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Doug's Comments

What is an Augmentee?

Randy wrote on Facebook: I read periodic posts which use the phrase “augmentees” (Augie). While I do understand the root word, I’m not exactly sure how it is being used by guys based at PRG. In reading between the lines I get the impression that individuals with jobs which gave them little to no skill as “security” personnel were assigned to be sentry guards alongside trained security personnel. These individuals were used as either sentries or in some cases as convey guards. I have not gotten the impression that the augmentees were used for things like flt line patrol, but have gotten the impression that some of you were sent to other bases in a security capacity. Was there any sort of heavy arms training that went along with this or was it just assumed you would know how to operate things like M-60s or 50 cal?

The only time during my tour at PRG that I ever worked out of my assigned duty (other than details, like building a hootch, or sandbagging) was supposed to be a three day stint on “human waste disposal” detail using the AF time honored system of “watch one, do one, teach one”. My “teacher” became ill and my second day was to teach another poor snook how to properly perform the task and that ended my time on the detail. I did learn that whoever coined the phrase “boy, this is a crock of sh##” never REALLY had a grasp of the reality of the situation! Our clerk that maintained training records went nuts when I insisted that this be entered in my official “training records”! I don’t know if that qualified me as being an augmentee or not!

Comments

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Bruce Miller: Security forces were usually under staffed and had to augmented with other personnel. Those that were assigned for that duty were sometimes called augmentees. I never served as one at Phan Rang but did at Binh Thuy AB before being sent TDY to Phan Rang Air Base.

Daniel Acosta: I was "trained" as an augmentee to go on a perimeter guard tower with a security policeman. The training consisted of firing off a foot long belt of M60 rounds and throwing a fake hand grenade. I was with a security policeman at night and I remember taking turns sleeping for four hours on at least one occasion. During the day I was posted by myself on a very tall tower facing a very open space outside of the perimeter and sometimes inside the base in a foxhole. My Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) was aircraft instrument specialist. That was my first base out of tech school in May 1968-1969. I kind of enjoyed doing soldier type duty once in a while. Some nights I could see the base getting attacked, Spooky firing down at VC, bomb dump blowing up, and hearing the WELLS getting ground assault.

Randy commented on **Daniel Acosta** post: I had a hoochmate (Bill Gaither - deceased 2016) who thought it was “fun” to go on overnight “Search and Destroy” raids with the 101st and the ROK Marines. The sq (1882nd Comm) put a screeching stop to these forays when the First Shirt got wind about it. Later, because of this activity his security clearance was downgraded due to “inappropriate behavior”. Funny part was the way it was leaked was when the ROK commander wrote the sq a ltr commending Bill for his dedication while working with a sniper team.

Bill Peikert: The training I had consisted of the operation of the M16’s finer parts. For marksmanship, it was pick a rock and shoot at it. I always enjoyed burning some ammo, but not a “real” range to shoot from.

Terry Pierce: Members of the 554 Red Horse (Rapid Emergency Deployable, Heavy Organizational Squadron of Engineers) Served as Augmentees at Phan Rang. They were Combat Engineers trained in M60, hand grenades, hand-to-hand tactics, mortar tubes, M16 and static defense tactics. At Phan Rang we were assigned in 2-man teams to defense positions along the perimeter and deployed to those positions in response to mortar, rocket or ground attacks. My particular assignment in 1968-69, was in Juliet Sector and continued the defensive line where the Aussies left off.

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Bill Fisher: I was in the 1882 Comm. Sq. at Phan Rang in 1971-72 as a DSTE/Crypto tech and was also assigned as a security police augmentee. I thought our range training was lots of fun. Fired lots of M16 ammo; was taught how to walk the rounds into a target in low light conditions (I think he called it the "Marine night firing method"); fired lots of M60 with both a bipod and holding it across the knees (somewhere there used to be an M60 barrel with my thumb print burned onto it LOL); trained on the grenade launcher and slap flares. I worked in the towers at night with a regular security policeman (SP). During an inspection one evening I volunteered to be on an ambush team on a VC supply cave they had found on the back side of Nui Dat. The SP captain looked at me and said, "Who the hell are you?" I told him and he refused to let me take part. I rather enjoyed the tower duty and the SP I was with gave me some good tips, but it was kind of spooky out there.

Randy asked **Bill Fisher** - while you were assigned to the SPs and pulling shifts with them, did you ALSO have to work at the communications center, or, were you assigned to the SPs exclusively for a set amount of time? If it was for a set amount of time, how long? Reading some of the old posts there did not seem to be any consistency in terms of how long folks were augmentees.

Bill Fisher commented on **Randy's** question: I usually worked as an augmentee until around midnight if I remember correctly (it was a LONG time ago) and then worked my day job. I don't recall how long I pulled the augmentee duty, though. I know it was not every night, but do not remember the frequency.

Randy replied to **Bill Fisher**: - thanks.... can't really say I'm sorry I missed that part of Phan Rang service.

Tom McKeown: Some duty as an "augie" was assigned like a TDY, but primarily we were part of the alert force when the base was attacked. Sometimes we massed at the "guard mount" location and relieved on 'All Clear', sometimes we deployed to positions on the perimeter and sometimes we made up a secondary perimeter. On some nights it was an hour or two, others all night. When deployed we went into work late the next day as the mission was still on. I worked TDY with the SPs and I pulled a 2-month tour with Red Horse building Aircraft revetments. It was noted with references in my periodic and annual review. All in a year's work! I think Augmentee Training was in the first month I was in country, deployed a few alerts, but

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my area was overstaffed so they asked me to go TDY to SPs. My augie status ended the day I left, worked a couple of alerts after figmo to the world. I would not have had it any other way.

Gary Chandler: If I remember correctly you volunteered for augmentation duty. You were actually looking forward to it.

Jackie Cooper: I was an augmentee within the first 30 days in Country. I was assigned perimeter duty by myself. I think my shift was 1-9 pm. I had a couple of hours or more of terrifying darkness by myself. The tall towers weren't too bad, but the ground level guard post where you couldn't see anything, but every sound seemed to be amplified, was scary as hell.

David Knighton: I was with the 435th Munitions Squadron and after arriving in country I was given the choice of working with Red Horse or becoming an Augmentee. I chose Augmentee. We were given a training class, prior to our first time going out at night, that covered radio procedure, Rules of Engagement, what to bring with us, etc. We already knew how to use an M-16 but didn't receive further training on M-60 or M-79 until approximately a month or so later. I further volunteered to receive specialized tactical assault training, along with some other Augmentees. The idea was that we would be put out in certain areas of the perimeter or be used as a reaction team. We were never actually utilized for those roles but we were chosen to go down to the Air Force Beach after the Sapper attack in the Spring of 1970. I spent 10 days/nights down there pulling night perimeter duty. Now that place was really scary because we were so far from the base. My Augmentee duty was spending one week each month, for 11 months, out on the perimeter in a tower/foxhole or bunker. Did one week on Day Shift and the rest were on Panther Flight (night shift). I concur that it was scary duty but would do it again in a heartbeat. Great guys out there along the perimeter to share the "fun" with.

Paul K. Glasser: I was in the 435th MMS February 1969-70. I do not recall having a choice, so was assigned to Red Horse, night shift as it was much cooler, and built a number of the concrete arch revetments that protected the F-100's. I think in a small way that drove my decision to become an architect.

David Knighton relied to **Paul K. Glasser:** Guess it just mattered what they needed more of at the time. They were building "Uncle, Victor and Whiskey" rows (Air Craft Revetments) at the time I got there in June '69.

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William Gentry replied to **Randy**, I was in a similar situation as you. I was at Phan Rang from September 1970 to May '71 coming from Tuy Hoa because it was closing. I was on a Weapons Load Crew working nights. I didn't know anything about the augmentee force. Always felt secure and only had a few situations where I felt threatened. Certainly appreciated the work the security forces did to protect us.

Larry Hardison: I was with 35th Supply Squadron August 1969 to August 1970. I was also an augmentee. I already had m-16 training but got more and trained on M-79 and 50 caliber machine gun. When we got hit I would get my gear, M-16 and ammo belts then stay at pickup point waiting for Air Police to pick me up and deploy me, usually out on flight line somewhere. I was at Da nang July 67-July 68. No augmentee there, they just loaded everyone on a flatbed trailer and posted us on the perimeter. Never fired a shot either time but was out there plenty of times.

Lupe Saenz: It seemed to me that only 35th supply personnel were ever tagged for augmentee duty. I was with the 35th Civil Engineers Supply and did lots of work with Red Horse Supply people. Some guy would turn in Supply paperwork to me and I would make sure they were pulled and ready for pickup. I was put on the augmentee roster a couple of time but because of my affiliation with Red Horse Supply, I got pulled off. Then, I made staff and that really pulled me out completely.

Doug Severt: It wasn't just supply but anyone that fell under the 35th TFW umbrella. I was in a detachment and I didn't even know we had augmentees.

Kirk Minert said **Randy's** asked a good question. **Doug** great answer. I was assigned to the 35th FMS Jet Shop and my squadron pulled me for augmentee duty. We received one days training on the various security police weapons before we became qualified. I do not remember how long the detail lasted but I was on the perimeter January 26, 1969. One night when I got in the tower I remember that I had more time as an augmentee than the security policeman. My twin brother Paul and I were augmentees at the same time. He was assigned to 35th Supply Sq.

Jim Leatherbury: I was in the 35th SPS in 1966 and I remember a few nights when augmentees were on post with us. I think they had some basic M-16 training but no M-60. I had no M-60

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training before Nam and never saw one until I got there. They sent us over to the 101st after about a week and a Ranger showed us how to load and shoot one. We did not have 50s at all.

Dennis Seaton: I was an augmentee in 1970 had a one day training session on M-16, 60 cal, 50 cal and grenade launcher. I pulled tower duty two nights and two weeks at the beach. I had a designated location to report to when the sirens went off but if they stopped we return to whatever we were doing. The only excitement I had was at the beach in a bunker facing the gate and perimeter to right. I was sitting in the rain under a poncho with an M-16 and several slap flares when a trip flare went off outside the perimeter fence. I called the SP on duty and they arrived behind me in their Jeep with a M-60 mounted on it. Another flare tripped but this time followed by a yelping dog.

John Ryan: We had some out of the 315th TFS but they were all voluntary.

Jim Sands: An Augie is someone assigned duties to help out a section that is undermanned. Normally you would get some basic training in what to do. When I was at Minot AFB I did augie duties in helping out the Weapons people loading the MB-1 nuke on the F-106. For that we received training until certified. In Nam many people were assigned sentry duties.... training was usually OJT. You learn as you go!

Louis Scarpitti: I was an augmentee 6/67-6/68 and I was a jet engine mech first. We went to security training to learn MACV rules of engagement. We were instructed the MACV way, then instructed what we needed to know to stay alive. We also had M-16 training both day and night firing. After working 12-16 hour days on the flight line we would be used as sentries at different locations. This happened maybe 5-6 times as I remember. During alerts sometimes we would be in teams of 25 or so out on the parameter, no idea where, but maybe 3 times. I didn't mind helping, but no body ever showed up to help us on the flight line while working 12-18 hour days and longer. Would I do it again? Yes I would!

Jim Sands: It was because they couldn't do your job!

Louis Scarpitti: said yes, **Jim Sands,** you're right and I wasn't trained for theirs. My first night as part of one of these defense teams we were in a ravine waiting. After about 20 minutes we were told to spread out along the fence line. My legs said no; we're not getting up to sit behind

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a bush to wait for trouble. What was only a split second in my brain seems like a life time. We sat behind those defensive brushes for over two hours. They did receive some incoming fire about 100 yards away. Somehow being sucked into one of my jet engines seemed a lot safer. No, I give those sky cops credit, they were out there every night protecting us from the boggeyman. As for them doing my job, by them doing their jobs I could get 40 winks on the wing of an F-100 while working the trim pad during those 12-16-18 hour days. GO AIR FORCE!

Aubrey Mitchell: I was with the 35th SPS, we had augmentees that worked with us. The main reason for that was to help back us up and get used to the terrain around towers and in the bunkers. Most of the guys we had came from supply. I remember several times when we had inspection, their M-16's were dirty and rusty. Some of the bolts were frozen from rust. Also another reason we had augmentees is because there were never enough security police to maintain the whole perimeter if the base was overrun by Charlie.

Everett J Schwartz: I had an augmentee that worked for me during TET at Pleiku. In fact Air Force sent a reporter and photographer to Pleiku and did a photo and write-up in the Air Force Times.

Terry Pierce commented on **Everett J Schwartz** remark: As far as I know, Red Horse personnel were never assigned to SPS. We had our defensive positions and were trucked to them during alerts/attacks. I am really glad the SPs were there and that they were properly trained and that they ‘took care of business’. Red Horsemen trained in the interior of the Florida panhandle Just outside Hurlburt Field, near Elgin. We trained as a unit - 400 men (200 one month and the other 200 the following month. Some of the instructors were from the Army Ranger camp next door (hand-to-hand/unarmed tactics) and shipped out as a unit. We were not directly under the Base Commander, rather we were self-contained (our own chow hall, chapel, motor pool, armory, etc) and might be called out on short notice to build, repair or help other units. We were sent to Na Trang, Da Nang, Ban Me Thuot, etc as well as running and protecting convoys. Yes, we had combat training but were extremely proud of the Security Police Force for doing the ‘heavy lifting’. Those guys were impressive. Especially during the two ‘big’ TET attacks - at Phan Rang and Bien Hoa in ‘68! You guys are my heroes. Hats off to you, my brothers.

Jess Echavarria: I was assigned to the 35th FMS as a jet engine mechanic and was assigned augmentee duty the day after TET of 69.

Sam Lewis: I was on that perimeter the majority of my year March 67-68 as a 35th SPS. B Flt Security, 4 AM till Noon and noon till 8 P M switching every 60 days with Reserve SAT every 3rd night sleeping in quarters at CSC ready to go if anything happened. The first time I dealt with augmentees there was during TET 68. Half our Security flight was sent off to other bases and we were left shorthanded. To help fill the gap the flight was refilled with augmentees. My job during TET was to take two augmentees out beyond the wire in a jeep and sit on a ridge on the NW Perimeter reporting any movement we saw or heard. I must admit I was scared shitless at times with every sound sitting out there and I knew the augmentees were to but I had to do my best not to show it to them. I’ve wondered about why they sent us out there on that ridge something they never had done before except to put us out there as sitting ducks hoping to draw Charlie out. I thank God nothing major happened while we were out there .When TET was over I only had about 6 weeks to go, The augmentees went back to their squadrons and that's the only time I dealt with them.

Richard Hillenbrand: As an augmentee I spent most of the night lying in a ditch waiting to be told where we were needed.



By 1st Lt. Thomas Gates

We had a great time with the Aussies. On a couple of occasions we played for the “**Cinders**”. Cinders was a 105MM empty shell filled with cinders as opposed to “The Ashes” (Used for a Cricket Championship).

One game of softball, one game of cricket, followed by several cases of beer and cigars.

Lots of fun!

What happens when a sentry dog's handler returns home?

PHAN RANG - Of necessity, sentry dogs are large and vicious, trained to obey one man. What happens when a sentry dog's handler returns home?

"We give the dog a new master," was the reply of MSgt. **Donald E. Fink Jr.**, who heads the sentry dog section of the 35th Security Police Squadron here.

"The process of working a new man in on a dog, as we call it may take a couple of hours or several days, depending on the dog's temperament," the sergeant said.

After the former handler leaves and until a new master is assigned, the dog is contained in his kennel. "The dog soon gets anxious to leave his cage and be with somebody he can trust," Sergeant Fink explained.

"A kennel's keeper usually will take the dog out and tie him to a fence, where the new handler will talk to the dog," he continued. "Usually, the handler gains the dog's trust and eventually starts working the perimeter as a team. When one handler cannot master a dog, we try someone else.

"We use a variety of techniques to work a man in on a dog," the sergeant stated.

"One recent case in which almost all techniques were employed was with a dog most appropriately named Satan," he said.

Satan is a 3-year-old German shepherd who had only one handler. He trusted nobody, and even kennel's keepers kept an eye on Satan when they were cleaning his cage.

"The first handler tried unsuccessfully for about two weeks to work in on Satan, only to have his boots torn up while making little progress," Sergeant Fink remarked.

The next handler to try was A1C **Richard C. Morley Jr.** "We tried almost every technique before I finally mastered Satan," Airman Morley stated. "We first put a piece of my clothing into the cage so Satan could get used to my smell.

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"Since nobody was able to put a leash on him to go out to the fence, I went into the kennel to talk with him. At first, he would either growl or maybe chew my boots or he would ignore me completely.

"After four days of getting almost nowhere, we gave Satan a mild sedative so I could take him out of the kennels for a while. After the drug wore off, he became his old self again.

"After Satan bit me, Sergeant Fink asked me if I could master the dog," Airman Morley continued.

"After a discussion he decided to give me more time. The next step was to move Satan to another cage, since he might have felt as though he were protecting his home of many months.

"This seemed to help, because I was soon able to put a leash on him and take him out of the kennels."

In about 10 days Airman Morley had good command of Satan. During the next five days, before starting to work on the perimeter, many problems had to be resolved.

"I was told he had been a good scout dog and was excellent at detecting possible hostile movements," Airman Morley said. "Although he is intelligent, he is stubborn and used to getting his own way. It took me a while to break him of bad habits, particularly snapping at me, and get him to obey my commands immediately," concluded Airman Morley.

Few dogs are as difficult to master as Satan. The training techniques are varied, and most dogs will respond to the right person without so much difficulty. As with other sentry dogs, Satan will get a succession of handlers, and they, in turn might have to use several methods to become friends and masters of their dogs.

"Satan and Airman Morley make one of our best teams on the perimeter," concluded Sergeant Fink, "but to build an effective team like that takes the right combination of man and dog and a lot of patience."

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| <p>A Dog and His Master Recreation Enhances Mutual Trust</p> | <p>Airman Morley and Satan An Ever Alert Team</p> |
| <p>Story by Sgt. Douglas L. Christy Photos by A1C Oswald Gooden Source: Seventh Air Force News, October 8, 1969</p> | |

**Second Straight Month
 Pilots Repeat as Top Guns**

(Seventh Air Force News, July 2, 1969)

PHAN RANG - The 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron, a unit of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here, has named Lt. Col. **Kenneth F. Lidie**, Montgomery, Ala., pilot, and Maj. **Gus Planchon**, Pullman, Wash., navigator-bombardier, as the "Top B-57 Guns" for the second consecutive month.

The "Top Guns" are the crews garnering the highest bomb damage assessment (BDA) each calendar month.

Col **Frank L. Galler Jr.**, Great Neck, N.Y., 35th TFW, commander, said, "Keen competition exists among the crews for the coveted number one spot on the 'Top Ten' board.

"A system of points for destruction of targets of various importance is used," the colonel added.

"Heading toward the ground at high speeds leaves little time for discussion"

"The measure of success is directly dependent on the closely-knit team in the B-57 as well as with the forward air controller who spots the target and determines our BDA," stated Colonel Lidie.

"Heading toward the ground at high speeds leaves little time for discussion," he said. "You have to think like the other man, anticipate him, and rely implicitly on his judgment. A good team, however, can be much more effective than two individuals in separate aircraft." Major Planchon recalls what he considers the month's high-light mission. "There is certain satisfaction about striking anti-aircraft guns that you don't get from other targets.

"On this particular night, the FAC had several anti-aircraft positions on hillsides along the road," recalled the major. "He pointed them out in relation to fires on the ground and did an outstanding job of giving corrections.

"For 20 minutes we were busy following his instructions and watching the readily-visible tracers from the guns. We destroyed four separate positions," he said. "Some of the explosions from ammunition supplies were spectacular. "



Spooky, Shadow Chase Charlie

(Seventh Air Force News, July 2, 1969)

By Major Cam Stewart

NHA TRANG AB - It was three hours after sunset and the town of Ninh Hoa and the nearby countryside were quiet and apparently still.

Suddenly the enemy struck in a multiple attack.

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A Republic of Vietnam Regional Forces unit was pinned down in its position. A Popular Forces platoon was under heavy attack on all sides. Mortar rounds were falling in the U.S. Army advisor's position.

The Viet Cong - an estimated two platoons - had timed their Mid-May assault for complete darkness.

Things were rough and getting rougher for the defenders.

Army Captain **Clinton L. Stokes** called for gunship support, and an AC-47 Spooky was scrambled from Nha Trang AB to help equalize the odds in the uneven battle.

According to Captain Stokes, chief of mobile Advisory Team 22, the gunship arrived in the nick of time.

Maj. **Lewis W. Longhenry**, Boone, Iowa, the aircraft commander of the 4th Special Operations Squadron gunship, got a firm fix on the battle situation and made sure that he knew where the enemy forces were. Then he brought his three miniguns to bear and started hosing down the Viet Cong forces in a 360 degree circle around the friendly troops.

Firing at a high rate, Major Longhenry and his crew were soon forced to return to their base to replenish their stock of ammunition and flares.

Shortly after midnight, another Nha Trang Spooky, under the command of Maj. **Manley W. Crider Jr.**, Lampasas, Tex., was diverted from a nearby target to take up where Major Longhenry had left off, and "Charlie" was once again on the run.

Major Crider concentrated his fire on automatic weapons and mortar positions which were harassing the friendly forces giving the area around the friendlies an occasional sweep of minigun fire to discourage the VC who were still trying to mount a counterattack.

By the time he had exhausted his ammunition, Major Longhenry was back on station and took over the air support job.

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Meanwhile, an AC-119 Shadow gunship from the 71st Special Operations Squadron had been diverted to the battle scene by the ground controller and was able to harass the enemy until one of the Spooky crews returned.

The Shadow pilot, Lt. Col. **Earl W. Scott**, Greenfield, Ind., and his crew from **Phan Rang** AB stayed in the area, firing and providing illumination until Major Crider and his crew arrived, this time with Lt. Col. **John P. Aldrich**, Concord, Mich., in the firing seat.

Colonel Aldrich provided fire support until daylight and put an end to the attack.

Not content to let the aircrews go with only a radio "thank you," Captain Stokes drove to Nha Trang a week later to tell the crews in person how much he appreciated their help.



Shadow Guns Spark Eighty Explosions

(Seventh Air Force News, July 2, 1969)

PHAN RANG - "The target area looked like a string of firecrackers going off," said 1st Lt. **William C. Dawson** after returning here from a recent AC-119 Shadow gunship mission.

The 24-year-old native of Avenel, N.J., was night observation system operator on the mission which was responsible for setting off 80 secondary explosions.

Navigator on the mission, Maj. **William Taliaferro**, Arlington, Ga., explained, "We took off and headed right up the coast to fire on a suspected enemy troop concentration and storage area north of Pleiku AB.

"Upon arrival, we looked over the target area and spotted what appeared to be a moving light. Lieutenant Dawson checked it out with his scope. "He said it looked like an enemy camp site or concentration," the major continued. "We called in the exact coordinates to our control center and got permission to begin firing."

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Lieutenant Dawson added "Opening up with short bursts from all four miniguns, I watched the area in my night scope and could see a series of secondary explosions erupting."

The Shadow circled the area for more than an hour, firing close to where the initial explosions occurred.

Running low on ammunition the Shadow crew went in to Pleiku to take on fuel and replenish their ammunition supply.

While Shadow was on the ground, Air Force tactical fighter-bomber pilots kept up the attack with heavy ordnance.

Airborne again, the Shadow crew men were called first to drop flares and shine their million-and-a-half candlepower light around the perimeter of a friendly outpost near Dak To which had been taking mortar fire. Enemy troops had also been reported attempting to probe the outpost's perimeter.

"When we turned on the lights," said Major Taliaferro, "the enemy withdrew so we headed back to our first target."

Back on their first target, the Shadow crew reported touching off eight more secondary explosions, bringing their total in that area to 80.

Crewmembers on the mission were Majors **Donald R. Horak**, Paterson, N.J., pilot; **Richard C. Huston**, Riverside, Calif., co-pilot; **Taliaferro**; Lieutenant **Dawson**; SSgt. **Henry J. Young**, Gadslen, Ala., flight engineer; TSgt. **Edmond L. Harmon**, Atwater, Calif., gunner; Sgt. **Paul S. Wing**, Monmouth, Maine, gunner; and SSgt. **Ray E. Meckstroth**, Van Wert, Ohio, illuminator operator.

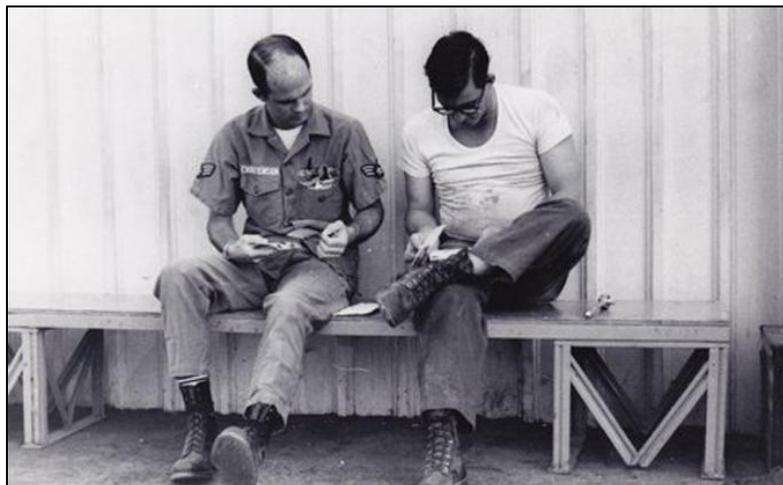
**AN ANT CAN LIFT 5 TIMES HIS OWN WEIGHT;
LEARN OTHER USEFUL FACTS at the 35th TFW
Intelligence Briefing every Monday night at
2000 hours at Batson Hall.**

‘You Are a Stranger Here but Once’



MAJ. **Gene C. Sue**, (left), Framingham, Mass., B Flight, 17th Special Operations Squadron at Phan Rang AB, presents the squadron plaque to WO **Tom Shealt**, Lithgow, Royal Australian Air Force, Number 2 Bomb Squadron. Mister Sheean, chairman of the Mess Committee for the Australian Squadron's Sergeants' Mess, accepted the plaque from the AC-119 Shadow gunship navigator as a token of friendship and cooperation between the two units.

(USAF PHOTO By SGT. DONALD L. DIRKSING)



Taking a Break

Skip Christensen and Craig Johnson (Swede) Photo by Bret Stagg



(Preface: The following script is by Gary Beck and used with his permission, who piloted Canberras with No. 2 Squadron in 1968, and rose through the ranks to retire as an Air Vice Marshal (2-star general equivalent). Gary gave this farewell to a Colonel Higgins (USAF) at a concert held at Phan Rang AB, November 1968. The presentation demonstrates the respect they had for each other and for their superior officers and the fellowship and the esprit-de-corps which existed within and between these allied squadron members. That same respect and esprit-de-corps still exists to this very day between the two allied forces, even for those that didn't have any personal contact with each other.)

No. 2 SQUADRON RAAF CONCERT NIGHT – PHAN RANG VIETNAM – NOVEMBER 1968

The other day I came across an old manuscript that I found in my flight bag that recorded all the words of a musical evening held at Phan Rang, possibly late November 1968. Some USAF and RAAF squadron members of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing came together to farewell one Colonel Higgins at the end of his tour. With a name like that, no guessing what the musical score would be (“My Fair Lady”). The musical geniuses I recall included John France and Dale Tabor and for musical accompaniment I recall we had a twelve string guitarist who was a member of the Kingston Trio. They flew F-100s and B-57s while we flew the original version of the Canberra. One Aussie singing mate I recall was Paul Goodwin, but all the talent rested with the Americans.

For the record, I have included all the songs sung, while sticking faithfully to the script as it appeared on these tattered sheets. I hope this gives a taste of the respectful tone for our superior officers, the fellowship and the esprit-de-corps which existed within and between these allied squadron members.

Cast of Characters

Lt Col. France - Plays himself
Capt. Sager - Plays himself
Capt. D. Tabor - Plays himself
Col. H. Haaland - Plays himself
Flt Lt G. Beck - Plays himself

Pilots sitting around a bar talking, chatter and usual hand flying. One, heard above the rest:

1st Pilot - Lt Col France

Where did the Gunsmokes ever learn to fly?
They all seem to be looking for a spectacular way to die,
And have any of you noticed – or is it only me –
The patterns and approaches flown by Gunsmoke 3?

2nd Pilot – Capt Sagar

I’ve heard he was the DCO in Wheelus Tripoli
But tell me sir, if he’s the best, what must the others be?

Lt Col France

See him flying through the air
Dropping ordnance everywhere
Seems to me some practice is in store
FACs all shout and rant and rail
Friendlies turn a ghastly pale
When they hear the Colonel’s engine roar.
Watch Lieutenants if you will,

Captains? They are better still,
Majors seem to know what they're about.
Lieutenant Colonels, if you please,
Hit with most consistent ease
While Gunsmoke 3 will leave the Cong in doubt,
They sometimes aren't quite sure who he is after,
And oftentimes they nearly die from laughter.

 **(SONG “Why Can't the English Learn to Speak”)**

Why can't the Colonels learn to bomb consistently?
And, to be specific, I'll refer to Gunsmoke 3.
If you bombed as he does, instead of the way you do,
You might be on your way to 7th too.

The Gunsmoke way of bombing never leaves the FAC in doubt.
And when they see them overhead, the grunts will all pull out –
No matter how they practice, they still lack our aplomb –
Of why can't the Colonels, learn – to –
Bomb the way they used to in those happy days of yore.
When they paced across the tarmac and not an office floor.
When they understood the ways of youth and weren't such bloody bores
And regaled the new Lieutenants with their tales of fighter lore.

Why can't the Colonels learn to bomb with accuracy?
How can you justify results like Gunsmoke 3?
When he is on a bomb run he doesn't look around
And if he has a lucky day he'll hit the ground.

It isn't just ability that keeps him from the pace
Although with marked agility he'll build you quite a case
About the disadvantages of air where bullets fly
But nape from 7000 feet – yes nape from 7000 feet
Is too damn high.

**Laughter, more talk, a drink – in walks Gunsmoke 3 whistling.
Many hellos, ‘good to see you’, ‘have a drink’ –**

3rd Pilot - Capt D. Tabor

Colonel Higgins, now you’re leavin, no more to fight the Cong.
Do you have any pearls of wisdom to help us get along?
We know about your dislikes, you’ve built some mighty fires!
Now would you take a few short minutes to tell us your desires?

Col H. Haaland

 **(SONG “Wouldn’t it be Lovely”)**

All I want is a big soft chair
Far away from the V.C.’s lair
Where 50s are quite rare,
Oh, wouldn’t it be lovely?

ALL: Lovely – Lovely
Lovely – Lovely

Then whistle this next verse as part of chorus:

No more flak holes for me to fret,
No more worries of things like TET,
No more low clouds to sweat;
Oh wouldn’t it be lovely

ALL: Repeat chorus

Oh so lovely sittin’ in a chair and not a plane
I’d not care about the bombs, the wind or the evening rain,
SOF would be someone else’s woe,
Thunderstorms with the ceiling low
Won’t matter when I go –
Oh, wouldn’t it be lovely?

ALL: Repeat chorus

(All join in for this last portion after whistle chorus)

Oh so lovely sittin' in a chair and not a plane
I'd not care about the bombs, the wind or the evening rain,
SOF would be someone else's woe,
Thunderstorms with the ceiling low
Won't matter when I go –
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?

ALL: Loverly – Loverly
Loverly – Loverly

Colonel Higgins finishes his drink, tells the troops his Gunsmoke radio is to be retired from service since it holds the record for transmissions during a 6 month period – raises it to his ear, mumbles something about that damn SOF and rushes out.

Things settle down a bit, dice or cards show up, the Lt Col wonders:

Lt Col France:

It now and then amazes me to see a bird like Gunsmoke 3
Who's moved so far up this Air Force maze,
He's nice enough, as you'll recall; and has a lot upon the ball
But still it sort of leaves me in a daze.

Capt Sagar interrupting:

You think it's all because of work?
Don't kid me now, I'm not a jerk.
Promotions are not always based on pluck –
And in the case of Gunsmoke 3

(If you'll just tag along with me)
I'll introduce the element of luck.

 (SONG “Little Bit of Luck”)

The Lord above gave man an arm of iron
So he could fly his century through the murk
The lord above gave man an arm of iron, but –
With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
The Lieutenants will do all the work.
ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit
With a little bit of luck they'll do the work.
The Lord above gave Colonels all the foresight
So they can tell where bullets fly around
The Lord above gave Colonels all the foresight, but –
With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
When the shooting starts you're homeward bound.
ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,

With a little bit of luck you're homeward bound.
They never take the blame for nothing
But with a little bit of luck they pass the buck.

The Lord above gave Colonels lots of knowledge
So they can tell just where the bombs should go.
The Lord above gave Colonels lots of knowledge – but
With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
When they drop a dud the FAC won't know.
ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit
With a little bit of luck the FAC won't know.

The Lord above gave Gunsmoke 3 the talent
To run a wing of pilots hard at war,
The Lord above gave Gunsmoke 3 the talent – but

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With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
He will not be shot at any more.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit
With a little bit of luck not any more.
And when you hear incoming mortars
Then with a little bit of luck you need not duck.

The Lord above looks after Colonel Higgins
When he is driving Centuries round the sky,
The Lord above looks after Colonel Higgins – but
With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
He will not have time for you and I.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit
With a little bit of time for you and I.
With a little bit, with a little bit
With a little bit of Colonel’s luck.

Laughs, “Let’s drink to that.” (Short period of conversation as Aussies move to centre.)

Ft Lt G. Beck:

I’ve been to the alert pad many times at night
Where the Gunsmokes go for dinner but don’t join in the fight.
It seems they’re just day-rated and if you want to hear them cuss
Just watch when we invite them to come along with us!

AUSSIES:

 **(SONG “I Could Have Danced All Night”)**

The Magpies fly at night
But when the moon is bright

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The Gunsmokes go to bed.
They won't accept a dare
Have never seen a flare
But work by day instead.
The DCO is really quite amazing
He drops his bombs from very high
We do not know why he
Insists he'll never be
Down where the Magpies always fly.

You'll see the Gunsmoke bunch
When they arrive for lunch
And take up all the seats.
The pilots on alert
Can never have dessert
Because they're last to eat.
And when it comes to flying combat
They all forget what they're here for
And if the DCO
Would only look below
He'd see the Magpies win the war.

In **Squadron Number Two**
There's little we can do
To get him in the fight.
He will not fly with us
He says it's too much fuss,
We know it's only fright.
These bombing runs made on the level
So low we're really tempting fate.
You won't find in his book
He thinks it's really crook
The way the Magpies operate.

As it ends, the door opens and in walks the SOF – he is a shambles and his duty uniform has no seat (red shorts show through.)

Capt Tabor:

What the hell did you guys do to Gunsmoke 3?
He came roaring out the door and spotted me.
There wasn't any place to hide, I couldn't even run
But man, my hemorrhoids sure are cured now that he is done!
He is handed a drink, looks around.

 (SONG “Just You Wait”)

Just you wait Colonel Higgins, just you wait.
When you're up at 7th it will be too late.
It was at your dinner hour
When I raised hell with the Tower,
Just you wait Colonel Higgins, just you wait.
Just you wait Colonel Higgins, 'till you're hit
And you yell to get the Jolly Greens out quick.
I will tell them there's been no flak and head straight for the alert shack
Just you wait, Colonel Higgins, just you wait.
Oh, Colonel Higgins, just you wait 'till you're on final GCA,
Oh, Colonel Higgins, I will recognize it as your judgment day.

When you say you want your bearing
I'll pretend I'm hard of hearing
Oh-ho-ho, Colonel Higgins, down you'll go, Colonel Higgins, just you wait.
As the SOF I'm responsible for how things are done,
Where the birds will recover, how this damn base is run.
But no matter the hour of the day or the night
Decisions that I make are never right!

Next week, before you start on your way

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We'll let the SOFs stay home all bloody day.
You'll be mobile, and have to make decisions as well
With no SOF you can blame when everything goes to hell.
While the Gunsmokes make traffic jams way out on the line
I'll have gin and tonic with a small twist of lime.
And then, when the boss is chewing you
You'll find out what we really do.

When you're sleeping and the scrambles are all late
And the runway's slippery and they cannot wait.
Then your trailer, we will mark it.
What a perfect jettison target!
It was fun, Colonel Higgins,
Now you're done, Colonel Higgins
Ha, just you wait!

The troops feed him a stiff one (tea so it looks straight) tell him not to worry, and
recommend Absorbine jr. for the sore spots to help remove the sting.
The door flies open and in rushes Gunsmoke 3, no radio, 1505's, bag in hand and
announces he's not staying another week.

Col Haaland:

I'm not working tomorrow so how about a drink?
Those clowns who run the war don't give you time to think!
I know it's getting rather late but I have some things to say
So stand around while I expound, then see me on my way.

 (SONG “I’m Getting Married in the Morning”)

I'm off for Saigon in the morning
Tonight I'll have myself a time.
I know I'm bumming –
Just keep 'em comin

Then get me to the plane on time.

(DRINKS)

I've got to be there in the morning
Generals don't like it if you're late.
Open the bottle
I'm at full throttle
Until I pass that loading gate.

(QUICK DRINK)

If you are worried, I'll leave here by four
If you can't keep up, don't drink anymore!

(SLIGHTLY DRUNK)

He's gonna have himself a party
Somebody go sound the alarm –
When he is drinkin
There's no time for thinkin
But get him to the plane
Get him to the plane
For God's sake get him to the plane unharmed.

(ALL Repeat above verse)

(MORE SLOWLY)

I'm off to Saigon in the morning
This is my last night with the gang
The whole base is waking
Daylight is breaking
The time has come to leave Phan Rang.

I finished packing, a short time ago

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Now where’s the baggage? I really don’t know.

(EVEN SLOWER)

I’m off to Saigon in the mornin’
Tonight I’ve really had a time,
Call out the day shift
Bring up the forklift
And get me to the plane on time.

ALL (Repeat at normal speed)

He’s off to Saigon in the mornin’
Tonight he’s really had a time
Call out the day shift
Bring up the forklift
And get him to the plane,
Yes get him to the plane
For God’s sake get him to the plane on time.

He is helped out the door.

Note: Air Force Acronyms used in the above concert:

DCO - Deputy Commanding Officer

SOF - Supervisor of Flying

One Final Note: If anyone knows who Col. Higgins is, would you please let [me](#) know. If he is identified, I will amend this article to reflect the additional information.

Notice to Reunion Attendees. Details about the 2019 Phan Rang AB Reunion in Savannah are contained in Phan Rang News 174-175 and 176. As we have done at every reunion, except the very first one, we have attendees bring in wonderful items, many handmade or unique items specific to Phan Rang that we use for a silent auction, raffle or door prizes, with the

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proceeds going to a general fund that allows our group to subsidize reunion activities. If you have something that you would like to contribute, please bring it. The funds that are earned from these events will go towards subsidizing events at future reunions.

HAPPY CAMPING

I also would like to provide some information for the RV’ers that are planning on attending the reunion. I thought that it would be nice for them to camp as close together as possible so that they could possibly carpool back and forth from the reunion hotel and enjoy some camaraderie around the campfire in the evenings. I heard that Creekfire RV Resort offers a veterans discount, but check that out because they both may do that. At this point in time Phan Rangers (number in brackets) have reservations at these RV sites:

| | |
|--|---|
| Red Gate RV Camp Ground (1) 136 Red Gate Farms Trail 912-272-8028 | Creekfire RV Resort (3) 275 Fort Argyle Rd. 912-897-2855 |
|--|---|

Doug’s Comments: I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter and if you have any comments or would like to submit a story, just send it to me. This newsletter was composed and all graphics 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. I would like to remind everyone that we have services available to all Phan Rang AB veterans like the **Roll-Call** that [Bob Tucker](#) maintains. The ‘Roll-Call’ is a list of everyone that we’ve known to have been stationed at Phan Rang AB, including their grade, organization, time served and other information that may be helpful in searching for a buddy. If you are not on Facebook and would like a copy of it, contact Bob Tucker and he would be glad to send you a digital copy of it, but please remember that this is a work in progress and only contains the names that the members have captured through the years and it is not a complete list of everyone to have been stationed at the base.

Phan Rang AB Challenge coins are still available for a limited time for eight dollars each. If you would like to purchase one, send a check to Jack Anderson to the address listed in the reunion section. Please make your check out to ‘**Phan Rang Reunion**’. The 2019 Reunion shirts are on sale [here](#) along with hats and many other Phan Rang related products.