

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 180 “...keeping the memories alive”

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BASE COMMANDER HAILS OPENING

(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, August 9, 1967)

Col. **Lewis R. Riley**, base commander, sees August as the turning point in the long-rang construction program of the base. Within the last week three major new facilities were opened...a base exchange, a dining hall, and a chapel.....and tow more will open before the month is over. The airmen's open mess will open its new building on Friday and a new group headquarters building is due to go into operation on August 24.

The base commander described the new BX as “one of the finest base exchanges in all of Vietnam.” He noted that over \$50,000 worth of merchandise was sold on the first day as close to 5,000 people surged through the doors.

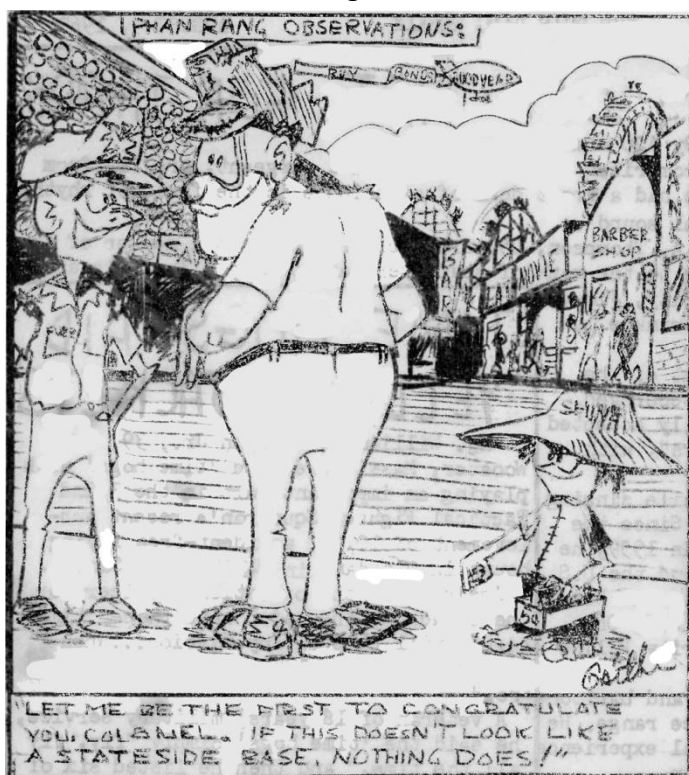
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“We have attempted to make this a Stateside-appearing base,”

The new dining hall, which opened the same day, served 2,100 personnel in its first day of operations. “I think it’s one of the greatest dining halls in Southeast Asia today,” commented the hall’s supervisor, TSgt. Rice. “We have attempted to make this a Stateside-appearing base,” said Colonel Riley. “It doesn’t cost much more to go first class...this is our home.”



WHO WAS FIRST?

(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, August 9, 1967)

“The food is just great!” said **A3C Roy P. Youngblood Jr.**, 19, a B-57 phase mechanic in the 8th TBS who was the first airman to eat in the new dining hall.

“It’s beautiful inside...It’s very decorative and real modern design...I really like it,” said MSgt. **James Jump** of the 35th CES, first man to enter the new base exchange.

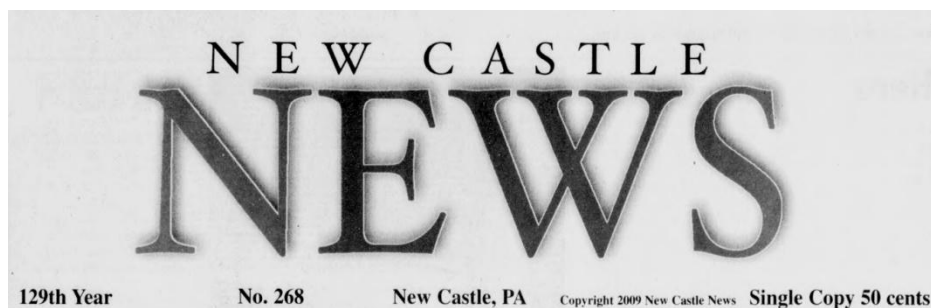
A2C **Bill Westerberg** claimed he was the first man to make a purchase...a pack of cigarettes, at the new facility. He’s assigned to the machine room of CBPO.

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HERO TRIBUTE



THE FINAL MOMENTS OF A MOUNT JACKSON MAN KILLED DURING THE VIETNAM WAR UNVEILED DURING GRAVESIDE CEREMONY



**Capt. Richard Whan Hopper exits his Martin B-57 Canberra in March 1968.
This is the last known photograph of him.**

Forty-one years ago, Capt. **Richard Whan Hopper** of Mount Jackson gave his life for his country.

On Friday, his family and friends were told how.

Many of the details of Hopper's death on March 25, 1968, near Da Nang, South Vietnam, they already knew. Hopper's entry at www.virtualwall.com says that the 1953 Mount Jackson High grad was piloting a B-57 aircraft that "crashed on landing due to battle damage" and that Hopper "attempted a missed approach which was not successful."

Both Hopper and his navigator, Maj. **Donald McHugo**, died in the crash.

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What the pilot’s family didn’t know until last August was that a 19-year-old Marine named Frank Hahnel had witnessed the crash.

Three days ago, with nearly 100 people gathered around Hopper’s grave in Mount Jackson Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Hahnel shared the details of the last moments of the pilot’s life and unveiled a bronze and stone memorial in his memory.

Hahnel recounted a story of selfless heroism, of a man who sacrificed himself to ensure the safety of others.

“No one has greater love than this,” Hahnel read from the Gospel of John before beginning his talk, “than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

ON A MISSION

Rich Hopper was 9 years old when his father died. His brother, Ron, was 7.

“I think we probably both have memories of the Christmases, having the trains around the tree,” Ron said.

“And getting up early in the morning and watching him leave to go to the Air Force base,” Rich added.

The two attended Friday’s service with their mother, Carolyn Leeper; uncles Bob, John and Tom; and about 100 other family members and Mount Jackson residents who had called Capt. Richard Hopper their friend.

Ron recalled his reaction 11 months ago when Hahnel first contacted his family from Florida.

“Almost disbelief,” he said, “when he started to go through how he was able to track down this information. And then you wonder, why 40 years later?”

Hahnel explained that while he was in Vietnam, he carried with him an 8 mm movie camera, with which he filmed various aspects of his wartime experience. He had it the day Hopper died,

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and filmed the wreckage of Hopper’s B-57. That footage included the numbers on the aircraft’s tail section.

The film was forgotten, though, until Hahnel’s family obtained his old war footage last year and used it to compile a video for him. While watching the record he’d made of Hopper’s crash, Hahnel began to wonder just who the young pilot had been.

“i had the numbers off the tail section, and i was able to find out who the pilot was through the United States Air Force archives,” Hahnel said. “That happened last August, and I contacted the family by placing an ad in the Leatherneck magazine.

“As soon as the ad went in, a local person that lives here in Pennsylvania, a former Marine, contacted me, told me where the Hopper family was, I contacted them, and here we are. ”

A HERO’S DEATH

On the last day of Richard Hopper’s life, Hahnel was stationed with a tank maintenance platoon in I Corps Sector, a few miles southwest of the Da Nang military base.

Hopper and McHugo were assigned that day to a mission over Laos in their Martin B-57 Canberra. Hahnel believes their target likely was the North Vietnamese Army’s resupply activity along the Ho Chi Minh trail. However, their plane was struck by ground fire that disabled one of its engines as well as its hydraulics system.

About 2:30 p.m., Hahnel said, he was working inside a mobile machine shop truck when he heard a plane approaching. “This airplane was making so much noise that it sounded like a turbo prop, not a jet bomber,” he recalled. “I stepped outside the rear of my truck, looked up, and saw an aircraft banking hard, counterclockwise, along the outside limits of our perimeter wire. It was about 100 feet above the deck.”

Hahnel could tell that the pilot was having a difficult time controlling the plane, but he knew without a doubt what was going on.

“Capt. Hopper was selecting where to land his aircraft,” he said, “and it was not going to be on

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any American troops.”

Hopper could have bailed out of his plane and let his B-57 randomly crash, Hahnel said.

“If he had, it would have fallen right on the top of the 1st Tank’s maintenance facility and its personnel.

(Instead), Capt. Hopper rode his aircraft down, controlling it as best he could ... almost down to ground level, ensuring that not even one person was hurt. He crash-landed his plane outside of our perimeter, in a small clearing, and only Capt. Richard Whan Hopper and Maj. Donald Lyle McHugo’s lives were taken.”

As the plane passed his truck, Hahnel added, Hopper was looking to his left and down, right in Hahnel’s direction. “We locked eyeballs for a few moments in time,” Hahnel said, “but no words were spoken.”

He added that the men apparently tried to eject just before crashing, but that the attempt failed. “It was the ultimate mechanical systems failure, a catastrophic event.”

REACTION

Prior to being contacted by Hahnel, Rich Hopper said, he hadn’t known a lot about his father’s death.

Ron Hopper also said that Hahnel had shared some revelations “that we weren’t aware of — maybe no one did but Frank, from having been there and having some film footage.”

John Hopper, meanwhile, believes there’s still at least one mystery surrounding his brother’s death. He noted that the Da Nang base sat adjacent to the South China Sea, and wonders why his brother and the navigator didn’t simply bail out over the water and allow their crippled aircraft to crash into the sea.

Though Hahnel didn’t touch on it during the service, John Hopper said he’d learned earlier that the navigator was slumped forward in his seat as Capt. Hopper rode the B-57 to the ground.

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“He may already have been dead,” John Hopper said, “or he may have been praying. But he also may have been unconscious, and maybe that’s why my brother didn’t eject — he wasn’t going to leave him behind. “I guess the only way we’d know is if we could get the recordings” from any radio contact Hopper might have made.

Despite that unanswered question, one fact Friday could not be disputed — Capt, Richard Hopper was an unqualified hero.

“When you’re a kid,” Rich Hopper said, “you always think that about your dad. It’s nice to actually know it.”

REMEMBERING

Capt. Richard Hopper



►► Capt. Richard Hopper graduated from Mount Jackson High School in 1953, and Grove City College in 1957, with a degree in engineering. He later earned a master's degree at the University of Arizona,

►► Hopper, who was 32 when he died, was the eldest son of Whan and Sophronia Hopper. He was married to the former Carolyn Thompson (now Leeper), and the couple had two sons, Richard and Ronald Hopper.

►► At the time of his death, he was stationed with the 8th Bombardment Squadron, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, 7th Air Force at Phan Rang Air Base, about 310 miles southwest of Da

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Nang.

►► Also at Friday's graveside ceremony, John Bush read an original poem, and the captain's son and granddaughter, Rich and Rachel Hopper, released a box of butterflies in his memory. A reception followed at Mount Jackson Presbyterian Church.



(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, July 20, 2009)

“We who remain will remember those who have been called to their final muster. The memory of our own will live on in us.”

HE LOVES THE SEA

(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, August 9, 1967)

For 27 years, MSgt. **Richard A. Rice** has been hooked on a “big liquid tranquilizer”, the oceans of the world.

Chief administrative man in the consolidated base personnel office, the 38-year-old native of Chandler, Ariz., skin-dives, collects sea shells, takes color photos under water, and writes articles on skin-diving which have been published in “most of the major skin-diving magazines in the world.”

“I’m so fascinated and amazed by everything that I see”, said the devout sea-worshipper as he described his under-water sensations.

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“All of your troubles just sort of float on the surface and you duck under them...Adventures, danger, beauty....seeking the unknown and never sure you’re going to find it...It’s a constant challenge to your mind and your body.”

He described sea life as “Walt Disney and Picasso under water...all those strange little characters swimming around.”

Sergeant Rice came to Phan Rang in March, and has spent his off-duty hours at the beach near the base.

He has collected shells by the dozen, continued his passion for under-water photography, and skin-dived from a reef three miles from shore.

As a youngster in Ashtabula , Ohio, the sergeant began his love affair with the water by diving into one of the Great Lakes, and in his 21-year Air Force career he has managed to go skin-diving in the Caribbean Sea...the Sea of Cortez off Mexico...along the coast of Canada...off the Bahama Islands...and along the coast of Florida.

Back in 1963, when he was stationed at Homestead AFB, Fla., Sergeant Rice became president of the ‘Gators’, a base skin-diving club with 140 members.

He has written skin-diving and fishing columns for the South Miami News in Florida and his articles have appeared in such magazines as American Skin-diver and Australian Skin-diver.

His wife Verda and four children are confirmed water-bugs, just like Dad. With each new Air Force assignment, Sergeant Rice grabs a map to locate the nearest body of water.

He has encountered sharks many times, mostly off the Florida Keys. Once he was confronted by a Lemon shark off Key Largo. The sergeant ‘shouted’ under water to scare off the intruder, and then shot to the surface.

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IDEA PAY-OFF FOR 3 AIRMEN

(Seventh Air Force News, June 18, 1969)

PHAN RANG - Good ideas made money recently for three airmen here when they received cash awards for recommendations adopted under the Air Force Suggestion Program.

Col. Robert G. Goold, base commander, presented the awards to MSgt. **Wayne A. Dick**, TSgt. **Lewis O. Pardew** and Sgt. **Herbert J. Peters**.

Sergeant Dick, Derby, Kan., received. \$110 for simplifying the submission and transmission of air combat mission reports. As noncommissioned-officer -in-charge, intelligence division, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Sergeant Dick found that several messages on the same combat mission could be consolidated into one message, saving time and money.

From Mount Prospect, Ill., Sergeant Peters, a reciprocating-engine mechanic with the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron, suggested a special wrench be used to remove and replace certain nuts on reciprocating engines. He was awarded \$25.

A fuels specialist with the 35th Supply Squadron, Sergeant Pardew, 33, Chestnut Hill, Md., received a \$20 award for suggesting the water spout at the water truck filling station he extended so that water would not be blown away by the wind as the trucks were being filled.

DID YOU KNOW?	Newsletter
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Did you know the commanders of Phan Rang? Check this newsletter for a bio on all of them.	139
The 35 th TFW flew 75,000 sorties from October 1966 to October 1968 which equates to 3,572 sorties per month during that period.	1
Do you know who challenged the ‘Cool Hand Luke’ record of egg eating?	1
Do you want to see a chronology of VC/NVA Attacks on Phan Rang, 1961-1973?	43
Do you want to read the entire book “Tales of Phan Rang” by Robert Chappellear...start here.	26
Do you want to see a timeline of significant events occurring at Phan Rang?	135

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For a Casualty List for Ninh Thuan Province, which lists all casualties for Phan Rang assigned personnel.	155
The Phan Rang News contains approximately 3,600 pages of historical facts and the stories of those who served there during its short 6 years of existence.	1-180
Learn about the important mission of a bird named ‘Pedro’ that can’t be found in any Audubon guide books.	134
The magpie is widely considered the most intelligent bird that can be found in the western rangelands, but did you know what they were doing in Vietnam.	147
Did you know how did the 315 th SOW become a member of the ‘Jet Set’?	83
If you haven’t read Michaelangelo Rodriguez’s recounting of his Phan Rang experience, read his account that he presented to the Phan Rang AB Reunion in San Antonio. His unique sense of humor really comes through and you will really enjoy the read.	2
If you liked what Michaelangelo did in San Antonio you must read his witty monologue that he presented to the group at the Phan Rang AB Reunion in Charleston.	87
Did you know that we had ‘Sea Serpents’ at Phan Rang...who would have thought?	89-90
Did you know how many 435 th MMS troops it takes to change a tire?	92
Did you know that a red kangaroo and a horse could pull together?	105
Did you know that Phan Rang AB could offer an ornithologists a field day with all of the ‘birds’ they had on base...they had a few Gooney Birds (130), a lot of Yellow Birds (174), a few Bird Dogs (78), some Magpie’s (147) that were imported, a Bug Bird (78) and the most popular and coveted bird...the Freedom Bird (85)?	Numbers in parentheses indicate the issue nr.

Jon Buck: Returned 50 years ago from Phan Rang. Served 19 months as a Fireman. I went on to do many things but always had Phan Rang in my memories. Very proud of what we achieved as a very young men. I have over the years heard those who think they know what we did, but they don't know because they weren't there. We have earned the right to be proud.

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Return to Glory

Retired F-4

jet restored for
display at SCLA

VICTORVILLE - Despite the cold weather, hundreds of visitors attended the unveiling of an F -4C Phantom II Supersonic Jet that once soared over the High Desert and Vietnam.

City of Victorville and Southern California Logistics Airport officials welcomed the Pearl Harbor Day crowd to SCLA as they showcased the restored jet that sat mostly untouched for over 20 years at the former George Air Force base.



The 35th Tactical Fighter wing was the fighter unit based out of George Air Force Base, which is now Southern California Logistics Airport
Top: Visitors gather around the recently restored F-4C Phantom II Supersonic Jet after its unveiling ceremony for the jet's display at SCLA.

After SCLA Director Eric Ray welcomed the crowd, he said, the F - 4 Phantom was a result of America’s defense posture after the events of WWII and the restoration of the aircraft should be a sign of freedom and a beacon of hope for generations to come.

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Mayor Gloria Garcia, who is a High Desert native who remembers when GAFB was a hub of activity, commended the SCLA restoration team for two years of painstaking effort to restore the F-4 “to its original glory.”

The crowd applauded as workers pulled the large covering (a parachute) of the static aircraft that was part of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing that once flew out of GAFB.

Many veterans and longtime residents, who remember the sights and sounds of the F-4s and other aircraft that once flew over the High Desert, were in tears when they shared their stories with the Daily Press.

Numerous veterans gathered near the jet to discuss all aspects of the aircraft fighter-bomber, including how the jet could carry more than 18,000 pounds of weapons, including air-to-air missiles and various bombs, but was not equipped with guns.

Ray said the jet restoration project was extensive, with the SCLA team and a group of veteran volunteers working with a static aircraft curator to insure that every detail - from the paint to the tires - was precise.

Part of the restoration process included sanding and washing every part of the aircraft and conducting hours of research to insure that every part and the paint scheme was a correct match.

“One big surprise is that we had to use latex paint, with a rubber base because it holds up better” Ray said. “We also had to make insure the aircraft was mounted and positioned to tolerate the harsh desert winds. Even though it’s grounded, we were very concerned about wind load on the jet. Roger Christoffels, an SCLA lead worker and Air Force veteran, said it took his team about eight months from sanding to mounting to complete the war bird, which was welded into place in early November.

The aircraft, which was left on the property after the base closed in 1991, had deteriorated, with damaged glass and tires that were dry-rotted, said Victorville spokeswoman Sue Jones.

“The restoration team added the correct stickers to represent all of the units that flew the F-4,”

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Jones said. “The glass was painted to make it look like it was tinted and the missiles were restored by hand and volunteers from Florida built the mounts.”

Ray said finding tires for the aircraft was problematic, adding that his group of retired veteran Volunteers found and purchased the tires from “parts unknown” and had them installed.

The McDonnell Douglas F-4C II Jet Interceptor fighter /bomber first entered service in MacDill AFB in Florida in 1964. After being placed in to service, the jet was part of the Tactical Fighter Wing at several bases, including MacDill, George, Edwards, Davis, **Phan Rang**, Da Nang, Camh Ranh Bay, Yokota, Luke, Tulsa and March.

The jet, which remained in use by the U.S. in reconnaissance and Wild Weasel roles until 1996 has the distinction of being the last U.S. fighter to attain Ace status in the 20th Century.

OBITUARIES

Obituary for Ben H. Swett

Obituary for Col. Ben H. Swett, U.S. Air Force, Retired



Col. Ben H. Swett, Ret., died on July 20, 2019 in MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital. He had been a resident of Temple Hills, Maryland since 1971.

He was born on September 3, 1934 at Saint Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, son of Herbert Elbridge and Marcia Harriet (Fadner) Swett. Though originally named “Herbert Benjamin,” he always used “Ben H.” as his first and middle names.

Ben H. Swett attended grade schools in Wisconsin and Colorado, and graduated from Pasadena, Texas, High School in 1951. In 1955, he graduated from the University of Arkansas with a B. A. degree in Government, was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U. S. Air Force, and married Wyneth June Haskins at First Christian Church in Ponca City, Oklahoma. He served in the Air Force for more than 30 years. As a junior officer, he served as a navigator

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on B-47 jet bombers in the Strategic Air Command (SAC), as a SAC avionics maintenance supervisor, and as a scientific specialist doing original research in the field of long-range forecasting. He also completed an M.A. degree in Political Science at the University of New Hampshire.

In 1970, he served as Wing Navigator and Civic Action Officer for the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing at Phan Rang, Vietnam, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross, five Air Medals, and several other awards. During this time he worked to aid and support America’s Montagnard allies in the Central Highlands.

During the 1970s, he served as a development engineer and research director at Air Force Systems Command headquarters at Andrews AFB in Maryland, and at the Pentagon as Assistant for Reliability and Maintainability in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In the latter role, he wrote and coordinated the Department of Defense Directive on Reliability and Maintainability of systems and equipment. This Directive led to significant improvements in the U.S. military as later seen in the first Persian Gulf War. In 1981, the Institute of Environmental Sciences named him as an Honorary Fellow “for scientific study and analysis of the deficiencies in military hardware reliability development and the courageous pursuit of corrective action on both technical and administrative fronts.”

His final Air Force assignment was as Director of Engineering and Standardization at the Defense Industrial Supply Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he created a new initiative to reduce the amount of fraudulent and sub-standard materials purchased by the Department of Defense.

After retiring as a Colonel in 1985, he served as a government and industry consultant. Both during and after his service, he studied religion and spirituality, writing papers and hosting seminars on these subjects, and wrote poetry. A number of these works are posted at www.bswett.com.

During retirement, he did genealogical research. In the early 1990s he created the website www.swett-genealogy.com, which is now the leading source of information on the Swett family.

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He was a long-time member of Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Fort Washington, Maryland, serving for many years as the Chairman of Elders, as a financial officer, and as a teacher.

He will be remembered for the many lives he touched as a son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, colleague, spiritual mentor, and friend.

He is survived by his wife, Wyneth H. Swett; two sons, Scott L. Swett of Falls Church, Virginia and Bruce A. Swett of Fulton, Maryland; a sister, Mrs. Carol M. Downie of Rochester, Minnesota; and four grand-children.

(Col. Swett contributed to the Phan Rang Newsletter by allowing me to include his entire journal that he wrote during his year in Vietnam. If you haven't read it, please check out Phan Rang Newsletter 153. The entire newsletter is his Vietnam journal titled “A Year in Vietnam-a Diary” by Ben H. Swett. Ben was also very active in the civic action programs at Phan Rang and Phan Rang Newsletters 26, 27 and 45 have articles about him receiving civic action awards. During my conversations with him I found that we have an interesting family connection of sorts. His step-father was Julien Joseph Arpin, born 1906, son of John Baptiste Arpin, Jr., born 1874, son of John Baptiste Arpin, Sr., born 1826. Arpin Sr. went to California according to family traditions and came back cross-country to Wisconsin alone with a mule loaded with gold. He established a saw mill and also had many cranberry marshes and the town where he settled was named after him. The town of Arpin was the small village in central Wisconsin where my great grandfather settled after they emigrating from Germany. They were farmers, but they worked in the saw mill and the lumber camps during the winters with their horses. I still have family living in the town.) (Cedar Rapids Gazette, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, May 10, 2015)

ROBERT DOUGLAS DIVELBISS

2/17/1945 – 5/4/2015

Iowa City



R. **Douglas Divelbiss**, 70, died Monday, May 4, 2015, in Phoenix, Ariz. He was born in Wilksburg, Pa., to Robert M. and Dorothy A. Divelbiss. He is survived by Jane, his beloved wife of 45 years; son, R. Skip Divelbiss and wife Tiffany of Phoenix; daughter, Katherine Divelbiss Clary and husband Brian of Huntsville, Ala.

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Doug received his undergraduate degree from Rutgers University, where he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity. After graduation, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force and attended pilot training at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas. While there, he met his wife, Jane. Upon graduation, he was stationed at **Phan Rang**, Vietnam, where he flew C-123 cargo planes. After returning to the states he flew C-141 transport planes out of McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. At the completion of his military career, he received his M.B.A. from Southern Illinois University.

Frankie Gene Fields

February 24, 1929-June 9, 2016

Frankie Gene Fields of Nacogdoches, Tx., (formerly of Dickinson, Tx), peacefully passed away on June 9, 2016 at the age of 87. He was born in Pine Valley, Oklahoma, on February 24, 1929. His family moved to Wickes, Arkansas, where he graduated from Wickes High School in 1948, and enlisted in the United States Air Force. During the Korean War, Frankie was stationed at RAF Waddington Air Base in England where he met the love of his life, Mavis Place, all because of a box of Hershey chocolate bars. They were married in May 1951 at the home of Sam and Dale DePalermo which is now Bayou Realtors. They had two daughters, Lizabeth and Kathryn, who were always known as “daddy’s girls”. Through the Air Force, Frankie was stationed at several bases in the United States and at Bentwaters Air Base in England. In 1969-70, he served his country in the Viet Nam War at **Phan Rang Air Base**, Viet Nam, where he received the bronze star. Frankie proudly retired after 22 years in the USAF. After retirement, he settled in Dickinson and became a car salesman, realtor, and then an insurance agent. He eventually moved to Nacogdoches where he lived for the past 39 years. (Galveston Daily News, Galveston, Texas, June 12, 2016)

Robert Galen Stack

1941-2017

FAIRFAX — **Robert Galen Stack**, 76, of Fairfax, VA. departed this life on May 26, 2017, following a valiant battle with cancer. Born March 23, 1941 in Packs Branch, WV. he was the son of the late John William Stack, Sr., and the late Nellie Roberta Vance Stack.

After graduation from High School in Mount Hope. Mr. Stack served honorably in the United States Air Force from September 1959 thru April 1981. Achieving the rank of Master Sergeant.

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He served his country faithfully in the Republic of Korea; Langley Air Force Base, VA; Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany; Reese Air Force Base, TX; **Phan Rang Air Base** and Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Viet Nam; and other locations across the United States. Following his military career, he continued to serve as a Department of Defense Civil Servant in the Washington D C area until his retirement. (Beckley Register Herald, Beckley, West Virginia, June 3, 2017)

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LAFB’S BASE COMMANDER EXPERIENCED OFFICER

(Del Rio News Herald, Del Rio, Texas, July 7, 1976)

Laughlin Air Force Base's new base commander, Col. Jesse W. Campbell, brings to his job more than 23 years of military experience, dating back to 1953. A native Pixley , Calif. , Colonel Campbell received his Air Force commission and entered basic navigator training in 1953, and received his aircraft observer wings in 1954.

For the next two years he served as a navigator, then entered the pilot training program at Reese AFB, at Lubbock. He won his pilot wings there in July, 1957.

The colonel's first assignment as a pilot was with the 38th Transportation Squadron at McGuire AFB, N.J. He later transferred to the 53rd Air Rescue Squadron at Keflavik. Iceland. During his "rescue" assignment,, Colonel Campbell flew C54 aircraft.

Returning to the U.S. in 1960 he was assigned to Sheppard AFB, at Wichita Falls where he held various jobs with the Air Training Command missile and space training programs. Later he went to Patrick AFB , Fla. As Detachment Commander, 326th Detachment, 3774th Instructor Squadron where he remained until 1966.

From August, 1966 until August, 1967 he attended the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, Ala, and in November 1967 was assigned to the 311th Air Commando Squadron, **Phan Rang Air Base**, Republic of Vietnam. Flying C123K aircraft there he logged more than 1,000 sorties during his combat tour of duty.

Following his Southeast Asia tour, Colonel Campbell went to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany

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where he was successively; Chief of Plans; Chief of Command Post; Assistant Chief of Maintenance; and Director of Operations for the 322nd Tactical Airlift Wing.

Colonel Campbell returned to the states in July of 1973 and assumed duties as Secretariate of the Inter-Service Training Review Organizations at Randolph AFB in San Antonio. On May 19, 1975 he was selected to serve as Assistant Chief of Staff, Air Training Command a position he held until coming to Laughlin.

Colonel Campbell took over the Base Commander duties formerly held by Col. Richard Hickenbottom on March 15, 1976.

Colonel Campbell includes among his decorations and awards, the Air Force Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Air Force Commendation medal.

The colonel and his wife, the former Carol L. Landels, of Los Angeles, Calif., have four daughters.

366th Airman in Line For Bronze Star In Viet Nam

(Alamogordo Daily News, Alamogordo, New Mexico, June 14, 1966)



HERO SAVES ANOTHER LIFE— Air Force A1C **Clarence M. Schofield**, 29, of Riverdale, Ga. who recently snatched a live grenade from the floor of a crowded room has again saved a human life. The quick-thinking airman used artificial respiration and kept a stricken fellow air policeman breathing until medical help arrived. He was awarded the Airman’s Medal for throwing the grenade out of the room and has been recommended for the Bronze Star for his most recent action. (Air Force Photo)

PHAN RANG AB, Viet Nam Air Force A1C Clarence M. Schofield, 29, of Riverdale, Ga., who won

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the Airmans Medal recently, now is being considered for the Bronze Star Medal for saving another life.

Not long ago at Buu Son airport terminal near the Phan Rang air base, Schofield—an air policeman—snatched a live grenade from the floor of a crowded room and threw it into a nearby bunker where it exploded harmlessly. His prompt action was cited with saving many of the 50 to 60 persons in the room.

Schofield was awarded the Airman’s Medal for heroism involving voluntary risk of life. “It just seemed the only thing to do at the time,” Schofield said.

The quick-thinking airman recently pumped life into a fellow member of the 366th Air Police Squadron who collapsed and stopped breathing. Schofield applied artificial respiration and kept the stricken man breathing until medical help arrived.

Hospital authorities praised Schofield’s fast work in the crisis.

Col. George S. Weart, 366th Tactical Fighter Wing commander, recommended him for the Bronze Star Medal.

Note: All newspaper articles I could find had his middle initial as ‘M’, but copies of official documents on the VSPA web site his middle initial is ‘J’. The following is from his Airman’s Performance Report (APR) for the period 30 Nov 65 to 16 Oct 66. **COMMENTS OF REPORTING OFFICIAL FACTS AND SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS:** Airman Schofield’s outstanding professionalism in the performance of his duties, has consistently placed him above his contemporaries. His intelligence, alertness and military bearing has resulted in his constant utilization as honor guard for such distinguished VIPs as the United States Secretary of Agriculture, CINCPAC, and commander PACAF, Airman Schofield, already the recipient of the Airmen’s Medal for heroism, reacted to a call for help on 8 May 66, when a fellow air policeman fell ill, in his quarters he stopped breathing. Airmen Schofield’s timely application of artificial respiration is credited with the saving of that airman’s life. For this act, Airman Schofield was recommended for the United States Air Force Commendation Medal. **STRENGTHS:** His devotion to duty, sense of responsibility and conduct, both on and off duty are among Airman Schofield’s many attributes. **OTHER COMMENTS:** Airman Schofield’s use of tact and

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diplomacy, whether dealing with United States or Vietnamese personnel, has served to further American-Vietnamese relations. Airman Schofield repeatedly proves his noncommissioned officer potential and is a definite asset to his unit, Pacific Air Forces and the United States Air Force.

John Atwell: 53 years ago today I left Myrtle Beach AFB in a C-130 B model on my way to Prang Rang AB - there were 12 of us on the flight as the “advanced team” - three days later (39 hours flying time) we arrived - we had to spend a night in the Philippines because the pilot said he couldn’t land at Phan Rang at night? I asked what the hell kind of base was he taking me to? He just laughed...

Pupils aid Vietnam Orphanage

(Deming Graphic, Deming N.M., March 27, 1972)

A letter of thanks was written by U.S. Air Force officers recently to students of Memorial Elementary School.

A request for assistance to orphanage in Vietnam was made by Capt. Dennis Canon, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. M. Canon of Deming. Capt. Canon is coordinator of the Medical Civic Action Program with the Headquarters, 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, APO San Francisco 96321.

Principal Bill Samples read the letter to the pupils. They responded with an effort that produced personal toys, baby bottles, jump ropes, canned goods, towels, soap, diapers and medical supplies such first-aid material.

“It was a school wide venture,” said Samples.

Besides Canon, the letter was signed by Col. Ray C. Staley, commander of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing; by Maj. William D. Vickers, Catholic Chaplain, and by Maj. Albert Johnson Jr., director of Base Medical Services.

The letter said:

Dear Students,

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We are most appreciative of your kind donation for the children at the Tan Tai Orphanage, Phan Rang, Republic of Vietnam, and want to thank you for your generosity. Our base has cared for some seventy children at this orphanage during the past five years supplying them with food, clothing, medical attention and supplies, material improvements to their facility and much personal love from the men assigned here. Projects like this have been a vital factor in showing the people of South Vietnam the personal concern of America for their nation. And, of course, these projects would be impossible without the interest and assistance of you and many others like you. As the departure date of the USAF from Phan Rang draws close we want to assure you that the American spirit of brotherhood will live on in the hearts of many in this area. Thank you again for helping to make this possible.

Ernest Peters: After completing Technical School at Keesler AFB in July 68, I arrived at Myrtle Beach AFB in mid August 1968. After completing my 5 level training, I immediately received orders for Phan Rang AB. I departed Myrtle Beach around December 1, 1968 and after 30 day leave and 30 day TDY to Lackland AFB for crypto school, I departed McCord AFB, Washington on January 31, 1969. So it was fifty years ago but I'm still at Phan Rang.



U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant **Ralph I. Hammons**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin H. Hammons, Middle Point, has arrived for duty at George AFB, Calif. Sergeant Hammons, a jet engine technician, is in a unit of the Tactical Air Command which provides Combat units for air support of support of U.S. ground forces. He previously served at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. The sergeant is a 1954 graduate of Van Del High School. His wife, Freddie, is the daughter of Mrs. Minnie Hightnight, 303 West Hanna, Davis, Okla. (Delphos Daily Herald, Delphos, Ohio, September 2, 1971)

Captain Frank Ligon Promoted in Viet Nam - **Frank Ligon**, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Burney Ligon, who is stationed in Phan Rang, Vietnam with the United States Air Force, has been promoted

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from lieutenant to the rank of captain, his parents have been notified here. Captain Ligon, who received his degree in veterinary medicine from AAM University. Is writing articles on "The scout dog and the leech" and is doing research on diseases of dogs. He is also in charge of food sanitation in several mess halls. He has traveled to Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore - cities of Malasia, and to Bangkok, Thailand. Mrs. Ligon is teaching in Edna, her former hometown and plans to meet her husband in Honolulu, Hawaii during his leave in June. (Fort Stockton Pioneer, Fort Stockton, Texas, March 16, 1967)

Frank Ureta Jr. Arrives in Phan Rang, Viet Nam - Pvt. **Frank Ureta, Jr.**, of Fort Stockton, recently arrived in Phan Rang, South Viet Nam. Ureta has been in U. S. Army for about a year and is attached to a light maintenance company. Friends may reach him by writing to Pvt. Frank Ureta, Jr., RA 187465502, P.R.S.A.C. 552nd Lt. Maint. Co. (C.S.), A.P.O. San Francisco, 96321 (Fort Stockton Pioneer, Fort Stockton, Texas, March 16, 1967)

SSgt. **John P. Montgomery**, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Montgomery of Jackson, has arrived for duty at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. SSgt. Montgomery, a jet engine technician is assigned to a unit of the Military Airlift Command which provides global airlift, air rescue, aeromedical evacuation, air weather and air photographic and geodetic services for U.S. forces. He previously served at Phan Rang Air Base Vietnam. (Portsmouth Times, Portsmouth, Ohio, October 5, 1967.)

Sergeant **Ronald J. Overly**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac J. Overly of Donegal, is a member of a unit that has earned the U. S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with "V" device for valor in Southeast Asia. Sergeant Overly, a carpenter in the 554th Civil Engineering Squadron at Cam Ranh Bay AB, Vietnam, will wear a distinctive service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the unit. The squadron, which moved to Cam Ranh Bay in January, earned the award while stationed at Phan Rang Air Base. It was the third such award for the construction unit, but the first with the "V" device. The sergeant's squadron was cited for exceptionally meritorious service for facilities construction and in the perimeter defense of Phan Rang from Jan. 1 through Dec 31. 1969. He is a 1957 graduate of Mount Pleasant High School. His wife, Magdalena is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Degenstein of 3112 S. Main Minot N.D. (Connellsville Daily Courier, Connellsville, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1970)

U S Air Force Staff Sergeant **Gary I. Gemas**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas M .Gemmas of 512 Race

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St. Connellsville, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sergeant Gemas is a weapons technician in a unit of the Pacific Air Forces Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he served at Eglin AFB. Fla. The sergeant is a 1966 graduate of Connellsville Joint Senior High School. (Connellsville Daily Courier, Connellsville, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1970)

Airman Smith At Phan Rang AB HOMER CITY — U.S. Air Force Airman 1.C. **George T. Smith**, son of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Smith of Homer City R. D. 1, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base. Airman Smith is a member of be 821st Combat Security Police Squadron and a graduate of Homer-Center High School. (Indiana Evening Gazette, Indiana, Pennsylvania, September 28, 1968)

Staff Sgt. **Paul W. Buckley**, son of Mr. and Mrs. G. Lincoln Buckley, of 707 Fairview Road, Swarthmore, has received the Air Medal for service with the Air Force in Vietnam. Buckley, whose wife, Paula, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul M. Barr, of 206 Anderson Ave., Media, was decorated for .duty as a C-123 Provider cargo-troop carrier aircraft loadmaster. He received the medal at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. (Delaware County Daily Times, Chester, Pennsylvania, October 21, 1971)

Senior M/Sgt. **Louie R. Gray**, is among communications personnel who share honors with the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam, in earning the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm. (Sarasota Herald Tribune, Sarasota, Florida, June 8, 1971.)

U. S. Air Force Staff Sergeant **Donald A. Stoops**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter W. Stoops of Umatilla, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base. Sergeant Stoops is a member of the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron, an elite unit that has been especially trained to repel enemy aggression and provide air base security. The Phan Rang unit will be heeld in constant readiness to supplement the defense forces of any U.S. Air Base in the combat zone which might come under an enemy attack. The sergeant is a graduate of Matilla High School. His wife, Dorothy is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Curtis of Valdosta, Ga. (Eustis Lake Region News, Eustis, Florida, September 26, 1968)

S.Sgt. **Randall W Oefelein**, son of Mrs. Julie Oefelein of Beckemeyer, has been awarded the U.S. Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. (Centralia Evening Sentinel, Centralia, Illinois, September 20, 1966)

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Staff Sgt., **Jeffrey T. Nugent**, U.S. Air Force. Served in the Philippines and at Phan Rang Air Force Base in Vietnam. Also served in the reserves after leaving the Air Force. Born in Geneva Ohio and lived most of his life in Salt Lake City, Utah.

(Ashtabula Star Beacon, Ashtabula, Ohio, November 11, 1013.)

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.