

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 195

5 RAR’s Path to War ‘The Advance Party’ - Second Tour by Roger Lambert

Facebook Gems

Three Terrible Days in March

- Capt. Peter Gibney Moriarty KIA
- Capt. Eugene P. McKinney KIA
- Capt. Richard Whan Hopper KIA
- Donald L. McHugo KIA

Update on Maj. James Anthony

Aussie 2021 Anzac Day Reunion

Phan Rang AB 2020 Annual Reunion

57TH Alumni Association Reunion Info

Doug’s Comments



5 RAR’s Path to War “The Advance Party”

Our Journey begins at the
Mascot (Kingsford Smith Airport)¹

¹ Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport (colloquially Mascot Airport, Kingsford Smith Airport, or Sydney Airport; IATA: SYD, ICAO: YSSY; ASX: SYD) is an international airport in Sydney, Australia located 8 km (5 mi) south of

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January 1969. Friends and family are there to see off the Advance Party of the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). The overseas departure area was a far cry from that which one sees today at Kingsford Smith (the new international terminal was not opened until mid 1970). At the allotted time, final farewells are made and we board the Qantas Boeing 707 V-Jet. First destination - Darwin.



QANTA'S Boeing 707 V-jet²

Darwin

Arrival in Darwin. Time for a couple of Crown Lagers³ in the old terminal building before reboarding the B707 for the next leg of our journey. Its evening but it's hot.

the Sydney city centre, in the suburb of Mascot.

² V-Jet is a marketing name which was introduced by Qantas soon after the introduction of the Boeing 707-138B with turbofan engines.

The "V" stands for the Latin word "vannus" which translates literally as "winnowing basket" or more loosely, "a device for blowing the grain" or "a fan". Hence V-Jet denotes Fan Jet.

The first Qantas 707 to be built with turbofan engines was VH-EBH which was delivered to Sydney on 6 August 1961 wearing a modified version of the original 707 livery. Aircraft VH-EBI, VH-EBJ and VH-EBK were also delivered in this interim livery.

³ Crown Lager is a 4.9% premium Australian beer originally made by Carlton & United Breweries (CUB), a subsidiary of Foster's Group. The beer was first brewed in 1919 under its former name, "Foster's Crown Lager".

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Singapore

The Qantas 707 touched down at Singapore's Changi Airport for breakfast en route to Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport. It's now hotter than Hell.

All the soldiers were dressed in their summer dress military uniforms but upon arrival in Singapore they all had to change into a civilian shirt before traipsing across the tarmac to the terminal for brekkie⁴. All these young blokes and some not so young blokes, all wearing the same khaki polyester trousers and black shoes but importantly, all wearing different civilian shirts. That'll fool the casual observer into believing that a bunch of Aussie tourists had just landed rather than a bunch of highly trained, chomping at the bit, diggers. Why the civilian shirts? Singapore was an essential refueling stop but the Republic of Singapore, officially, withheld permission for troops in transit to land.



Troops in ‘civies’ returning to the QANTAS Boeing 707 V-jet following brekkie at Changi Airport

Here the memory is a bit dim as while I'm confident that Qantas flew the Sydney-Darwin-Singapore leg of the journey, I'm reasonably sure that we then flew with Qantas into Tan Son Nhut. There was a time where Qantas only flew the Sydney-Darwin-Singapore leg and Pan Am

⁴ Brekkie is Australian slang term for breakfast.

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flew the Singapore-Tan Son Nhut leg of the journey.

Tan Son Nhut

Touch down Tan Son Nhut. This time we all keep our khaki shirts on and look like soldiers. Oh, that's right, we are in Vietnam at long last. It's very hot, humid - and smelly.

What sort of place is this? There's civil and military aircraft coming and going, GIs all over the place and Vietnamese all over the place as well. Hang on, isn't this supposed to be a war zone? And I don't even have a weapon...

With the usual administration tasks out of the way with Air Movements, we're marshaled towards a weird looking aircraft in camouflage, two greens and brown and US markings. It's not a Hercules as it's only got two of what appear to be radial engines and a jet pod under each wing. This '**baby Hercules**' is actually a Fairchild C-123 Provider.

Fairchild C123 Provider. Tramp up the ramp and - wait a minute - where's the seats? There aren't any! Our trusty green carryall bags were placed in rows across the floor, we were told to sit down on them facing aft and tie-down straps placed over the thighs from one side of the row to the other. **Welcome to Vietnam!** And people complain about cattle-class these days.



Fairchild C-123 Provider (Baby Hercules), Tan Son Nhut, Saigon

It's funny how some things remain vividly etched in the memory after so many years. The prop on one engine began to turn slowly before the engine fired up and then the second engine.

Noisy beast. Taxing out, the thing rattled and shook, and the brakes squealed alarmingly (at

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least I assumed it was the brakes) as we trundled out to the active runway. The whine of the under-wing jet engines turned into a deafening roar, and though this didn't actually seem to give us enough forward momentum, the 'baby Hercules' was airborne in what seemed to be a relatively short take-off.

A few minutes later, the high-pitched whine of the jets ceased and the aircraft settled into what's best described as a wallowing cruise under the power of the two piston engines. The thing rattled shook and creaked to the extent that I thought it would start popping rivets! The noise in that stripped out cargo hold bore no resemblance to anything I'd experienced before. This thing flew far worse than a Caribou and that was bad enough travelling sideways up to Gaspers from Bankstown on exercise with birds (feathered variety) overtaking us in the air (well, not quite).

Luscombe Field, Nui Dat

Approaching our destination, Nui Dat, the pilot pulled back the throttles and the aircraft adopted a nose down attitude. This guy was doing a combat approach to the runway as the angle of descent rapidly increased.

The thing began to rattle and shake more so than ever, dust and dirt began to fly up off the cargo bay floor as the entire airframe seemed to resonate in synchronization with the revolutions of the engines. You could hear the rush of the slipstream above the noise of the engines as the flaps and undercarriage were lowered (at least I hoped that's what it was).

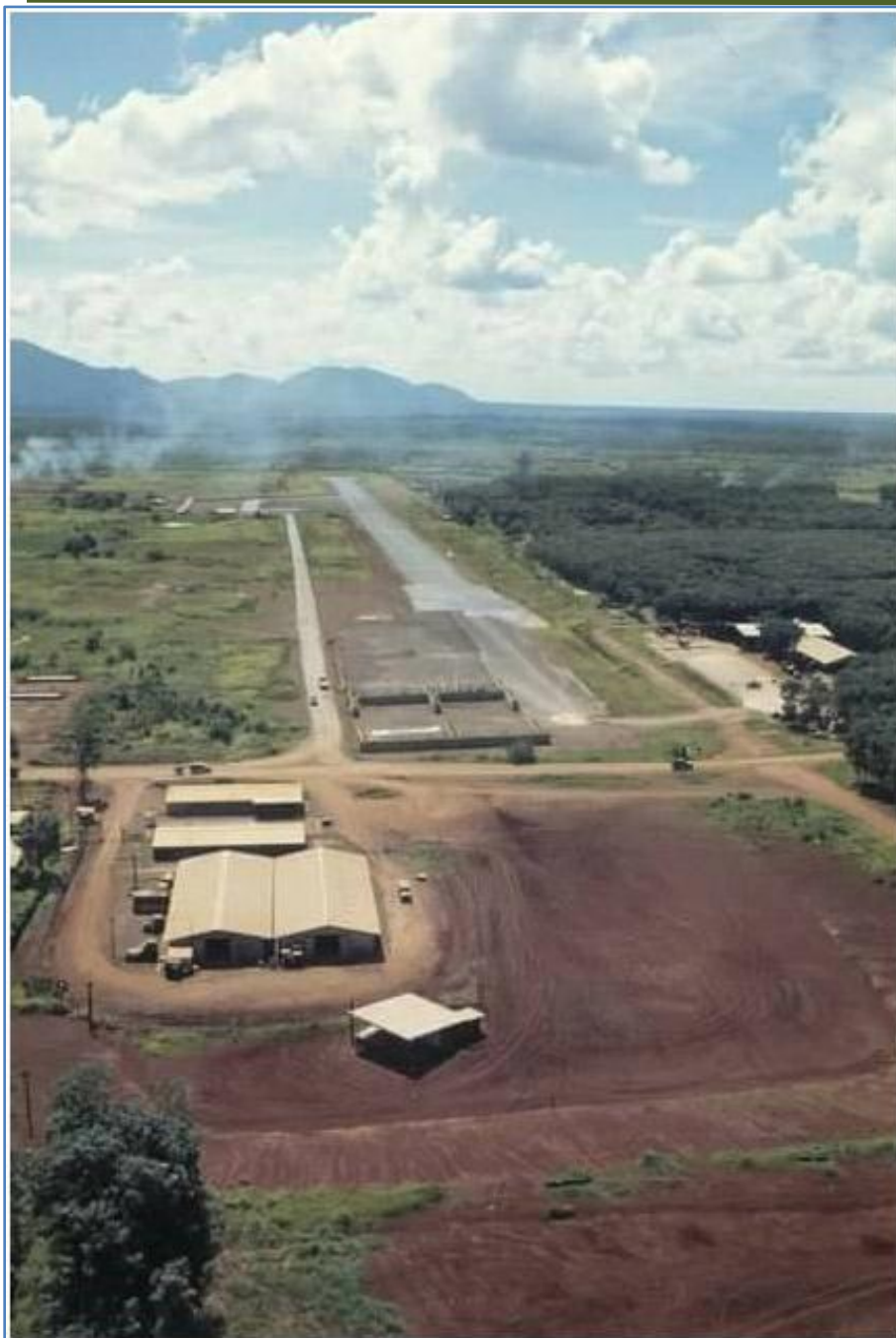
Luscombe Field. Our makeshift seating made it difficult to stop sliding towards the nose of the aircraft as we began our descent into Luscombe Field. As the descent became steeper, the tie-down strap was the only thing preventing all of the human cargo from joining the aircrew in the cockpit!

The arrival at Luscombe Field was just that - an arrival. This 'baby Hercules' slammed onto the deck. I can only assume that the pilot had done this many times before but to my mind, he had just managed to flare the aircraft before we met terra firma. Moments before I was thinking that we're all going to become casualties before we've even seen combat!

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Luscombe Field, Nui Dat

We disembark at the end of the runway and are greeted by members of 1 RAR whom we were taking over from in country. It's very hot, dirty, dusty and smelly. Welcome to Phuoc Tuy Province.

Nui Dat

Welcome to your new home for the next 12-13 months. It's stifling hot, dusty and smells like rotting vegetation. Tents, canvass, troops for the use of with sandbag walls - home sweet home.

9 Platoon Lines. I'm

fortunate enough to be hutchie up with one LT J.J. Smith. MC (later CAPT J.J. Smith, MC and Bar). I was able to annoy the crap out of him by asking as many questions as I possibly could to draw on his experience and insights into operating in country. In fact, that was the pattern over the next couple of weeks - glean as much information as possible from our 1 RAR counterparts before the main body of 5 RAR arrived in Vung Tau and then Nui Dat.

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As part of the learning curve, I accompanied my 1 RAR counterparts on a night ambush. We trudged down to the ‘Pearly Gates’ and out along the road towards Hoa Long. At one stop before the ambush position, I was roused from a nap with a gentle nudge. "How laid back is this dude?" I hoped they thought. "Heading out on a night ambush and he can catch a spot of shut-eye". The truth of the matter was I was knackered; the enervating climate had already got to me.

The night ambush passed without incident although I was introduced the cumbersome Starlight Scope. I wasn't impressed but that's another story.

Article by Lieutenant Colonel (retired) R.A. Lambert; Platoon Commander, 9 Platoon, C Company, 5th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment 1969-70

Reading Roger Lamberts description of his first encounter with the ‘*Baby Hercules*’ was hard for many of us to read because we were laughing so hard. I don’t think I’ve ever heard a better description of a ride in the Provider an airplane that I’ve dubbed ‘*The little airplane that could*’. The following are some comments from guys that just read the first impression and flight, but not the landing portion of Rogers story.

Jim Erixson: The description sure brings back some memories when I flew in the C-123. All the sounds were there but we had seats to sit on. I remembered the front right window was missing which gave us plenty of cool air after we took off.

Dave Hubert: Now, now guys. Be nice. I flew those from 70-71 and had to deal with the noise the rattles and the shakes every day, and she always brought me home.

David Knighton: When we came from Cam Rahn Bay to Phan Rang we came down on a C-123 in June '69. I can't remember if we sat in troop seats along the side or on the floor or a combination of both. I do remember that we got hit by three rounds from ground fire though. We could hear them hitting the plane, even above the noise. Michael Mulcahey was on that plane with me.

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Ernest Peters: When I flew in a C-123, they always told us to sit on our flak jackets rather than wear them for that reason.

Floyd Shatto: I flew in one from Phan Rang to Saigon, going on R&R to Hong Kong in 1966 and also in one returning during a heavy rain storm. Water was coming in through cracks. One scary ride. The almost vertical take offs and landings were fun too.

Hank Milnark: You should of been in C-123 back in January 1966 landing on that steel matting! I flew in a lot of C-123 and they always got us back to Phan Rang! Also flew in Caribou and C-130's.

Bob Kossow: I had a similar ride on an Air America plane that was relocating a family with all belongings including the animals. Plane was overloaded so they flew thru a valley, took ground fire.

Dean Delongchamp: Was assigned to C-123K's '69-'70 (310th SOS). I had an interesting flight that is probably pretty unique. Near the end of a day spent hauling everything you can think of around Vietnam, we got a call telling us to pick up a couple pallets full of Hmong mercenary soldiers, about 60 in number and deliver them to some remote outpost. As soon as we lifted off, the whole group toked up. We had so much ambient marijuana inside that plane it was ridiculous. It gave new meaning to the phrase “flying high”! We flew them around until they finished their smoke break and then delivered them to the outpost. Figured letting them finish was the least we could do as half of them would probably be dead by the end of the month.

Aubrey Mitchell: In May of 71, I remember when I first flew into Phan Rang, it was on a C-123 in jump seats landing sideways looking at the runway with one engine.

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FACEBOOK GEMS



Ernest Peters: Anyone else have a part time job at Phan Rang? Being an Aircraft Radio Repairman meant I was trained in electronics. So I was offered a part time job working in the Hobby Center. Remember all the reel to reel tape recorders that were used to copy music? My job (I was one of several techs) was to fix and maintain those recorders. I made \$1.00 an hour and was limited to 10 hours a week. We were also allowed to repair the personal equipment of other personnel on base and just charged for the parts needed to repair them. The job only lasted a couple of months as I was one of the ones sent back to the world in Oct 69 because of the changes to the base.

Doyce Bailey: I worked part time for American Express for a while. Don't remember what I did or how much it paid but it kept me out of the Lapidary shop. Like lots of others, I spent a LOT of time making tapes. I still have them. I just bought a reel to reel so I can convert them.

Ted Trojanowski: I tended bar in the NCO club dining room bar for awhile then I moved up to the Officer's club bar. Gotta tell ya, the tips were better with the NCOs.....

Albert Roark: Jet Engine Mechanic, 67-69. Don't know how I found time, but I had a part time job through the airman's club, working the snack bar at the beach. Worked every third day. Fortunately with the help I had, I could take power naps through the day.

Ron Roeder: I drove the bus from the NCO club to town and picked up the help from off base. Worked in MMS (Munitions Maintenance Squadron) repair second time back for 6 months.

Skip Vice: Dish washer at O'club for six months in 67, to make money to go to bangkok on R&R

John Graham: I worked up at the trap and skeet range in 69 made good money too.

Christopher Boles: I volunteered to work MARS phone calls home, as I had a HAM license a

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couple nites a week. That was a very enjoyable time. I remember our contact was "Sunshine" in the states. The operator for the phone company was awesome taking 10 phone numbers and getting everyone on line for their 3 min. I would call the barracks and offices to take a list. Maybe Doug could do a article on MARS phone calls and how all that worked?

Doug Reiter: I ran projectors at the theater a couple nights a week in early '71. But I kept going out of town on business so they fired



THREE TERRIBLE DAYS IN MARCH

22-25 MARCH
A TERRIBLE WEEK FOR
PHAN RANG AB

CAPT. PETER GIBNEY MORARTY 22 MARCH 1971 KIA



Capt. **Peter Gibney Moriarty**, 615th TAC Fighter Squadron departed Phan Rang AB at 1428 hours local, 22 March 1971 to Savannakhet Province, Laos, on a scheduled combat mission in an F-100D 56-3180. At approximately 1515 hours local, under conditions of poor visibility, Captain attacked four armored tanks, under intense conditions fire from both 23mm and .51 caliber weapons, he was observed on final approach of his first pass, without delivering its ordnance. His aircraft was seen to impact straight ahead into the ground. During the mission, about 5 miles south of the city of Sepone, Moriarty's aircraft

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was struck by hostile ground fire (12.5mm) while over the target and exploded in a burst of fire. Visibility was poor in the area due to smoke and haze. Neither the FAC, flight leader, nor orbiting aircraft observed Captain Moriarty’s aircraft at all times. Their concentration was on the tanks, and not on captain Moriarty’s aircraft. No immediate search of the area was made since the crash occurred in hostile area. Circumstances and facts have been analyzed and evaluated and there is a possibility that captain Moriarty ejected safely when his aircraft turned into its final approach. (Source MIAREP)

Individual was held in MIA status from 22 Mar 71 to 23 May 71, until evidence confirmed that he could not have survived and status was changed to KIA on 25 May 1971 per DD Form 1300 and his body was never recovered. Peter was 30 years old (DoB 7/15/1941) and was from Newington, Connecticut.

Known Awards

Silver Star - Distinguished Flying Cross - Purple Heart - Air Medal

A complete biographical sketch for Peter Moriarty can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 158

Capt. Eugene Phillip McKinney 23 March 1968 KIA



CAPT Eugene P. McKinney, 614th Tactical Fighter Wing was a USAF pilot assigned to the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang Air Base in Ninh Thuan Province, RVN. On March 23, 1968, CAPT McKinney’s F-100D (#56-3152) was scrambled. His aircraft was one of a flight of F-100s making an attack on Viet Cong buildings near An Nhon, eight miles southeast of the airfield at Phu Cat when one of the aircraft was lost. Capt. McKinney was pulling up from his fourth attack when his aircraft was hit by ground fire and crashed. An army helicopter quickly arrived at the scene and confirmed that Capt McKinney had died in the aircraft.



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Capt. Richard Whan Hopper 25 March 1968 KIA

MAJ. DONALD LYLE MCHUGO 25 MARCH 1968 KIA



8th TBS, 35 TFW, USAF, Phan Rang

A Canberra on an armed reconnaissance mission was damaged by small arms fire as it was making its second bombing run on a ford at Ban Te Bang in southern Laos, about 20 miles southwest of the A Shau Valley. The aircraft's port engine was damaged but Capt Hopper managed to fly the crippled aircraft back to Da Nang. Unfortunately the aircraft became uncontrollable during the single-engined landing at Da Nang and crashed with the loss of both crew. This B-57 had originally flown with the 38th TBG at Laon AB in France.

UPDATE

Maj. James Anthony

"Major Flies 10,000th Sortie For 'Panthers'" in Phan Rang Newsletter 194

On 22 December 1969, F-111A 67-0049, assigned to the 428th TFS of the 474th TFW, crashed and was destroyed. The mission had been the operational testing of rockets on the Nellis ranges. During a rocket delivery recovery, a wing of the F-111A completely detached in flight. The highly experienced crew of Maj Thomas Mack and Maj James Anthony were killed after the unsuccessful out-of-module-

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limits ejection from the rapidly rolling, out of control aircraft.

As this aircraft already had the modified carry through box, the loss caused the grounding of all F-111s for an extended period . USAF F-111s had restrictions placed on them until after inspections and testing.

Ground F-111 After Fatal Crash

(Indiana Evening Gazette, Indiana, Pennsylvania, December 24, 1969)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The controversial F111 military airplane has been grounded for the fifth time in less than two years in the wake of a Nevada training crash which killed two pilots.

The Air Force announced Monday it has grounded its fleet of 223, swing wing jets until it determines what caused the crash that killed Lt. Col. Thomas J. Mack and Maj. James L. Anthony.

Mack, 38, of Viola, 111., and Anthony, 35, of Big Spring, Tex., went down with the \$8 million plane Monday during a training mission at the bombing and gunnery range at Nellis Air Force Base, about 45 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nev.

The plane was the 15th F111 lost so far by the Air Force. The most recent grounding was last month and affected 89 of the planes.

The suspension was ordered when ground tests revealed a heat-duct leak in two airplanes and one engine. Wing structure and hydraulic system troubles have caused past groundings. After Air Force problems with the F111, a contract for a Navy version was cancelled last year and a contract for an Air Force bomber version was sharply curtailed.

Development of the F111 began under former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara seven years ago. Since then a fleet of the airplanes have been used in Vietnam, then recalled.

The plane originally was designed to serve both the Air Force and the Navy as bombers and fighters.

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Photos is likely taken in the 615th TFS lounge and it is believed to be Maj. Anthony bending over to put out a cigarette and all the others are unidentified. Photo by Col Rich Buickerood, USAF, retired.

REUNIONS

2021 Anzac Day Reunion

This reunion will be based on the exact same itinerary that we had planned for 2020 but were unable to travel because of COVID-19. The trip begins in Los Angeles where we board a Qantas flight for Brisbane and a day after our arrival we participate by marching in the Anzac parade and join in the other festivities of the day. I'm not going to go into more detail other than to say that I suspect that there will be two travel choices. One choice is to tour Australia and the second choice is to continue on to New Zealand. For specific details contact [me](#) and I will send you the complete itinerary, but for now if you think you might be at all interested in joining us please let me know and I will keep you in the loop as we travel down that windy road. There is

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no commitment now; we just want to get an idea of how many might want to go.



As in the past we have tried to have something special for the group that we’ve dubbed **“The Big Event”**. In Nashville we went to the Grand Ole Opry, in Savannah we had a dinner cruise on the river and this year **“The Big Event”** is going on a train ride to Santa Fe on Friday because you can’t come to New Mexico and not visit Santa Fe. The excursion includes a bus ride to and from the rail station, the train trip, which from Albuquerque to Santa Fe on the Rio Metro Rail Runner Express takes approximately 1.5 hours to travel. The total distance between the two cities is just under 65 miles, and the train travels at about 80 miles per hour. After we arrive in Santa Fe, we have time to explore and then have lunch at the Cowgirls restaurant. Santa Fe at that time of year can be chilly so we suggest that you wear warm clothing.

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THE COSTS			
Cost for Everything		Cost for Just the Reunion	
Banquet including gratuity and taxes	\$56	Banquet including gratuity and taxes	\$56
Friday ‘Big Event’ including gratuity, tax, bus transportation and lunch.	\$45	Reunion Fee	\$20
Reunion Fee	\$20		
Total	\$121*	Total	\$76*

***Note: All totals are for individuals only.**

Please send check to:

**Jack Anderson
826 72nd St. S.E.
Auburn, WA 98092**

Please make check payable to **“Phan Rang Reunion”**. Please name all attendees to aid in the creation of name tags. Prompt payment is appreciated. Thanks.

IF YOU HAVEN’T ALREADY MADE YOUR RESERVATIONS AT THE HOTEL FOR THE REUNION NOW IS THE TIME TO DO THAT. CLICK [HERE](#) TO LINK TO THEIR WEBSITE. IF YOU PREVIOUSLY MADE RESERVATIONS FOR THE CORE DATES OF 15-17 OCTOBER AND WANT TO ARRIVE EARLIER OR STAY LATER, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE REUNION RATE IS EFFECTIVE THREE DAYS BEFORE THE CORE EVENT AND THREE DAYS AFTER. IF YOU WANT TO ADD DAYS IT PROBABLY WOULD BE BEST TO CALL THE HOTEL AT 1-505-821-3333 TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES AND MAKE SURE THAT YOU MENTION “PHAN RANG REUNION”.

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57th TCS/MAS/AS/WPS 2020 REUNION

For members of the 57th Alumni Association

Check to see if you are eligible to join



More information and registration form: <https://www.57th alumni.com/Home/reunion-2020>

The word is out...”This reunion is going to be huge!”

Doug’s Comments: I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter and if you have a story to tell, please write it down and send to me so that your unique experiences can be saved for posterity. This newsletter was composed and all graphics by Douglas Severt unless otherwise stated. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, mailto:mailto:dougsevert@cox.net and put ‘unsubscribe’ in subject line.