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**Roger Dale Burchett**

## **REUNION OBSERVATIONS**

Our 7<sup>th</sup> reunion is now relegated to the history books. By all accounts it was a resounding success. There were something’s that could have been better, but I’m sure that could be said for any event.

I think this reunion had more first time reunions with their bunkmates/workmates from almost 50 years ago. Joe Schwarzer and Robert Smith, John Reeves and Bob Holz, Anders and Tom Barden and Jim Gagnon and Donald Poirier. Dave Runells met up with David McIlwain, Andy McClendon and Vernon Stephans and they hadn’t seen each other since the jet engine shop at Phan Rang. What a joy it is for them, but for those of us on the sidelines who may have had the similar reunions in the past we know how special it is and I think it actually makes you feel like you’re 21 again.

Something else that is noteworthy are the number of people that attended that very first reunion in Dayton, OH in 2012 are still coming like Sam and Ruth Lewis, Tom and Marcia Parsons, Lou and Annette Ruggiero, Lou and Sue Matherne, Wayne Rodgers, Denny Hawley and Douglas and Joyce Severt.

The generosity of our group is also noteworthy. Joe Kaupa who worked all winter long in his workshop creating beautiful folk art wildlife artifacts as well as other creative pieces commemorating the Vietnam Veterans. Steve Phillips brought some very unique Phan Rang related pieces that were highly sought after and there were many more like John and Linda Shrank and Jeannie Holtz. We had wine and maple syrup from New York and maple syrup with it’s origins in Ohio. There could have been others, but I also have to thank the authors who so generously contributed their book/s to the raffle. There were others that I can’t even remember right now, but thanks to all of you. One random act of kindness was displayed by Kirk Minert. I was talking to Tom Barden and I learned that he was an F-100 crew chief and for a short time was the crew chief for Vic Vizcarra’s aircraft who wrote the book “Hun Pilot” which was on the raffle table right behind him. I called Kirk and told him about Tom and before I knew it he came down to the hospitality suite with a copy of Vic Vizcarra’s book that he gifted

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to Tom. Dave Runells who always brings Vietnam Veteran Rings to be raffled off or given away as door prizes, this year he brought eight of them and gifted eight lucky people with a ring and yours truly was one of them. Thank you Dave and all of the other generous Phan Rangers.

The unprecedented hospitality shown by the staff at the Radisson was remarkable. I think we knew right after our first visit to that facility that it was going to be a good venue even though it lacked some of the space and facilities that we would hope for, but they made up for it in other ways. I think every wish we had was granted and from my perspective and that of the board we could only wish that someday we might find another place that was as welcoming as the Radisson Airport and in particular Amy Alalouf, the Group Sales Manager who even spoke and thanked everyone at the banquet. Amy wrote this on Facebook to the group. “To all of The Phan Rang Family: The Radisson Nashville Airport would like to thank you for hosting your 2018 reunion with us. It was a pleasure to get to know each of you and we hope you enjoyed your stay here in Nashville! We hope you created some wonderful memories!”

*“On a personal note, I would like to thank Our Three Musketeers Lou, Doug and Jim. The three of you along with your wonderful wives walked into our hotel almost a year ago and a year later your reunion is over and now onto Savannah for 2019. You made my job a pleasure and the three of you along with Jack Anderson worked so hard and made sure everyone was happy. We shared so many emails and phone calls discussing details and needs and after everything was done, those ideas went on paper and I truly hope you were pleased with everything! The worse part about my job is meeting wonderful people as yourselves and then your program is over. If you ever find yourself wanting to come back to Nashville or driving through, please let me know. Thank you all for the memories, Amy” We love you Amy and you will always hold a special place in our memories.”*

The attractions in Nashville were many and I suspect many had a chance to experience “Tootsies” and other attractions on Broadway. As a group we went to the Friday night early show at the Grand Ole Opry enjoying such notables as Pam Tillis, Charlie Pride, John Conlee, Joe Diffie, Riders In The Sky, Old Crow Medicine Show and a young man from Australia, Morgan Evans. Our Phan Rang group was recognized twice from the stage, one time receiving a standing ovation and it was heard around the world broadcasted live on WSM and rebroadcasted on SiriusXM radio.

The following are just a few comments about the reunion posted on Facebook. **Donald Luke** wrote: “Always good to find more folks to bring into the fold . . . have been with many who attended reunions who expressed a disappointment in not finding the veterans groups and their reunions sooner . . . They also express a great satisfaction in getting back with fellow

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veterans who have a common history. I will say Thank You to Doug Severt but I know he would say it's not just him, it takes a team to keep the reunions going.”

**Joe Kaupa** wrote: “I just wanted to say what an awesome time NANCY AND I HAD AT THE REUNION AND MEETING ALL THE NEW PEOPLE AND REUNITING WITH OUR OLD FRIENDS. Sure hope it won't be your last. I felt honored to be able to present the duties of the Security Police "Panther Flight" and augmentee's that protected the perimeter at night. Hopefully, for the men that were not aware what we did out there, it gives you a better insight of what all of us went through every night on the wire. I know there was other things I forgot to add to the talk and for that I will apologize but with time constraints I just couldn't get it all said. Too my brothers, on the perimeter you all did an outstanding job on the night of Jan 26. I am so proud of you all. Among the many things I am proud of, is on the night of the 26th of Jan 1969 is that we ended up without any US KIA's and I would like to believe that all of us in CSC that night had something to do with that. Getting a standing ovation brought tears to my eyes. It is something I shall never forget. May God Bless you all. See you in Savanna 2019.”

**Donald Poirier** wrote: “Jim Gagnon and me, our first PRAB reunion. Meeting for the 1st time since January 1972. We shared a barracks room together at Phan Rang. He worked for OSI and I was an SP. Funny thing, we live less than 100 miles from each other all those years.”

**Joe Schwarzer** wrote: “Meeting my buddy Robert Smith (Smitty) who I haven't seen since 1968.

**John Reeves** wrote: “I want to thank everyone who made the reunion such a wonderful success. I want to thank all of you for making it fun and memorable. Many laughs a few tears. Mostly new friendships. God bless you all.”

**Jim Kucipeck** wrote: “Amy Alalouf, thank you so much for the outstanding hospitality, great accommodations, outstanding staff, and outstanding service. You are special and Betsy and I will never forget you and what the Radisson did for us and all the Phan Rang veterans!



## LIST OF 2018 REUNION ATTENDEES

*Larry and Marilyn McCabe, Andy and Betty McClendon, Jeremy McGaughey, David and Connie McInwain, Ronny and Darlene McWilliams, Jim and Janet Meesko, Kirk and Cathy Minert, Michael Mulcahey, Deana Young, Bruce and Mary Muller, Kirby and Jeannie White, Randy and Cindy Weber, Richard Ward, Eric and Mary Tyler, Bob and Marcia Tucker, John Ryan, Howard and Cathy Taylor, Tom and Mary Strait, Vernon and Marty Stephens, Robert Spence, Robert and Barbara Smith, Charles and Bonnie Simmons Michael and Glen Short, John Shields, Douglas and Joyce Severt, Joe Schwarzer and Chris Eyler, John and Linda Shrank, Greg and Susie Schmidt, Sandy and Kathy Sander, David Ranells, Anthony Ortiz, Lou and Annette Ruggiero, Wayne Rogers, Richard Dixon, John Reeves and Robin Littrell, Mike and Carla Reed, Toby and Rebecca Polk, Steven Phillips, Donald and Deborah Poirer, Charles Plaganios, Delbert and Sharon Ping, Neil and Patsy Pillar, Eugene and Diane Pellon, John and Val Ostler, Ron and Virginia Adkerson, David Albright and Royanne Ginck, Jim and Pam Anders, Dana and Marlene Anthony, Tom and Sandy Barden, Marvin and Carolyn Bennett, Ray and Mary Benson, Bob Blankenship, Jonathan and Jeanane Buck, Don and Victoria Chatterton, John and Sharon Claybaugh, Orus and Mary Coffield, Mike and Donna Conklin, Phil Cousineau, Elazandro and Lilli De Los Santos, Ed Downey and Barbara Brandt, James and Debra Eckardt, Mike and Floyd, Jim and Kathy Gagnon, Tom and Nancy Gates, Ralph Gorman, Bob and Margaret Gorman, Ken and Barbara Long, Johnny, Maggie Johnson, Catherine Evans, Bob and Anita Blankenship, David and Ann Boerman, Michael and Robin Crowder, James and Debra Echardt, Marvin and Carolyn Bennett, Keith and Kimberly Kukla, Jim Lehse, Barry LaBombarde, Jean Laasko, Ken and Barbara Long, Denny Hawley, Don and Deborah Poirier, Toby, Cameron and Rebecca Polk, Bob Kellington and Lisa Amador, Jim and Kathleen Soltis, Ralph and Bonnie Lou Johnson, Jim and Kathy Holland, Larry and Jan Pace, George and Kathleen Haskett, Howard and Kathy Taylor, Jim and Judy Hemphill, Rich and Barbara Luckhaupt, Dave and Linda Pace, Richard and Judy Ward, Frank and Cindy Square and Mike Granese.*

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**Minutes of the Nashville Reunion General Meeting**

October 13, 2018

The seventh annual business meeting of the Phan Rang/ Happy Valley group was called to order at 2:30 pm, on October 13, 2018 in Nashville, TN.

Doug Severt, Lou Ruggiero and Jim Kucipeck hosted the meeting.

The minutes of the last general meeting from Seattle, WA, Oct. 19th, 2017 were approved by acclamation.

The Financial report was read by Jim Kucipeck, financial information as of 10/5/2018. Current balance of \$15,267.84 with anticipated expenses of \$8648.00 for the Nashville reunion.

Open issues: Reaffirmation of officers, Doug Severt, President, Lou Ruggiero, VP, John (Jack) Anderson, Treasurer and Jim Kucipeck, Secretary. All the current administration was reaffirmed by acclamation.

New Business: Bruce Muller made the following proposal. “I have taken the time to break the U S into 6 equal pieces by population, and my major cities in each section. This will make a site selection much easier. There are 3 sections in the North: N/E, N/C & N/W. There are 3 sections in the South: S/E, S/C & S/W all by population. That was we will be able to serve all our brothers at PRAQB. Not everybody can afford to travel all over the US. I feel we are leaving out a lot of our brothers who aren’t as luck as us.” Maps were handed out to the group. A proposal was made and it was followed by a second, no vote taken. An additional discussion took place, during Bruce Muller proposal, that a decision was made at the Seattle Reunion in 2017 that the site selection decision would be made by the current administration Doug Severt, Lou Ruggiero, Jack Anderson and Jim Kucipeck.

The next item of new business was the selection of the next reunion city. It was decided at the Seattle reunion by vote of the group in 2017 that the administrative committee, Doug Severt, Lou Ruggiero, Jack Carpenter and Jim Kucipeck would make that decision. Through a collaborative effort via email and phone calls to each other we decided on the following cities Virginia Beach, VA; Dayton, OH; Savannah, GA; Jacksonville, FL; Tamp, FL would be considered. Through due diligence we the committee decided



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that Savannah, GA would be the site of the 2019 Phan Rang/Happy Valley Reunion.

Bruce Muller had an additional proposal to sharing information on members of PRAB group. “We could gather information i.e. email addresses, phone numbers on a master list. That way we could contact PRAB members. I believe we have member who will start a data base. On the data base you would have a space for SHARE, ONLY through an administrator. The administrator would call the person to get permission to release the information or not to contact. That would cover the privacy issues.

The proposal was seconded and approved by the group. Tom Strait agreed to be the creator and administrator of the data base.

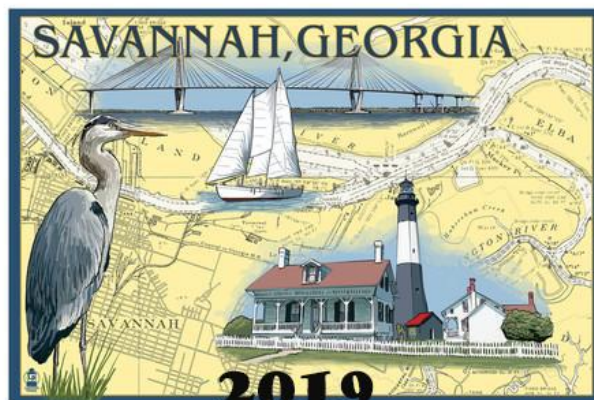
A discussion took place by Jim Kucipeck at the urging of Vernon Stephens about the need for information concerning veteran’s health. It was decided that at the next reunion that we would have representatives from among the V A, Disabled Americans Veterans, or the American Legion. The first topic that would be discussed at the Savannah Reunion would be how veterans should go about getting help from the Veterans Administration.

The meeting closed 3:30 pm by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted

**James Kucipeck**, Secretary

Happy Valley/Phan Rang Reunion



*Phan Rang AB Reunion*

**35<sup>th</sup> Security Police Sq., Phan Rang AB, RVN, a briefing presented by Joe Kaupa  
at the 2018 Phan Rang AB Reunion Banquet, Nashville, Tn.**

35<sup>TH</sup> SECURITY POLICE SQ.  
PHAN RANG AB, RVN



By SSgt. Joe Kaupa

This presentation is about my Vietnam experience and what the duties were for all the units in the Security Police, who worked the perimeter. When I comment on the WIRE it is the BASE PERIMETER. Panther Flight is Night Shift on the Perimeter.

There were approximately 190 SP's on the Perimeter each night, consisting of Heavy Weapons unit, Tower guards, SAT (Strike Alert Team) Teams, CSC (Central Security Control), Alternate CSC, Water Point, SP Motor Pool, along with approx 66 K-9 Dogs and their handlers. We also had Augmentee's, which the numbers varied.

Orders for Phan Rang March 68. April 1, 1968 notice of promotion to SSgt effective 1 July. I took, my wife, Nancy, 23 month old son, Scott and 6 month daughter, Debra back to Minnesota to live with her mother and grandfather.

On May 26th, Scott's second birthday I left for Vietnam. Arrived at Cam Rah Bay after a long flight. I was a young 23 yr. old father of 2 at the time and wondered if I would ever return home alive, in a body bag or injured. I was very nervous as I am sure a lot of GI's were at the time.

Door opened and the heat and smell was just terrible. I had been the only person going to Phan Rang on that plane, got on a huey chopper and off we went. It was a very bumpy ride and the doors were open. Wondering if we were going to be shot at.

**Arrived at Phan Rang. Wow, What a hell of a ride.**

Assigned airman's barracks. Very tired, Finally 1900 got to bed. Midnight, I heard this explosion that sounded so close to the barracks. What the hell was that. Charlie was welcoming me to Vietnam with a Rocket and mortar attack. A guy grabbed me and said GET THE HELL to the

bunker. This scared the hell out of me as I never heard this sound before. The explosions seems to get closer.

## **What the hell did I get into?**

**I’m going to tell you a little bit of myself, then I’ll talk about:**

- Heavy Weapons
- Tower Guards
- Dog Handlers K-9
- Strike Alert Teams (SAT)
- Alternate CSC (Nui Dat)
- Water Wells
- Augmentees
- Events of 26 January 1969
- And then recap

Day 1, I was told everyone goes out on the Perimeter (WIRE) that is E-4 and below. We strung concertina fencing for the first two days. Concertina Wire is long round rolled strands of razor sharp wire. The wire is strung 3 deep and 2 high. The Perimeter was very scary as you were in no man's land, but you would see towers out on the wire. I remember when we got a break how NASTY the water was? Looked and tasted like mud water. It was so damn hot out there and we were ringing wet from sweat!

First thought was I'm glad I'm not working out here at night time. **Little did I know what was ahead for me!**

After 2 days of working. I was sent to the orderly room and told I was assigned to Panther Flight (night Shift). a. Night shift, 1800 to 0600 hrs. This is 6 PM to 6 AM, 6 days a week.

**“My worst nightmare was about to begin. Out there in total darkness,  
‘Alone’.”**

I was taken to base supply issued, pith helmet, flack jacket, Camo fatigues (only Panther flight and K-9's issued Camo), web belt, boots and poncho.



**“I wondered where the hell my weapon was. we are in a war zone?”**

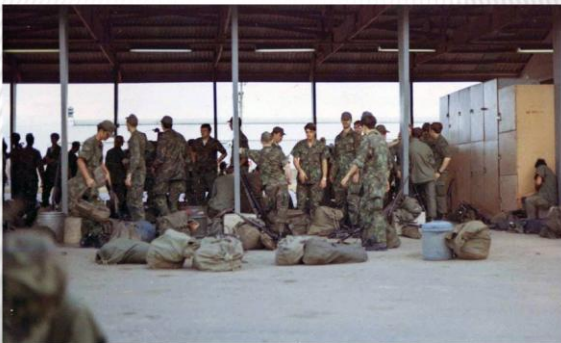
## **FIRST NIGHT ON PERIMETER**

Once you left the main part of base, it was very dark. Further out you got the scarier it got. To say I was nervous is a understatement.

You had one night of training and I was Posted with another E-4. I think the tower was Hotel 8.

Got to the tower finally and they dropped us off and and we walked to the tower. After climbing steps to the top I thought "WOW", you are a sitting duck here. We each had M-16's, 2 bandoliers of spare ammo, portable radio, and slap flares. (Slap flares are a tube, where you take the cap off hit the bottom of the flare and it will light up the area for a short period of time.)

**GUARD MOUNT**



**HEADING TO THE WIRE**



**Guard Mount** where you get assigned to a post, a briefing of intelligence for the night and got your weapons.

Loaded up in a duce 1/2 and heading out to the wire.

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**PERIMETER**



The perimeter was approximately 11 to 12 miles in diameter around the base.

**MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE OR DIDN'T APPRECIATE THE AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY THE 35TH SECURITY POLICE SQUADRON PLAYED IN THE DEFENSE OF THE BASE. WE PROVIDED ALL THE SECURITY FOR THE BASE AND THE WATER POINT.**

**THERE WAS NO ARMY, KOREAN, AUSSIE SECURITY.** The Korean's and Aussies went outside the wire at night set up Ambush positions. I hope I am able to do justice for all my SP brothers.

Because it was so quite on the wire you could actually hear the mortars and rockets that the VC shot off leave their tubes heading towards the base.

First 6 hours very still, and quite. Around midnight we would hear K-9's call in on dog alerts. Thought here we go. Nothing happened.

An hour later all of a sudden I heard this explosion and booms. My partner said this was Harassment and Interdiction (H&I) outgoing fire. Every night there would be H & I at different times and places. I was then told about the MACV Rules of Engagement (You could NOT fire unless the person was firing at you, or they were inside the Wire.)

**“NO FREE FIRE ZONE. What the hell kind of war are we in here?”**

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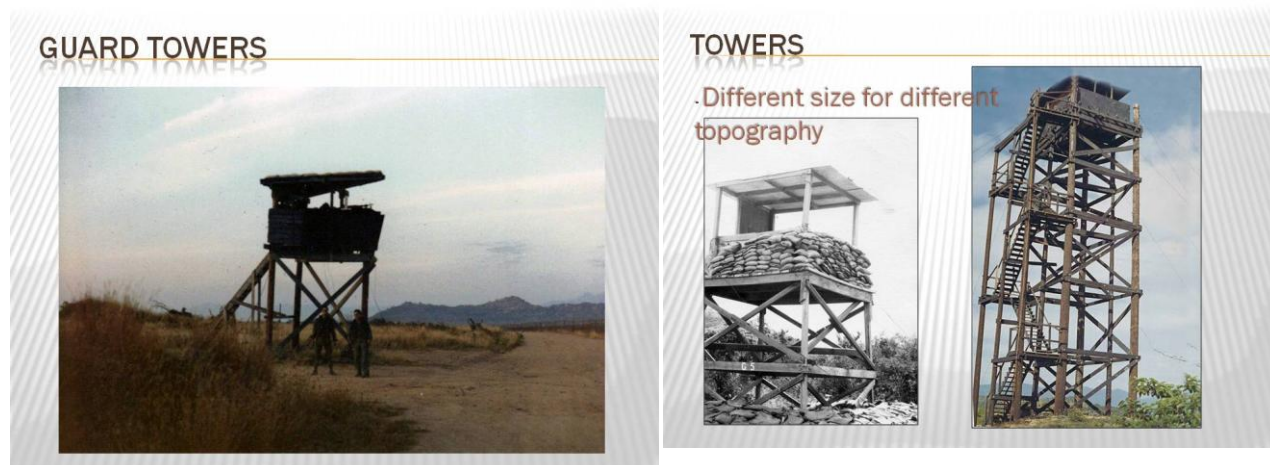
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Most of the time H & I was fired at CHARLIE'S MOUNTAIN, which supposedly was a VC (Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) stronghold where they were dug in. I was told it was about a mile or so from the perimeter.

Daylight finally came and we were relieved of duty. All I know is it was a nerve racking first night. Then I was told that I would be posted tonight ALONE as most all towers are one-man posts.



Towers were about 30 yards off the wire and the K-9 men walked on the inside of the wire with their dog.

**My god, it was so dark and quiet out there. You had to strain your eyes to look outside the wire, looking for movement.**

**(I WOULD LIKE YOU ALL TO CLOSE YOUR EYES, UNTIL I TELL YOU TO OPEN THEM.**

**PUT YOURSELF IN THAT TOWER ALONE. THIS IS WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR A TOWER GUARD AND K-9 HANDLERS ON THE WIRE EVERY NIGHT, LOOKING AND LISTENING FOR MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THE WIRE STARING INTO THE DARKNESS.**

**THERE IS EXCEPTION WHEN THERE WAS A FULL MOON, BUT IT WAS STILL DAMM DARK. WE ALL KNEW THAT THE VC DIDN'T LIKE THE FULL MOON. THEY MAINLY PROBED AND SENT INCOMING WHEN THERE WAS NO MOON.)**

Also fixed to the tower was a **AZIMUTH** reader. It was a board with numbers on it and an arrow that was used to give coordinates of incoming round.

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If you saw incoming you took a reading, called it in to CSC (Central Security Control) The nerve center for all security operations for the base. (Note: I will explain further the duties in CSC) and they in turn notified the Korea's for their big guns and our Heavy Weapons Unit that would fire at the azimuth Reading location given by the tower guard.

My second night I was posted on a tower alone and believe me it was scary as hell. **YOU WERE SUCH A SITTING TARGET IN THAT TOWER. ONE B-40 ROCKET WOULD BLOW YOU OUT OF THE SKY.** Total darkness and very quiet. You're thinking that if they come thru the fence where will it be. Will I have a chance? What if there are 25-50 VC coming thru, how could I stop them until back-up arrives?

What if they just take a B-40 rocket and blow me out of the tower? You are the only line of defense preventing them from getting on the base. Will I ever see my wife and children again? It was just nerve wracking how this worked on your mind.

I can't put into words how scary it was working the towers at night ALONE. It is one of the scariest, mind game playing a person could ever have. Your mind plays so many games with you. You hear and see things that are not there.

One night after being posted I got to the top of the tower and saw movement inside the tower. Here was a 10 foot python snake lying on the sand bags. That scared the hell out of me. I asked CSC permission to shoot and killed it.

Another time I saw movement on the wire after alerting the K-9 handler in front of me and I used a slap flare and it was a tiger walking along the wire.

You never see anyone or talk to anyone except maybe the K-9 out front who would walk up for a couple minutes or the SAT team would bring you some coffee and give you a 10 minute break.

### **LONG, LONG NIGHTS.**

I worked the towers and occasional as a SAT team member, manning the 60 Cal machine gun until July 1.

Once off duty, trying to sleep during the heat of the day was extremely difficult. We would go to the “Snake Pit” the SP's hang out behind the orderly room to drink a few beers every morning to help you get to sleep.

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There were many units in the Security Police that worked nights. These units had 12-14 miles of perimeter to man. I will breakdown the units that were out there and explain their jobs the best that I can.

**Panther Flight**, approximately 190 men posted on towers, and Sat Teams.

**Water point** which was about a 1-2 miles off the base perimeter in a hamlet which was guarded by thee SP's (When I worked out there.) When the ARMY was there they used 10-15 men to guard it) After they left the SP's took over the Security. Across the river was another Hamlet. The bunker there was literally 30-40-feet from hooches. The only back up came from base perimeter SAT teams and Heavy Weapons Units. I worked the Water Point on two occasions and believe me it was damn scary out there.

You were a total sitting duck out there. When I was posted there, there was a lot of gun fire in the hamlet across the river and you always wondered when the VC was coming. I can only remember one time where the water point was hit hard and all 3 men were injured, from what I remember, Rocket and mortar rounds. I believe we called Pedro in to pick up the injured.

**K-9 dogs and Handlers** approximately 66 dogs on the wire. They walked the dog's right on the inside of the wire.

**Heavy Weapons Unit** used APC's (armored personnel Carriers), Mini gun mounted on a jeep. They would patrol areas and go where needed.

**Alternate CSC** was located on top the Nui Dat hill. Believe that was manned by two men. They had a clear view of everything around the base and the perimeter. They also were used as a backup for CSC in case CSC got knocked out. Rich Luckhaupt manned that along with another man.

July 1 came and I sewed on my SSgt stripes and was assigned as a SAT team leader. (Strike Alert Team). The team consisted of SAT leader, machine gunner and an extra guy. You drove a jeep and were assigned a certain area for response. We carried M-16's, AR 15's, 38's, M-60 machine gun, grenades, M-79 grenade launcher and slap flares. We set up on the perimeter with mortar pits and fired H & I or fired at VC.

You would respond to any post in your sector that had movement or K-9 alerts. I always made sure my guys in the towers got a lot of breaks if possible. The third guy on the team would relieve the posted man.



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I never forgot how lonely it was in the towers alone and no one to talk too. If it was quiet I would sneak into the chow hall and the cooks would cook up some things and I would take them out to the towers in my sector. They appreciated that a lot.

There were numerous times where we would respond to K-9 alerts or sightings outside the wire. There were a few times where we had a fire fight and Spooky would be called in. The VC were good at Hit and Run. They always took their wounded or KIA's with them. You would find blood but no bodies.

I learned very quickly that Charlie **NEVER** liked to **HIT YOU** when there was a full moon. When there was **NO MOON** he would send you **INCOMING**.

Whenever incoming came in you could always hear them leave the tube and go over head to strike the base and flight line. There were always many PROBES on the wire and K-9 Alerts. **LITTLE DID WE KNOW THAT THESE PROBES WERE VC & NVA PREPARING FOR A GROUND SAPPER ATTACK ON JANUARY 1969.**

I think the K-9 guys knew something was wrong as they know there dogs and how they alerted, but then there was nothing.

The Aussie's provided ambush teams outside the perimeter. Their teams were called Airfield Defence Guards and their job was to root out any insurgent before they got to the base perimeter. The Korean's also did ambush work outside the wire and had the big guns with basically the same mission as the Aussie's only further out.

**Armory personnel** located next to guard mount and CSC handed out weapons of numerous kinds, cleaned them, charged radios, maintenance on weapons as needed. I think there were 2-3 guys that were assigned there at night.

**Augmentee's** (These were men from other squadrons that volunteered to work with the SP's out on the wire.) They were a Great bunch of men and we SP's appreciated them. If memory serves me right there were over one hundred augmentee's that were trained and ready to be deployed.

**CSC** (Central Security Control) This was a radio room that was the nerve center for All Base Security Operations. All radio calls from all personal working at night came through CSC. We had a large 4' X 4' scale board in front of the radio desk for the Comptroller to look at with every tower post, K-9 post position on the perimeter. It helped the comptroller in dispatching back up and blocking forces.



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Each tower post was numbered by sector and each K-9 post had a number.

We had a hot line to the base commander. We were responsible for dispatching help to hot areas, activate further augmentee's response and siren activation when incoming was sighted.

There were three people that manned the CSC. One job was to keep a police blotter of all radio calls that came in, time and location. This person typed all the information.

In November 1968, I was told I was being assigned to CSC as a Comptroller (Radio dispatcher) and would be responsible for over 200 men out on the perimeter. The job included deploying men, equipment, and setting up blocking forces to repel any ground attack.

Also calling up all backup people, activate base sirens, co-ordinate air response, and the safety of all base personnel. After hearing this all I could think was WOW.... I pray I am up for this.

**Someone there must think I can do the job!**

From November 1968 thru the middle of January 1969 we continued to have a number of continued probes and Rocket and mortar attacks.



On the night of January 26, 1969, I was the comptroller and at 0029 hrs., **ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE**, Juliet 4 called in he had 3 Sappers inside the wire. Seconds later K-9's were engaging in a fire fight.

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I believe Sgt Cupto, K-9 handler was first person injured and his K-9 dog FRITZ saved his life by jumping on a grenade. It cost Fritz's life. Sgt Cupto was awarded the Silver Star for his actions that night.

Craig Lord was next to Cupto when the fire fight began. There were other K-9 men wounded that night along with Panther flight men and heavy weapons men. I believe one of the APC's took a direct hit from a B-40 Rocket. At the same time we were receiving incoming Rockets and Mortars.



I was receiving radio calls from all around the perimeter of incoming mortars, rockets and ground fire.

Men out on the wire from tower guards to K-9 men were stepping on each other calling in. We were receiving ground fire on three side of the base. Don't remember the other people in there. I dispatched all personnel for back up, activated the base sirens and also all Augmentee's not already posted.

WE were in **RED ALERT**. (RED ALERT was a status for an ALL OUT GROUND & MORTAR, ROCKET ATTACK.

We contacted Spooky to get him in the air to help on the wire.

We had K-9 men down and other wounded men. At one point during all of this we had a Rocket hit the outside of CSC and Shrapnel came flying thru the walls. I hit the floor as shrapnel was flying past us. I held on to the radio and continued dispatching.

Was I scared? You better believe it! But you react and you don't have time to think about it.

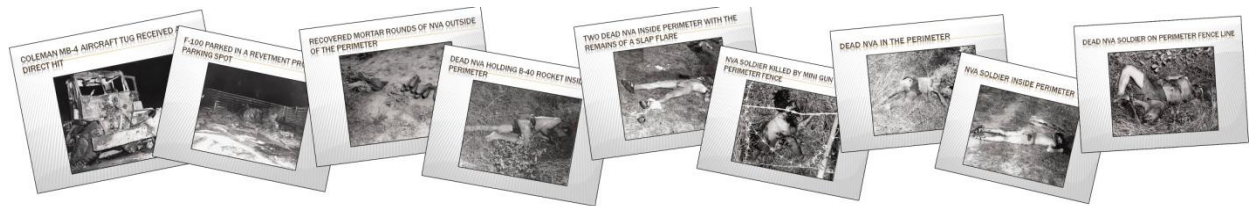
**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN**  
...keeping the memories alive  
Phan Rang AB News No. 161 **“Stories worth telling”**

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We lost power for a short time and was going to have Rich Luckhaupt who was on top of Nui Dat at the Alternate CSC to take over but our power came back on and we did not have to.

We continued being mortared and rocketed and could here rounds hitting outside the building. We found out later, we were being hit by the NVA's (North Vietnamese Army) H-13, Sapper Company of 351st NVA Battalion. The Battalions had a estimated strength of 300 men.

**Finally after approximately 12 hours of incoming Rockets and Mortars, and ground fighting the base was given an all CLEAR at 1245 hrs. (12:45 PM).**



**The following is the results of the Rocket, Mortar, and Ground Attack on JANUARY 26th, 1969:**

1. We took 74 incoming rounds (Rocket and Mortars)
2. 2 Aircraft destroyed
3. 11 Aircraft damaged
4. 0 US KIA's (Killed in Action)
5. 15 US WIA's (Wounded in Action)
6. 1 US K-9 Dog (Killed in Action)
7. 17 NVA (Killed in Action)
8. 1 NVA (Prisoner of War)

From January 26, 1969 until I rotated on May 26th 1969, I remained as a Comptroller in CSC and we continued to take many more incoming rounds and a number of probes on the perimeter.

The following facts: I would like to pass on before concluding this presentation. This information was gathered from AIR FORCE Records.

Mortar or rocket impact on pavement outside CSC.

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For all of you men that arrived at Phan Rang during July 1968 to Dec 1969 we had received 580 incoming Rockets and Mortars rounds that hit our base.

Phan Rang AB took more incoming rounds than any other AB in Vietnam during the Vietnam War according to AF Records. The base took a total of 693 rounds from 1968 to

1972. No records were kept prior to July 1968 that I could find. Phan Rang AB received 580 of those rounds from July 1968 to Dec 1969.

Coleman MB-4 Aircraft tug received a direct hit.

F-100 parked in a revetment protected parking spot.

Recovered mortar rounds of NVA outside of the perimeter.

The images of the fallen NVA and VC are very graphic depictions of the human toll of the aftermath of the attack. For the most part the air missions at Phan Rang AB resulted in a huge loss of human life, but it was far away and you didn't see up close the carnage that resulted from a bomb drop so it didn't seem real, but when you see up close the fallen young men that tried to disrupt our mission and kill us, it makes it very real.

Dead NVA holding B-40 rocket inside the perimeter.

Two dead NVA inside perimeter with the remains of a slap flare.

NVA soldier killed by mini gun on the perimeter fence.

Dead NVA in the perimeter.

Dead NVA soldier inside perimeter.

Dead NVA soldier on perimeter fence line.

ther dead NVA inside perimeter.

Dead NVA killed inside perimeter.

Recovered rifles, radios and ammunition of NVA Sapper team.

In CLOSING I would like to read two poems that my good friend and SP brother, A2C Rick Hernandez, a 20 year old young man wrote on his feelings working every night on the perimeter. I had no contact with Rick for over 45 years and one day I got an e-mail from him that brought tears to my eyes. I would like to share his E-mail with you.

**Sgt Joe, It is my honor to be in touch with you, the 26th of January, you were in control of the communication. Everyone depended on you to keep and respond to each situation as it came up. You handled everyone with Authority, that was calling in excited scared. Joe, as scared as I was your voice managed calm me down and get ready to die defending the Air Base. I really thought I was going to be a KIA. After all of these years I still hear Rocket and Mortar Rounds hitting base. I see and hear Mini guns firing in the Juliet area. You really deserve nothing less than the Silver Star. I will continue later, the tears are making me so blurry.**

I think these poems speak for all the men that worked the perimeter at night.  
Here is Rick’s first poem:

### **Courageous and Brave**

**They stood to**

**While fear was eating them up alive**

**They went out into the darkness**

**Every night willing to die,**

**For what was right.**

**They thought of home,**

**And the ones they loved.**

**Fighting back tears with all their might**

**Protecting the sleeping troops,**

**Every single night.**

**No one thought about the angels on the perimeter**

**During the darkness of every night.**

**Sleep safe tonight my brothers**

**You are protected by Panther Flight.**

The second poem:

**In the emptiness I exist alone**

**With only the darkness who becomes my friend**

**We laugh and talk as we stare**

**Into the nothing that is forever.**

**The darkness becomes my best friend**

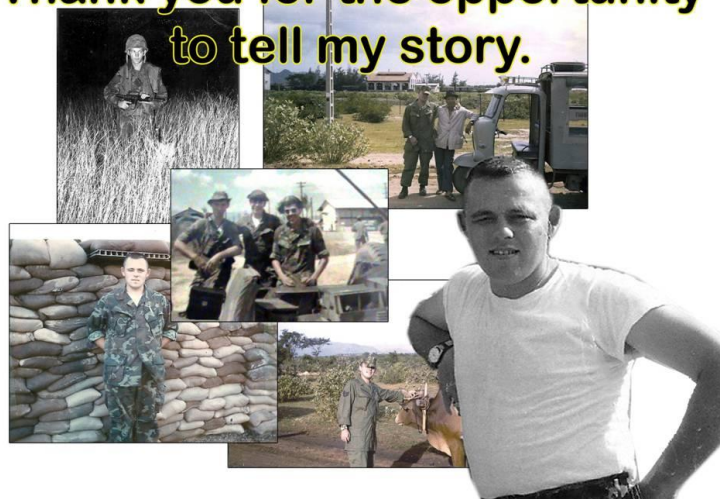
**It holds me as a mother holds her child**

**It comforts me as I cry**

**We stay together until the morning light.**

I hope I have given JUSTICE to my SP Brothers and I have given you an insight of what the Security Police men of Phan Rang AB did and went thru during their tour of duty.

**Thank you for the opportunity  
to tell my story.**





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*It's hard to think of a reunion and not think of Roger and Ina Burchett. Roger and Ina were founding members of the Phan Rang Brotherhood when they along with a few others at the first reunion in 2012 bonded with all of us and will forever remain Phan Rangers and a part of our collective memory of the wonderful people that served at Phan Rang AB.*



**R**oger Dale Burchett served in the United States Air Force as a Jet Engine Mechanic from November 1968 to November 1972. He completed basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. He completed Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, IL. He then received orders for Clovis Air Force Base in Clovis, New Mexico. He volunteered to serve his country in the Vietnam Conflict from December 1969 to November 1970. Upon his return from Vietnam he received orders for Minot Air Force Base in Minot, North Dakota.

Roger loved his country and was honored to have the privilege to serve. He would give a card of thanks to all active military persons and to those who had served that he would meet. He would always say "Welcome Home" to his fellow Vietnam service members that he would meet. The card contained the words of General George S. Patton which read: "The highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one's country." He sincerely believed that. Roger always had something special for every member that attended the

reunions.

Roger married Ina Jones on November 9, 1969, before his deployment to Vietnam. After his discharge as a SSgt in November 1972, Roger and Ina moved back to their home town in Stanford, Kentucky. Roger resumed his employment with K and K Grocery and later was employed by Horseman's IGA where he worked as a butcher. Roger and Ina had two daughters Melissa and Heather.

In 1978 Roger left the grocery industry to attend A & P (Airframe & Powerplant) School in Somerset, KY. He received his A & P License in May 1980. Roger accepted a job with Petroleum Helicopters (PHI) in Lafayette, LA and began employment in June 1980. PHI has many bases in the United States and Overseas. The Lafayette base provided off shore services to workers in the Gulf of Mexico. He also obtained his IA License (Inspection Authorization) while employed with PHI. He worked as an inspector until his retirement in November 2015, after 35 years of employment.

Roger was a great mechanic and could fix almost anything. He loved working outside in his yard. He loved music and was a gifted musician. He played the drums from the young age of 15. He always looked forward to the Phan Rang Reunions with his fellow military family. He always had some sadness when the reunion was over. He loved reminiscing with old friends.

Roger passed away on May 20, 2016 at the age of 67. He was a godly man who found good in all mankind. He was a kind, loving and giving man. Roger is missed by all who knew him. He is greatly missed by his wife Ina of 46 1/2 years, daughter Melissa and her husband Kevin, daughter Heather and her husband Mike and three beautiful grandchildren Sarah, Chloe and Ryder and his Phan Rang family. He was a loving husband, father and Popie. He was a true patriot.

**The world is a better place because of the path in life that he walked and the life lessons that were learned from his wisdom.**

I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter and if you have any comments, please let me know. This newsletter was composed by **Douglas Severt**. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, reply to <mailto:dougsevert@cox.net> and put ‘unsubscribe’ in subject line.