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OPERATIONS

(Source: No. 2 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam
1968 Pamphlet)



In the 4200 missions that No. 2 Squadron flew during its first 18 months of operations in Vietnam, some 6200 targets were struck by day and night. These targets were located throughout South Vietnam, from its southern extremity, north to the Demilitarized Zone.

Operational control of the squadron is exercised by Headquarters 7th Air Force through the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing. (Administrative control is exercised by Department of Air Force

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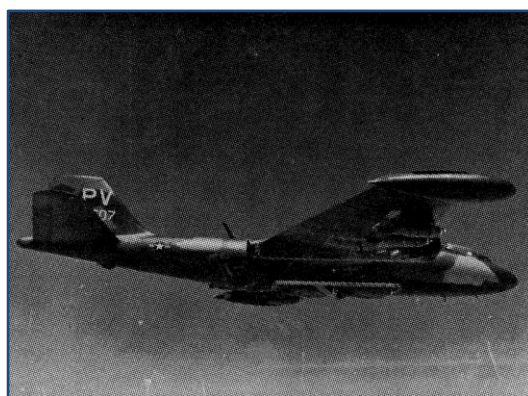
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through Headquarters RAAF Element Vietnam. Matters of operational policy have been agreed between Department of Air and the USAF, and are supervised by the Commander RAAF Vietnam.) The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing is somewhat cosmopolitan in its make-up, comprising three USAF F-100D squadrons, a US National Guard F-100C squadron, consisting almost exclusively of civil airline pilots, a B-57 tactical bomber squadrons, and the Australian Canberra light bomber squadron. However, close cooperation with keen- and friendly rivalry between squadrons has molded the wing into an efficient operational unit. All aircraft are employed in the same role; bombing at night under the control of ground radar stations and visual bombing by day. In addition the USAF squadrons fly visual night missions, working under the light from flares.



F-100 D on a dive-bombing pass



USAF B-57 of 8th TBS carrying 8 740 lb bombs

Initially, No. 2 Squadron flew its eight daily missions on night radar bombing (Combat Skyspot) sorties. This technique denies the enemy the security normally afforded by darkness and bad weather, while the bombing height of more than 15,000 feet ensures complete surprise. However, its accuracy depends not only on the accuracy of tracking by the ground station, but also on the precision with which the aircraft is flown. The squadron soon established a reputation for precise flying, maintaining height within 20 feet, airspeed within two knots and heading within half a degree. Assessed results have proven the Combat Skyspot technique to be accurate and effective. Two of the squadron's best results occurred on the nights of 25th July and 15th September 1968, when bombs killed 33 VC, wounded 20, destroyed 15 structures and nine sampans on one strike, killed 40 VC and obtained a secondary explosion on the other. Such results are a tribute to the competency of the radar controller, the suitability of the Canberra for accurate instrument flying, and the ability of the aircrew.

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In November 1967, the daily task of the squadron was changed to four sorties by night and four visual bombing sorties by day. Basically this remains the allotted task, although since 3rd July 1968, 7th Air Force has been programming two night missions and six by day. All visual bombing is in support of ground operations in South Vietnam. The most significant ones include direct support of troops in contact with enemy, pre-strikes on enemy forces prior to land, airborne or riverboat assault, and interdiction of enemy supply routes.

Prime Minister Gorton viewing a pictorial display of Canberra targets throughout South Vietnam.



Crew explaining details of a target to DCAS, AVM Townsend, before take-off.

Air Cdre Newstead, Com RAAF V, and Wg Cdr Evans “consider the possibilities” while inspecting light-arms fire damage to a Canberra.



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Canberra heading south to a target in the Delta region.

Although the B-57 is the American version of the Canberra, it, like the tactical fighters, uses a dive-bombing technique on day and night visual sorties. Thus, No. 2 Squadron is the only squadron in South Vietnam employing a level bombing technique using the aircraft precision bomb-sight. While the Canberra is in many respects difficult to operate under the conditions of this war, FACs have been quick to learn its particular advantages over the fighter — its suitability to bombing structures along canal lines by selecting varying spacing of the six bombs, and by its ability to level bomb beneath low cloud cover. While the preferred bombing altitude is 3,000 feet because of improved accuracy and lower threat from ground fire, about 20 percent of day missions are flown down to a minimum of 1,000 feet. Although the bombsight is of World War II vintage, the accuracy currently being achieved by the squadron, from photographic assessment, surpasses that for which the equipment was originally designed, and compares very favourably with all other squadrons. The many tributes from FACs and ground commanders testify to the success of the technique, the professionalism of the squadron aircrew and maintenance personnel. Weather conditions throughout Vietnam are generally good. However, on numerous occasions throughout the year, fighter missions have to be diverted due to low cloud or poor visibility. Under these conditions, the Canberra has been able to "hold" until the weather improves, permitting attack on the original target. At other times delays caused by the ever changing tactical situation have forced the Canberra to "hold" for long periods. Thus the endurance aspect of the squadron's operations is noteworthy.

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Crew returning from mission.

The squadron is unique in that it possesses VT (variable time) fuzes for its bombs. Depending on settings, the fuze detonates the bomb between 50 feet and 200 feet above ground, giving considerable blast and fragmentation effect — a particularly suitable weapon against "soft skinned" targets such as structures, vehicles, sampans and enemy troops. Although not used as frequently as the squadron would wish, many VT-fuzed bombs have been dropped proving their suitability to conditions in the Delta region of Vietnam.

A mission's effectiveness is reflected in the, FAC's assessment of bomb damage. One recent daylight mission in which four of the squadron aircraft carried out a formation strike on one target resulted in 25 VC being killed. However, on many occasions,

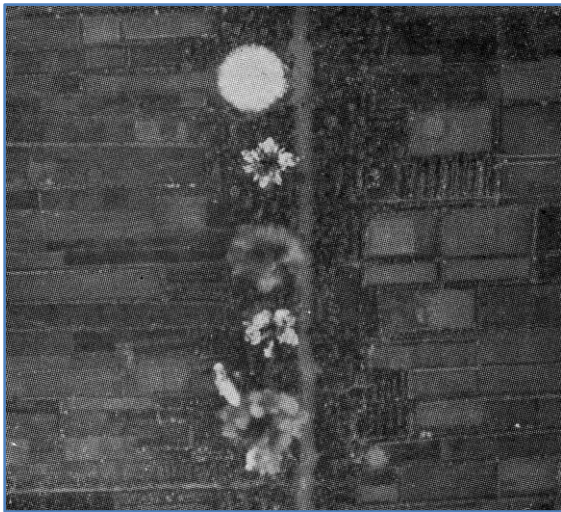
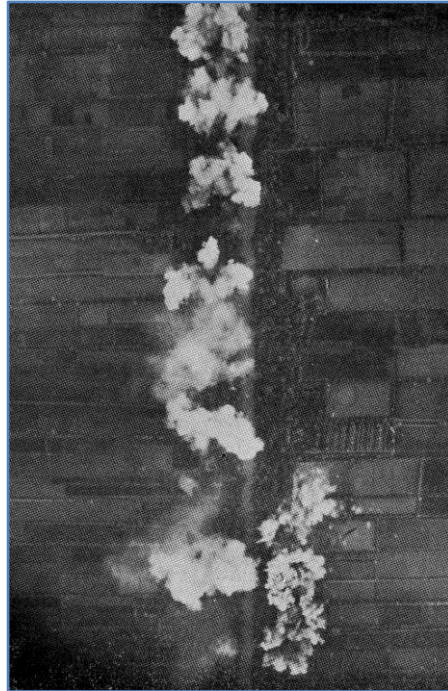
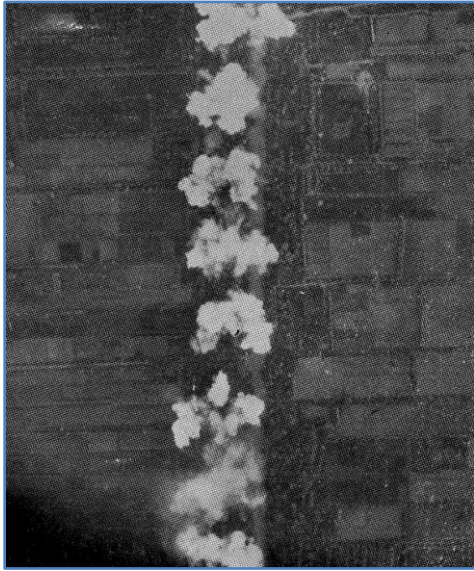
particularly when working on targets in dense jungle, damage assessment is not possible. Again, while a FAC may establish that a number of bunkers or structures have been destroyed he cannot determine whether or not they were occupied at the time of the attack. The damage actually achieved by the squadron is, therefore, very likely to significantly exceed the officially credited total. This, of course, affects all squadrons in Vietnam equally. Nevertheless, the credited Bomb Damage Assessment provides the best indication of the success of a squadrons bombing. No. 2 squadron flies approximately six percent of the sorties undertaken by the six squadrons assigned to the 35th TFW. USAF Intelligence figures show that during the last six months, No. 2 Squadron has achieved 16 percent of the wing's credited bomb damage. These results testify to the suitability of the Canberra for both day and night operations.

The results achieved have been at the cost of only a few minor incidents involving ground fire, probably due to the small percentage of low-level runs. In one, a Canberra in the last seconds before bomb release had its perspex nose-cone shattered by a bullet, narrowly missing the navigator. The other incidents involved bullets through wings and flaps.

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Squadron bomb damage assessment at 17th November 1968 includes:

608 enemy killed, 49 wounded;
1850 military structures destroyed,
1595 damaged;
214 secondary explosions;
2600 bunkers destroyed, 1114 damaged;
302 sampans destroyed, 117 damaged,
8685 metres of trench destroyed;
30 tons rice destroyed;
20 bridges destroyed.



Photographic assessment of all daylight strikes ensures that bombing accuracy is maintained. Photos show strike by three Canberras along canal lines.

Despite the fact that the squadron uses vastly different methods and equipment to that of our allies, the "Magpies" have made an effective contribution to the tactical air support for the ground commander in South Vietnam.

“The 'heart' of the squadron is the operations room...”

The 'heart' of the squadron is the operations room which is manned continuously by a staff of three air electronics officers and four general hands.

The operations room maintains close liaison between USAF tactical operations, intelligence, air traffic control and weather sections. All information pertaining to the mounting of a mission is processed at operations and relevant information passed on to the various sections of the squadron.

Planning for the following day's bombing operations commences during late afternoon when relevant information is received from USAF operations. Information on target areas, rendezvous time, bomb loads etc is displayed on the ops board and the technical flight advised of appropriate requirements for the next day's missions.

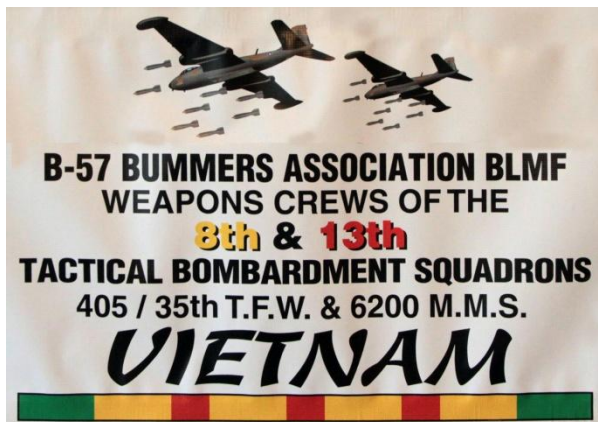
Prior to pre-flighting, each aircrew self briefs on aspects of operations required for that particular sortie. Again, upon return to base, each crew is thoroughly debriefed, and a copy of the debrief is forwarded to 35th TFW Intelligence for further dissemination.

Current intelligence and high threat ground fire areas are displayed on boards in the ops room for the benefit of crews. In addition they receive a comprehensive intelligence briefing once per week. Similarly each Friday afternoon a briefing is held for all airmen not on essential duty. Here the squadron intelligence officer brings members up to date on the latest developments in the Vietnam War.

BIRTH OF THE BUMMERS

BY HOWARD TAYLOR

It all started with the deployment of B-57 weapons personal from Clark Air Base, Philippines to Tan Son Nhut (Saigon) Vietnam for combat missions in Vietnam. The weapons airman were very short handed and worked long hours with little time off for sleeping let along having time for laundry calls and decent quarters for hygiene. After a few weeks they begin to look pretty rough and ragged.



One day in the chow hall some airman from another unit says "You guys look like Bums" "The B-57 guys shot back the response of "Yes we are Bums, we are actually the B-57 Bummers". That is how they became the B-57 Bummers. Now let me tell you how we came back years later and formed the B-57 Bummers Association BLMF.

It was in the summer of 1995, I was home from my first week of Summer Camp with the Army National Guard. It was a late Friday afternoon and I was out in the backyard grilling chicken wings when my son Shane brought me the telephone. As he handed me the phone he said that there is a man that wants to talk to a Mr. Howard Taylor. Thinking I might have a business call or some kind of sales call I say hello. The voice on the other end says "is this Howard L. Taylor that served with the B-57 bombers in Vietnam and the Philippines?" Some people have a very distinct voice and Tommy was one of those guys and if you had ever been around him very long you would never forget that voice. It had been 27 years since I had heard that voice. As soon as he finished asking me if I was that guy I said "Rebel where in the devil are you"? He said he was at the truck stop at the intersection of I-65 and highway 67 about six miles from my home. I had my son watch the chicken wings and told him to tell his Mom I was going to the truck stop to pick up an old Vietnam Veteran friend. We must have been a sight to see as we greeted each other in front of his rig in a big ole bear hug.

“It was a night that I will always remember as our new beginning.”

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After returning to my home and introducing him to my wife and son we started catching up on each other's past from when we last saw each other. Then we started talking about our time in the Philippines and Vietnam and the B-57 Bombers. We started remembering names of those we served with and wondering what had happened to them and where they might be. As we remembered names of those that came to mind we wrote them down and I promised to see if I could get my cousin to look these names up on her computer on people search. I have never in my life encountered anyone that had a memory like Rebel that could recall names of people from the past and even of all of the highways that he traveled as a truck driver. We had a fairly large list of names before we parted ways that night. It was a night that I will always remember as our new beginning.

I pulled out some of my memorabilia from Vietnam and found a set of orders with six names on them with home addresses. These orders were the ones that sent us to the Philippines. The only person that received a letter from me out of those six was Earl Brown and he was very surprised that he even got the letter because there had not been anyone living at that address for many years. The letters was heading for the dead letter box when Earl showed up at the Post Office and the postal lady who knew that he had lived there but didn't know his first name. She asked him if he knew the person on the return address and he stated that he didn't recall and she asked him if his first name was Henry, which he admitted it was. She tells him to open the letter as it is probably for him and they hadn't been able to deliver it anyway. As soon as he opened it and saw the BLMF his memory started flooding his mind and he recalled who I was and he gave me a call.

Tommy and I made a trip over to Tupelo, Mississippi to meet up with Earl and shortly after that meeting we located Reg Fix and the four of us meet in Knoxville, Tennessee. We were on a roll locating Bummers and eight of us meet in Cookeville, Tennessee and planned our first official reunion for October 1998 with 29 Bummers in attendance. In 2000 we had our second reunion and we decided to form a not-for-profit organization which we called the B-57 Bummers Association BLMF with reunions ever two years. It has been great getting together sharing our past experiences with our present life with each other.

Looking back on our past there are some things that time takes away from us but there are other things that time will never take away. Friendships that we had in Vietnam will never be taken from us as we look back we can remember those friendships but we may forget dates

and time.

Self-Help Project
Phan Rang Opens Putt-Putt

PHAN RANG — "With more than 7,000 military personnel here, the need for recreational activities is great," explained Maj. Vincent E. Carrier, base personnel services officer.

"We had a crated miniature golf course on hand, but because of the low work-order priority it was going to be a long time before the civil engineers could get around to installing it," continued the major.

But Phan Rang personnel did not have to wait months for their miniature golf course thanks to the extra effort of the men of the 35th Civil Engineer Squadron. "An airman in the squadron suggested the unit take on the installation of the golf course as an extra-duty self-help project, and the squadron responded" related Major Carrier.

Working nights and Sundays, the engineers had the course up in less than a month. This included a sparkling white-plank fence enclosing the playing yard.

Cooperating in the program, too, was the base chaplain. Learning a place to locate the putt-putt course was needed, the chaplains came to the rescue by making part of the paved chapel parking lot available for the recreation site.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremonies opening the course to all service personnel, Col. Robert M. Denny, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing vice commander, said, "The extra effort of all concerned — especially the civil engineers — in making this miniature golf course available has not gone unnoticed. It's this kind of can-do attitude which has seen America through in the past and will see us through here, too."

After the brief ceremony, Colonel Denny and Lt. Col. John G. McCann, 35th CES commander, played the first round on the 18-hole course.

F-100s Record 20 Kills

(7th Air Force News, May 8, 1969)

PHAN RANG - F-100 Supersabre pilots of the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron here killed 20 enemy soldiers when they struck an enemy base camp 9 miles north of Go Dau Ha.

The Supersabre pilots also reported destroying 29 bunkers, 300 meters of trenchline and 15 fighting positions.

Maj. Kenneth W. Murray, Wahawa, Hawaii, and 1st Lt. Francis C. Gideon Jr., Clark AB, Philippine Islands, were the F-100 pilots on the strike.

“There had been a ground engagement a short time earlier,” recalled Major Murray, “and the forward air controller said the enemy had fallen back into their base camp.

“The camp was about 70 miles northwest of Saigon. Friendly forces were about a mile from the target.”

“We came in on random headings to avoid possible ground fire and laid in our bombs. There wasn’t any ground fire from the enemy - the survivors did not want to call attention to their position,” he concluded.

Some interesting facts about the C-123's stationed at Phan Rang AB.

C-123 Provider

The rugged C-123 Provider, one of USAF's most-used tactical transports, was a workhorse of the long US war in Southeast Asia. The Fairchild airlifter many times proved its worth in Vietnam , where it carried troops and supplies into combat zones as hot as the encircled US Marine base at Khe Sanh in 1968 and provided the capability for Operation Ranch Hand, the US program of defoliant-spraying to eliminate jungle cover and thus unmask enemy troop movements.

Strangely enough, the C-123 began life as a glider, although designers drew it up with every expectation that, eventually, it would be powered. Russian expatriate engineer Michael Stroukoff, who had built a series of wooden gliders, shifted to metal in 1946, ultimately building

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the XG-20A. He added two radial engines to create the XC-123 Avitruc, following this with the XC-123A, powered by four turbojets. Eventually This aircraft: C-123K Provider-#55-4542 Flown by Lt. Col. Joe Jackson in Kham Duc rescue flight, for which Jackson was awarded the Medal of Honor.

In Brief Designed by Stroukoff, built by Fairchild

- first flight Sept. 1,1954
- crew of four (two pilots, flight engineer, navigator)
- number built 304
- no armament
- capacity 61 troops or 50 stretchers, six seated patients, six medics

Specific to C-123B: two Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engines * max speed 245 mph * cruise speed 205 mph * max range 1,450 mi * weight (loaded) 60,000 lb * span 110ft * length 75 ft 9 in * height 34 ft 9 in.

Famous Fliers Medal of Honor: Joe Jackson. Air Force Cross: Jesse Campbell, Richard Nagel Jr. Other notables: Rollen "Buck" Anthis, Claudius Watts III, Vernon Kondra, Anthony Burshnick, Bruce Fister. Jack Alton, Les Gaskins, Bob McClintick, Wendell Pool, Pat Stajdel, Dean Delongchamp, Tom Reiter, Buddy Cox and Dick Thompson.

Interesting Facts Nicknamed "Bookie Bird" * operated from land, water, ice, snow, sand * flown by Air America, CIA proprietary airline * used for night bombing of Ho Chi Minh Trail * sometimes capsized when taxiing in strong crosswinds * used as personal transport by Gen. William Westmoreland, MACV commander * featured in films "**Air America**" (1990), "**Operation Dumbo Drop**" (1995), and "**Con Air**" (1997) * displayed motto, "**Only we can prevent Forests**" (defoliation aircraft) Fairchild wound up with a contract to build 300 production aircraft. A small number were delivered to Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Venezuela, the Philippines, and of course, South Vietnam.

These C-123s went on to fight harder, longer, and better than anyone could have imagined in the early 1950s. C-123s contributed a great deal of in-country airlift in Vietnam and Cambodia. They carried out combat airdrops of troops, supplies, and ammunition, search and rescue teams, and Special Forces. Even now, one can find old C-123s hauling freight in South America.

-Walter J. Boyne

AIR FORCE Magazine / January 2010

Dean Delongchamp According to Wikipedia’s list of aircraft losses of the Vietnam War, the following number of Bookie Birds were lost:

C-123 Provider—53 total, 21 in combat

First loss: C-123B 56-4370 attached to the 464th TAW which came down on an Operation Ranch Hand (defoliation) training flight between Bien Hoa and Vung Tau, SVN on 2 February 1962

Final loss: 1971

So basically, 17% of all C-123’s built, were lost in Vietnam with 21 (40%) of the losses in combat.

Crew Chief in Heaven

The ‘**Crew Chief of All Time**’ died and went to heaven. St. Peter greeted him there and said “Welcome to heaven! Your terminal assignment orders indicate you were the best crew chief in human history and did wonderful things for your fellow crewmembers, your unit, and your country your entire life. For that reason I am authorized to let you choose in which part of heaven you would like to spend eternity.”

“Well”, the chief said, “I’d love to bunk somewhere where I will never see another pilot – they are loud, contemptible, and generally a pain in the ass and I don’t want to see, hear, or have to deal with one ever again!”

“No problem, Chief!” St. Peter replied. “We don’t get too many pilots up here, but just to be sure, I have the perfect place for you – a deserted tropical island where you will never be bothered by them”.

The crew chief floated off to his island paradise, a happy lad. But about 1 week later he was back at the pearly gates, demanding to see St. Peter.

“What’s wrong?” St. Peter asked.

“Well” said the crew chief “You said I would never have to deal with a pilot again. But, as I was walking along the beach this morning, I looked up and there, swaggering towards me, was this obnoxious looking fellow wearing a flight suit, sporting a sidearm and a 16-function wrist watch, with a girl on each arm, and telling war stories that all started with “There I was....”

St. Peter appeared puzzled and said “Let me check something” then queried his computer to determine the recent whereabouts of both pilots. He wasn’t coming up with any answers when finally it dawned on him....

“Oh, that wasn’t a pilot you saw this morning... that was **God!** – Sometimes he likes to dress up and pretend he's a pilot.”

WHO PACKED YOUR PARACHUTE?

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience!

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, ' You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!

'How in the world did you know that?' asked Plumb.

'I packed your parachute,' the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude.

The man pumped his hand and said, 'I guess it worked!'

Plumb assured him, 'It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today.'

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, 'I kept wondering what

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he had looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat; a bib in the back; and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor.' Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, 'Who's packing your parachute?' Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. He also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory - he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachutes.

Both stories were contributed by John Postgate

Update on BilletEase: Prior to the 2018 reunion I started a fund called BilletEase to help with reunion lodging expenses for veterans that would like to attend the reunion but might be financially strapped. We collected a total of \$861 which is a testament to the generosity of this group. Unfortunately I didn't think it through because I had no way of determining who might be a deserving candidate so I had planned on purchasing room certificates from the hotel and use them for door prizes given out at the banquet, but because I did not plan ahead to do this and with the absence of our group treasure I didn't make it happen for the Nashville reunion, but I will make sure that we do that for the Savannah reunion in 2019.

I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter and if you have any comments, please let me know. This news/letter 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.