

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 200

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World War II Stock used by FAC pilots

(Canberra Times, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, AU, September 12, 1968)

From JOHN MANCY at Phan Rang Air Base, South Vietnam

THE Australian Canberra jet bomber circles some 24,000 feet above the network of river canals and rice paddy of South Vietnam's Mekong Delta and calls for the FAC (forward air control) pilot who will mark out the bombing target.

"Magpie 61 here. We have two 5001b bombs and four 1,0001b bombs for you", the bomber Pilot radios. The unseen FAC pilot answers:

"Great, Magpie 61. I think we can put them to good use. You see where the river breaks out to the east of that township. Your target is on the south bank of the first canal after the turn-oof. I'll drop some smoke for you".

The FAC's light aircraft sweeps down and marks the target area — a complex of surface military Structures — with a smoke bomb. Meanwhile the Canberra has come down to its bombing level of 3,000 feet.

"Well, there's someone down there for sure", the FAC pilot calls.

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"I saw a fair bit of tracer whizzing past then hut, it shouldn't bother you too much at your altitude. You see my smoke? The target's just 30 metres to the right from where you are now.

"I'd like you to drop your 500 pounds first. Do you want to do a trial run?"

The RAAF pilot answers that he does and the navigator wriggles up to the nose-cone of the jet and peers down through his bombing sights.

They finish the trial run and the FAC swoops down to place another marker.

The navigator directs the pilot in over the target. "Right. Little more right. Right. Steady, Steady, Steady-steady. Steady steady. Bombs away".

The Canberra returns to Phan Rang where the 260 men of No 2 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force are based on the coastline some 170 miles north east of Saigon.

There are eight of the more than 14-year-old Canberras at Phan Rang Base, which the Australians share with four squadrons of F-100 Super sabre fighter-bombers and one Squadron of B-57 bombers of the US Air Force 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

Stockpile

The 500 and 1,0001b bombs are from Australia's World War II stock pile. They have the only 1,0001b bombs in Vietnam, but the supply is almost exhausted and they will soon switch to the American's 7501b bombs.

Despite the age of the aircraft and bombs, the Australian squadron's performances compare more than favorably with the American squadrons.

According to US figures, in the 16 months that the Australian have been at 3 Phan Rang, No. 2 Squadron has carried out eight per cent of the total sorties and scored 15 per cent of the bomb damage assessment.

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The Australians, have dropped 25,000 bombs, all World War II stock, hitting some five-and-a-half thousand targets.

Targets range from enemy base camps, rest areas, supply and munitions dumps, road, bridges and bunker complexes and military structures. A ‘military structure’ can be anything from a two storey French villa to a bark lean-to.

When the squadron arrived it carried out only night radar-controlled, Skyspot', bombing sorties. Now it flies six FAC directed day missions and two night sorties every day.

The squadron is an independent unit providing its own food and accommodation facilities, but comes under the operational control of the US 35th TFW. It is the only RAAF bomber squadron operating in South Vietnam.



Here's another adventure of Roger Lambert who we were first introduced to in the story “Blondes, Bombs and Bunker” in Phan Rang Newsletter 186 and again in the continuation of the story in Phan Rang Newsletter 187. USAF Capt. Jim Farris, Forward Air Controller, was first introduced in Phan Rang Newsletter 187 when Roger describes his role in support during a bombing raid and he was successful in tracking him down after 44 years. Another memorable story that Roger provided was “The rescue that became a recover” in Phan Rang Newsletter 191 that details the search for and recovery of a downed USAF FAC pilot.

FORWARD AIR CONTROL (FAC) MISSION

Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Roger A. Lambert, Platoon Commander, 9 Platoon, C Company, 5 RAR (5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment) 1969-70

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In 1969, our Commanding Officer (CO), Lieutenant Colonel Colin “Genghis” Khan, decided that his Platoon Commanders needed to see Close Air Support from another perspective. That perspective was to ride shotgun with the Forward Air Controller (FAC) on an airstrike. My turn duly arrived and I made my way down to Luscombe Airfield, Nui Dat.



Luscombe Field, Nui Dat (161 Recce Flight, Australian Army Aviation image)

On arrival, I was greeted by the sight of a USAF Cessna O-2 with the pilot undertaking his pre-flight checks of the push-pull, twin-engine aircraft. My memory is a little obscure here regarding the pilot’s name and rank but I’m pretty sure he was a United States Air Force (USAF) Captain. I do however distinctly remember that he was dressed in a grey flying suit and that he also wore a black leather gun belt and holster.

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USAF Cessna O-2 Forward Air Control aircraft, Luscombe Field, Nui Dat (AWM Image)

Getting into the Cessna (I was seated on the starboard (right) of the aircraft), I noted the rocket pod under the wing. The normal load for the O-2 was two LAU-59/A rocket pods with seven 2.75" FFAR (Folding Fin Aircraft Rockets) each. These rockets could be armed with a variety of explosive warheads but the FAC usually carried white phosphorus (WP or "Willie Pete") heads. The WP round exploded with a highly visible puff of white smoke which made it useful for marking targets for attacking fighters, particularly in jungle canopy.



O-2 Rocket Pod being armed

As I strapped my seat belt on, I also noted the 5.56mm CAR15 attached inside the door. A quick mission briefing and we were racing down the airstrip, getting airborne is what seemed a very short distance and climbing away towards our target.

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Twenty minutes flying time out of Nui Dat, we were over our target. In this case, the target was a VC market garden that had been set up in the Jay (jungle) and the crops, apparently, were just about ready for harvesting. There was lots chat over the radio and the FAC pilot pointed to port where a flight of four Cessna A-37 Dragonflies appeared. He advised that the jets were all 'bombed up' with napalm.



USAF Cessna A-37 Dragonfly

We rolled into the target and a Willy Pete rocket zoomed into an area adjacent the garden, not quite on target. As we pulled up, the first Cessna Dragonfly streaked in across the jungle canopy to drop his napalm canisters but was called off by the FAC. The FAC rolled in again on the target and put the next WP smack bang in the middle of the gardens.

The A-37s rolled in, one after another, and canister after canister of napalm literally obliterated the target. The FAC pilot thanked the A-37s who departed and we orbited to do a 'bomb' damage assessment (BDA). Satisfied the target has been destroyed, we headed back to Nui Dat. Is the excitement over? Not quite.

As we line up for Luscombe Field, the pilot casually asked me to check that our starboard main undercarriage was down. What the?? He then calmly explained that he would normally do the visual check but because I was in the right-hand seat and obscuring the Perspex window in the door, it was my job to do the undercarriage check. Whatever happened to three greens lights??

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While we never came under ground fire and the sortie was not what I would deem hazardous, it did give me a greater appreciation for the role of the FAC pilot and what he had to do single-handedly to map read, fly the aircraft, coordinate the jets as well as his own passes to mark the target and make any corrections necessary to his marker WP rocket fire. While he made it all seem so easy, to my eye it was a little more complicated than patting one’s head and rubbing one’s stomach at the same time.

Little did I know at the time that I would use the ‘services’ of the FAC O-2 later in the tour. That of course was the catalyst for my article “Blonds, Bombs and Bunkers” and subsequent articles about “Magpie 31”.

I like to think that Captain Jim Farris, USAF, was my pilot on the familiarization flight as he was the pilot of the Cessna O-2 “Jade 03” the day he directed Magpie 31 in support of 9 Platoon but I can’t be sure.



CAPT Jim Farris, United States Air Force with his Cessna O-2 FAC aircraft.



Cessna O-2, Luscombe Field, Nui Dat (AWM Image)

614th TFS Joins 366th Fighter Wing

(October 1966)

The first F-100 Supersabres of the Air Force's 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron arrived in Vietnam recently to augment the strength of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing.

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Lt. Col. Louis R. Blakeny of Miami, Fla., 614th commander, flew the lead F-100 jet fighter from England AFB., La., where his unit had been under the Command of the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing.

Brig. Gen. William P. McBride of Realtos, Tex., flew the second 614th aircraft ferried to Vietnam. General McBride former commander of the 401st now is deputy for operations at Ninth Air Force, Shaw AFB., S.C. Col. George S. Weart. of Chicago, 366th commander, and key members of his staff met General McBride and Colonel Blakeny.

Colonel Blakeny, who earned a Distinguished Flying Cross during a previous tour in Vietnam, says several of his 614th pilots are also veterans of previous tours here.

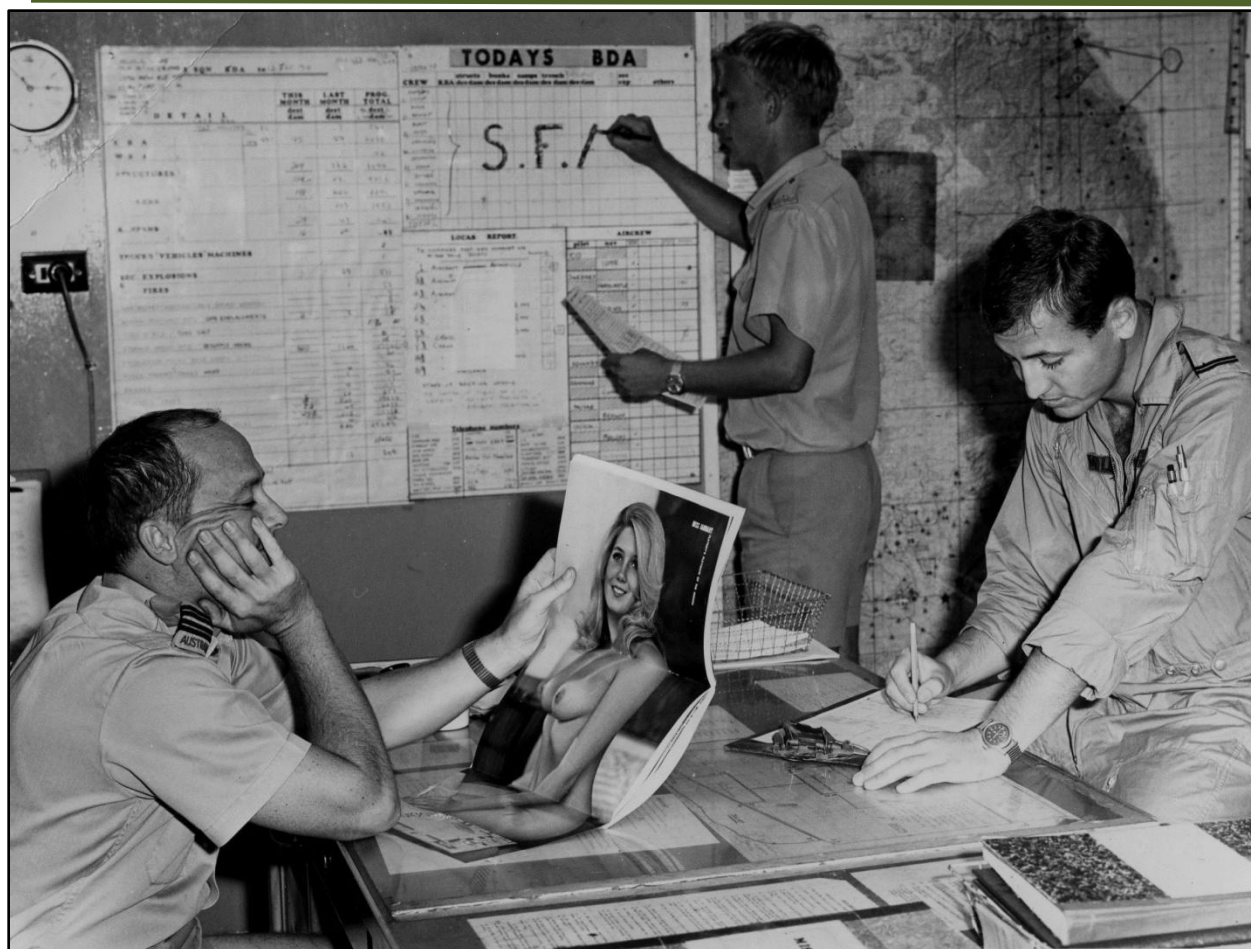


DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS...Lt. Col. Lewis R. Blakeny is presented the Distinguished Flying Cross for Heroism while serving in Vietnam. The colonel was presented the award during ceremonies here recently. Brig. Gen. William P. McBride, former 834th Air Division commander, presented the award. (Photo by A1C Nick Nonno)

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No. 2 Squadron Command Post (Operations Room)

I'm sure this officer is preparing to brief the outgoing crews on the terrain that they will be encountering right after lift-off or could his thoughts have strayed somewhere else? The following is a brief description of the operations room of No. 2 Squadron. The 'heart' of the squadron is the **operations room** which is manned continuously by a staff of three air electronics officers and four general hands.

The operations room maintains close liaison between USAF tactical operations, intelligence, air traffic control and weather sections. All information pertaining to the mounting of a mission is processed at operations and relevant information passed on to the various sections of the squadron.

Planning for the following day's bombing operations commences during late afternoon when relevant information is received from USAF operations. Information on target areas, rendezvous time, bomb loads etc is displayed on the ops board and the technical flight advised

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of appropriate requirements for the next day's missions.

Prior to pre-flighting, each aircrew self briefs on aspects of operations required for that particular sortie. Again, upon return to base, each crew is thoroughly debriefed, and a copy of the debrief is forwarded to 35th TFW Intelligence for further dissemination.

Current intelligence and high threat ground fire areas are displayed on boards in the ops room for the benefit of crews. In addition they receive a comprehensive intelligence briefing once per week. Similarly each Friday afternoon a briefing is held for all airmen not on essential duty. Here the squadron intelligence officer brings members up to date on the latest developments in the Vietnam War.

Pilots Make Happy Landings in Tree, Paddy

(Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tokyo, Japan, March 29, 1968)

SAIGON - One parachute failed to open and another opened with only one second before landing, but two Air Force pilots lived to tell their harrowing story.

The two pilots were Lt Col **Burton M. Field**, 38, of St. Petersburg, Fla., and Capt. **William D. Canup**, 26 of Indianapolis, Ind., who ejected from their doomed F-100 Supersabre at an unorthodox 500 feet.

The prescribed minimum ejection altitude for an F-100 is 2,000 feet, according to an Air Force spokesman.

Field was saved by a tree. His unopened chute; snagged On a 30-foot mango. He found himself dangling from his harness in an eight-foot ditch, his ankles resting in mud and water up to his Knees.

Canup whose parachute opened only one second before he hit the ground, landed in a rice paddy under about 15 inches of water. He sank into the mud bottom, which eased his landing. The chute was not open long enough to establish a normal rate of descent.

The two pilots, assigned to the 615th Tactical Fighter Sq. at Phan Rang Air Base, had been on a

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strike in the Mekong Delta when their two-seat aircraft was shot down.

Both men were rescued Within 15 minutes after hitting the ground. Their injuries were described as minor.

Field, a veteran of 126 combat missions, suffered minor cuts, bruises and burns. He later recalled the agonizing seconds after ejection and said he was not really Worried until he saw the branches of a tree go by.

"There were branches between me and the streaming chute." he said. "I figured that's the end and wondered how long it was going to hurt."

Canup was more confident. Although the ejection occurred on his second command the streaming chute," he said. "I supposed it wasn't my turn to go."

It was the second time Field has been forced to bail out from an F0100, This time he telephoned his wife from Vietnam.

"Well, I did it again," he told her. "She took it a lot better than last time," he said.



**Capt. William
Canup**

Note: The above incident actually occurred on 17 February 1968 and just a few weeks later on 6 April, Captain William David Canup, 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron, flying F-100D 55-2911 (Bobcat 6) was hit by ground fire during an air strike and crashed. He was making his second run on his target when his aircraft was hit by automatic weapons fire and crashed before he could eject. It was speculated that the bullet

may have incapacitated Canup as he went down with the ship, canopy still intact and no ejection executed. Because of the tactical situation on the ground, his remains were not recovered until the following day when they were brought back to Phan Rang. More information available in Phan Rang Newsletter 155 and 197 for details of both accidents.

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Aircraft Struck By 'Bird Seed' In Bomb Strike

(Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tokyo, Japan, December 26, 1967)



PHAN RANG, Vietnam — Lt, Col **Dougall M. Davis**, 46, Sarasota , Fla., a B57 Canberra bomber pilot and operations officer; of the 13th Tactical Bombardment Sq. recently returned from an air strike 60 miles southwest of Saigon with a tale of "birds" and "leaflets" which left holes in his aircraft.

A veteran of 148 combat Missions in North and South Vietnam, Davis said he spotted what he thought was ground fire coming out of the trees during his second bombing pass.

"Those are just birds coming up from where we're shooting," said the pilot of the other B57 in the air strike.

"Aw, you're both wrong," said the forward air controller at the scene. "We dropped some leaflets in there telling the people to get out."

"So I believed him," Davis recalled, "and we went on through the mission, thinking they were birds and leaflets. In fact, I felt a little jolt on the rudder pedals, coming off my last strafing-pass, and I thought maybe I'd picked up one of those birds."

The rude awakening came after the B57 returned from the air strike. Davis found that several armor-piercing slugs had hit the aircraft. The rudder control rod was pierced and left hanging together, by approximately one-quarter inch of metal.

The incident marked the second time Davis' aircraft has been hit by ground fire since he began flying combat missions in Vietnam, "The first time, a slug went right in the center of the windshield. That got my attention, in a hurry," Davis said.

During the, birds and leaflets strike, the ordnance of the B57s destroyed a military fortification and bunker and damaged several other bunkers.

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Firm Sends Bra-voes To Troops

(Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tokyo, Japan, December 10, 1965)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam — What happens when a package labeled "caressable bras" arrives at the mail room of an airborne infantry company deep in the jungles of Vietnam?

First, rumors start beginning that the "old man" got a case of ladies bras, then it's the executive officer that got the frilly unmentionables and last but not least, the grapevine has it the first sergeant got the receipt.

This was the case last week when such a package was received by the Army's Co. C, 2d Bn., 27th Inf., 101st Airborne Div. from the employees of Empire Foundation Inc. of South Fork, Pa.

But to the surprise of the C Co. "Cougars," the boxes, when opened by Capt. Richard E. Davis of Russellville, Ky., assisted by 1st Lt. **Luther L. Woods**, Hindman, Ky., and 1st Sgt. **Bobby H. Burke** of Clarksville, Tenn., did not contain bras . . . only candy and cookies.

A letter in the package said: -"For all the fellows, of C Co. Through this bit of correspondence, all of us at Empire Foundation Inc. want to express to each and every one of you over there, our sincere thanks for all that you. are doing in order that we may live in a free and peaceful America. As a group, we have chosen this holiday season to express this appreciation.

"Because we all realize that it is so terribly difficult being away from home, especially at this time of the year, we are sending these boxes, one to each company of the 1st Brigade, so that we may in this small way thank you all a little more personally.

"Our profound wish being, that through your enjoyment of the boxes of "goodies" which we are sending (which incidentally, have not only good things to eat packed in them, but all our prayers as well), that we may succeed in brightening your spirits, and let you know that we are very proud of you. With humble and grateful thanks, the employees of Empire Foundation Inc."

C.O. READY FOR THE F-111s

(Canberra Times, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, December 6, 1967)

PHAN RANG, South Vietnam, Tuesday (AAP). — The pilot who is to command the first Australian squadron to be equipped with the F-111 fighter bomber is preparing for his new role

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by flying against the Viet cong.

He is Wing Commander Bill Hughes, of Sydney, the officer in charge of air operations by the RAAF's No 2 Squadron of Canberra bombers which is based at Phan Rang.

The pilots and navigators of No 2 Squadron, who will be going to the United States for training on the F-111s, are being given experience in a six-month tour of Vietnam, flying day and night missions against Viet Cong bases in all parts of the country.

"It would be true to say that these men have been handpicked because of their professional qualifications", Wing Commander Hughes said.

"They will be flying by far the most sophisticated aircraft we have ever had.

"RAAF pilots and navigators are already training in the United States to become instructors for crews when courses start next year".

The first course on the controversial, high-priced aircraft starts in March next year In Australia, the fighter-bombers will be based at Amberley, near Ipswich, Queensland.

"The training period is about 23 weeks", Wing Commander Hughes said. "It is in three phases—orientation, radar and systems instruction, and actual flying.

"Eight pilot-and-navigator crews will attend a course — meaning three courses to train the 24 crews we will need".

Wing Commander Hughes will be the commanding officer of No 1 Squadron, RAAF, the first Australian unit to be equipped with the new aircraft. Number 6 Squadron also will get the F-111.

Wing Commander Hughes won the Distinguished Flying Cross while flying Meteors for the RAAF in Korea.

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Terry Brodt Remembers Early Days at Fighter Base

Airman first Class **Terry Vincent Brodt**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent R. Brodt. 8530 Cedros Ave., Panorama City, was one of the few veterans around when his unit, the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron, celebrated its first anniversary of combat operations in South Vietnam at Phan Rang Air Base.



Airman First Class Terry Brodt

Base Was Bugged

Airman Brodt was with the squadron when it first went Southeast Asia from England AFB, La. All of the original pilots have departed for new assignments, with only a few enlisted men left.

The young operations clerk recalls that..."it has been a most interesting and fruitful year. I have learned quite a bit about Air Force Operations in Southeast Asia."

The men just coming to Phan Rang cannot appreciate how good it is," said Airman Brodt. "We lived in tents, walked in ankle deep mud and choked on dust. There were no paved roads, it was an adventure that all who were deployed with the squadron will never forget."

The squadron, originally a bomber unit in World War II averaged 1000 hours of fighter time each month during the past year and flew 8000 sorties during the same time.

The past year also has seen the squadron fighting the Vietnam War in one other way - that of humanitarianism.

Help With Friends

Airman Brodt and the other men of the 614th have donated more than \$1,200 in the past year to schools in Phan Rang and Thap Cham for scholarships and improvements. Presently they are giving special support to one school, the An Phuoc High School in Thap Cham.

The airman was graduated from Thousand Oaks High School in 1964. He entered the Air Force in March 1966.

(Van Nuys Valley News, Van Nuys, California, November 09, 1967)

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NOW FOR THE REST OF THE STORY

Terry spent four years in the Air Force; serving 18 months in Vietnam (Phan Rang) and then two years in Spain, (Torrejon AB). During his time at Phan Rang, the government offered an extension on your tour of duty (1 year). He extended 6 month, took his 30 days free time off and returned to his duties in operations at the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Once he left the Air Force, he began his civilian career in travel sales as western sales manager for Carlson Wagonlit Travel. He recently retired after 44 years in the business.

While working in the travel industry, Terry also worked as a professional wrestling and boxing announcer in Southern California. During his years in the business Terry announced the biggest names in the ‘squared circle’. Grapplers like Hulk Hogan. Andre The Giant and Rowdy Roddy Piper, the Destroyer to name a few. He even introduced boxing's greatest Joe Louis who served as a guest referee for a match. Terry has been seen on TV's The Fall Guy series starring Lee Majors , and in the film " The Bad Guys" starring Ruth Buzzi.

Today, Terry is retired and resides in Reno with his wife Joan. He still stays busy and with a passion for fine wine he formed the Arrowcreek Wine Lovers Club and spends time organizing wine related events in the Reno area. In September he will be the emcee for the Cauliflower Alley Club at their annual convention in Las Vegas. The CAC is pro wrestling’s only non-profit corporation, that assists many people from the wrestling industry.



Top: Wrestling Photo announcing in 1970's at **KCOP channel 13** in Los Angeles.

Left: Lee Majors and Terry Brodt during the time we worked on ‘The Fall Guy’ in December 1986.

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Doug’s Note: Terry has submitted a lot of articles to be included in future issues of the Phan Rang Newsletters and soon there will be a special feature on all of the celebrities that have visited Phan Rang AB. Thanks Terry.

Doug’s Comments: I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter as it’s sort of a milestone for me as I never would have dreamed when I started this to promote our annual Phan Rang Reunion that I would have found enough articles and stories of Phan Rang to fill 200 issues. Well, I did and the stories just keep on coming, so 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.