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



The shipping of 27,568 bombs from Australia and elsewhere for storage at Phan Rang Air Base was one of the major "behind the scenes" tasks that occurred before the first 2 Squadron Canberra flew an operational sortie in South Vietnam. For weeks before A84-240 took off on 23rd April, 1967, on the first mission, the members of the armament section had worked to provide the squadron with bombs, ground handling equipment and aircraft armament equipment.

After a history of close association with the RAF the squadron found itself operating from a base controlled by the USAF. Procedures for storing and handling explosives varied, and it was not always an easy task to satisfy both systems. However, co-operation from the USAF was excellent, and the problems were eventually solved.

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Although by no means a new aircraft, it soon became evident that some equipment, long accepted by the Service, lacked reliability. The aircraft bombing systems, never tested under operational conditions, also developed faults initially. After several worrying months, the unreliable equipment was withdrawn from service, and modifications, an awareness of the trouble areas, and a general "shaking down" of the equipment produced improving results.



American manufactured M117 750 lb bombs being loaded for delivery to freezing area.

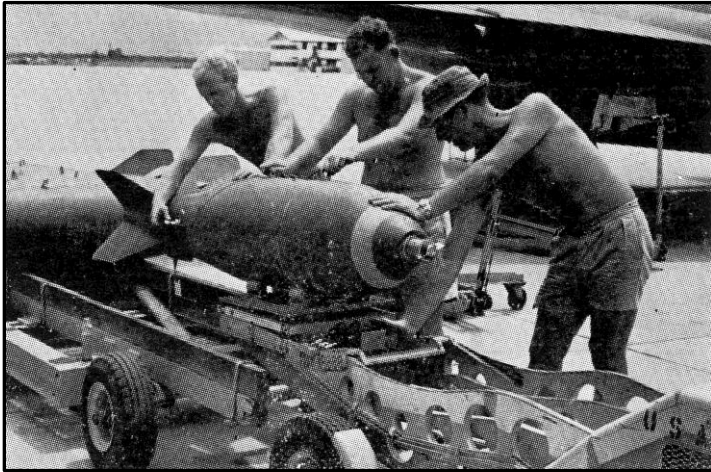
As the number of World War II bombs was limited, the problem of replacement equipment (both bombs and bomb carriers) was considered soon after the squadron was deployed in the area. This task was undertaken by units in Australia, and a trouble-free transition from single lug vintage bombs to the new standard American M117 750 lb bombs was made in August 1968.

The introduction of American bombs and fuses, incorporating safety features not present with the detonator pistol fusing system previously used, allowed the squadron to adopt American handling and fusing procedures. As more and more American equipment is absorbed into the service, both at overseas bases and in Australia, this trend toward accepted American practices probably will continue.

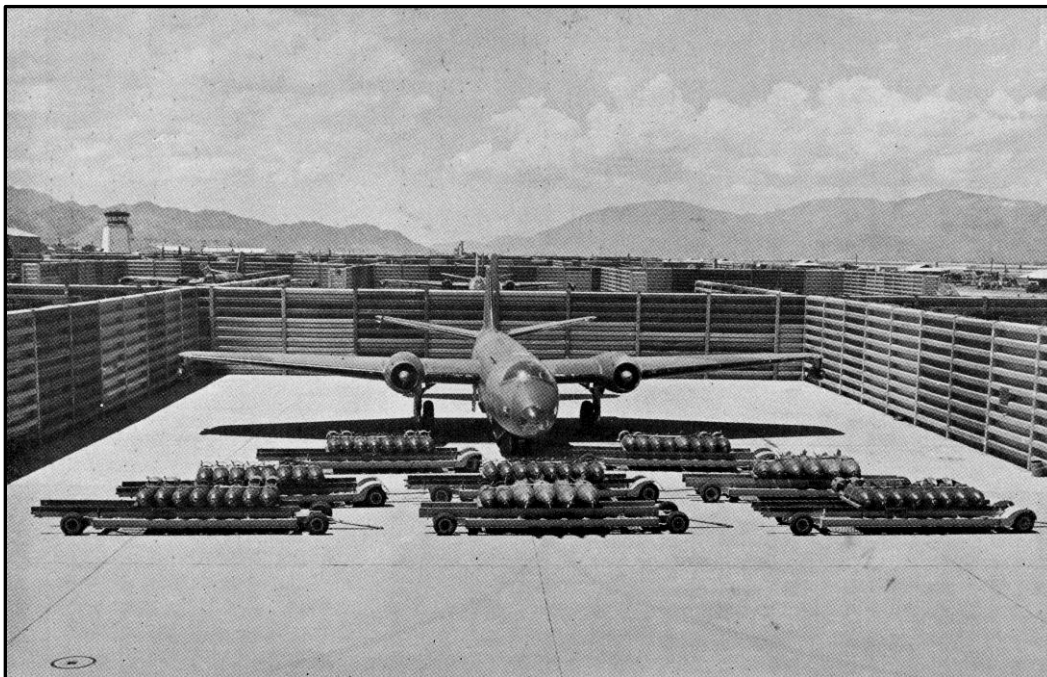
Eighteen months and 30,000 bombs after that first mission the efficiency of the section as a bombing unit is reflected in the exceptionally low rate of UXB (unexploded bombs) and bomb hang-ups. These now stand at 0.2 percent for UXB, and 6,500 releases without incident. The problems initially encountered have to a large extent been overcome, while the adoption of American 750 lb bombs has led to standardization of bomb loads and carrier equipment. These

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factors have now enabled the section to reduce its size without jeopardizing the efficiency or safety of the squadron.



Armament fitters preparing bomb for loading onto Canberra.



The squadron's daily supply of 500 and 1000 lb bombs before the change to M117 750 lb bombs.



The “Bummers” Saga



The “Bummers” Saga Continues... UNPLEASANT MEMORIES

By A1C Robert P. Zelski

We had mandatory shots before entering the Republic of South Vietnam. I’ll never forget when our four man Crew Chief, Cecil Mathews said, “you’ll love this last shot! Talk about a true kick in the ass! The pain lasted a good 15 minutes and was sore the rest of the day.

The heat and humidity when the C-130 Hercules cargo door opened, was almost unbearable, welcoming you to Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam!

Adjusting to your living quarters in a 12 man military tent for the next 90 plus days was hard. With the heat and humidity, it became necessary to have a small fan at the head of the bed especially if you slept days. Sometimes that didn’t even help.

I was issued an M-1 rifle, without shells, happened on my first TDY to Da Nang, then, we had to lock it to our bed springs for safe keeping.

The heat and humidity in Vietnam was beyond my expectations. I remember hearing someone comparing it to Florida’s heat and humidity as times two. Having to tell mom, when you send my ‘care package’, please buy items such as potato chips, peanuts, etc, in cans and not bags because of the humid conditions. The dust storms that kicked out of nowhere were also something to behold. Better cover you open beer and C-Rats. Enduring the mosquitoes was much easier with mosquito netting that surrounding your bunk and it seemed that the monsoon season was unending and hard to endure.

The smell of thousands of dead rice bugs crushed on the B-57 flightline by MJ’s and other vehicles after a nights rain, that were attracted to the maintenance and loading lights. On the

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night of January 12, 1966, from the arm/de-arm hut at Da Nang, I witnessed B-57, tail number 0-33876 start to takeoff and then crash at the end of the runway. Moments later when Major Elijah G. Tollett Jr. and Capt. Leon B. Smith II exited the cockpit and they were standing nearby, a 500lb bomb aboard the aircraft exploded, instantly killing both pilots. Nearly every soldier goes home with some nightmare of war and that is mine! I will never forget that night of feeling so helpless and I will take those nightmares to my grave.

All they had at the Da Nang mess hall were powdered eggs and milk, so needless to say, I never ever ate eggs or drank any milk in Vietnam. We always were on twelve hour work shifts and one day off per week. I discovered at 0600 hrs, after completing a 12 hour shift that all of the steaks and lobster tails were completely consumed at the squadron party and only chicken was left, but that made for a tasty early morning breakfast for us. After eating we discovered that there wasn't any hot water for a shower...and after working for 12 hours we were pretty rank.

After having finished a bomb-bay door reconfigure and bomb load, getting back to the work order dispatch hanger and being told, that aircraft's mission changed as well as the reconfigure and armament. Thanks, Sarge Hank Laramine, who became one of my best friends while over there. The sound of VC mortar round heading into the base, some aimed towards the fuel bladders that were adjacent to our living quarters. Our flares would light up the night sky. Watching Filipino's eat a 'Balut', which is a developing duck embryo. Tripping on a tarp and smashing my middle finger between a 50 caliber machine gun and a gun clearing rack. About nine stitches and a lot of blood and pain. Thanks to Reggie Fix for driving me and my blood soaked hand to the infirmary. Hitting the top of my head on a wing flap while fusing bombs, about six more stitches and again a lot of pain.

Occasionally after finishing a 12 hour work shift covered in sweat, gun oil and grease, only to discover there's no hot water in the showers. Having the C-123's (Operation Ranch Hand) that sprayed Agent Orange defoliant, parked right next to our work area. Then, finding out 48 years later, I had aggressive prostate cancer because of it. Watching body bags and the wounded soldiers brought in by ambulances to the tarmac to be loaded into cargo aircraft to be sent home or to the hospitals in the Pacific. From my barracks seeing a flat bed of stacked silver transport coffins being transported to the Clark Air Base Mortuary. Having our squadron ordered out of Da Nang Air Base and relocated down south to Phan Rang Air Base in October of 1966. It took some time to adjust to the new living conditions, i.e. back to living in tents and

other sub-standard facilities. With my overseas tour coming to an end, having to say goodbye to the friends that I made while at Clark, Da Nang and Phan Rang Air Bases, just knowing that most of them you will never see again.

MY MOST DISTURBING MEMORY

By Larry Theurer

The B-57 bomber carries bombs on its wings and also in its belly on a long rotating internal door. The bomb bay door is shaped like a giant rolling pin split lengthwise with one half removed, one side flat, the other round. The door rotates 180 degrees on its center pins until the flat side is down. Bombs are attached, the door is rotated closed, and the bombs disappear inside leaving a smooth round fuselage. When in-flight, the pilot throws a switch to hydraulically operate the door. When the engines are off there is a hydraulic lever inside the cockpit that can be manually pumped like a jack to rotate the door.

One of the B-57's needed its internal bomb racks reconfigured for a mission. I grabbed my tool bag and went out alone. As I approached the aircraft on its right side, I saw the cockpit canopy was open and no one was around the entire area. The bomb door was rotated partially open with the flat side at a 45 degrees upward slant. The ladder to the cockpit hung on the left side of the aircraft.

“Suddenly the bomb door begin to slowly close up on me.”

The belly of the B-57 is low to the ground so I got down on my knees and inserted my body, parallel to the flat door face, into the approximately three foot wide space between the door and the curved airframe fuselage. The metal edge of the bomb door was at my waist, the steel edge of the fuselage behind me was just below my shoulder, like I was inside a giant steel jaw, inside the belly of the aircraft. I could not hear much going on outside. I was peacefully working along doing the bomb racks with my lower back muscles beginning to ache from holding myself at such an awkward bend position when I heard some talking and noises. Suddenly the bomb door begin to slowly close up on me. I instantly went totally limp and dropped out and fell to the ground. As I lay there in terror I watched the door completely close in the next five seconds. If I had been three seconds slower to react I would have been cut in

half...two seconds slower decapitated.

I lay there in shock not believing what just happened. I heard two airmen roaring with laughter from the cockpit. I got up and looked. One guy is standing on the ladder while the other is sitting in the pilot's seat with his tongue out simulating a sex act by furiously pumping the hydraulic lever. I wanted to yell at him, but I was so scared and sick I just walked away and sat by a wall for a long while to regain my composure.

THANK YOU LARRY FOR SHARING YOUR VIETNAM EXPERIENCES WITH US

(Larry Theurer has contributed so much to this newsletter and the collective memories of Phan Rang AB through his short stories. His stories have appeared in Phan Rang News 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 106, 112 and 116. Thank you Larry for sharing your Vietnam experiences with us.)

AIR COMMANDO AID C-123'S AT DA NANG

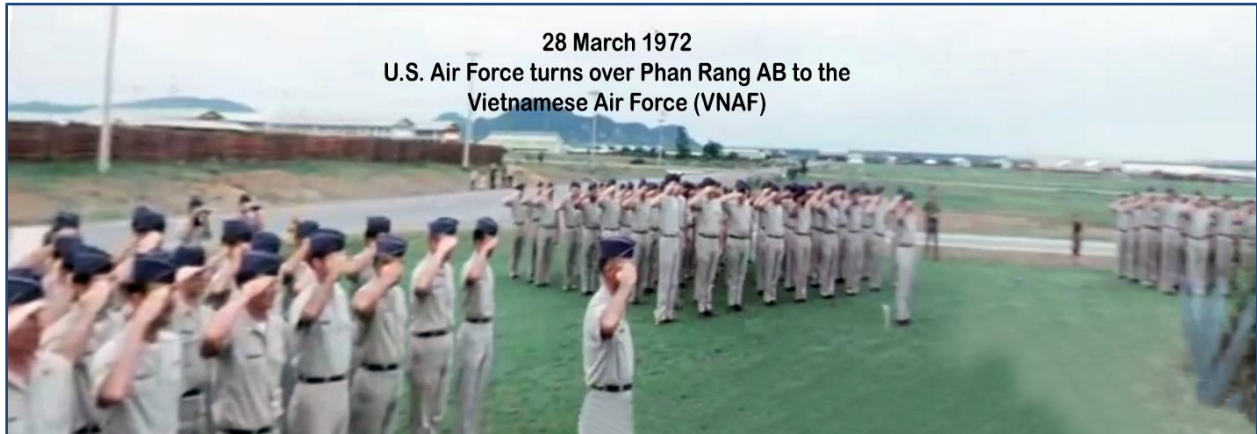
(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, August 2, 1967)

In the wake of the massive rocket attack on Da Nang Air Base, the 315th Air Commando Wing of Phan Rang is helping out the 311th Air Commando Sq., up there.

Three C-123's have been flown to the unit, according to wing scheduler TSgt. Welcon D. Knox. He noted that three of the Da Nang unit's C-123's were damaged in the attack, and will undergo major maintenance at Phan Rang. Wing plans and scheduling technician SSGT. Donald G. Von Buskirk noted that a C-123 wing was flown up this week.

Turnover

The American Flag is lowered & the Vietnamese Flag is raised



Members of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing salute the lowering of the American
Flag at Phan Rang Air Base.



COL Ray C. Staley, commander, 315th Tactical Airlift Wing and his Vietnamese
Air Force Counterpart lowers the sign marking the change of command.

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The 315th Tactical Fighter Wing banner is retired and the American Flag is lowered on Phan Rang for the very last time.



(In Vietnam) “No matter what you lived through, if you lived...the next day would be the same. You just want to forget everything, but you can’t forget anything. And then you really need those you served with because they’re the only ones you’re going to talk to about it. You can start a sentence with them, and they can finish it.”

Mel Carney, Vietnam War

Propaganda Flyer found by J. Joseph Mack on a C-123 during his 1968-69 tour of duty.



AI LÀ KẸ GÂY CẢNH CHIẾN TRANH ?

Trong đêm 21-5-67, bọn Việt Cộng thêm một lần nữa gieo rắc chiến tranh trong dân chúng . Chúng tấn công thường dân trong Châu Thành Bac-Lieu bằng 30 quả đạn 75 ly . Năm thường dân vô-tội bị sát hại và 35 người khác bị thương. Trong số đó có cả đàn bà và trẻ em. Số thường dân nạn nhân này chỉ có một tội duy nhất là sống yên vui trong khu vực an ninh.

19-86-67

Translated by Phuong Ho

Who is responsible for this war? On the night of 21/5/67, once again the VC have attacked civilized people. They attacked Chau Thanh Bac Lieu town with 30 bomb and 75 (Ly-sorry don't know this term) Five thousands die and 35 injuries. Many are women and children. These innocent people sin is because they live happy and peaceful area.



Loadmaster J. Joseph Mack aboard a C-123

Here’s some information that you will need before reading the Bomb Dump Trivia story below by Bud Short.

The **M-52**, 5 ton M-series tractor. Olive green. Some with cloth top, some with a metal top.



MFI - anything International Harvester. USAF blue civilian style body. This is a MFI deuce and a half and there is an MFI 10 ton in the background.



BOMB DUMP TRIVIA

By Bud Short

I just thought about some Bomb Dump trivia that will likely bore some of you to tears, but here it is anyway.

Back when the 461's were driving the blue MFI's and Fords, the trucks were 12 volts and the trailers were 12 volts. Everything was civilian style wiring with the 7 round pin trailer connectors. Then along came the M-52's. The M-52's had a 24 volt system and a 12 pin trailer connector. This is where the fun began; first someone needed to decide which of the civilian style trailers needed to be converted to 24 volts. It was just a matter of changing out the bulbs and remembering which trailers were 24v. Hook a 24v. trailer to a 12v. truck and the lights would just barely glow, hook a 12v. trailer to a 24v. truck and the lights would last a couple milliseconds.

Then we needed to build adapter pigtailed with the 12 pin connector on the truck end and the 7 pin connector on the trailer end, this would let the 461's connect the civilian trailer to the M-52 truck. With all of the trailer lighting problems, I decided to build myself a little test box to check the truck wiring, the trailer wiring and make it easy to fabricate the adapter pigtailed. Found an old picture with my trailer plug wiring diagrams behind the plexiglass on the wall behind me in

the bomb dump motor pool. I was having entirely too much fun for being in a war zone.

No Sweat

By Schuffert



"Looks like I bagged a Charlie at the front gate, sir . . .
Yeah, he's all dressed in red and chanting that Commie
slogan about 'Ho, Ho, Ho' and he's got a bag of loot
I think he stole from the BX . . ."

Their 200th Mission

(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, August 2, 1967)

Capt. **Charles R. Rasnic**, 8th TBS pilot, flew his 200th combat mission in Vietnam Sunday. Lt. Col. **Nathaniel Gallagher**, the 8th TBS operations officers, turned the same trick on Monday. Both are completing their third two-month rotational combat tour in Vietnam, averaging a combat mission per day.

They Call Him Lee

(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, August 2, 1967)

Lee, the popular young Vietnamese mascot of American personnel who go out to the beach, is actually named Su Xin Thiet.

It seems nobody can pronounce that name, according to beach club secretary MSgt. Milton Corry, and that’s how the 11-year-old youngster acquired the nickname of Lee.

Sergeant Corry said Lee is the youngest employee at the beach house, where he works as busboy and is kept busy clearing huge piles of soda cans from the tables.

“If he’s not here”, said the sergeant, “every G.I. where he’s at.”

As tall as a G.I.’s belt buckle, Lee likes to clown around with mock karate fights, and the G.I.’s kid right back.

MYSTERY SOLVED...RICHARD BITTIKOFER HAS FINALLY ADMITTED THAT HE WAS THE CULPRIT THAT STOLE THE HAM THAT WAS THAWING OUT IN THE AUSSIE KITCHEN IN 1970! SINCE THAT CRIME WAS COMMITTED 48 YEARS AGO THE UCMJ STATUE OF LIMITATION HAS EXPIRED, HOWEVER A CHECK WITH THE AUSTRALIAN AUTHORITIES WE LEARN THAT THERE IS **NO** STATUE OF LIMITATION FOR GRAND HAM THEFT IN THEIR JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THEY HAVE DECIDED TO CONTACT THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION, AKA INTERPOL, CIA, FBI, THE OFFICE OF RDGAF AT THE AIR FORCE AT CANBERRA TO CAPTURE BITTIKOFER AND BRING HIM TO JUSTICE. SOME SAY THAT IF THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THERE IS NO CRIME, BUT OTHERS SAY THAT DESTROYING EVIDENCE IS A FELONY. THE CULPRIT IS NOW REQUESTING A CHANGE OF VENUE FOR THE TRAIL TO BE HELD WHERE THE THEFT TOOK

PLACE...PHAN RANG.



Australia's Fighting Sons

(The following is the lyrics to a song written by Peter Simson that really touched me.)

I was talking to a soldier he was on his way to war and he's going to make a difference, so he says.

I could tell he meant it from the look in his eyes and he would give his life to save his fellow man.

And he's fighting in Afghanistan, he's fighting in Iraq and he's fighting wars some people can't be won.

But his strike is ever forward till the task ahead is done, that's the nature of Australia's fighting sons

And he's fighting for the honor and his country's and his flag and tradition from father down to son

And he will never take a backward step until the job is done that's the nature of Australia's fighting sons

But at home he's a father, and uncle and a friend and he talks about the normal things each day,

Interest rates, Aussie rules, there's cricket and the poms and how he thinks we'll all end up OK.

Yet he never plays the hero and doesn't boast or Skype and he seldom talks of war and what he's done

He just quietly moves on forward to the battle until it is won that's the nature of Australia's fighting sons

Now we've seen him in Gallipoi, we've seen him in France and he was fighting in the jungles

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of Vietnam

And his courage can't be questioned though his heart beats like a drum that's the nature of
Australia's fighting sons

And he's fighting for the honor his country and his flag and he seldom talks of war and what
he's done

With pride and courage in his heart and a slough hat and a gun that's the nature of Australia's
fighting sons

Last week I saw a soldier he was on his way to war and he's already made a difference like he
said

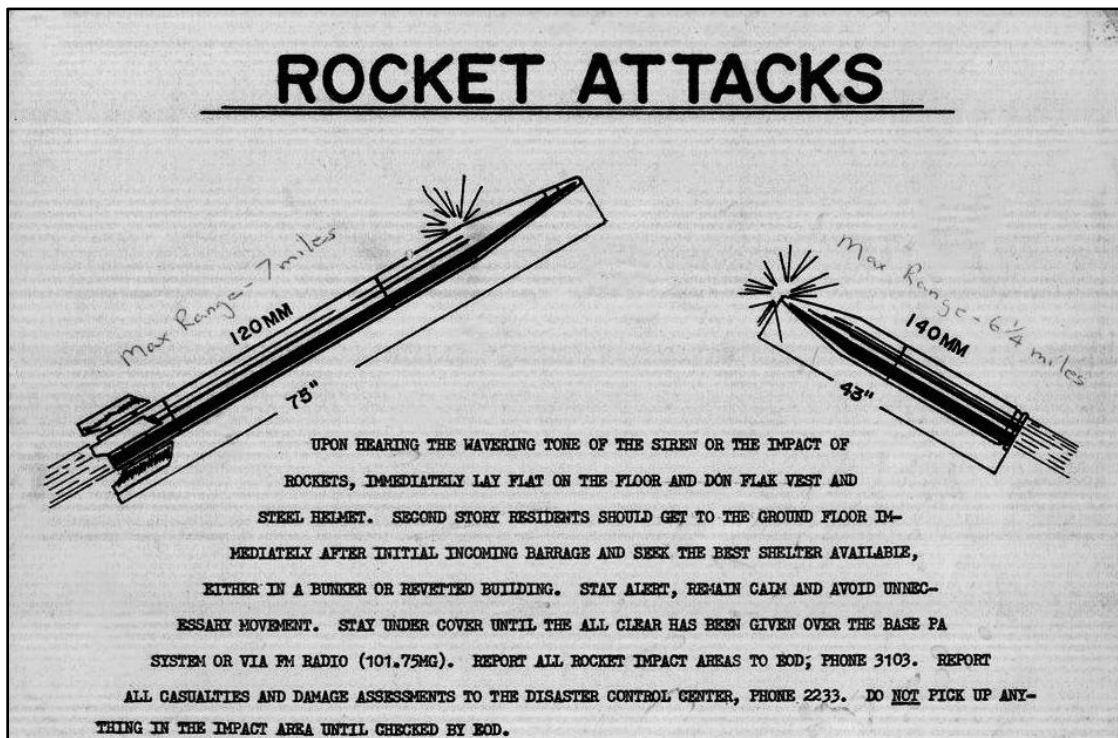
For my heart he has rekindled and my faith and hope is restored that our country is in the
hands of these brave men

But he's fighting in Afghanistan, he's fighting in Iraq on the front line until the battle is won

But he will never take a backward step he will never turn and run, that's the nature of
Australia's fighting sons

And on his slouch hat he still wears the rising sun

(To hear this song on Youtube by Reg Poole, click [here](#))



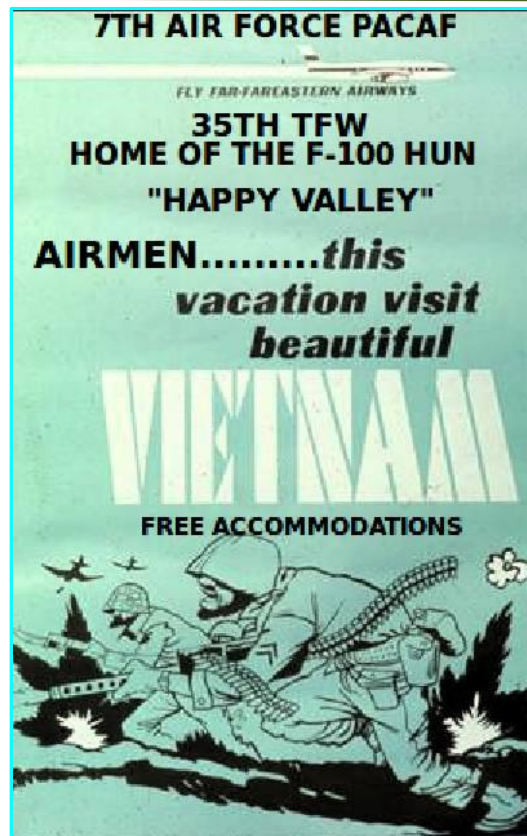


To view the video “A Christmas Thought” by Tom Clark click [here](#).

Doug’s Comments

I can’t believe that this is already the hundred and sixty fourth time that I put out a newsletter and began this journey back to Vietnam if only in memories...not only mine, but those who also served in Vietnam and who I now proudly call my “brothers”. I remember around the time I was putting out the 75th newsletter I lament that I was worried that I might run out of stories, and Marjorie Hansen reassured me that I would always find stories, and I have. Because of my Phan Rang reconnect, I have been reunited with some old war buddies and maybe a thousand of the most amazing people in this world. It is safe to say that this has been the most rewarding endeavor in my whole life. Our annual reunions have become the single most important event of the year for me because of seeing old friends and meeting new ones, that were some of my best friends that I just never met before. I seem to have a driving ambition to try to capture your wonderful stories and also to remember those who paid the ultimate price. Weather we come from Fort Wayne, In., Oakdale, Pa., Arlington, TX or Kingscliff, New South Wales we are all part of that exclusive fraternity called Vietnam Veterans.

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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.