

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 206

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THE GREAT HURRAH, OR, HOW A FIGHTER PILOT CAN MAKE IT BETTER



by Ron Deyhle

I have seen Willie Mays hit a homerun; Adolph Plummer set a world record in the 440 yard dash, and have seen an Air America Sikorsky H-34 pick up a wet and

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slightly concerned downed American pilot 20 miles from Dien Bien Phu. But the most exciting thing I have ever seen at Phan Rang Air Base on 1 July 1971. The traumatic and moving experiences of war are never forgotten. When I drift to those thoughts of my distant past that formed me, I think about this experience at Phan Rang, and it still sends chills down my spine. **Hold my beer while I tell you this tale - a true account.**



**1Lt. Ronald Russell
Deyhle**

I had been in Vietnam 14 months; five months at Tuy Hoa and nine at Phan Rang (PRG). I was ready to go home. Everybody was. Ready for the land of round-eyed girls, music where the band singers could articulate “Rs,” root beer, and Miniskirts. The wing weenies were concerned about pilots doing crazy flybys or rolls etc. on their last missions. “We don’t want to kill someone, or ourselves,” they said. We had a C-123 Ranch Hand try a tactical pitch up at PRG and killed himself and 5 other people. Wing had put out the word:

“Don’t do anything unauthorized on last flights or you’ll pay the piper.”

That was the setting for the last F-100 combat mission in Vietnam. It was to be a flight of four, with a representative from each squadron in the flight (Tuy Hoa had five squadrons, Phan Rang had four). Col. Cregg P. Nolan, Wing Commander, led the flight, Capt. William M. Guth was Two, Capt. William A. Bazar, Three, and Four was newly promoted Capt. William “Chip” Taylor. I didn’t see the takeoff, but Fred Tomlins, Lee Howard, Scott Madsen and I ambled down to the flightline expecting to see a vanilla, Casper Milk-Toast *fini*.

Little did we know what was in store. The tiger was in the shadows. There were more people on the tarmac than would be at a Dallas Cowboys football game. WOW!! It was packed. Man, it was neat. Maybe we will have enough money to pay the piper! Also watching were all the unsung heroes who actually repaired with their own hands, and kept these ancient beautiful birds flying. Watching were rescue crews, support, security, ROK troops, Bookie (C-123) folks. Everyone was there.

Let me introduce you to “Chip” Taylor. A 1968 Air Force Academy Grad, he was a fighter pilot’s pilot. Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*, Robert Mitchum in *The Hunter*, Chip Taylor in Vietnam. He was

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wild charismatic, fun, and unpredictable. So a safe place for Chip, on his last flight, was with the Wing Commander, right? *Riiight!!*

Air Force mistake number 1: putting Chip in the last flight. Mistake number 2: putting Chip in an F-model with an Air Force photographer in the back seat. Mistake number 3; putting Chip in the number 4 flight position.

Here they come. Standard overhead pattern; 1,500’ AGL 300 knots. Echelon with pitch-outs to final to landing-all textbook. Lead, Two and Three land uneventfully. But wait, what is going on with Four? He is extending his downwind. In Chip, something had stirred. As the great John Prine said, “I lived down deep inside my head.” Is this all? Is this It? Six years, 360,283 F-100 combat sorties, the most of any fighter in Vietnam; 242 F-100s lost, 87 F-100 pilots, American warriors, dead; 267 military personnel died while at Phan Rang. No F’ing Way! There has to be more, a four ship flyby...*something!*

What is Chip doing? Turning to final, up comes the landing gear and the flaps. It looks like he will crash short of the runway. Off to my right, I heard a low rumble. It grew louder, like the roar of a primeval beast. Anyone who has ever heard the sound of a J57 afterburner, will never forget it. Probably won’t hear well again either. As Chip rolls out on final we see the afterburner lit. Chip tears down the runway, 600 knots, 25 feet, afterburner roaring. He goes right over Lead, #2 and #3. My wife say’s I can’t hear, and tells me to clean the wax out of my ears. But I think that J57 in afterburner did the job on my ears. It was like superman going by, or Bobby Unser in the Indianapolis 500. It was *great!* It doesn’t take long for Chip to eat up two miles of runway. Before the end of the runway he does a tactical pitch up to downwind, followed by gear and flaps off a tight perch to the last landing of the F-100 in combat. **WOW!**

The thunder of the crowd was deafening. Louder than the crowd when Michael Jordan would sink a 3-pointer with two seconds left to win the game. Or louder than the fans with the Franco Harris immaculate reception. If there had been goal posts there, they would have been torn down. It was pure exhilaration!! I got hit in the back of a loose beer can. I still today walk tilted to the right. The crowd was in hysterical ecstasy.

The spirt of our lost comrades of that year I’m sure were smiling. What a great tribute to them:
Charles Edward “Bob” McGleish, Charlie Kollenberg, Mike Caudil, Jon King, John Mautz Neill,

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Mike McGovern, Clive Jeffs, Pete Moriarty, Joe Smith, William Buerk, Ben Lang. All 11 brothers, all a future lost.

The rollout and celebration was fantastic. Chip sitting on the nose of the F-100 #874 (The last combat F-100 landing in SEA) with a beer in one hand, getting hosed-down by the fire truck. Champagne and jubilation were had by all. Well, almost all. Colonel Nolan...maybe not. I asked Chip if he planned this. “No,” he said, “it just happened.” **I’m sure in the deep recesses of his mind, he said to himself, “what the F..., here goes!”**



“Chip” gets his farewell soaking, regardless of his impromptu performance before the whole world.

Captain Taylor managed to go on to glory flying front-line fighters via another AF stint, then Air Guard and AF Reserve career.



Somewhere birds are singing and the sun is shining. But as with many happy stories, this one turns sour at the end. The Air Force took a dim view of his “burner go-around,” We all flew our airplanes home to Guard Units in the States. Three waves of F-100s over three weeks. (See *Phan Rang Newsletter 44 for the flight home titled “35th TFW Packs Up for Long Flight Home” and “Working Trip Home For Pilots”*.) Chip, a dedicated fighter pilot known for his high number of hours and combat missions and who passed up R&R for more combat sorties, went home in a “cattle car” (*his description that described commercial contract aircraft that ferried troops to and from Vietnam and were usually filled to capacity, hence the term “cattle car”*). These flights were generally referred to as “Freedom Birds” which are featured in *Phan Rang Newsletter 205 “Flying the Freedom Bird”*.) and with an Article 15 in hand. As Rodney Dangerfield say, “I don’t get no respect.” But Chip, as will all good fighter pilots, recovered. He went to A-7Ds, got another extended tour at Korat, even went downtown Hanoi in Linebacker II, then got picked to

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go IPIS. Rather than leave fighters, he got out of the active Air Force, joined an A-7D guard unit, and then switched to the Air Force Reserves, flying F-105s, F-4s and F-16s. The Article 15 turned out to be a door-opener to the Guard and the Reserves and a radically different Air Force than exist today. He did what we all want to do. His whole career was in the cockpit, in front-line fighters, and he retired as an O6. How about them apples, huh? As Paul Harvey would say, “And now you know the rest of the story...good day.”

Thanks for contributions from Scott Madsen, Lee Howard and Chip Taylor. - Ron Deyhle
Yep, Ron, a well done tale, if I say so myself. Yet I still feel, as I read and re-read the text, that I’ve heard of and /or seen this “happening” sometime/somewhere before, perhaps as a small part of a larger article in our journal about the last Hun landing and/or taking off in Vietnam. So, I’ll continue to look for that faint recollection in The Intake. And I hope with other people looking too, we just might find a trace of my fading memories. **It’s Hell...growing older!** -
Medley Gatewood publisher editor of the Intake

F-100 #874 maintenance men are jubilant and pose for a picture with their airplane



The last missions of F-100's ever to land at Phan Rang Air Base, 1971 flown by Chip Taylor. All of the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron Maintenance guys rode

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their bird and we all cheered!

photo by Robert Remel

“*The Great Hurrah, or, How a Fighter Pilot Can Make It Better*” is published with the permission of Ronald Dehyle and the *Intake*. This is his second story that he has contributed to the Phan Rang Newsletter. His first was “Remembering 1Lt. Clive Garth Jeffs” in Phan Rang Newsletter 194 and he promises to do more. **Lee Howard** (see picture below) who was mentioned in this story and also a witness to the event was highlighted in *Phan Rang Newsletter 199*. The “Chronological Order of Phan Rang AB Air Losses” in *Phan Rang Newsletter 197* and “Casualty list for Phan Rang AB Assigned personnel” in *Phan Rang Newsletter 155* and others will have more details on each specific 11 brothers all lost in Vietnam. These losses only represent a fraction of Phan Rang assigned personnel that didn’t make it home. We all remember and honor those that served so valiantly and we will never forget them.



Lt. Lee Howard one of the spectators on that fateful day, poses for a picture with his aircraft.

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WHAT IS AN ALCE?



WHAT IS AN ALCE?

834th Airlift Division



The 834th Air Division essentially ran an in-country passenger and cargo airline. Operational control was exercised by the Airlift Control Center (ALCC) at Tan Son Nhut. A dozen or so Airlift Control elements (ALCE) across Vietnam acted as extensions of the ALCC. The ALCC would schedule all missions the night before and the ALCEs would flight follow each mission and reroute and/or change loads as required. The Phan Rang ALCE launched three squadrons of C-123 aircraft, flight followed and rerouted them during the day, and recovered them in the evening. Also control was exercised over all 834th Airlift Division aircraft transiting Phan Rang AB. We coordinated constantly with the Aerial Port Detachment at Phan Rang on passenger and cargo matters hence the need for a Port representative to be physically located in the ALCE control center.

834th Airlift Division aircraft in order of size were C-130, C-123, and C-7A. Primary ALCE communications with C-130s was VHF, with C-123s UHF, and I don't recall what the occasional C-7A used. They were primarily used to support Special Forces bases and other locations with very short runways and were not based at Phan Rang, so we saw little of them. We also had HF single side band to communicate with ALCC and other ALCEs. We could communicate with aircraft just after they took off from Japan via HF.

The field version of an ALCE was called a Combat Control Team (CCT). They worked out of radio jeeps at temporary Landing Zones (LZ). They were based at Tan Son Nhut and were airlifted in and out of LZs. When I went to Hue-Phu Bai to set up Hue ALCE at the beginning of Tet 68, we replaced a CCT with the call sign Tailpipe Charlie. Others were Tailpipe Alpha, Tailpipe Bravo, etc. I remember they gave me a much appreciated case of hand grenades when they left.

The unofficial but always used call sign on UHF/VHF for Phan Rang ALCE was *Happy Valley ALCE*.

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Phan Rang was called “Happy Valley” because before I got there it had never been hit by the VC. Our luck did not last but the name did. The HF call sign was Clifton Spotter. The ALCC was Hilda and Da Lat ALCE was *Dashing Mayors*. C-123 B models (no jets) were Hades 55 and C-123 K models (with auxiliary jet engines) were Bookie 55 with the 55 being any two digits, different for each aircraft.

My only experience with ALCEs was in Vietnam but I would imagine they operated much the same in peacetime. I was only in the USAF four years with 26 months in Vietnam. Before that I was an Aircraft Dispatcher at Base Operations at March AFB, CA, 22nd Bomb Wing. I also spent four months at Anderson AB, Guam, as AIC of a consolidated operations section for three B-52 squadrons called Bomber Crew Control, 4133rd Bomb Wing. That was all as a 27130/27150 Air Operations Specialist ending as a SSgt E-5. Air Operations did not have a Tech School, it was all OJT. I was told that there was a very long Tech School before my time but OJT was still necessary afterwards because Air Operations jobs varied widely.

Here’s a few interesting stories for you

We got a land line call at Phan Rang from Hilda, advising us that sabotage had been found on the ramp in C-130 aircraft based at Cam Ranh Bay. Hand grenades were found in the radio racks under the cockpit floor. They were put in Styrofoam cups with the pin removed and the cup was laid on its side. Vibration would move the grenade out of the cup, the handle would fly off, and three seconds later **BOOM**. We were to advise all Cam Ranh based C-130 aircraft we could raise on the radio. I told one pilot and he sent the Flight Engineer to check. He came back on the radio and said the FE found one and was holding it, now what? I told him to divert to Phan Rang and we would have EOD meet the aircraft on the taxiway. I watched in binoculars as the FE walked out the C-130 ramp and gave the grenade to EOD. So far as I know, none of the grenades exploded.

Another time at Hue we had a C-130 offloading at night with the two outboard engines running. 122mm rockets started coming in and the pilot yelled down to the FE and Loadmaster in the cargo bay “We’re getting the hell out of here!” He started accelerating from the parking spot, took a 45 degree high speed taxiway to the runway, and took off with the two inboard engines still spooling up.

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A couple of hours later, after the rockets had stopped, two guys in mud covered flight suits came up the stairs to the ALCE, which was located on the third floor of the four story control tower building. I said “Where did you come from? We haven’t had a plane on the ground for two hours.” They told me they were the FE and LM from the C-130. It seems they thought the pilot meant to abandon ship, so they ran out of the open ramp and jumped into a handy rocket crater.



This photo is Phan Rang ALCE on a rainy day in 1969. The guy on the left is the ALCE Controller (Combat Airlift Controller) and the guy on the right (SSgt Douglas Severt) is the Aerial Port Coordinator.

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The ALCE and Aerial Port Guys that made it Happen

From Left to right: **Sgt Bill Utterback**, ALCE, and the author of “What is an ALCE?”, **A1C Hanson**, Det 8, 14th APS, the port representative in ALCE with **MSgt Adams**, NCOIC of ALCE, **Amn Tony Schommer**, ALCE (Both Tony and Bill went on to become Air Traffic Controllers and Tony became an ordained minister and currently serves as one of the Pastor for the Phan Rang Alumni Group) and Unknown ALCE person. Bottom row left to right: Amn Hanson, with MSgt Adams in the background, and MSgt Adams in the center with the other two unknown. (Photo by **A1C Ken Levy**, Det 8, 14th APS, the port coordinator and he also performed as a Load Planner; planning all of the loads for the morning launch of the C-123s. Ken had a lot of interaction with the ALCE and he remembers a Major Stanley Johnson, ALCE Duty Officer, who carved homely little dioramas out of balsa wood, and sometimes, working on the night shift, they would play cribbage till dawn. Ken has had a very storied carrier being an artist and many other things and still works as a renowned Chef in New York state.), the last picture is A1C Ken Levy working the Port Desk in ALCE. Ken was an excellent coordinator and communicator.

ALCE Transports Move Everything

The people most responsible for getting people and cargo to their destinations in the Republic

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of Vietnam are the small groups of Air Force personnel who operate the airlift control elements (ALCE).

The mission of the 834th Air Division ALCE is to insure the smooth flow and maximum efficiency of all the aircraft assigned for airlift mission.

Daily, more than 100 missions are flown out of Pleiku, Phan Rang, Saigon, and Cam Ranh Bay every day, carrying passengers and cargo throughout Vietnam, performing air evacuations and a myriad of additional missions.

Primary aircraft for the missions include the C-7 Caribou, C-123 Provider and C-130 Hercules. A C-118 Liftmaster is used daily for air evacuation.

“Our highest priority is medical evacuation,” noted Maj. James H. Brown Jr. “Headquarters at Tan Son Nhut AB will divert any aircraft in the area to respond to this emergency so the injured or sick individual can receive the quickest and best medical care.”

Priorities are determined by the used and may run from a tactical emergency or emergency resupply requiring a response by ALCE in two hours or a routine priority two requiring delivery in six days.

The C-7’s primary mission is resupply of thy CIDG camps located in the II Corps Tactical Zone. An average of 19 sorties are flown daily, each aircraft carrying 4,600 pounds of cargo. Again, the cargo is varied as ALCE’s mission. Montagnard soldiers and their families, pigs, chickens, ducks, cattle, fresh vegetables, petroleum, supplies ammunition, lumber and pierced steel planking is only a small sample of what may be sound sitting on the cargo ramp at any of the resupply bases ready for delivery.

The C-123s and C-130s primarily are used to haul cargo and passengers to the larger bases in country. The ALCE makes sure hold baggage, general cargo, aircraft and automobile parts, office supplies and anything else it take to keep U.S. forces supplied are moved with speed and efficiency.

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RAAF Bombers Pound Vietcong

Canberra bombers of the RAAF's No 2 Squadron are supporting troops of the US Army's famed 101st Airborne Division in a big operation in Quang Ngai Province.

The Canberra crews have been praised by the Americans for the accuracy and effectiveness of their bombing, according to the Department of Air in Canberra.

Code-named Malheur, the operation aims at clearing the Vietcong from the rich valleys of the northern province, thus cutting off his food supplies.

In the past eight weeks the Canberras have hit more than 90 targets in support of the First Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and the Third Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.

So far, more than 600 Vietcong have been killed in Operation Malheur.

SATURATION BOMBING

Because of the saturation bombing of targets, an accurate bomb damage assessment of the Australian strikes has not been possible.

After the Canberras drop their bombs the Americans pound the targets with artillery, send in Iroquois helicopter "gunships" with machine guns and rockets, then sweep the area with ground troops.

The Australian missions have been radar directed and flown at night. No 2 Squadron, based at Phan Rang, is commanded by Wing Commander Rolf Aronsen, of Canberra. In its first 10 weeks of operation it dropped nearly 1,200 tons of bombs in South Vietnam.

(Canberra Times, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, July 11, 1967)

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The Australian Army's Experience in the Vietnam War

THE HOA LONG DANCE

By Col. Roger Lambert

Many Charlie Company members, or for that matter Battalion members, will recall recall the infamous “Hoa Long Dance”. But, and more importantly, how many fell for the ruse?

Hoa Long was an actual Vietnamese village about five kilometres down the road from the Task Force base at Nui Dat. But what about the dance? I first became acquainted with the Hoa Long Dance on the Battalion Advance Party in 1969.

Our 1 RAR (1) hosts took great relish in describing the dance which was reputedly held each Saturday night in Hoa Long. And the description of the dance and enjoyable times to be had was done with much conviction.

Now for those new in country, any diversion would be a welcome one, particularly if it involved a dance and women and especially being so recently used to the social scene at home in Australia. What else was a fit, young warrior chomping at the bit to do on a Saturday night in Phouc Tuy Province?



The spurious Hoa Long 50/50 Dance sign

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As I recall, the requirement was to get dressed in civilian clothes and assemble on the main road leading into the Battalion area. At an appointed time, a bus would reputedly come along to pick up the assembled group, suitably attired in civvies, and take them into Hoa Long for the dance. The bus would then return to Hoa Long later that evening and bring the group back to Nui Dat at the conclusion of the dance.

Too good an opportunity to miss? Apparently so, as I’m told that those with ‘a few days and a wakey’ took great delight in covertly watching this group of newbies, dressed in civvies (2), assemble at the appointed time and wait for the bus for Hoa Long – which of course, never came.

I guess we’ll never know just how many fell for the ploy. And no, for the record, I wasn’t one of them.

Then there was the equally infamous “Dat Do Dogs” (3) but of course that’s a similar but another story ...

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

Notes:

1. 1 RAR is the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment
2. Civies = civilian clothes
3. “Dat Do Dogs” is a corruption of the Dapto Dogs, a well-known greyhound racing track South of Sydney, NSW
4. The image used for the header in this article is representative of the Royal Australian Regiment and doesn’t represent a specific battalion.

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Do-It-All Wing Has Many Duties At Phan Rang AB

By CAPT. WAYNE A. TONGUE



PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — A tactical airlift wing, as its name implies, usually is in the business of transporting troops and cargo. That is unless it happens to be the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing at Phan Rang AB.

Would you believe that the 315th has a fighter squadron, a psychological operations squadron

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and an airlift squadron, plus being the host unit responsible for the operation of Phan Rang AB? And the wing commander, Col. **Kenneth T. Blood Jr.**, also has the title of installation coordinator, which usually is an Army responsibility in Vietnam.

Then have you noticed that peculiar odor that may have awakened you at dawn about once every 10 days or so? Spray aircraft of the 315th TAW are a familiar sight (and smell) as they spread insecticide over the landscape in a widespread malaria control program. The specially equipped C123 Providers dispensed 105,205 gallons of insecticide in 1970 alone in making living conditions safer and more pleasant both in the field and at established bases in Vietnam.

The 315th also has been responsible for in-country training for Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) aircrew members in the C123 aircraft.

As for aircraft, there is variety here, too. The 315th crews fly C47 Skytrains, A37 Dragonflies and O2 Super Skymasters in addition to the C123s.

However, strictly from the airlift aspect, the 315th still has a few records worth noting. During 1970, C123s headquartered here airlifted 937,708 passengers throughout South Vietnam. Besides passengers, 143,433 tons of cargo were moved.

The 315th also is charged with the task of dropping combat paratroops and assisting the ARVN in jump training. During the last year, 34,242 troops "hit the silk" from the 315th Providers.

What more is there to say about this versatile unit? How about the fact that one of its airlift squadrons was the first to enter the Vietnam conflict and that it is probably the only airlift unit to boast of a Medal of Honor winner. In addition, the 315th has the Air Force's oldest fighter outfit on active duty, the 8th Special Operations Squadron.

In the words of Col. Blood, "We try to convince the enemy to give up by words and leaflets (psychological operations), and, if that doesn't work, we will haul the troops and ammo to help persuade them, and then send in our fighters to support our ground forces. At this time we are training the VNAF to do the same. **We can do it all.**" (*Pacific Stars and Stripes*, October 31, 1971)

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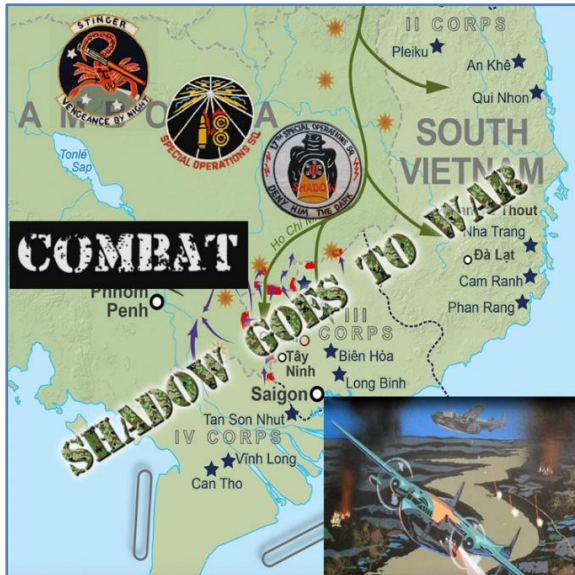
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SHADOW GOES TO WAR

By Roy Davis

(Note: This is a continuation of the story started in Phan Rang Newsletter 205 titled “Ferrying C-119’s from Ohio to Phan Rang”.)



After completing Jungle Survival School at Clark AB, Philippines and returning to Phan Rang I received my in-country flight check and began to fly combat missions.

Upgrade to aircraft commander was based on date of rank, so in order to upgrade more quickly I transferred from the 18th SOS to the 17th SOS. Shortly after the move I upgraded to aircraft commander.



The majority of the missions we flew were in support of ground troops in contact with the enemy (TICs). In addition we periodically sat alert in the event we needed to respond rapidly.

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Most of the combat missions we flew were at night. Pictured is a typical combat crew.

Flying TIC missions was less stressful and dangerous than truck hunting over the Ho Chi Minh trail.

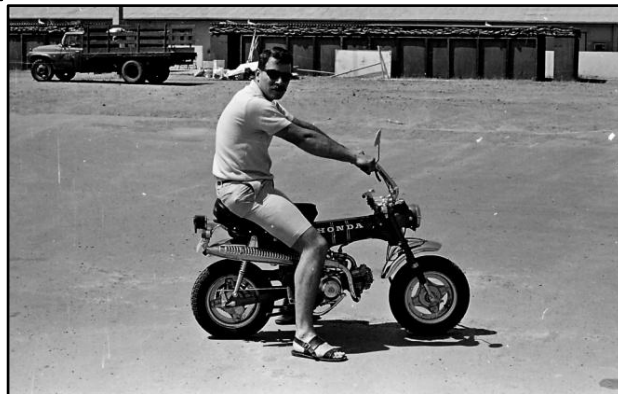


I had only one in flight emergency. On a mission over Cambodia we had a runaway prop. The RPM was controllable and the prop blades ran away against the stops. We turned around and headed towards our emergency field, Pleiku AB. The only issue was a discussion I had with the copilot and engineer on what the proper procedure was for our emergency. They wanted to shut the engine down when I knew the proper procedure was to increase the RPM to 3100 to be able to provide some torque from that engine. Weather was not great at Pleiku but we made a successful emergency landing.



During the day we had time for some recreation after getting some sleep. I was interested in photography and the base conveniently had a photo lab. I also played handball and tennis with Dan Eramo and Joe Crocco (Pictured).

Roy Davis riding his Mini Honda.



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Gary Ingram wrote on Facebook: *On July 30, 1970, I landed at Phan Rang (50 years ago) to start my journey and it was a fantastic experience and will never forget it.*

Roy A. Davis, Pilot - An Autobiography

18TH SOS AND 17TH SOS, PHAN RANG, 1969-1970

THE BEGINNING

I was born in Queens, New York, in 1942. I went on to get my degree in Meteorology at Florida State University. In 1966 I got my commission through OTS and my first assignment was pilot training at Craig AFB, Alabama. After graduating from UPT as the top pilot in the class, I went to the 8th MAS at McChord AFB, Washington, to fly the C-141

AC-119G AND K



Maj. Roy Davis standing next to his aircraft at Phan Rang.

In January 1969 I was assigned to fly the AC-119K gunship at Phan Rang AB in Vietnam. Training was to be three months long. Initial training was in the C-119 at Clinton County Airport, Ohio, by reserve pilots. After completing this training, gunship training was started at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio. I can remember my first live fire mission over Lake Erie. I was in the cargo compartment waiting my turn sit in the left seat. I swore that I could hear the guns firing—wrong. When the minis started to fire the noise was startling and deafening. Training was completed around the end of June. The only problem was the crews were ready but the 18 aircraft we were supposed to ferry to Vietnam were not. Departure was rescheduled for October, November, and December 1969. My aircraft was scheduled along with five others for December.

From April to December there was not much to do other than remain current in the aircraft.

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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.

On Dec 31, 1969 we left McChord 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.

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

We arrived at Midway at the height of black albatross mating season. Quite a sight to see these large birds doing their mating dance. It was on Midway that a naval NCO offered to paint nose art on our airplanes. He did an awesome job painting the following on our aircraft: Lucy’s “The Pea-Nut Special” (my aircraft), “Fly United” (Twaddle), “The Polish Cannon” (Kwiecinski), and “The Super Sow”.



Unfortunately this artwork was removed after arriving at Phan Rang.

The next stops after Midway was Wake Island, followed by Guam, Clark AB and finally Phan Rang AB. The trip took almost a month. The first thing we did was head right back to Clark AB to attend Jungle Survival school. This was not a fun course. We were let loose in the jungle and

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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.

Upon returning to Phan Rang I received my in-country flight check and began to fly combat missions. Upgrade to aircraft commander was based on date of rank, so in order to upgrade more quickly I transferred from the 18th SOS to the 17th SOS. Shortly after the move I upgraded to aircraft commander.

The majority of the missions we flew were in support of ground troops in contact with the enemy (TICs). In addition we periodically sat alert in the event we needed to respond rapidly. Most of the combat missions we flew were at night.

During the day we had time for some recreation after getting some sleep. I was interested in photography and the base conveniently had a photo lab. I also played handball and tennis with Dan Eramo and Joe Crocco.

Flying TIC missions was less stressful and dangerous than truck hunting over the Ho Chi Minh trail. I had only one in flight emergency. On a mission over Cambodia we had a runaway prop. The RPM was controllable and the prop blades ran away against the stops. We turned around and headed towards our emergency field, Pleiku AB. The only issue was a discussion I had with the copilot and engineer on what the proper procedure was for our emergency. They wanted to shut the engine down when I knew the proper procedure was to increase the RPM to 3100 to be able to provide some torque from that engine. Weather was not great at Pleiku but we made a successful emergency landing.

AFTER GUNSHIPS

In late September 1970 I was given a compassionate reassignment to McChord AFB to fly C-141s. This reassignment was due to a serious illness in my wife’s family. I was assigned to my old squadron, the 8th MAS. I upgraded to flight examiner as then reassigned to the 62nd MAW as a stan eval flight examiner. In 1977 I applied for and was selected to fly the VC-137 for the 89th MAW at Andrews AFB. Due to a reduction in Presidential airlift by President Carter, my assignment was changed to the VC-135 at Ramstein AB, Germany.

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I retired as a Colonel in 1992 where I became a firefighter for the City of Tacoma. Now, retired for a second time, I live with my wife, Paula, in Peoria, Arizona.

After two years of flying Gen Alexander Haig, I was reassigned to Det 1, 89th MAW at Hickam AFB to fly the VC-135 and be the Det Ops Officer. This assignment was followed by a year at CINPAC protocol; command of the AFROTC unit at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT; Chief of Staff at HQ AFROTC; and finally the AFROTC NW Regional commander.



Hootch Revenge

Hootch Incident May 1966

by Donald Dinubilo

Our hootch had cement floors, electricity, screen doors and sandbags three feet high along the outside walls. It was prime accommodations then. Our BX had little tiny fans for sale, and we would strap them to the foot of our racks (beds). It made sleeping during the day a lot better. As our squadron was building up, a lot of senior NCO's transferred in and created a situation. It seems like our hootch became desirable to 7 or 8 of those NCO's. They wanted our hootch, which was next to AP HDQRS and the armory.

We were told to pack up our shit and move up the hill to a new hootch with plywood floors. WTF, the 10 of us went to our 1st Lieutenant, a very cool officer, and complained. The Lieutenant said, **MOVE NOW!**

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Pissed off, we decided to get even so Mann climbed up in the rafters and cut the main seam from the front to the back of the tent. When the first monsoon rain, or any rain came the interior of the tent would be an “instant swimming pool”. But that wasn’t enough, Vic and I got a full shit can and put it in the inside back door while the NCO’S were gone. About three hours in the heat, that tent smelled like **“SHIT”**. One of the E-7’s came up to our hootch and called Vic and me out. Yelling about shit smell and they told us to get our asses down to their hootch and clean it out.

Vic said “I didn’t do anything wrong so I’m not going to clean any shit up.” He threatened us, cussing and yelling but we just kept saying no way. Finally the Lieutenant came up and told the NCO to leave us or charge us and the Lieutenant dismissed us.

Monsoon came a few weeks later and water was running out of their front and back doors. We all laughed as we walked by going to chow.



Army PFC **Orval B. Staatz jr.**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Orval B. Staatz, Herington, is assigned to the 101st Airborne division as a truck driver in Company C, 501st support company, near Phan Rang AB. (*Salina Journal, Salina, Kansas, February 20, 1967*)

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A1C **Herbert W. Phillips**, an administrative specialist, is serving at Phan Rang AFB, Vietnam. His wife, Judy, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William L. Robinson, 926 Highland, Salina. (*Salina Journal, Salina, Kansas, February 20, 1967*)

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Roger Lambert wrote in response to the “Freedom Birds” in Phan Rang Newsletter 205 that he flew home to Australia on R&R on a World Airways 707 and returned courtesy of the same airline in '69. *(As a transporter this was news to me that we had charter flights to Australia unless they were specifically for R&R travel and space available seats were offered to any eligible traveler. I believe that the normal “Freedom Bird” for the Australians was Qantas Airlines departing from Saigon. - Doug)*

Doug’s Comments: I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. 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.