. That is because it is easier to push the control stick to the left than pull to the right. I was pleased we were landing runway 22, which was a left hand pattern, the preferred left! But alas, it was no help at all. To describe the resultant landing as a controlled crash would be a stretch. Only a Navy carrier pilot would consider it a normal landing! As we hit the runway and I poured the coals to go around, from the front seat I heard, "Jesus Christ! You pass, I don't want to have to go through another one of those again!" Needless to say, Doug took control of the airplane and made the next landing a full stop. That landing from the back seat was the worst landing of my entire career -- and I passed.

About half way through my tour I took leave and visited Ray Curtis, a very dear friend from Edwards, now stationed in Saigon. I had no problem getting a space available flight to Tan Son Nhut AB near Saigon. Spent the weekend with him and he showed me around but we didn't wonder too far out from his hotel which had been turned into a headquarters. We visited the

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tennis courts on the hotel's grounds and watched players properly clad in white tennis sports attire playing. Everything was so proper and colonial; it was hard to think we were in a war zone.

On my return trip I got stuck at the Tan Son Nhut terminal trying to get space available back to Phan Rang. There just weren't any flights headed there, or at least that is what the personnel behind the space "A" counter were telling me. I was getting concerned, then I heard a voice, "Vic, What are you doing here?" I turned to see who it was and to my pleasant surprise, it was my Lt. Col navigator who frequently flew in the back seat of my "F". I told him I had been visiting a close friend in Saigon but was now stuck trying to get back to Phan Rang. The Lt. Col said, "Wait here, let me see what I can do" and left headed out towards the ramp. After a while, he returned and said he had checked with the pilot of the C-123 he was riding and that he had gotten clearance from the pilot to have me join them. They had two stops at remote bases to drop off fuel before heading to their final destination, Phan Rang. That Colonel sure loved to fly, and he sure was a lifesaver.

When I boarded the C-123, the loadmaster showed me to a web seat clear of a huge fuel bladder strapped to the floor taking up most of the cargo bay, the Lt. Col went up into the crew compartment with the pilot and the co-pilot and we flew to the first of the two scheduled remote fields.

***“I couldn't believe it... they looked like young teenage boys in high school.”***

I couldn't see much out of the small porthole window behind me or across from me but from the engine sounds I could sense we were in a steep descent for landing. The touchdown was more of a controlled crash with the immediate roaring sound of the engine props reversing, rapid deceleration throwing me sideways against the cockpit bulkhead, and a lot of brown dust blowing past the small porthole windows. When we climbed out of the "Provider" I was startled by the small size of the dirt runway we had just landed on, carved out of the jungle. Calling this a remote base was a huge overstatement. I noticed I was the only person standing there without a side arm. Even the C-123 crew, including my Lt. Col was armed. The 123 loadmaster was busy hooking up a fuel hose to the fuel bladder while two bare-chested young troops were dragging the other end of the hose towards several large barrels between two Cobra gunships

parked at the edge of the jungle. The Lt. Col informed me the two guys dragging the other end of the hose were crewmembers of one of the Cobra gunships. I couldn't believe it, how could that be, they looked like young teenage boys in high school. I watched in amazement as everyone went about transferring fuel from the bladder while the 123 pilot and co-pilot did, their aircraft pre-flight. It was obvious this was going to be a minimum time turn around. The Lt. Col. continued briefing me on the base and its operations. It was loud and clear this place wasn't the most secure and safest place to be.

Looking around, seeing these young troops not much older than twenty years and responsible for these gunships, the pilot skills of getting a C-123 into a little patch of dirt classified as a runway, gave me a new appreciation for the non-fighter pilot warrior. It exposed me to a new and very different view of the war.

***“The abilities of that C-123 pilot more than impressed me, it humbled me.”***

Fighter pilots are egotistical because they are usually at the top of their graduating pilot training class and know they have to be good to get a fighter assignment. My C-123 experience made me think possibly the only difference between pilots is the fighter pilot has a natural aptitude for flying, while all others grow into it; with a few exceptions, we were all generally equal. The abilities of that C-123 pilot more than impressed me, it humbled me.

The Wing always had two birds on alert in the closest aircraft shelter by the end of the runway. One Hun would be loaded with four cans of napalm while the other would have four Mk-82 500 pound bombs, usually with Snake Eye fins (high drag retardation fins for low altitude delivery).

One of my most anxious moments of my tour was a scramble where my wingman and I were vectored to a FAC requesting air support for troops in contact. In bound to the target, we made contact with the FAC who proceeded to brief us on the situation. The friendlies were on one side of a small river in a firefight with a larger Viet Cong force on the other side. When we reached their location, the jungle was so thick we could not see the river under the canopy foliage and were having difficulty identifying their exact location; it all looked the same. The FAC informed us the friendlies were going to mark their spot with white smoke and the target

would be a hundred yards to the north of the smoke. A few moments later purple smoke started seeping out between the jungle trees and the FAC got all excited yelling into his radio, "Hit that smoke, that's the bad guys, they are trying to spoof us!"

***“I questioned the FAC's instructions and requested verification these weren't the friendlies. He was adamant in his response, again saying "Hit the smoke!" I did as instructed, and pickled my bombs off...”***

His call concerned me. Our guys were going to mark their spot with smoke, now because it wasn't the color expected; I was supposed to bomb the smoke? What if there was a miscommunication about the color? Concerned about friendly fire, I questioned the FAC's instructions and requested verification these weren't the friendlies. He was adamant in his response, again saying "Hit the smoke!" I did as instructed, and pickled my bombs off, thinking this guy better be right or I won't be able to live with myself if I was responsible for a friendly fire incident. Such is the fog and stress of war!

There was an Aussie detachment of Canberra bombers at Phan Rang. One day there was a notice on our squadron flight scheduling board asking if anyone was interested in getting a flight with the Aussies. Always looking for adventure, I said I'd go. The Canberra is a two-man crew bomber with pilot and a bombardier/navigator. For my orientation flight, I was given the bomb/nav's seat behind the bulkhead separating the pilot and the bomb/nay. British and Aussie Canberras do not have the canopy enclosing the pilot and backseater together like in the US B-57 version of the Canberra; all I had for looking outside was a very small rectangular side window. The Aussie bomb/nav took a jump seat in the small passageway next to the pilot for the take-off. After climb out and level off, the bomb/nav took his parachute off so he could squeeze into the bombardier's position in the nose. What a concept, who would design a battle station so small the combatant could not wear a parachute during the critical time of being over a target? Must not have been a combatant.



*(Aussie Canberra in front of the alert pad just before takeoff. Photo by David McGaughey)*

**Author Gets a Combat Mission in an  
Aussie Canberra at Phan Rang.**

Before squeezing into the nose, he turned to me and patted the jump seat and motioned for me to take his place, saying it was a better view from there. I had to agree; it was just slightly better than having to stare straight onto a bulkhead. But the seat was still so low you could not see out over the instrument panel; you were eye level with the pilot's butt right next to you. For the remainder of the flight, all I could see was blue sky if I looked almost straight up, and the pilot constantly moving the flight control yoke keeping our aircraft in formation with the other Canberra in the flight. We delivered our bombs straight and level and returned for a TACAN approach to Phan Rang. Before reaching the TACAN initial fix, I moved back to my original position so the bomb/nav could have the jump seat.

I found the experience flying with the Aussies interesting and a square filler, I could now claim to have flown in a Canberra, not to be confused with a B-57!

Right after my Aussie flight, I was also offered a chance to do an F-100 Functional Check Flight (FCF). Major Graf, one of the pilots with whom I went through Luke when I re-qualified in the F-100 was assigned as the Wing Maintenance Officer and all he flew were FCF's. He had three

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FCF's due and wanted me to take one. I told him I'd need to review the Dash-6 FCF Pilot's Hand Book and learn the FCF profile, but sure, I'd do it. He told me it wouldn't be necessary to do a complete FCF profile. The airplane was consistently being written up for excessive fumes in the cockpit. Graf just wanted me to take it up on a local flight and check if the fumes really were too strong. This was an inherent characteristic of the F-100. I figured they would have to be really bad to be written up. I asked what about FCF Orders, I'd have to be on them to be legal. He said he'd take care of it.

I checked the aircraft forms to see what maintenance actions had been taken to correct the write up. I was surprised to see this was going to be the third FCF for the same problem. The first corrective action was to retighten some lines. That didn't correct the problem. Now maintenance had replaced some parts and tightened more lines.

I started up, did the standard ground checks, and taxied out for takeoff; yes the plane had the unique fume smell of an F-100. On the runway, I slowly advanced the throttle to 100% and the fumes got stronger. The thought of aborting raced through my mind but I quickly discarded it figuring if it got any worse, I'd fly around sucking up 100% oxygen. I flew a local flight around the area for a while on 100% oxygen and then went to normal to check the fumes; I thought they were slightly stronger than normal but bearable. Before returning to land I rolled inverted and shook the plane slightly to check for any loose items; the only thing I got was minimal dirt and dust. When I returned to the ramp, I signed off the discrepancy write up to the relief of maintenance. The flight was a nice change from the daily combat routine.

With deference to the F-4's doing dangerous but effective Night Owl work on the Mu Gia Pass Trail, other than slinging yourself at the ground at night, Night Owl missions in our area were fairly mundane; but the potential for anxious or exciting moments were always there. During one of my later Night Owl missions, I was scheduled with a new Lieutenant as my number 2. This being his first Night Owl mission, I made sure I covered all items on the briefing guide, especially those items particular to the Night Owl mission.

As briefed, I set up a rectangular pattern offset up wind from the target. We were self-illuminating, releasing our own parachute floating MK 24 Mod 0 flares on the downwind leg with a turn to a base leg from which we would roll in for our dive bomb pass, at the target. After making my two runs at the target, it was my wingman's turn. My flares had already

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extinguished and the area had returned to total darkness. Only a few visible stars, the navigation lights of my wingman across the pattern from me, and something burning on the ground where I had dropped my bombs, distinguished what was sky and what was ground. My wingman was on the downwind leg ready to start illuminating in preparation for his attack. Suddenly, he yelled, "My flare pod is on fire!" I responded, "JETTISON IT!" Following his shadowy silhouette of his navigation lights, I saw a tumbling fireball streak away towards the ground. My next transmission was "Are you okay?" In a much calmer voice he responded, "I think so."

Evidently, the flares ignited when he pickled but got stuck and were burning in the pod. It was a terrifying first Night Owl experience for the young Lieutenant, one I'm sure he would never forget.

**Phan Rang** is located in the southern portion of II Corps, close to 400 miles from the DMZ. Most of our missions were in II and III Corps. I was surprised one day when we were tasked to do a road cut very near the DMZ in I Corps; making it the longest mission of my South Vietnam tour. I wondered why we'd be flying that distance when Da Nang AB, another F-100 base, was so much closer. As Alfred Lord Tennyson penned, "Ours is not to reason why, but just do and die!"

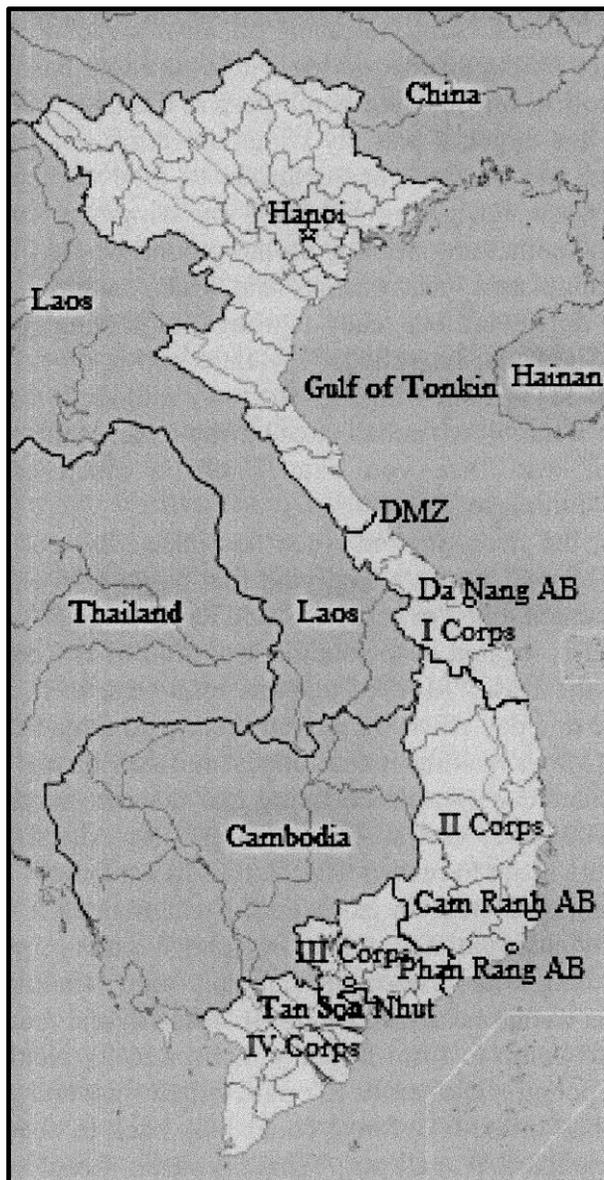
I led the mission with an experienced wingman as 2. The target area was perfectly clear without a cloud in sight. We met up with our FAC in an O-1 Birdog who briefed the target, a road winding north in very mountainous terrain near the DMZ. He rolled in and marked the spot he wanted us to bomb to form a road cut. I rolled in, pickled off my four Mk-82 500 pound slick bombs (None retarded fins) and pulled off to the west as he had briefed. Before I could look back to check my results, I heard the excited FAC call out, "That's a shack, Lead!" (A bullseye). I spotted where my bombs had hit and saw number 2 in his dive just as he released his bombs. Continuing a circular climb back to where I had rolled in, I saw 2 of his bombs hit the center of the road about fifty feet next to mine. The FAC went crazy! He asked what unit we were from and what dive angle we were using. I told him we were doing 30-degree dive. He replied we were "gutsy" but "good", giving me the impression he thought the threat warranted using a 45-degree dive. This was a piece of cake compared to bombing missions over North Vietnam! He credited us with 100% target destroyed in his BDA report.

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**Most Phan Rang AB Missions Were in II & III Corps. Author's Furthest Mission was at the Laotian Vietnamese Border by the DMZ.**

like a cheerleader, was encouraging me with a pep talk after Lead's near miss. Okay 2, you can do better than that, finish off the bridge on your pass!" Unfortunately, my bombs went just over the bridge resulting in a long hit by a larger margin than Lead's short hit.

Lead's second pass was almost identical to his first; the bridge was still standing after his pass.

My wingman and I felt pretty good about our bombing that day. The gun camera processing shop the next day contacted us, saying we should come down and check our film from the previous day. I never checked my gun camera film; I couldn't imagine, anything worthwhile ever showing up on it. But we complied with their suggestion and reviewed the gun camera film. We were surprised to see a couple streaks of 37mm AAA come across our nose during the dive bomb run. Had no idea we were being shot at on that mission. Guess that is why the FAC insinuated that a higher dive angle would have been more judicious.

Not all missions were as effective as the road cut near the DMZ. As luck would have it, I was on the Squadron Commander's wing as number 2 attacking a wooden bridge over a deep gully when I missed big time, twice! We were under control of a talkative FAC who was not pleased with our performance; we were having a bad day. We were doing low angle 15

degree dive with MK-82 Snake Eyes. Lead missed just short of the bridge but close enough to cause some damage. The FAC acting

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The FAC was becoming agitated. "Oh come on guys, you can do better than that! Two, come on, finish it off, you're cleared in." It just wasn't our day; we looked like amateurs. My second attempt was worse than my first try. Other than "Oh my God", the FAC was speechless. He finally asked, "Ready for BDA?" After Lead said he was ready, the FAC, in a disgusting voice said, "I'll give you 5% target destroyed.

The squadrons threw hard drinking going away parties. Dangerously, those in command from the Wing Commander down, were willing to look the other way and ignore Air Force regulations regarding drinking within 24 hours of flying. Too many pilots were flying within the 24-hour restriction. I was one of them one time, but it only took one flight hung over to realize how stupid and dangerous that was. I and a young Lieutenant I was mentoring had partied hard the night before his practice flight to upgrade to flight lead status. We were both hung over when we reported for the first flight of the day very early the next morning. The Lieutenant had to excuse himself several times to go worship at the porcelain altar while trying to brief the mission. I thought, hmm, this is not good. Shortly after returning to continue the briefing I had to do the same thing. After up chucking a couple of times, you get the false sensation that you are feeling better. All we need is a little shot of 100% oxygen once we get out to the airplane -- wrong! Taxiing onto the runway, I notice Lead had failed to set his flaps for take-off. I radioed, "Lead, check flaps" and then rechecked mine and found I hadn't set mine either. By now, I had gotten all the clues that we were in no shape to be in an airplane but I stupidly ignored them.

On the way to the target, I was breathing in as much 100% oxygen which helped me feel a little better; I'm sure Lead was doing the same or at least I hoped he was.

Lead rolled in for a 15-degree dive bomb pass, releasing one bomb. He had briefed we'd drop singly to get as much practice doing low angle dive. When I did my 4 "G" pull out from my dive, I almost passed out. My "G" tolerance had been greatly diminished by the alcohol. I had notice that even at two "Gs", I was starting to black out. The light finally came on and I called Lead to get rid of all his bombs on the next pass and to watch his "Gs". He acknowledged, we terminated bombing with the second pass, and returned to base. That was a hard lesson learned and we were both fortunate we hadn't blacked out and flown into the ground!

Nearing the end of my tour, there was a mass briefing of all the pilots in the base theater. Security line badges were checked at entry, generating curiosity of what was this all about. The

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Wing Commander began the meeting by emphasizing the sensitive nature of what was to follow and instructing us that we could not discuss it with anyone outside the theater. He then turned the meeting over to the Deputy Commander for Operations who broke the news that starting the next day, our combat operations would be extended into Cambodia!

This was totally unexpected. Whatever your opinion of President Nixon, you had to give the Commander-in-Chief credit for having big "gonads". He was determined to end US involvement in Southeast Asia, honorably, and was pulling out all the stops in the conduct of the war to achieve this goal. Cambodia had been a long time sanctuary for Communist forces in South Vietnam. They would cross into Cambodia to lick their wounds and regroup anytime they took a beating from the ARVN without the fear of being pursued. Now the ARVN was going to be allowed to follow the enemy into Cambodia and we were going to provide them air support.

Cambodian missions brought about two changes. First, for the first time in my Phan Rang tour, we got air refueling tanker support; secondly, we started flying in four ship flights. This presented a challenge, many of our pilots had never air refueled, that training having been waived in their check out similar to my class. For myself, it had been over seven years since I had poked an F-100 probe into a basket and it had been against a KB-50, never a KC-135.

In one of the first Cambodian missions, I was scheduled to lead a four ship in which only number 4 and I had air refueling F-100 experience. Aware of this, I spent extra time instructing the two inexperienced flight members on aerial refueling techniques during the flight briefing.

When we hit the KC-135, I was first to try hooking up and surprisingly; I had no problems at all. I'm sure my many hook ups with the KC-135 drogue configuration during my F-105 tours in Southeast Asia contributed to making it look easy. My inexperienced flight members flying off to the side waiting their turn had an opportunity to observe the technique I had briefed. I hoped the saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" would prove true when it was their turn.

Number 2 in the flight, was a low time F-100 Lt. Col whose total high time in other aircraft showed as he successfully hooked up after a couple of stabs at the basket.

Then it was my Lieutenant buddy's turn I was mentoring. He had the most difficulty hooking up.

## **“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN**

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He was stabilizing too far back from the basket and chasing it as he moved forward. He came close a couple of times, hitting the rim of the basket with the probe. I didn't like giving a lot of verbal in flight instruction. I thought it was a stronger learning experience for the student to analyze what he was doing wrong and correct it if he could. But it was getting time to help and I planned to tell him to stabilize closer to the basket if he missed on his next try. As it was, I didn't have to say anything as he finally succeeded hooking up; but it wasn't pretty.

Tim followed the Lieutenant and his experienced showed as he hooked up on his first attempt.

After the flight, as I completed the mission debrief, Tim asked me to stay, he wanted to discuss the mission privately with me. When we were left alone, Tim started in on me, saying I needed to take more command of the flight. He thought I had let number 3 go too far trying to figure out how to hook up. I appreciated him giving me his opinion in private and even though he was closer to correct than wrong, I thought he was a little more critical and upset with the way I lead the flight than he needed to be. To each his own!

Providing close air support in Cambodia was easier than in South Vietnam, at least in the areas of Cambodia I flew. The vegetation in Cambodia was not nearly as thick as in Vietnam, making it easier to locate and identify enemy ground troops. It wasn't only easier locating positions, but for the first time, I actually saw the enemy crouching in a ditch along a tree line I was strafing. My first vision of humans in my gun sight suddenly brought the brutality of war to the forefront. My combat experience of bombing, or rocketing roads, bridges, and structures was much easier; it was always killing inanimate objects. White smoke from a machinegun shooting back from the ditch just as suddenly made me realize they were trying to kill me as well. War is an ugly thing!

I don't know how many missions I flew in Cambodia; unfortunately, the mission code in my Air Force flight records did not differentiate missions by country, but I estimate it was a hand full. With the Cambodian campaign, I had flown combat in all four corners of the Southeast Asian War; Laos, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Cambodia.

**This is just a sample of what lies ahead if you purchase the book. Col. Vuzcarra puts you in the drivers seat like no one has done before and paints a picture of what life was like in the heydays of Phan Rang AB and beyond. Buy his book here.**



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Col. (Ret.) Vic Vizcarra was commissioned Through the ROTC program upon graduation from Loyola University of Los Angeles in January 1960. A high standing in his pilot training class allowed him to choose the F-100 from the list of available assignments. After completing F-100 training, he was assigned to the 31st TFW, 309th TFS at Homestead AFB, FL where he flew the "Hun" for 16 months before receiving orders to Japan in the F-105. After a six and a half year absence from the F-100, he received an F-100 assignment when he volunteered to return to Southeast Asia, and flew 120 combat missions with the 35th TFW, 352nd TFS, at **Phan**

**Rang AB.** In addition to the F-100 and F-105, Col. Vizcarra flew the F-5 and F-4 in follow-on assignments. This is the author's second book and is a companion to his first work, "Thud Pilot".

Hun Pilot examines the first of the Century Series of new fighters of the mid-'50s from a young fighter pilot's prospective. The North American Aviation F-100 Super Sabre was the first U.S. fighter capable of exceeding the speed of sound in level flight. Designed as a day superiority fighter, it quickly morphed into the Air Force's mainstay fighter-bomber. The F-100 design and its Pratt and Whitney J-57 engine were a quantum leap in aerodynamics and engine technology that expanded the day-to-day operational flight envelope into the aeronautical regime previously flown only by the X-series of specialize test aircraft. Pioneering supersonic operations opened previously unknown aeronautical phenomenons that challenged new piloting skills. Over its quarter of a century operational career, the F-100 suffered one of the highest accident rates in the fighter inventory, with 38.75% of the fleet destroyed in aircraft

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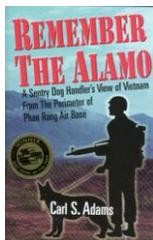
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accidents. Yet, with properly trained pilots at its controls, the aircraft fulfilled the requirement for a worldwide deployable deterrent against the growing nuclear Communist threat. In its latter years of operation, the Hun remained an effective weapon system, flying 360,283 combat sorties in Southeast Asia, more than any other fighter.

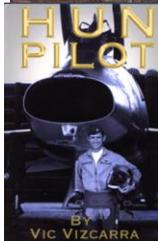
**Special thanks to these authors for supplying their books for raffling at the 2018 Phan Rang Reunion in Nashville.**



**Remember the Alamo** by Carl S. Adams available for sale [here](#).



**The Sky is Not the Limit** by James Etchison available for sale [here](#)



**HUN PILOT** by Vic Vizcarra available for sale [here](#).



**Fighting Fighting** by R. L. Dixon available for sale [here](#).

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