

"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. 184 "...keeping the memories alive"

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The 2019 Phan Rang AB Reunion - Savannah, Georgia

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Phan Rang AB Vietnam



REUNION ATTENDEES

David Albright and Rayanne Glinck, Lou and Annette Ruggiero, Jim Erixson and Betsy Ross, John and Valerie Ostler, Richard and Judy Ward, Joe Taylor, Jim and Betsy Kucipeck, Joe Schwarzer and Chris Eyles, John and Pat Ploof,

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Eugene and Diane Pellon, Charles and Bonnie Simmons, Dean Harrison, John and Jennifer Davis, Darrell and Amanda Crosby, Jim and Debbie Eckardt, Douglas and Joyce Severt, David and Judy Jerry, Kirby and Jennie White, Rick Dixon and Sarah Cormier, Michael and Carla Reed, Edward Downey and Barbara Brandt, David Washburn and Debra Rae, Jim and Pat Sullivan, Tom and Nancy Gates, Bob and Margaret Gorman, Ray and Mary Benson, Joe and Nancy Kaupa, Ken and Victoria Swickard, Elizandro and Lillie De Los Santos, Greg and James Frazier, David and Connie Mcilwain, Tom and Marcia Parsons, David and Peggy Cox, Jim and Judy Hemphill, Vernon and Marty Stephens, Bobby and Judy Flack, Richard Hillenbrand and Susan Yeakey, Kelly and Marilyn Angel, Bruce and Mary Muller, Neil and Patsy Pillar, Andy and Betty McClendon, Tom and Mary Strait, El and Debbie Hoard, Hank and Sue Milnark, Don and Vicki Chatterton, Leo and Jeanne Remillard, Wayne and Gwen Rodgers, Keith and Kim Kukla, Curtis and Mau Hendrix, Marwin and Carolyn Bennett, Tom and Sandy Barden, Carl Weese, Roy and Jann Perry, Dana and Marlene Anthony, Bob and Barb Sutero, Carl and Dianne Stehle, Ralph Gorham, Jess Echavarria, Barry and Jean Labombarde, Michael Short, Ray and Jo Ann Jensen, Ron and Ginger Adkerson, Robert and Barbara Smith, Jack Bachman, Bob Hoffman, Aubrey and Patricia Mitchell, Lou and Sue Matherne, Delbert and Sharon Pink, David and Linda Pace, Bill and Michelle Arvo, Jack and Judy Anderson, Joe Burkhard and Susan Randianne, John and Sheryl Debusky, Tony and Judy Shommer, Mike Floyd and Catherine Evans, Don Gray, Jerry and Alice Boling, Bob Kellington and Lisa Amador, John Hennigar, Greg and Susie Schmidt, Rupert and Patricia Danyow, Bob and Anita Blankenship, Kirk and Kathleen Minert, Robert Connolly, Ron and Ginger Adkerson, Larry and Louise Martino, Ronnie and Darlene McWilliams, Johnny and Maggie Johnson, Greg Leisle, Don and Stella Culpepper, Gary and Joyce Wilson, Lee Miller, Jerry and Bobbie Leinart, Tony and Wanda Lehota, William and Martha Childs, David and Ann Boerman, Gary Nason, Mark and Bonnie Crtenshaw, Frank and Cynthia Square, Leland and Laura Sullivan, Isreal Cortez, Ken and Barbara Long, Rich Hall and Dawn Collins, Tom and Marilyn Mullen, Barbie Harris, Bill and Gail Phillips, John Falada, Foy

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Robinson, David Knighton, Bill and Karen Gentry, John Reeves and Robin Littrell, Bob and Jeanne Holz, David and Patricia Steenland, Marc and Patsy Monroe, Daneil and Carolyn Garcia, David Miller, Roger and Hellen Sopha, Michael and Alice Young, Ken and Bryon Creasy, Ken Miller, David Fontenot, Allan and Janice Foss and Ken and Vicki Swickard.



THE BANQUET

Featuring Edward Downey, Barbara Brandt and John Ploof from the Phan Rang AB Honor Guard, Robert Kellington Master of Ceremonies, James Erixson, Chaplain, Nancy Kaupa, Key Note Speaker and 220 Phan Rang AB veterans, wives, family and friends.

The Phan Rang AB Honor Guard posted the flag.

Barbara Brandt, a member of the Honor Guard reads the following as Edward Downing and John Ploof light the candles.



This candle-lighting is a tribute to the Airmen of Phan Rang who have passed since our last reunion, and to acknowledge the tasks they performed:

To the pilots and flight crews whose missions were the purpose of Phan Rang Air Base.

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To the security personnel and dog handlers who kept the base safe.

To the crew chiefs and maintenance specialists who kept the aircraft flyable.

To the logistics and supply people who got the beans, bullets and band-aids to those who needed them.

To the medical and food service personnel who kept us healthy.

To the civil engineers who built and maintained the base.

To the administration and other general fields who kept the base running.

These seven candles are lit for the men of the Seventh Air Force who have now passed.

Chaplain Jim Erixson takes to the podium and begins to tell a story about when he was walking to work and hearing these songs as he passes the Airman’s Club.

Then he sings the chorus of these songs:

“We gotta get out of this place
If its the last thing we ever do
We gotta get out of this place
Cause girl, there's a better life
For me and you”

By the Animals - *We Gotta Get Outta This Place*

Then he goes right into:

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“There is a house in New Orleans
They call the Rising Sun
And it's been the ruin of many a poor boy
And God I know I'm one”

By the Animals - *The House of the Rising Sun*

Then he sings the chorus of a song we all sang a thousand times:

“I wanna go home I wanna go home oh how I wanna go home
Last night I went to sleep in Detroit City
And I dreamed about those cottonfields and home
I dreamed about my mother dear old papa sister and brother
I dreamed about that girl who's been waiting for so long
I wanna go home I wanna go home oh how I wanna go home”

...and then he starts singing *God Bless America* and everyone joins in.

Then he gives the invocation and Ken Miller who is celebrating Yom Kippur gives a prayer in Jewish.

Jim, during his presentation shared some heartwarming letters that he's received from family members after he sent the surviving family member a card and Phan Rang Challenge coin after the death of a veteran.

Master of Ceremonies, Bob Kellington starts the program with some little known tidbits of Savannah. His unique sense of humor was injected in most of the explanations that made for a very humorous presentation.

- **Here are some of the tidbits that he left with us:**

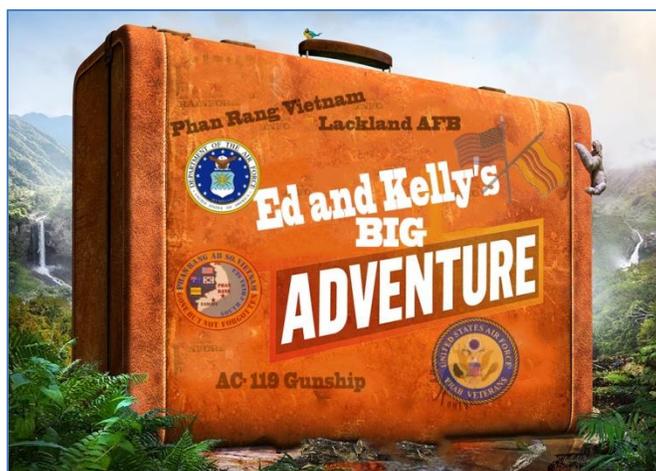
- Savannah was a Christmas gift to President Lincoln in the Civil War
- Savannah's Spanish moss isn't a moss at all

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- Flannery O’Connor taught chickens to walk backwards in Savannah
- Moon River Brewing Company is considered by many to be Savannah’s most haunted site



THE ADVENTURE BASIC TRAINING FLIGHT 1426

By Ed Downey

It all started for me on 9 Sept. 1969 as my mother dropped me off at the Federal Building in St. Louis, Missouri at 8 a.m. We were put into lines of Air Force, Navy, Army and the draftees. A Marine corporal came out and said he needed two marines and Just like that two of the draftees were Marines. We were taken into the ceremony room and were sworn in to service of the United States. After filling out some forms, we just waited around all day until we were taken to the airport at 4:30 p.m. We flew to Houston then got on another flight to San Antonio. By the time we got to Lackland AFB, it was 1 a.m. The next day at 2 a.m., we met our Training Instructor and Team Chief. The screaming and yelling began. They told us how many recruits would be gone in the first week and if any of us gave them trouble, we were going straight to jail.

Then we had our first drill. Put down your luggage. Pick it up!! You're too slow! Put it down! Pick it up! This went on for some time until they put us on a bus and headed for "Hell's Kitchen". Now it's 4:30 a.m and everybody in the chow hall is yelling at us. We hurried through the line and bolted down our food, went to our barracks, hurriedly made our beds and slept for

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one and a half hours.

We were rudely awakened at 6:30 a.m. by our TI banging on a garbage can. We did some exercising and went to our chow hall for breakfast. Nobody could eat a thing! From then on it was PT, drill, classes and shots. Rumors around the base told of a TI who disciplined a recruit by putting him in a GI can and banging on it with a club. He probably got in trouble for that!

Going to the firing range to qualify with a M-16 was fun and there was always someone who unknowingly had their weapon on full auto and fired their 20 rounds in a burst. The obstacle course was both fun and strenuously challenging. My favorite memory was the Tartan rope swing over a pool of muddy water. The trick was when they threw the rope to you, you had to leap, over the pool to catch the rope. Several recruits got wet that day.

The day of our graduation, we marched to the parade grounds., and on our way, the TI gave us "Flight Halt". One guy in the middle of the formation didn't hear the command and kept on going, knocking down everyone in front of him, like dominoes. We all got a laugh out of that.

GODZILLA UNLEASHED



By Kelly Angel

(Kelly Angel, a Phan-Ranger, with the AC-119 gunships, submitted the following stories of his basic training experience.)

There was A guy in our flight who acquired the nickname Godzilla. He was a big guy, about 6-4, around 240 pounds and mostly muscle. Not a very handsome guy, but seemed nice enough and didn't mind the nickname. However, he was constantly picked on by the TIs. They seemed to go

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out of their way to push and provoke him.

Then after a few weeks of this, we were in the chow hall and it all came to an explosive conclusion. There was one TI in particular that was always giving somebody a butt chewing. He was a short, extremely arrogant guy who always strutted around with his head up in a cocky attitude trying to make himself look taller. On this day, he lit in an Godzilla and was raking him over the coals about something. I guess Godzilla had finally reached his breaking point and he snapped. He cut loose with a haymaker that caught the TI under the chin and launched him across the chow hall right into a table full of airmen eating their meal.

The TI was out cold, but within seconds three or four TIs had converged on Godzilla and had him on the floor and promptly dragged him out of the building.

That was the last we ever saw or heard of Godzilla. But at the time, he was sort of a hero to many of us.

LUCKY



One of the guys in my flight during basic training had a last name of Luckey, so we all called him Lucky. We were staying in a two story wooden frame barracks with two rows of bunk beds on each floor. Lucky had the top bunk in the bed next to mine. As was his habit, he would be in the latrine every evening until time for lights out, and then come running up the stairs and down the aisle to his bunk. He was very athletic and would launch himself like an Olympic high jumper and land on his back on his top bunk.

One evening some of the guys decided to play a little trick on him by removing his mattress and springs and then securing the sheet over the frame to make it look like his normal bed. As usual, he came flying down the aisle and launched himself up and on to his bunk. As he fell through to the bunk below, he let out a blood curdling scream. Then, when he hit the bottom bunk it collapsed and fell to the floor with a mighty crash. All this noise and commotion brought our TI out to investigate.

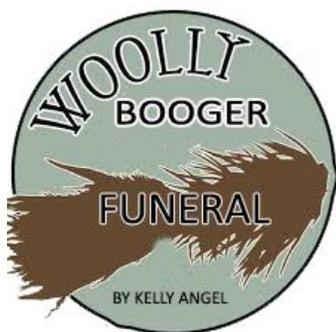
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Since no one would confess, we were all subjected to about 20 minutes of severe verbal abuse and the whole flight was made to do double PT for three days.

WOOLLY BOOGER FUNERAL



During the many inspections that we were subjected to during basic training, one of the things that we were expected to remove from our clothing and uniforms were those little balls of lint that would accumulate mainly in the packets. Our TI referred to these little critters as woolly boogers.

After finding several of these during one of our inspections, our disgruntled TI informed us that our leisure time Sunday afternoon had been canceled and instead we would be attending a woolly booger funeral.

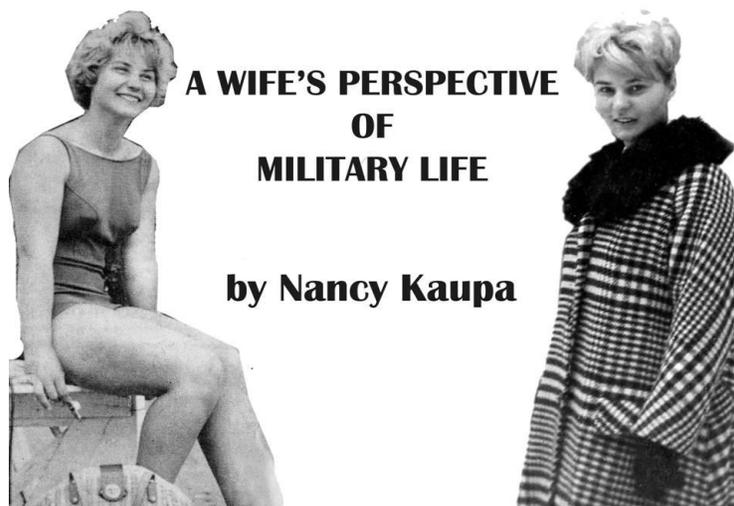
To begin this ordeal, six guys from our barracks were chosen to be pallbearers and dress in their 1505 uniforms. The woolly boogers were placed in a match box and the six pallbearers in two columns of three, each with a finger helping to hold the match box between them, slowly proceeded down the center aisle of the barracks. The rest of us were standing at attention along the aisle and saluted as the match box went by. Any person caught smiling or laughing during this ceremony would be disciplined with 50 push-ups.

As the funeral procession exited the barracks, the rest of us fell in behind it and followed it to a burial site behind the barracks. After the match box was laid to rest in an open grave, we had to stand at attention in mid-ninety-degree heat while our TI made a tongue drawn out eulogy describing the merits of woolly boogers.

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(The following is the presentation that Nancy Kaupa gave at the reunion.)

What a wonderful reunion this has been! We've all had time to share with our old friends and meet new ones. That is what this reunion is all about...the Veterans and of course their families.

We've always heard what it was like going to war from the guys perspective and last year I decided to write down about what it was like from the wife's perspective, so I'm proud to stand up here and represent the wives and the families that were left behind. My story probably isn't the same as yours, but I feel after being a member of this group and associated with veterans and their wives for many years that you will find that we share many similarities.

So with that said, I will start from the beginning because WAR didn't come until later.

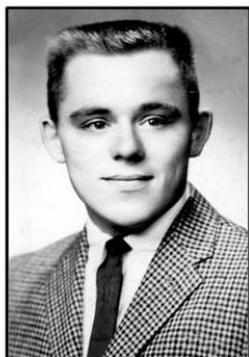
Joe and I met on the Mississippi River the summer of our freshman year in high school, 1959. Joe and his buddy were in Joe's dad's fishing boat and I and a girl friend were in my dad's fishing boat. I thought Joe's friend was kind of cute and my friend Mary thought Joe was cute. After a couple days Joe called and invited me out on a date. We went for an A&W Root Beer Float and then we sat and talked. By the end of the night we were talking about where we wanted to go on our honeymoon. We both wanted to go to Hawaii.

I was a life guard on the Wabasha Beach on the Mississippi River for three years.

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• Joe from Plainview High School

• I from St. Felix High School in Wabasha, Minnesota.



We both graduated in 1963, Joe from Plainview High School in Plainview, Minnesota and I from St. Felix High School in Wabasha, Minnesota. We lived 20 miles from each other.



Joe enlisted in the Air Force right after graduation. After Basic Training he had 2 weeks leave before being stationed at Fairchild AFB in Spokane, Washington. I attended St. Teresa's College (an all-girls school) for a year, which was my mother's choice...not mine.

Joe came home on leave in June of 1964 with an Engagement ring, which I gladly accepted. That fall, by my choice, I attended a School of Cosmetology in Minneapolis, MN.

Joe told me he was being stationed at Bossier Base in Shreveport, LA effective January 1965.

We set our wedding for July 10, 1965. However, on July 9th there was a storm in Wabasha, Minnesota, lightning struck the St. Felix Church steeple causing a fire in the church where we were going to be married the next day. I often wondered if someone was trying to tell me something!

My mother gathered up her lady friends and they had the church cleaned in a short amount of time. The Insurance Company was very upset that the damages had been disturbed, but the wedding went on as planned.

After the wedding dinner, Joe and I drove to La Crosse, Wisconsin for our short one night honeymoon. Yes Bruce, Wisconsin. Wisconsin is a long way from Hawaii where we dreamed to

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go in 1959, but we were in love and we always loved that land across the river.

The next day, Sunday, we drove back to my mother’s house because I had a horrible tooth ache, which the dentist took care of on Monday.

To prepare for the trip to Louisiana we packed every corner of Joe’s 1953 Chrysler with my clothes, shoes, wedding gifts and anything else I thought we might need. Joe said we couldn’t get another pair of shoes in the car. On Tuesday Joe’s father, mother and Kim, Joe’s younger brother came to my mother’s house for lunch and to wish us a safe journey to Louisiana.



Packing the car for the big move to Louisiana.

Yes, my mother had packed us a bag lunch, which we ate and enjoyed. I had to ride with a suitcase in front of my legs because the heater in that dear old Chrysler would not turn off and it stayed on until we sold it.

We made it as far as Ames, Iowa when one of the recaps came off. Since we didn’t have cell phones back then, we had to wait for someone to come by, stop and give Joe a ride to the closest service station. He did come back! Since the spare tire was in the bottom of the trunk with everything packed on top of it we decided it would be best to buy a new tire. Tire replaced and we were back on the road.

We headed south through Missouri and into the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas, where a dog jumped out of the ditch, right in the front of our car. We stopped and the dog was not moving so we decided it would be best if we kept driving since we were in Hillbilly Country.

When we finally got to Shreveport, Louisiana it was dark, hot and humid!

Joe had rented one of Sargent Ganey’s apartments off what was called the Bossier Strip at the time.. Sgt. Ganey was a member of Joe’s organization. Joe opened the door and Cockroaches ran everywhere. I wanted to get on the first train headed north but I insisted we get a motel

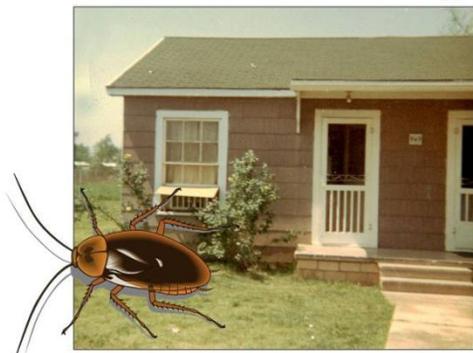
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Roach Motel

(Our first apartment)



**Joe and Nancy’s Roach infested
Apartment**

room. I still thought the train was a good choice but I didn’t know where the train depot was or the bus station. The next day we moved into our apartment. It wasn’t so bad in the daylight. A few days later, I thought it would be nice to wash the windows and that is when I discovered the glass came right out of the window frames, but It did make it a lot easier to wash them! Because Joe was an Airman Second Class we didn’t have much money and after paying the bills we had \$5.00 for the rest of the month. We lived off Chicken Pot Pies and Hamburger Helper. But we were in love.

There was a Beauty Shop ½ a block from our apartment. I applied for a job, was hired, but before I could work I had to pass the Louisiana State Boards in New Orleans, Louisiana. So we got to see some of New Orleans. I started work the day after we got back to our home sweet (Roach Infested) home.

A month or so later, Joe was working nights at the base. I was in bed when I heard someone outside my bedroom window and then tried to get into our apartment. When he couldn’t get in he went across the street to another apartment. I called Joe and he called the city police. They checked the area and found no one. The next day the girl with two kids who lived across the street came home, she had stayed with a friend that night. She found a man sleeping in her bed. She called the police. Turned out, at one time he had friends who rented that apartment and he didn’t know his friends moved. The cops said they would keep an eye on our street.

To get from the bathroom to the bedroom you had to go through the living room, and kitchen. One day I was taking a bath when a “huge” Cockroach came out of the overflow. I jumped out of the tub, ran through the living room and kitchen all the way to the bedroom. I didn’t care that I got everything wet. Joe was laughing so hard.

A couple months later we decided to get a dog. Joe came home with a Cocker Spaniel from the dog pound, which he named “Rusty”. To our surprise Rusty had puppies in our bedroom closets so we then changed her name to “Sandy”.

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One night Joe was driving to the base for work and a drunk driver totaled Joe’s lovely car so we replaced his lovely Chrysler with a Corvair 2 door Coupe.

I became pregnant with our first child, Scott Joseph Kaupa born on May 26, 1966. Joe insisted I stop working and take care of Scott. Sandy, the dog was very protective of Scott and she would not let anyone near his bassinet. When Scott was born, Joe’s mother wanted to be called Granny and so my mother was Grandma.

Joe was promoted to Buck Sgt. so we were able to be on the list for base housing and soon Joe received notice that there was a house open in base housing. It was like heaven: 2 bedroom duplex with washer and dryer. No more laundromats and plenty of space for Scott and Sandy to run and play. It was fully furnished and one of the NICEST things it was AIR CONDITIONED!

Scott’s first trip to Minnesota he rode in a cardboard box behind Joe because they didn’t have car carriers for kids at that time. Joe was driving and it was time for a diaper change, but before I could get the clean diaper on, Scott peed right on Joe’s head. I was laughing so hard I couldn’t do anything and just let him keep peeing. Needless to say, Joe was not laughing.

We had a wonderful time in Minnesota with family and friends.

Scott was about 1 ½ when we discovered I was pregnant with our second child Debra Ann Kaupa. Joe’s mother was so excited because she had 3 boys, David , Joe and Kim. We drove home to Minnesota that summer.

Debra Ann Kaupa arrived on November 24, 1967 and Joe’s Mom and Dad were so excited to have a little girl that they went out and bought her three dresses and mailed them to us. It was a year before she fit into them.

December of 1967 we drove home to Wabasha, Minnesota for Christmas which we were very excited about. Our parents were excited to see how Scott had grown and to meet Debra for the first time. Joe’s mother took Debra and me shopping. She wanted to buy Debra some dresses, but Debra was very stubborn and didn’t want any of the dresses Granny picked out. We went home without a dress, much to Granny’s dismay. We had a wonderful time with both

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of our families. It was time for us to drive back to Louisiana. Because the weatherman was calling for heavy snow. We left earlier than planned in hopes that we could get south of the storm. We got 50 miles from Wabasha, Minnesota and drove into a huge snow storm. The roads in southern Minnesota and all of Iowa were being closed so we turned around and went back to Wabasha. Joe called the base and got an extension on his leave time. Three days later the roads were open. We had never seen such huge piles of snow like there was along the highways in Iowa. The drifts had to be cut through with big blowers as they were about 50 feet high. It was like driving with snow barriers on both sides of the highway. We did make it back to Bossier Base in time for Joe to go to work as scheduled.

VIETNAM CALLING



Joe received orders that he would be leaving for Vietnam on May 26, 1968, which was also Scott's 2nd Birthday and Debra was 6 months old. **We were stunned, although we both knew it was going to happen sooner or later.**

Joe put in for 30 day leave and we found a good home for the dog and we drove back to Minnesota with all our belongings.

It was a blessing that my mother offered to take us in for a year. My maternal grandfather also lived in her house. In fact, Gramps (as everyone called him) lived with us my whole life. Mom was still teaching high school math at St Felix at the time, so I did most of the cooking and cleaning during the school year, but Mom made homemade bread every Saturday. When I was a kid in school, everyone brought their bag lunch because we didn't have hot lunches back then. I had no trouble swapping my homemade bread for store bought bread.

We celebrated Scott's 2nd birthday a day early, before Joe left for Vietnam. That was one of

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the worst days of my life.

While Joe was in Vietnam he was able to call me 2 or 3 times thanks to the Mars station and the men manning it. He would talk, then he would say “Over” and then I could talk, say “Over” and he would talk again. It was so nice to hear his voice and I knew that he was “OK”, even though we knew there was someone listening to what we were saying. We were so glad to be able to talk to each other. I found out later that one of the men on the radio was the husband to one of my high school friends.

While Joe was in Vietnam I did not watch the evening news because they would show pictures of dead Vietnamese and also of our military. It was so gruesome that I didn’t want to see it or have Scott and Debra to see it. I tried to keep my mind positive and prayed every night for his safe return. During the summer Joe’s older brother would stop at my mother’s house on some Saturdays and invite me to go out on the Mississippi River to swim, water ski and meet with his friends on one of the islands. I always enjoyed it, because I grew up on the river and I was a life guard on the beach for 3 years. Oh yes, Dave always stopped at my mother’s because he knew she would give him a loaf of her warm, homemade bread.

Later that year I learned that a girl younger than me who I didn’t know, lost her husband in Vietnam. My mother’s house was half a block from the mortuary where her husband was lying in wake. As much as I dreaded going, I knew I should sit with her. If I were in her place, I would appreciate someone who could understand what I was going through. I thanked God and said many prayers for her and her family. We didn’t talk much but that was OK. I haven’t seen her since that time, but a mutual friend has told me several times how much it meant to her that I was there.

During the winter some of my school friends tried to teach me to play “Bridge” but that was a lost cause. In the spring they got me on the golf course once. I was doing so bad that I purposely dropped my score card. Mary Healy found it and said “Nancy, you dropped your score card.” I think I had swung that darn club 100 times by then. They say you can’t be a good golfer and a good fisher person. I chose fishing.

The two kids and I would visit with Joe’s parents and his two brothers on week-ends because they owned a locker plant in Plainview, MN. and worked Monday through Friday. They owned

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a house on Sand Prairie which was about 5 miles from my mother’s house and right on the Mississippi River. They enjoyed seeing Scott and Debra but Joe’s mother was so worried that they would get too close to the Mississippi River bank, fall into the water and drown. The kids enjoyed seeing their two Uncles Dave and Kim and they would wrestle with them on the floor and laugh.

I would send care packages to Joe, which included Jiffy Pop Corn, cookies and candy. Joe’s family would send 15 sticks of Summer Sausage which they made at the Plainview Locker Plant. But by the time Joe received it the outside packaging was all moldy but Joe would wash it off, dry it and share it with his buddies.

R & R IN HAWAII

In December Joe was approved to go on R & R and he chose Hawaii, so he and I could spend some time together. Thanks to my sister Carol who came with her daughter Mary Ann (who was Debra’s age) to babysit. (Yes Bruce they are Packer Backers). We were going to get our Honeymoon in Hawaii. I arrived in Hawaii a day before Joe so I was able to meet him at Fort Derusey. We both were so excited we walked and talked all the way to our motel. I was so excited to see him that I forgot to tell him we had twin beds in our room but we moved the two beds together. We both ended up on the floor, but we didn’t care! What bothered me more was the smell because all of his belongings smelled like Vietnam because of the rice starch used in all of his clothes.

The next day the hotel tied the beds together. One day we rented a car and toured the Island, which was as beautiful as we expected. We walked the beach, swam, walked the Shopping Center, went to the top of the revolving restaurant (but we couldn’t afford to eat there) and saw the Don Ho show, which was great.

The most memorable time was when we got on a tour boat to see the Pearl Harbor Memorial. At the same time we were going into the harbor they played a reenactment of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and at that very same time some Japanese fighters flew very low over the tour boat with guns sounding. We later learned they were filming the movie, “Tora, Tora, Tora”. Talk about getting your heart pounding! Time flew by so fast, and it was so extremely hard to leave each other again.

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The next 5 months were extremely long for both of us.

Let me say during the entire year Joe was in Viet Nam he was on my mind, in my heart and my prayers. I thanked God every day for Scott and Debra for keeping me busy, my mother for allowing me and the two kids to invade her house and my Gramps for helping me entertain the kids during the day.

HOMECOMING

Joe arrived back in Minnesota on May 26, 1969, Scott’s 3rd birthday. Neither Scott nor Debra remembered their dad, even though they saw pictures of him. I had to tell them that this is your father because they had no memory of him. This was very hard on Joe because he just wanted to hold them and it brought tears to my eyes. It just took them a few days to accept him.

Joe had orders for Whitman Air Force Base, a missile base, just outside of Knob Noster, Missouri. We had base housing with 3 bed rooms and a full basement, which was nice for the kids because they could ride their trikes etc. down there when it rained or snowed. Being a missile base, Joe would be gone for 5 days and home 3 days.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

A period of time after Joe’s return from Vietnam, we both had a very stressful time for about a month. The year he was gone, I controlled everything, paying bills, what the kids and I would do etc. I had a very hard time sharing that control, but we were able to work through it.

One day when Joe was home on break, a friend picked him up to go fishing. On their way home they were in a car accident and Joe broke his shoulder bone. They couldn’t do the surgery at Whitman so they flew him up to the Air Base in North Dakota for surgery. A week or so later he came home in a cast from his neck to his waist. It was very hot and humid which added to his misery and we were thankful that we had air conditioning. One day we were sitting outside with the kids and a lady from up the street came with a cake. To be specific, it was a BOOB CAKE. The cake was in the shape of a woman’s body from the neck down to the

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waist and the BOOB’s were made of pudding. We laughed so hard, this put Joe in even more pain. We are still very good friends with Bob and Della.

Our third child Amy was born at Whitman Air Force Base on May 17, 1971.

When it was time for Joe to reenlist, they offered him Technical Sergeant Stripes. We decided not to reenlist because we were sure he would be sent back to Viet-Nam and we were not willing to go through that again.

BACK TO PLAINVIEW

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Joe, both I and our four children are extremely proud of you and your service to our country and as a Police Officer, father and husband.

Thank you for listening to my trials and tribulations, but I wouldn't change a thing.

God bless everyone here today and God bless America!

THE CRUISE



We had a wonderful time and an excellent buffet meal on the River Queen. The boat was all decked out for a dinner and it was flying Air Force Flags. The boat consisted of two dining decks and an upper observation deck. On the first deck there was a live band playing Vietnam era songs and on the upper observation there was a DJ playing tunes. The meal for both decks consisted of a beef carving station, fresh catch of the day, Savannah style shrimp and grits, baked chicken with artichoke cream sauce, fresh seasonal fruit, garden salad with dressing and

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toppings, roasted fingerling potatoes, fresh seasonal vegetables, squash casserole (my favorite), iced tea, lemonade, soft drinks and coffee.



This picture was taken about in the middle of the second deck looking towards the aft which consisted of the buffet and table around the rounded aft end of the boat. The next picture is facing in the opposite direction showing the dining and bar area.



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Just a small sampling of some of the Phan Rang Cruisers.

General Meeting Minutes

Oct. 12, 2019

The 8th annual business meeting of the Phan Rang/Happy Valley group was called to order at 1 p.m. of October 12, 2019 in Savannah, GA.

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

The minutes of the last general meeting from our Nashville, TN were approved by acclamation.

The Financial Report was given by Jack Anderson:

Beginning Balance January 1, 2019, \$2900.00

Revenue (raffles, silent auction and 50/50 raffle) \$4000.00+

Refreshments for reunion \$860.00

Current balance as of October 12, 2019, \$5550.00

The Treasurer's Report was accepted by acclamation.

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

New business: The location of next reunion is Albuquerque, NM October 15, 16, 17, 2020. The reason for the change in dates from the traditional Columbus Day weekend, better rates. We also discussed the reason why we didn't pursue going to Colorado Springs, CO rates were too expensive. At this point we discussed our criteria for choosing a particular reunion location:

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Rates

Suitable accommodations

Parking \$ (if any)

Ease of transportation

Banquet facilities

Recreation opportunities

Shopping

More information on the Albuquerque site will be forthcoming as negotiations proceed.

Bruce Muller raised the issue of our memorabilia vendor Apparel Design. The prevalent feeling of the membership was that the company was not fulfilling our orders in a timely fashion. It is not uncommon to place an order and paying and not receive that order for 3 or 4 months. It was agreed that we would look for a new vendor or release our reunion logo as a JPEG and let each member have their our shirts made.

Meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m. Motion by Joe Kaupa, 2nd by Lou Ruggiero, all in favor.

Jim Kucipeck wrote on Facebook: “Savannah Post After Action Report. Well it is all over for this year, the reunion that is. We as the members of the board hope that you all had a good time and we suspect that you did from all the smiles and good cheer that we observed. For some of you it was your first time and we are sure that it won't be your last. Good Lord it was so great to see so many "newbies" as our MC Bob Kellington put it. I heard that some of you found friends that you had seen or heard from since leaving Vietnam, wonderful! Take care, be safe and we will see you next year in Albuquerque!”

Rupert Danyow wrote on Facebook: “It was a wonderful reunion! My wife Pat and I had a great time met new and old friends!! Many great memories! Thank you for all your hard work and putting together this wonderful reunion!!”

Jim Erixson wrote on Facebook: “It was good meeting some new people like Susan and Richard and also first timers Tony and Judy Shommer. Tony slept on the top bunk and I was on the bottom bunk 50 plus years ago. So good spending time with him and his wonderful wife. Looking forward to seeing you all again next year in Albuquerque and, maybe in Australia in April.”

Dana Anthony wrote on Facebook: “Samantha was in her element from all the attention

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she received. Her new best friend is Bob Hoffman. Thanks to everyone who shared their kindness and accepted my pup. This reunion will be one for the books and difficult to top. Our leadership committee, however, never ceases to amaze. Thank you for all you do for our group. We'll look forward to seeing everyone in Albuquerque.”

Nancy Kaupa wrote on Facebook: “You are so right Dana, our group is a very special group and Joe and I look forward to seeing you all next year.”

Doug Severt comments: I think the board members all agree with me that it's really **YOU** that make the reunions special. We do work hard planning and organizing to make sure that everything runs as smoothly as possible, but when we see old bunk mates reuniting after 50 years, others affectionately greeting each other after a year's absence and the fellowship that is displayed daily makes it all worth it. For three or more days we set politics and the cares of the world aside and just enjoy each other's company!

Albuquerque in 2020 15-17 October



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Phan Rang Staff Members

Like any great community, it's the dedicated volunteers that make our community GREAT!

PHAN RANG STAFF MEMBERS

Douglas Severt: President

Lou Ruggerio: Vice-President

James Kucipeck: Secretary

Jack Anderson: Treasure

Ed Downey, Barbara Brandt & John Ploof: Drill & Ceremonies

Christopher Boles: Photographer

Kirk Minert: Aircraft Historian

Bob Tucker: Keeper of the Rolls

Joe Kaupa: In Memoriam Board

Bruce Muller: Badge Board

Jim Erixson, Charles Simmons & Tony Schommer: Chaplains

Bob Howe: Australian Ambassador

Kristina Ho: Vietnamese Ambassador

Doug Severt: Facebook Administrator

Kirk Minert: Facebook Administrator

Bob Tucker: Facebook Moderator

Joe Schwarzer: Facebook Moderator

Kristina Ho: Facebook Moderator

Skip Ruedeman: Place Reunion info in VFW Mag.

Lou Ruggerio: Place reunion info in AFA Mag. & VVofA Newspaper

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:mailto:dougsevert@cox.net> and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.