

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 202

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The Canberra Times

To serve the National City and through it the Nation

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The 'Wallaby Airline' goes to war



Of all the RAAF fliers in Vietnam, the helicopter crews of No 9 Squadron are closest to the war, flying deep into guerrilla country on reconnaissance missions.

They take reinforcements to Australian Army units engaged in battle

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and bring out casualties - frequently under enemy fire.

The knowledge that squadron can lift wounded men out of battle and deliver him to hospital within half an hour is a powerful boost to the morale of the Australian troops in Vietnam.

The squadron is now preparing to modify four of its helicopters so that they may be quickly converted to gunships to provide close support for troops in action.

The RAAF has a transport squadron and a helicopter squadron in Vietnam - both based at Vung Tau, the beach resort south-east of Saigon.

No 35 squadron has six Caribou transports. No 9 Squadron has 11 Iroquois helicopters and will soon have 16.



The Caribou squadron is nicknamed "**Wallaby Air line**". It carries personnel and supplies on regular runs to bases north of Saigon in the second and third corps areas and to bases south of the capital in the Mekong Delta.

Supplies for US Forces

One Caribou is stationed permanently at Nha Trang. From there it flies deep into the mountains and jungles of the western and northern provinces of South Vietnam with reinforcements and supplies for American special forces detachments.

The Caribou crews frequently log 120 hours of flying in a month.

One pilot returned to Australia recently after a twelve-month tour in which he had added 1,300 hours to his flying time.

The Caribous frequently return to base punctured by enemy ground fire. During the Tet offensive they were generally the last aircraft to stop using air fields which were under attack.

But when they had to leave they left in a hurry. One crew claims a record for having become

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airborne within 40 seconds of the order "start engines" after a mortar bomb burst close to their aircraft.

Like the Canberras the Caribous have an outstanding serviceability record. In technical jargon No 35 squadron's serviceability rate is 87 per cent which means that if it had 100 aircraft, 87 would be flying or able to fly at all times.

For the past twelve months Air Commodore "Ginty" Lush has been the commander of RAAF units in Vietnam.

Fatigue in wings

He says the war has taught the RAAF a lot about the use of helicopters, particularly about techniques for operating near hostile forces.

But he believes that the RAAF is drawing its biggest dividend in Vietnam from its Australian-made **Canberra bombers** which have had their first opportunity to prove their worth in war.

The Vietnam War has quite literally given the Canberras a new lease of life.

When the Canberras arrived at **Phan Rang** in April RAAF engineers calculated that metal fatigue in the wings would terminate their service life in 1970.

But each of the Canberras has been modified to carry a 500 lb bomb on each wingtip in addition to the six 1,000 pounders carried in its belly.

This alteration in load distribution has reduced the stresses which cause wing fatigue and as a result the Canberras are not wearing out as rapidly as had been expected. They should continue to be serviceable into the 1970s.

The Canberras in Vietnam are also providing invaluable experience for men who are to fly the F-111s. The Canberra crews at Phan Rang will soon be sent home on leave and will then go to the United States to take over the first of the F-111s.

Another of the lessons the RAAF has learned from the Vietnam War is that age is not

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necessarily a handicap in combat flying.

In fact the sharp reflexes of youth may be an embarrassment in some of the complex flying tasks which demand knowledge and skills possessed only by men who have been flying for 15 or 20 years.

Accordingly there are many middle-aged men flying combat missions in Vietnam. The commander of the Australian Canberra Squadron is 42.

Grandfather in combat

His opposite number in the American F-100 wing is 50. The chief instructor of the Forward Air Controllers School at Phan Rang is a 45-year-old grandfather who first flew in combat over Europe in 1942.

Among his students have been men of 51 and 52 who graduated from flying strike aircraft to the even more demanding task of coordinating and controlling air and artillery strikes from low-flying Cessnas.

Quite clearly the RAAF is learning much of value from its participation in the war.

But what the application of airpower is achieving generally in the war is not so clear. Obviously with so many fixed wing transports and helicopters available to them the allied forces are more mobile and effective than they would otherwise be.

But how much of the vast tonnage of high explosive dropped from the air is wasted because it destroys only jungle? How much is damaging to the allied cause because it kills innocent civilians or needlessly destroys their property.

The Communists have built up over 15 or 20 years a formidable system of base camps, bunkers, tunnel complexes and other fortifications which represent a substantial military investment in South Vietnam.

Attacks on key points

Even layman who flies over South Vietnam can see that the application of allied airpower

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is steadily destroying this investment.



On a map in the Australian Canberra squadron's operations room at **Phan Rang** hundreds of coloured pins cluster in notorious Vietcong base areas like the Iron Triangle and War Zone D.

Each pin represents a bombing attack on a bunker or some other strongpoint which was the product of months of Vietcong labour.

Each successful attack means the loss of one of the hideouts to which the Vietcong withdraw when allied troops approach and from which they advance to strike at poorly defended villages and hamlets.

But the Vietcong are operating from areas which have been attacked so Intensively and so often.

The Vietnam War, it seems, is demonstrating the limitations as well as the capabilities of air power.

Occasionally you meet airmen who claim that airpower is decisive and that victory merely depends on intensification of the air war.

But more typical is this comment from the FAC school chief instructor who flew combat

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missions over Europe in 1942, "This war has to be won by guys on the ground. Airpower can help them but it cannot do the job for them".

(Canberra Times, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, March 29, 1968)

Last RAAF Bombing Mission in Vietnam



A84-244 with Flying Officers David Smith and Peter Murphy and the last bomb dropped

On **31 May 1971**, No 2 Squadron flew its final bombing missions of the Vietnam War before withdrawing from its base at Phan Rang, in Ninh Thuan Province. The unit's B20 Canberra twin-engine jet bombers were called on to provide nine sorties over the north of South Vietnam, with the last of these taking off at 1410 to fly in support of American ground forces in the A Shau Valley. The last bomb was released at 1518. During nearly four years of operations, No 2 Squadron had dropped 76 389 bombs totalling 27,158 tonnes. The squadron's aircraft left Vietnam to return to Australia on 4 June, and personnel and equipment progressively departed until mid-July. It was to be another 32 years before the RAAF again dropped a bomb in anger.

Flooded Platoons 'Pedroed'

PHAN RANG - Aerospace Rescue and Recovery service at **Phan Rang AB** is usually orientated

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toward the safety of fighter, bomber, and transport crews flying in the vicinity of this base. Circumstances, however, recently brought them into a unique rescue role.

Heavy tropical storms pelting this central South Vietnam coastal area caused considerable flooding. Among the victims were two platoons of the Republic of Korea White Horse Division conducting a sweep of suspected VC areas south of here.

After rapidly-rising waters left them stranded on a small piece of high ground, an HH-43 rescue helicopter from Detachment 1, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (MAC) here went to their aid.

Three flights by the HH-43 “Pedro” crew-plus an assist from a U.S. Army Ch-47 helicopter from Cam Ranh Bay AB - were needed to complete the rescue.



DATELINE: Phan Rang AB, VN 1969

I flew on AC-119G Shadow gunships from Dec 1968-Dec 1969. My crew position was Aerial Gunner.

The position required great endurance; as the air temperature even at night was 90 degrees plus. Our standard operating altitude was 3000 feet; and the humidity was still over 90%.

Our standard flight time was 5 hours; but frequently we would be airborne up to 11+ hours. As a consequence, at mission's end we would be sweat soaked, down to our knees and exhausted.

We were billeted in Quonset huts through the Fall of 1969. Afterwards, the “air conditioned aircrew barracks” were completed. Our billets were Q4; Quonset huts that used to house the AC-47 enlisted personnel. Our Quonsets were located up near the “rock crusher”; away from the main base. This was a former processing station for the

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concrete needed for initial construction of the base. The building was H shaped, with latrines in the connecting corridor. There were sandbag bunkers surrounding the building. This provided a ready made “patio” in the back. We had half barrel barbecues on the patio; frequently BBQing steaks or other mystery meats.

Our gunship squadron, the 71st SOS, had revetments near the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) #2 Bomb Squadron. #2 Squadron proudly flew and supported the Canberra Medium Bomber. Our two squadrons struck up a friendship based on both Squadrons being “outliers” or tenants on base.

Often was the case that we would be returning to our billets after a long arduous mission. We were hot, sweaty, exhausted and salt rings stained our flight suits and jungle fatigues. We were dropped off by the crew bus; actually just a pickup truck with a plywood cover. As we clambered out of the bus, we sometimes were greeted by loud voices and music. We sometimes were handed a Fosters as we entered the Quonset hut. On occasion we would also be surprised by the sounds of female voices laughing or singing.

There were Australian Bands that would tour the bases. They would also coincidentally have some female singers/dancers as part of the entourage. Our mates from #2 Squadron were always happy to cajole the band into a jam session at our Quonset hut. The bands would stop by after playing the clubs on base. The merriment sometimes lasted until daylight. We didn't mind at all. After a shower and a Fosters, all was good for us.

On a few occasions we would arrive at the Quonset hut with the Aussies in the midst of peculiar games.

One game was called “tickle”. There two players in the game; both enhanced by massive amounts of adult beverages. The object of the game was to see who would start laughing first. Simple enough you say? Well, here's the fine detail; which set us aback the first time we saw it. The two players were completely naked. It gets better though. Each player had one outstretched hand nearly making contact with his opponent's nether region. At the start signal, each would begin tickling the others nether bits.

First man to break down laughing was the loser. The loser usually had some penance to

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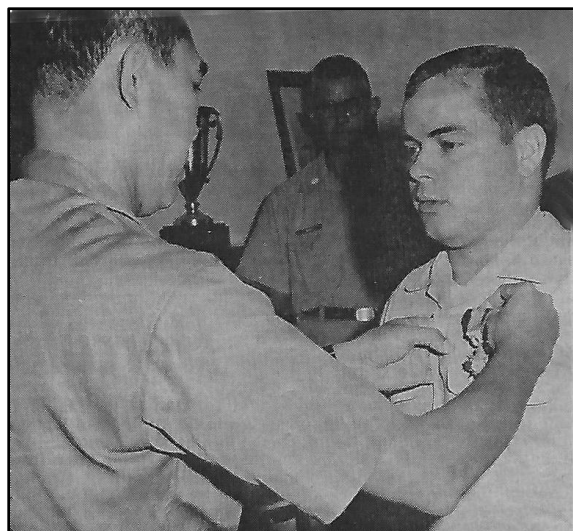
perform; maybe chugging a Fosters or some other agreed upon task.

The wildest game we saw them play was a two man “race”. This was another game induced by adult beverage consumption.

In preparation, long slender cones were fashioned from note paper. The players were once again completely naked (I sometimes wondered about those Aussies). The paper cones were then inserted between each man’s butt cheeks. There was a starting line created; with both players standing in a runner’s stance. Just prior to the start signal, the cones were lit on fire. Once the flames were stable, the starter yelled GO! The object was to see who could last longest while running with a flaming cone in their derriere. Funniest thing we had ever seen. Those Aussies were the finest kind!

Up until a few years ago, I was still in contact with a mate from No. 2 Squadron.

“An opinion should be the result of thought, not a substitute for it.” — *Jef Mallett*



Airman Receives the Vietnamese Air Force Medal of Honor

SSgt. **Jerry W. McCutcheon**, receives the Vietnamese Air Force Medal of Honor from Lt. Col. Phan Phung Tien, VNAF base commander. The chaplain services specialist was presented the award for his humanitarian assistance to the Vietnamese on and around Tan Son Nhut.

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VC Boats Close In -- Till Strafing Starts

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (Special) - One of the most adventurous rescues in the history of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang Air Base occurred recently when Capt. **Fred E. Davis**, 28, ejected from his F-100 super Sabre over the South China Sea.

This was Captain Davis second bailout from a battle-damaged aircraft¹ in recent weeks, he ejected a few miles from Phan Thiet City, near a Small fleet of Vietnamese fishing boats.

“We knew,” Davis said, “that there were quite a few Viet Cong sampans in the area. I floated there for a minute, and then one of the boats pulled alongside me and motioned for me to come aboard.

“He was scared, but there were many other boats around that I didn’t figure I had anything to lose. Once aboard, I tried to tell them that I wanted to go to a nearby destroyer, the Robert K. Huntington. I couldn’t make them understand, and from the way they were looking at me, I wasn’t exactly sure that they wanted to understand.

“I took out a smoke flare and lit it, hoping to get the attention of one of the search planes. Finally, one of the Forward Air Controllers saw me.

¹ On 30 June 1969 Capt. Fred Davis, 352nd TFW was flying F-100D 56-3372 was shot down on a close air support mission near Tan An, 18 Miles southwest of Tan Son Nhut. Capt Davis was pulling up from an attack on enemy bunkers when his aircraft was hit by ground fire. The port wing caught fire and Capt Davis ejected two miles to the north and was picked up by an Army helicopter.

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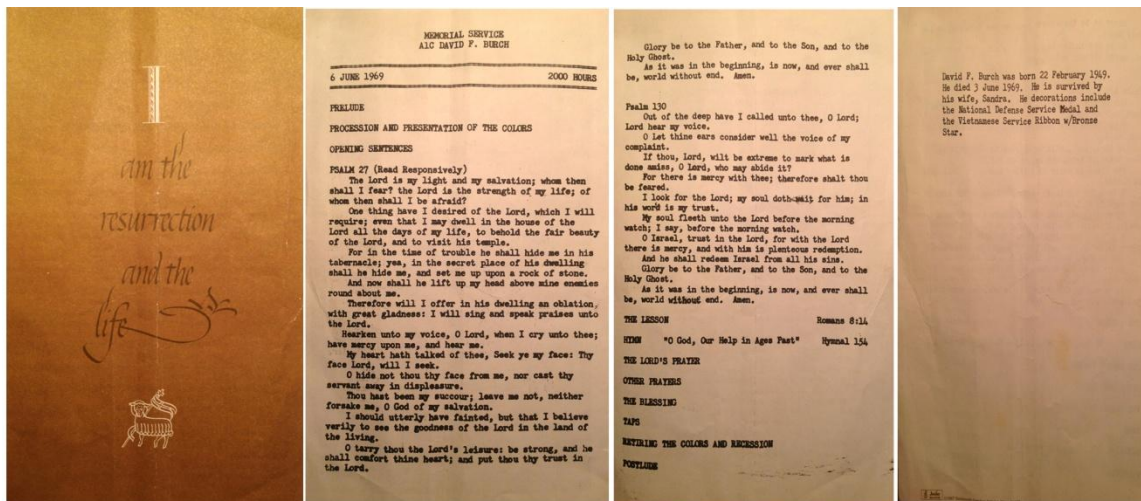
“My problems still weren’t over. By this time, a number of other boats were beginning to close in on us, and I had a good idea why! About the time I had finished all the prayers I knew, an Army Huey Cobra came over and let loose with a burst of .50 caliber machine-gun fire between us and the other boats.

“Whatever ideas the other boats had, they forgot them and did an about face. After this I also had more luck communicating with the people in the boat.

“Before we could weigh anchor and head for the destroyer, I had to help them pull in their fishing nets. After about 20 minutes of some pretty strenuous work, we got under way to the Huntington.

“A lifeboat met us at the ship, and took me aboard. On the Huntington, I was outfitted in a Navy uniform. The men of the ship were very helpful in getting me back to base.”

(Capt. Fred E. Davis was flying F-100D 56-3113, which was damaged by ground fire during a close air support mission in South Vietnam. Capt Davis ejected just off the coast 10 miles south of Phan Thiet and was eventually rescued by a Navy vessel.)



Memorial Service for David Felix Burch 6 June 1969

Transcript of service held at the Phan Rang AB Chapel on 6 June 1969

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MEMORIAL SERVICE

A1C DAVID F. BURCH

6 JUNE 1969

2000 HOURS

PRELUDE

PROCESSION AND PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

OPEN SENTENCES

PSALM 27 (Read Responsively)

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The lord is my strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple.

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his tabernacle; yea, in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.

And now shall he lift up my head above mne enemies round about me.

Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation, with great gladness: I will sing and speak praises unto the Lord.

Hearken unto my voice, O Lord, when I cry unto thee; have mercy upon me, and hear me.

My heart hath talked of thee, Seek ye my face: Thy face Lord, will I seek.

O hide not thou they face from me, nor cast thy servant away in displeasure.

Thou hast been my succour; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

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O tarry thou the Lord’s leisure: be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart; and put thou they trust in the Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and every shall be, world without end. Amen.

Psalm 130

Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; Lord hear my voice.

O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint.

If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?

For there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared.

I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust.

My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning watch; I say, before the morning watch.

O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and every shall be, world without end. Amen.

THE LESSON

Romans 8:14

HYMN “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

Hymnal 154

THE LORD’S PRAYER

OTHER PRAYERS

THE BLESSING

TAPS

RETIRING THE COLORS AND RECESSION

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POSTLUDE



David Felix Burch
Air Force

David F. Burch was born 22 February 1949. He died 3 June 1969. He is survived by his wife, Sandra. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal and the Vietnamese Service Ribbon w/Bronze Star.

(His death occurred while stringing concertina wire on the Phan Rang Air Base perimeter road when the vehicle hit a bump and he fell from the truck and sustained injuries that resulted in his death. Also note that his birth date on the memorial was incorrect; it is 24 February 1949.)

Note: *Phan Rang Newsletter 155* contains data on all casualties for Ninh Thuan Province (The province where Phan Rang AB was located) for all branches of the service and casualties for Air Force personnel assigned to Phan Rang AB occurring anywhere in Vietnam.

Hennessey Man Killed By Crash in Vietnam



Edward Louis Goucher
Air Force

Captain **Edward Louis Goucher**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marion Goucher of Hennessey, was killed in action in South Vietnam on Monday, September 4. He had been stationed in Vietnam since May 25, and was assigned to Tan Son Nhut AB. Captain Goucher was killed in the crash of an A-C 123 aircraft. Goucher was pilot of the plane, which crashed into a mountain side. The entire crew went down but the bodies have not been recovered and may never be because of the location and weather conditions.

Military memorial rights for Capt. Goucher will be held Saturday at Laredo AFB. If the body is recovered funeral will be held in Hennessey. If not, a memorial service will be conducted there.

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Captain Goucher was a graduate of Hennessey High School (Oklahoma) and received his BS degree from Central State College at Edmond in 1961. He was commissioned upon completion of Officer Training school at Lackland AFB, Tex.

Survivors in addition to his parents include his wife Jan and daughters Darrin and Terri of Laredo, Tex.

(C-123K 54-0621 hit ridgeline 18 KM south-southwest of Bao Loc air field during approach for landing with the loss of all aboard. The wreckage of the aircraft was found two days later near Bao Loc, its first scheduled stop. The cause of the accident was attributed to pilot error. Four of the passengers, Capt W B Mahone, Capt V K Kelly, TSgt J M Boatwright and MSgt H C Cook were a Ranch Hand crew on their way to Nha Trang to collect one of their aircraft that had been under repair for battle damage.)

Cheekstowagan Is Killed In Bombing Flight Over Viet

An Air Force major from Cheektowaga (New York) was killed Saturday in Vietnam when his B-57 bomber was hit by ground fire and crashed.

The death of Maj. **Martin W. Anderson** 37, of 27 Cleveland Dr., a former instructor at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo., was announced by the Defense Department Monday Evening.



Martin Andersen
Air Force

The Air Force said the plane on which he was navigator was on a bombing mission when it was struck by ground fire and “went into a vertical dive from 500 feet.”

The Canberra light bomber crashed somewhere over South Vietnam, but the number of lives lost or the exact location has not been announced yet.

Maj. Andersen had been in Vietnam since Nov. 1, transferring there after two years as a mathematics and aeronautics teacher at the academy.

A 15-year-veteran of the Air Force, he had been attached to the 13th Bombardment Squadron in Vietnam.

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A native of Wallingford, Conn., he was a 1952 graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Engineering and received a master's degree in engineering in 1964 from the University of New Hampshire.

Before teaching at the academy, he was stationed at Mather Air Force Base, Calif., and Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio.

His wife is the former Bertha I. Friedrich, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Friedrich of 62 Meadowlawn Rd., Cheektowaga. Other survivors include four daughters, Karen E. 9, Victoria K. 7, Valerie L., 3 Heidi L., 1, and his mother Mrs. Adolf Anderson of Wallingford.

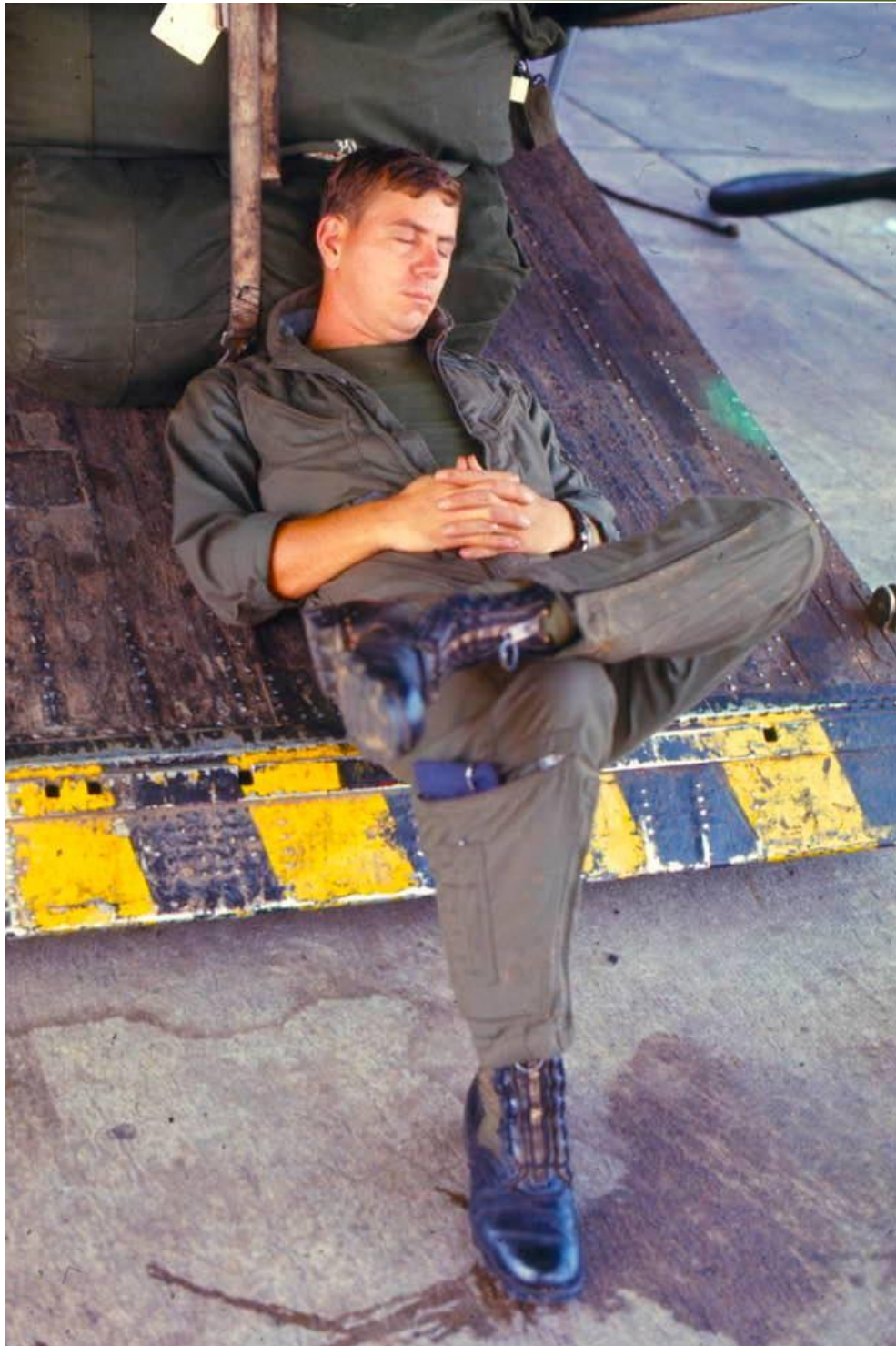
(19 Aug 1967, B-57B 52-1550 A Canberra was shot down with the loss of both crew during a close air support mission 25 miles north of Saigon. The pilot was Maj Richard Michael Secanti. The aircraft was orbiting near its target, a VC storage area five miles west of Lai Khe, when it was hit by ground fire and crashed immediately before either of the crew could escape. Like many of the early B-57Bs and Cs, 52-1550 was originally used by the 3510th OCTW at Randolph AFB, Texas to convert pilots and navigators to the Canberra before posting to operational units.)



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John Anthony Ward said “sometimes we had to grab some Z’s when we could. My co-pilot, Lt. Cook, Cam Ranh Bay, 1971” taking a nap on the ramp of a C-123.

Photo by John Anthony Ward

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This is just a small sampling of those lives that were lost to all causes, but mainly aircraft crashes. You may recognize some, others you won't because they were just listed as numbers. For a complete detailed list of all Phan Rang AB Casualties see [Phan Rang Newsletter 155](#) and for all Phan Rang AB aircraft losses see [Phan Rang Newsletter 197](#).

Phan Rang AB Casualties. Many were younger; some were older; and, a lot were the same age as I was when I arrived at Phan Rang. It always breaks my heart to look at their pictures and realize that they left friends, relatives, in many cases parents, wives and children - yet, my life, for all its twists and turns, progressed to the point it is today. For good or bad, I had the opportunity to lead that life as I wanted - **they did not.**

Rest in Peace my brothers, I hope all who served with you appreciate how truly lucky we have been. *By Jim Lombard*

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Reference Allan Cambell's "It Happened at Phan Rang:"

My recollection of that 4th of July evening, was a little different. When the sirens went off and we assembled at the designated site for the 1882nd Communications Squadron, I was told we had a large gap in our defense perimeter. I was also told to grab 25 troops and plug that hole. We each got issued an ammo belt and got on a couple of trucks. We were dropped off on the perimeter and we found the empty fox holes. I assigned two men per fox hole and settled in for the night.

That was one long night. I gained a whole new appreciation for those Air Policemen assigned to guard our perimeter. Visibility that night was poor at best. Charlie would be right up on top of you before you could see him. With only one ammo belt, we could not hold off any intruders for more than a couple of minutes.

Relief showed up at 0530 the next morning, just in time for me to be at work at 0600. It turned out to be a very busy day also.

MSgt. JON ALEXANDER

Hi Doug

Its Chris from Brisbane yes No. 2 Squadron, and again Great newsletter as always and in this one (Phan Rang Newsletter 201 "*Gallantry Cross with Palm for the men of the 35th TFW and it subordinate units*") you stated that the whole of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm and was that presented as a medal or just a ribbon?

Hopefully you all will be here next year for ANZAC Day and you will enjoy it here.

Kind Regards

Chris Bramwell 2SQN

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Doug, yet another excellent newsletter..

I forgot about the Wooden Nickels and I had one for years and got rid of it.....

I remember that the NCO Club had lots of money in the bank--thinking \$200K or so if my memory is correct. They sold a lot of beer and TAB. I will never drink TAB again.

When the government orders soft drinks for the base, somehow someone got the order as mostly TAB. I remember seeing cases of TAB sitting out in an open field sitting in the hot sun. Later they sold it at the Clubs....

Just one more memory of 54 years ago

Terry Brodt

G'day Doug,

In answer to your questions,(Did Aussies have slot machines in their clubs?) here is my recollection. No doubt you'll hear it from others as well.

We certainly didn't have slot machines (in Australia we call them Poker machines [Pokies]) in the Koala Bar which was the Airman's Mess.

We used the same US Military Payment Script as you guys, which was changed randomly to thwart the black market. When I was there (68-69) the exchange rate of the Aussie dollar was about \$1.10 US. Today it's about \$0.79 cents.

Hope this has been some help.

David Potter

Gold Coast Queensland.

Mr. Severt

I just want you to know how much I appreciate what you, and many others, do to keep the Phan Rang, (Happy Valley), Facebook Page as current, lively and political and bias free as you

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do. I appreciate that you're posting David's Memorial Program in one of the upcoming newsletters. I really am glad that you've opted to do this, as someday, one of us from Happy Valley will ultimately stand the last "Retreat". I'd like to know that as much information about all of us, who we were and what we'd done, will be in the archives for posterity.

Speaking of the newsletter, it is fantastic. Along with all the postings and photos from the guys the newsletter is like a time transporter. I can feel the heat, smell the JP-4, hear the 105 and 155s pounding away, hear the roar of the F-100 in full afterburner, and see the lightshow from Shadow and hear the mini guns "BURP" from Puff. Most of all I can remember the great guys I served with, those that made it, and those, like David, who unfortunately didn't. They were, and are, simply the best.

Thanks again.

Joe Cleary

(Note: Joe supplied the information for the “Memorial Service for David Felix Burch” that appears in this newsletter.)

Doug’s Comments: I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. If you have a story to tell, please send it to me so it can be shared with the Phan Rang community. 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.