

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 205

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## Flying the Freedom Birds



**Freedom Bird.** For the Vietnam generation of U.S. military veterans, this phrase meant only one thing; the aircraft that brought them home at the end of their tours. However, these were not military aircraft, but commercial airliners under contract by the U.S. Air Force Military Airlift Command (MAC) and served by civilian crews and flight attendants. The airliners were not just used to bring the soldiers home, but to fly them into the war zone as well. During the course of the war, thousands of flights crisscrossed the Pacific Ocean. For military personnel, it was a deeply emotional journey in both directions.

These flights were also a powerful and moving experience for a generation of young women who served aboard these aircraft as flight attendants. Few understood the emotional demands they would face. One flight attendant recalled, “There was no special training by the airlines or the military about how to handle it. We relied on each other and the soldiers to manage.”

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These women allayed the fears of soldiers heading to war and offered support and reassurance to those headed home. In addition to the emotional impact, the flight attendants risked physical harm while flying to military bases in an active combat zone. As Captain Dwight Small, a pilot for Flying Tiger Line, recalls, “It was pretty hairy, especially in the early days. We turned off our running lights to avoid ground fire.”



**Seaboard World DC-8-60 loading passengers at Phan Rang AB.**

Despite the intensity of the operations, many flight attendants found the military contract flights rewarding and continued to serve on them for years. “I wouldn’t trade the experience for a million dollars,” stated Julie Kane, a flight attendant for Seaboard World Airlines. Her sentiments are echoed by Judy Meyer, who flew for United Air Lines, “It was some of the best flying I ever did.” Although these women were an integral part of the Vietnam War experience, their contributions are largely unknown outside of the veteran community.

## **Coffee, tea or special missions?**

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**Vietnam War: Pan Am flight attendants were flying into combat zones in Southeast Asia. They’ve mostly gone unrecognized. But they were accidental pioneers in military history.**



In the winter of 1968, a Boeing 707, heavy with American troops and body bags, took rounds of anti-aircraft fire immediately upon takeoff from Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. At once, a right engine burst into flames. It was the middle of the Tet Offensive, when coordinated Viet Cong raids pounded American installations in South Vietnam. A GI sitting by the wing spotted the engine fire outside his window and caught the attention of one of the stewardesses, Gayle Larson, then 25, who sped to the front to alert the cockpit crew of three.

The flight engineer raced into the cabin to inspect. As Larson remembers, the planeload of GIs was unimpressed, "paying no attention to the disaster outside the cabin windows." The flight was redirected from its original destination — some holiday spot in the Pacific, no one remembers now — and instead flew to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. *(Note: During my (Doug Severt) tour of duty at Clark AB in 1965 there were several Cat. B (Pan Am) flights that had to quickly leave Vietnam, escaping to Clark AB empty).* The 707 was a first-generation long-

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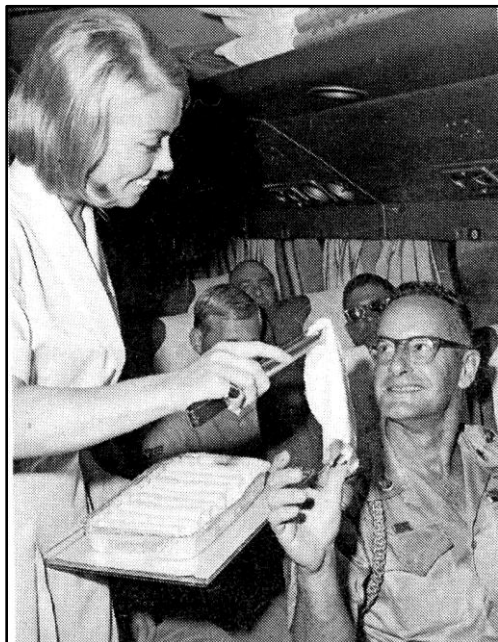
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distance jet with four engines, but it could fly on just three. In an all-economy configuration, it could carry 180 GIs.

Larson and her roommate, Susan Harris, who was also on the flight, secured the cabin for safety and fed the troops. "We were just trying to make sure everything was OK," Harris says.



**Pan Am flight attendant Isabel Dustman serves a towel to Sgt. Robert Gear.**

Now in their 70s, Larson, of Portland, Oregon, and Harris, of Kingston, Washington, recall their surviving a sniper attack and an engine failure as a moment of comic juxtapositions: The wing was on fire, but inside the smell of freshly baked Nestle Toll House cookies wafted through the cabin. During their years of service, it was a ritual for the roommates to mix up and freeze rolls of cookie dough at their home in Sausalito, California, for the trips to Vietnam.

"The guys ate a lot of cookies" that day, Larson says.

"They had probably seen far worse things on the ground fighting." A few nights later, while waiting for a new engine to arrive from Hong Kong, at a happy hour in the officers' club at Clark Air Base, Harris met a pilot for Braniff airlines who would become her husband.

## **WOMEN WENT UNRECOGNIZED**

For a small and unrecognized group of women, now mostly in their 70s, such high-drama, meet-cute moments are the personal and pedestrian memories of a war that otherwise divided a nation. These Pan Am stewardesses (now an outdated term but common at the time) were volunteers and got no special training for flying into war, though their pilots were mostly World War II or Korean War vets. Their aircraft routinely took ground fire. The pilots, all male, received hazardous-duty pay for flights into the combat zone. The women aboard did not.

The U.S. Air Force gave the flight attendants a rank of second lieutenants; if they were captured they could claim protections of prisoners of war. But they were civilians. Their uniforms were

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wrist-length white gloves and a baby blue "overseas cap." In addition to serving as first aid and safety officers in flight, the women had to undergo girdle and weight checks.

During the Vietnam War, Pan Am had an exclusive contract with the Pentagon to run R&R (rest and recreation) flights for soldiers on leave in the Pacific. Rented to the nation for \$1, it was effectively a military airline within the airline, starting with a fleet of six DC-6 propeller planes and, ultimately, 707 jets, calling daily at three air bases in the theater of combat. "We staff it with our best and most beautiful stewardesses," the Pan Am vice president told the Associated Press in 1966.

Over the course of the war, some of the women would fly as many as 200 times into the combat zone. Yet the Vietnam airlift crews got no medals or congressional citations for their work. There were no parades, nor much movement to celebrate their role or their place as accidental pioneers in military history. Although airlift crews for the 1991 Gulf War were celebrated with service medals from the Air Force, the pilots and flight attendants of the Vietnam War have not been similarly recognized. For more than 50 years, the stewardesses' war stories have mostly not been told.

### **VOLUNTEERS FOR THE DURATION**

The Pan Am stewardesses served a military role during the Vietnam War some 30 years before the U.S. armed forces would revoke the combat exclusion policy for women. Of the 2.7 million American troops who saw active duty in the Vietnam War, 91% traveled to the war zone on one of 23 U.S. commercial air carriers, which hauled one-fourth of military cargo overseas.

By 1967, some 800 flight attendants were working in the combat zone, transporting about 2.5 million military passengers. For many young soldiers, the female crew members would be the last American women they would ever see.

The women were about the same age, all with outgoing personalities, everyone had been to college at least two years and spoke a foreign language. They were predominantly white, though about 11% of the women on the Pacific routes were of Asian heritage. The uniform was a great equalizer. "We were clones of each other," says Marjorie Perry of Tucson.

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**A typical view of the cabin on a commercial flight, either going to or leaving Vietnam. Photo by Ernest Peters.**

Flight attendants were among the largest group of American civilians in the combat theater. A typical soldier's tour was 12 months in country. Some flight attendants volunteered to staff the airlift through the duration of the conflict, from the troop buildup under President Lyndon B. Johnson to the last flights out of a surrendering Saigon in April 1975. Few men can say they saw as much of the Vietnam War for as long.

### **JOYOUS TAKE OFFS, GRIM LANDINGS**

The R&R flights were a key part of boosting troop morale. Trips initially went to short-haul destinations in Asia such as Taipei or Bangkok.

Despite the horrors of war, flights out of Vietnam were joyous, the happiest places in the Pacific; GIs often broke into applause on takeoff. Likewise, returning flights were somber. "You could hear a pin drop, not a word, not a peep out of them," recalls Jacqui Nolte of Granite Bay, California, among the women who flew through the Tet Offensive. "They knew where they were going."

While the women were all young, they remember the troops were younger. Many of the boys

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were teenagers who read comic books throughout the flight. Flight attendants offered themselves up as big sisters and pen pals, too. It was an age before in-flight movies, and the women brought not just cookies aboard but also party hats, wigs and costumes for in-flight dress-up contests. Because of the duration of the flights, the women had time to get to know the troops. Some tried to keep up the friendships, occasionally to sobering effect. "I started writing to different soldiers, being a pen pal to several of them, but they all got killed, and I felt like a jinx," remembers Helen Davey, who flew with Pan Am for 20 years.

Airplane landings were intense. Instead of a low and gentle approach, as at a modern airport, the aircraft came in high to the end, of the airstrip. At the last possible moment, the captain would point the plane's nose at the ground and dive "practically straight down" to avoid anti-aircraft fire, says John Marshall, a former Pan Am flight engineer, now an aviation safety inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration in St. Louis. "It took a lot of skill to flare (a DC-6) at the last minute and get the airplane in a position to land on that runway."

Aircraft were allowed no more than two hours to turn around and unload a full plane of GIs, refuel and reload. After landing, engineers checked the fuselage for bullet holes. In an era of hijackings, crews could get held hostage by Vietnamese dissidents or American soldiers. For security, cabin crews were often ordered to not leave the plane.

But even that was dangerous. A white passenger airplane with a big blue ball on its tail was a standing target, visible above the tree line. The airfield at Da Nang was littered on either side with downed military aircraft and blown-up trucks.

"We dropped the guys off, and there were machine guns at the end of the ramp, and they were shooting at us at the end of the runway," says Nolte. As a new flight full of GIs would race up the stairs, men sometimes handed off pieces of fresh shrapnel to the women for souvenirs.

Men who had families frequently chose to take leave in Honolulu if they could, meeting up with wives and small children. Those flights and the airport reunions stand out for the stewardesses. "I remember one little boy grasping the leg of his father, saying, 'Don't go! Don't go!' That really broke my heart," says Donna Igoe of Sherman Oaks, California. "That's what they were facing, and they were enormously courageous."

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Many of the women used layovers in Asia to visit wounded soldiers at military hospitals in Vietnam, Guam, Manila and Tokyo. "One (amputee) asked me, 'Is my wife going to accept me this way?' recalls Marjorie Perry. "'Of course she will,' I said. Now I wonder: Did he even live?"

The stewardesses played a critical national defense role in the war. And though Pan Am no longer exists (the company folded in 1991) its female crew members were eyewitnesses to history. The women who worked for the Vietnam airlift say that, by and large, they are not troubled that they have been left out of the United States' Vietnam chapter, or that the nation has barely recognized their place in the war.

**"The guys recognized it," Ann Moon says. "And that means a lot."**



**A Pan Am B707 on the tarmac at a stateside APOE being readied for a trip to Vietnam. Photo by Hank Milnark.**



**A United B707 approaches a gate after arrival in the 'world'. Photo by Paul Minert.**

Sarah Rose is the author of "D-Day Girls: The Spies Who Armed the Resistance, Sabotaged the Nazis, and Helped Win World War II" and "For All the Tea in China: How England Stole the World's Favorite Drink and Changed History." Thanks to Hank Milnark for sharing this story.

**If you haven't read it, you need to check out the story of a Seaboard World DC-8 carrying 214 servicemen to Vietnam which allegedly strayed off course and was forced down by MIG fighters and the passengers and 17 crew members were held as captives in Russia. That story is in [Phan Rang Newsletter 81](#) "Russia Hold Jet Forced To Land With 214 GIs". Another story about the same incident is in [Phan Rang Newsletter 16](#) "A Stewardess' Record of Soviet MiGs Snaring a U. S. Transport".**



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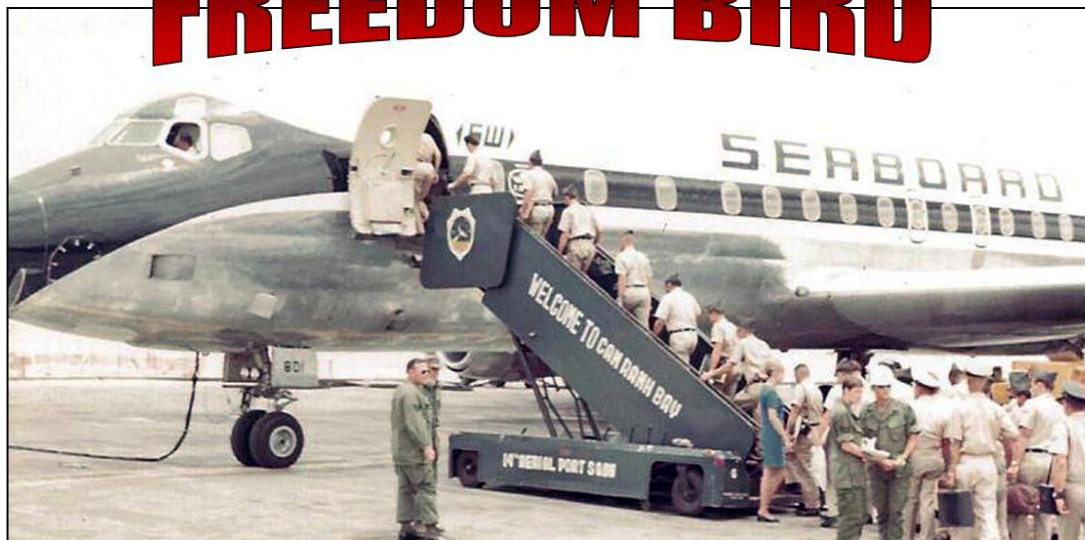
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This previously appeared in Phan Rang Newsletter 85.

# **FREEDOM BIRD**



The freedom bird, the freedom bird,  
The greatest sound you ever heard.  
Wind over wings, an upward climb,  
You serve your year, you serve your time.  
A ground shaking noise, an ear splitting sound.  
The freedom bird lifts off the ground.  
To carry you to the land of your dreams,  
A land where green meadows and twinkling streams.  
A land where freedom is an inherent thing,  
A land where people can freely sing.  
A land you were away from for maybe a year,  
A land your buddies died for without any fear.  
The freedom bird, the freedom bird  
The mightiest sound you ever heard.  
In just a few days, a month, maybe more,  
Up the ramp you'll go right thru her door.  
When that bird has lifted with that beautiful sound,  
Look out the window at the far below ground.  
Good by Vietnam! No more will I roam!  
Come on freedom bird, take me home.

**AUTHOR UNKNOWN**

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The picture above is a Continental Airlines B-707 returning from the far east to Travis AFB, Ca., October 1966. Photo by Douglas Severt. The list below are the Freedom birds that I remember, far short of the 23 carriers that were referenced in the article above.

**Airlift International**

**Arrow Air**

**Braniff International Airlines**

**Capital Airlines**

**Continental Airlines**

**Flying Tigers**

**Northwest Orient**

**Pan Am**

**Saturn Airways**

**Seaboard World**

**Slick Airways**

**TWA**

**United Airlines**

**World Airways**

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### A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

#### How Aussies solved the bomb Mission Markings Deliemma

"Leading Aircraftman (LAC) **Fred Muller**, a surface finisher with No 2 Squadron at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam had a problem. He sprays a small bomb on the side of the RAAF Canberras after each bombing mission - but was running out of space. He solved the problem by making a new size which represents 100 missions."

The second image, taken of A84-231 at Phan Rang by Rod Farquhar, shows the individual mission markings and the new 100 mission mark. *Story provided by Roger Lambert and all images from the Australian War Memorial.*



*Thanks to Roger Lambert for sending in this story. By the way we are going to be seeing some more wonderful stories by Roger in the next couple of issues.*

**Kurt Kraft wrote of an experience with the Provider:** I had a flight on a C-123 to Taipei in Taiwan for my R&R. When I was ready to get on the plane they passed out parachutes for us to learn how to put them on if needed. I then learned that the aircraft was going there for its major overhaul. I was thinking I hope it makes it. That was a very noisy flight!

When I went to get on the aircraft to return to good old Phan Rang I learned the aircraft was still not ready to go back. So another day was spent in Taiwan.

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### **Maj. Stephen’s Fini Flight 614<sup>th</sup> TFS “Lucky Devils”**



**Second row: Second from left- Al Cox, Third Matt Wallace. Third row: End- Bob Beckel and Skip Ruedeman is kneeling on the right with the hat, far right and Maj. Stevens is standing directly in back of Skip.**

**David Knighton commented on Facebook about the Hooch Maids:** They had to do all the cleaning of the barracks; dusting, sweeping, even making beds. They also did the laundry. I think we each chipped in \$4 each month. More than worth the money!

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### **Lockridge Man Commander of Vietnam Base - Col. Crane**

**LOCKRIDGE** - U. S. Air Force lieutenant Colonel **Emery J. Crane**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Emery R. Crane, Lockridge, has assumed command of the 310<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron at Phan Rang Air Force Base, Vietnam.

Colonel Crane served at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., as Military Airlift Command Liaison officer at Headquarters, Air Force Systems Command, prior to his appointment at Phan Rang.

Col. Crane, who holds the aeronautical rating of command pilot, was commissioned in 1950 through the aviation cadet program.

The 1940 Lockridge High School graduate received his BA degree in 1952 from Iowa Wesleyan College. His wife is the former Janet L. Smith.

*(Fairfield Ledger, Fairfield, Iowa, December 14, 1970)*

**Donald Dinubilo share a memory on Facebook:** Had my mom send me several pairs of nylons. Bar girls went nuts and I got beaucoup souvenirs for several days.

### **Former FAC Instructor Named Wing Commander - Col. Joseph Bleymaier Jr.**

*Special to the News-Herald*

The 47th Flying Training Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base soon will have a new commander.

Col. **Joseph S. Bleymaier Jr.** will assume command, succeeding Col. Clark Griffith Change of Command ceremonies July 24.

Griffith is being reassigned to Headquarters Air Training Command at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas as the deputy chief of staff for personnel.

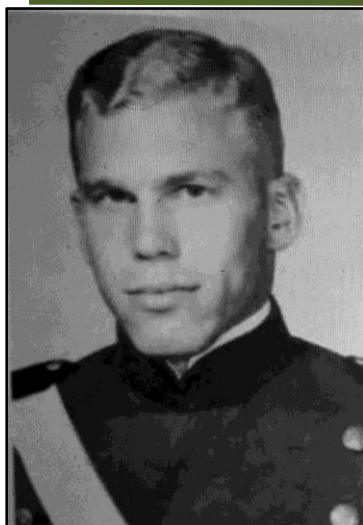
Currently, Bleymaier is commander of the Officer Training School, Lackland Air Force Base.

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**Cadet Joseph Bleymaier**

Born in Walla Walla, Wash., Bleymaier graduated from high school in San Pedro, Calif., 1961. He is a 1965 graduate of the Air Force Academy, earned master of political science degree from Auburn University in 1975, graduated from the Squadron Officer School, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and is a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College, and the Air War College. **Additional information about his early schooling:** *He went directly to the United States Air Force Academy from Mary Star of the Sea High School in San Pedro, California. Receiving a congressional appointment, via the football team, Joe came with high hopes for football. He was injured his freshman year, however, and two subsequent knee operations have turned his efforts to coaching the 19<sup>th</sup> Squadron*

*Team. He has been on the commandant's List seven times, and the Superintendent's List once, also a member of the Catholic Religious Council. A flight commander during the fall of '64 Joe's future plans include flying, and eventually graduate school.*

He completed his undergraduate pilot training Webb AFB, Texas in 1966 and was assigned to Perrin AFB, Texas, where he completed training in the F-102 "Delta Dagger". After training in The F-101 "Voodoo" at Tyndall AFB, Fla., his first operational assignment was with the 84th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Hamilton AFB, Calif., in 1967 flying F-101s and T-33 "T-Birds".

In 1968, Bleymaier was assigned to the 20<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, Da Nang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. He flew 300 combat missions in O-1 "Bird Dogs" and O-2s as a forward air controller out of Quang Ngai AB and later served as a forward air controller instructor at **Phan Rang AB**.

Upon his return from Southeast Asia, he was assigned to the 62nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron, K.I. Sawyer AFB, Mich. Bleymaier then served a year at the Pentagon as an Air Staff Training Officer (ASTRA), in the Directorate of Doctrine, Concepts and Objectives before being assigned as the chief flight examiner in F-101 and T-33 at Headquarters, Aerospace Defense Command, Evaluation Division, Colorado Springs, Colo, in 1972.

Upon completion of studies at the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., in 1975,

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he was assigned to the 318<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, flying F-106 "Delta Darts" at McChord AFB, Wash. In 1976, he became commander of the F-106 Alert Detachment and served as base operations officer at Kingsley Field, Ore.

He transferred to Headquarters, Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force, Izmir, Turkey, in 1978, where he served with the Tactical Evaluation Branch, then as chief, Special Operations, and later, executive assistant to the deputy commander.

Upon his return from Turkey, Bleymaier served three years on the Air Staff at the Pentagon as an international political military affairs officer in the Directorate of Plans, Doctrine Division, where his duties included serving as executive secretary to the General Officer Council on Chemical Warfare, and participating in the Air Force 2000 study.

In 1982, he was assigned to the Directorate of Operations as chief, Joint Matters Group and later that year as chief, Air Base Survivability Group until his assignment to the Air War College in Aug. 1983.

He assumed command of the 3503<sup>rd</sup> Air Force Recruiting Group, Robins AFB, Ga., in June, 1984. In July 1985 Bleymaier was assigned as vice commander, 12<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Wing, Randolph AFB, Texas. In August 1986 he assumed command of the Officer Training School at Lackland AFB.

Bleymaier is a command pilot with more than 3,300 flying hours. His military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, Air Medal with 15 oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Achievement Medal and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with silver star.

Bleymaier is married to the former Marcia Mary Hillenbrand of San Diego. They have three children, Tim, Steve and Cindy.

**Note:** Joseph was born in 1943 when his father who was with the 8<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group at Walla Walla Army Air Base in Washington. His grandfather was Maj. Gen. Joseph S. Bleymaier and his son Brigadier General Steven J. Bleymaier is Director of Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection, Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, Illinois.)

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**Maj. Gen. Joseph S. Bleymaier  
(Grandfather)**



**Joseph Bleymaier Jr**



**Brigadier General Steven J.  
Bleymaier (son)**

*(Del Rio News Herald, Del Rio, Texas, June 25, 1987)*



### **A SIGHT SELDOM SEEN**

**David Marks at the Phan Rang train station holding up the smallest flip flop he had ever seen to show size perspective. He also stated that he had guard duty twice for several of the railroad cars that he assumed were goods for the exchange.**

**Lynn Davis wrote on Facebook:** My barracks was the farthest barracks from the flight line, below the MARS station. There was a bench behind the barracks that was called the "group W" bench after the song "Alice's Restaurant". Once a week the security police would drive by and collect everybody and took us down to Security Police HQ where they frisked us. Most of the guys would empty their pockets and most had a significant sized bag of weed on them. The police would look everything over carefully and then told everyone to put everything back in their pockets including the weed. I wasn't a big pot smoker but I used to sit on the bench just to shoot the shit. I was surprised when the cops told everyone to put the pot back in their pockets and I finally asked why that was ok. The police told me they were looking for heroin because it was generally uncut and very deadly. After the inspection was over they gave us a ride back up to the "group W" bench.

**War was hell**



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**FERRYING C-119'S FROM LOCKBOURNE AFB, OHIO TO PHAN RANG AB, RVN  
a firsthand account by Roy Davis**



**FERRYING  
LOCKBOURNE AFB  
TO  
PHAN RANG AB**



Roy Davis said our departure was rescheduled for October, November, and December 1969. My aircraft was scheduled along with five others for December. We departed in late December and spent the first two nights at Malmstrom AFB, Montana, and McChord AFB, Washington. At Malmstrom we had to have our right J-85 jet engine replaced. We had to take the longer northern route because the aircraft did not have enough fuel to make it from California to Hawaii.

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**Getting ready for the long boring and tiring journey to Vietnam.**

**On Dec 31, 1969 we left McChord AFB for Alaska. Our one year tour started as soon as we left the CONUS. I spent the first day of my Vietnam tour snow skiing at the Alyeska ski area in Anchorage, Alaska.**

**Our next stop was at the naval station on Adak Island in the Aleutian chain. Alaska king crabs were in season and we got to visit a commercial crab boat and left with a large green plastic bag filled with pure crab meat—delicious.**



**C-119's lined up on the snowy ramp at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska**



**Next we headed south to Midway Island. The weather on this route was terrible—low clouds and huge thunderstorms in freezing temperatures. The other aircraft in our flight, Capt Dick Twaddle was the aircraft commander, called and said they lost their weather radar and could they use their FM homing radio to home in on us and thereby avoid the thunderstorms. A short time later they called asked us what the f%# we were doing. They said they were flying into every thunderstorm on the route and were icing up to the point where they could no**

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longer maintain altitude. We finally figured out that the FM homing device preferred thunderstorms to our FM radio—close call for them.



Midway Atoll



Wake Island



Albatross



We arrived at Midway at the height of black albatross mating season. Quite a sight to see these large birds doing their mating dance. They were everywhere so you really had to watch where you stepped.

Guam and Clark AB came next. The trip entire took almost a month. The first thing we did was head right back to Clark AB after arriving in Phan Rang to attend Jungle Survival school. This was not a fun course. We were let loose in the jungle and had to escape, evade and survive. The area we were in was infested with rats. During the night you could feel them running across your body.



Enroute to Clark AB

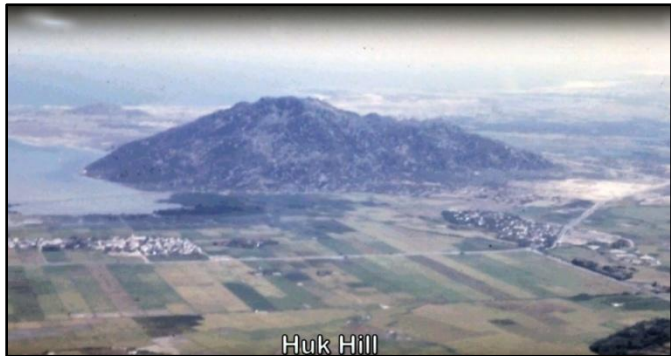
Enroute to Clark AB, Phillipines. Notice the “Fly United” nose art that we picked up in Guam.

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On final approach at Phan Rang AB...our home for the next eleven months. In the next issue we'll look at some of the crews that manned these aircraft and how they lived at Phan Rang.

Thanks to Roy A. Davis, Col. (Ret.) for this story. To see the entire video click [here](#).



**Gunn Assigned Near Phan Rang** - PHAN RANG, Vietnam - Army Pfc. **Roy S. Gunn**, 25, son of Floyd S. Gunn, 1020 N. Aransas, Alice, Tex., was assigned to the 589th Engineer Battalion near

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Phan Rang, Vietnam, Jan. 6 as a finance clerk. His wife, Carol, lives at 4008 Douglas, Farmington, N.M. (Farmington Daily Times, Farmington, New Mexico, January 26, 1969)

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Captain **Richard E. Weizenegger Jr.**, son of Mrs. Patricia S. Weizenegger, 1821 Valrnon Ave., Eau Claire is a member of the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. (*Eau Claire Leader Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, June 1, 1971*)

- O -

OWEN, Wisconsin

Technical Sergeant **William R. Krach**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Mike J. Krach, is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Sergeant Krach is an aircraft maintenance technician. (*Eau Claire Leader Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, June 1, 1971*)

- O -

BARRONET, Wisconsin

Major **Jack W. Graf**, son Mr. and Mrs. George R. Graf, Rt. I, Barronet, Wi., is a member of the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. He is a maintenance staff officer. (*Eau Claire Leader Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, June 1, 1971*)

- O -

NEILLSVILLE, Wisconsin

Staff Sergeant **William A. Perrine**, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Perrine, 2204 Black River Road, Neillsville, Wi., is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Sergeant Perrine is an aircraft maintenance technician. (*Eau Claire Leader Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, June 1, 1971*)

- O -

IOWAN Injured In Viet Accident

(The Register's Iowa's News Service)

STANTON, IA. - An Air Force first lieutenant from Stanton was injured in a motor cycle accident at Phan Rang Air Force Base in Vietnam a day before he was scheduled leave for a three-week leave home and re-assignment to Germany. Mr. and Mrs. Altis Olander of Stanton, were told that their son 1st Lt. **Dean Olander**, suffered multiple face fractures, a broken leg and cuts. He is being treated aboard the hospital ship, U.S.S. Repose. (*Des Moines Register, Des Moines,*

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*Iowa, January 10, 1968)*

- O -

A1C **David (Mike) Reifert**, who is stationed at Phan Rang in South Vietnam, recently sent his wife a clipping from a paper explaining the recent award the Phan Rang squadrons received. The article stated that the 315<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing at Phan Rang was officially redesignated as the 315<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing. The importance of this airlift role is confirmed by the wing's recent receipts of its fifth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. The citation accompanying the award read in part: "The superlative and combined efforts of all personnel were directly responsible for the wing's record-breaking accomplishments in tactical airlift with a degree of reliability previously unattained in the Republic of Vietnam." "Mike" is the son of Mrs. Ray E. Moore, Rt. 4, Delphi and Marcus Reifert of Fort Wayne. His wife is the former Linda Wilson of East Main Street, Delphi. His new address is: A1C David Michael Reifert, FR 307-50-1347, 309 Tactical Airlift Squadron, Box 7302 APO San Francisco, California 96321. (*Flora Hoosier Democrat, Flora, Indiana, February 6, 1970*)

- O -

Receives Medal - Master Sergeant **Rowland F. Barnes Sr.**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Germain C. Barnes, 1726 Mable St., Ottumwa, receives his second award of the U. S. Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, from Colonel Cregg P. Noland Jr., commander, 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing. The sergeant was cited for his outstanding professional skill, leadership and devotion to duty as a supply superintendent at Vandenberg AFB, Calif. The sergeant served at Tuy Hoa AB, Vietnam before arriving at Phan Rang, is a 1952 graduate of Albia High School. His wife, Mary, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Earl A. Johnson, Albia. (*Alvia Monroe County News, Albia, Iowa, June 14, 1971*)



**Frank Wilder wrote:** I was pulling KP at the chow hall the afternoon the daily rain and lighting storms would hit the base at approximately the same time every day. Anyway, Lighting flashed and hit just outside the hall...traces of the lighting danced throughout the hall floors amazing all and myself as well. An Air force airman who's last name was Weightman, was hit and later died. We played cards with this airman, a real nice guy, I think he was a rank above me at the time.

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The lighting hit his mess kit and killed him while cleaning and rinsing the kit as we all did. No lie, the very next day all personnel was eating off paper plates from then on, at least the rest of my tour, (1966-67)

Hi Doug,

I too was impressed with Issue 204 – the story of Captain McKay was particularly sad and tragic. You have certainly got the US-Aussie connection tied up!

Reference the range of ANZAC Day celebrations in the US, I suspect that the Aussie Defence Attache or their staff at the Australian Embassy in Washington DC would have a list. They might be worth trying out. Keep up the good work!

Cheers,

Bob Howe

Doug,

A short note to say thank you for continuing with the Phan Rang News. I look forward to each issue. You are keeping history alive and we need that today.

Wishing you and your family a very safe and relaxing weekend.

All the very best,

Tom (Thomas S. Gates)

Florida Veterans Hall of Fame - Inductee

USSOCOM Patriots Award - Recipient

Hi Doug,

I hope you are well and don't mind me writing direct to you. I'm a No 2 Squadron RAAF Queensland Association member and thoroughly enjoy reading Phan Rang news. I've learnt so much about Happy Valley from the articles. I was at Phan Rang Feb 67 to mid Feb 68. I was initially with RAAF No 5 Airfield Construction Squadron before transfer to 2 Squadron in May 67. 5 ACS was with 554 CES (Redhorse). Apart from doing a lot of long working days we did have some leisure. As I remember it there was a large tent that served as a 'beer hall' and entertainment centre. This tent had a resident band which I think was called "The Hank Wells band". I can't seem to find a reference to tent or the band so I was hoping that perhaps you might be able to help as I am writing up a few notes about my time in Happy Valley. From memory it was located near a muster point for the Security Police/ Dog handlers.

I do remember that getting back to our assigned barracks was hazardous due to the ditches

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that were being dug for the sewerage and water reticulation pipes. But that’s another story. Our regular after work watering hole was the Red Horse “Igloo” bar located behind the mess. We also visited the Bamboo Viper NCO’s Club for drinks on occasions. I was a member and I still have my membership card. Just one last thing; perhaps you could run a story about the serious fuel pipeline explosion that occurred in Phan Rang township in May 67. There is a good report of it in a book “Phan Rang Chronicles” written by a British Medical Doctor named Hamilton. He was working at the local hospital and treated the casualties.

Best regards. Bob Browne

### **KEEP THOSE LETTERS AND STORIES COMING!**

**Doug’s Comments:** First of all good news, all the Phan Rang Newsletters (205 and counting), Phan Fares and the Roll-Call will be archived at the Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. Also Fold3 (Part of Ancestry.com) has already received all of our Phan Rang Newsletters and Phan Fares in digital format and will be available to researchers soon. If you have a story to tell, please write it down and send it to me so that your unique experiences can be saved for posterity. I’m encouraging you to write your biography (no specific format...include your entire career), if you haven’t already done so, for a future newsletter issue. I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. 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:dougsevert@cox.net> and put ‘unsubscribe’ in subject line.