

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 208

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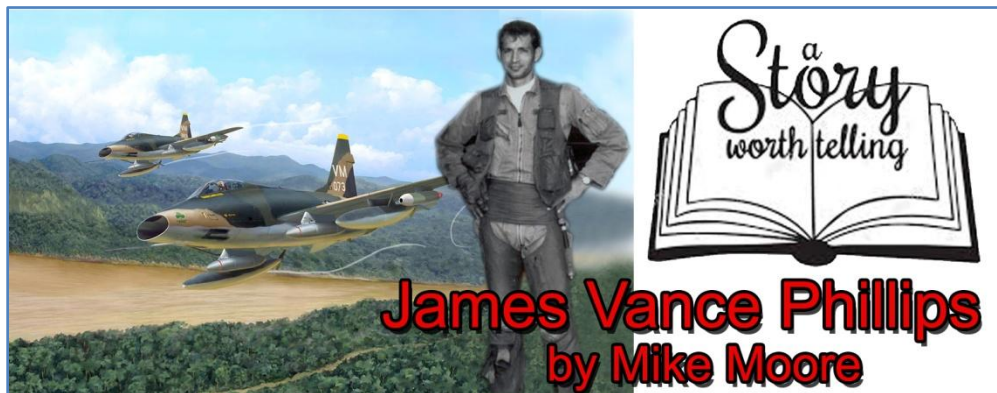
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A story worth telling - James Vance Phillips by Mike Moore

(With addition information inserted by Doug Severt.)

- On 10 February 1970, Lt. Phillips, 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Phan Rang AB, RVN was flying an F-100D, Serial Nr. 55-3585 when he crash. Following are the details of the crash: An F-100 was damaged during a mission near Katum. 1Lt Phillips was attacking enemy bunkers when his aircraft was hit by small arms fire on his fourth pass. He flew across South Vietnam, crossed the coast and ejected about 10 miles from Phan Ly Cham. He was rescued from the

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sea by a HH-43B helicopter.

- On 16 September 1970, Lt. Phillips, was flying an F-100D 55-3806 when he was on a bombing run when he was shot down and ejected. Following are the details of the incident: The Cambodian incursion continued and a Super Sabre was lost in that country on the 16th. 1Lt Phillips (call sign Blade 5) was bombing boats and a storage area five miles southeast of the town of Kratie when he was shot down as he pulled up from his seventh pass. He ejected safely and was picked up by a HH-3E helicopter from the 37th ARRS.



The instructor said Vance was the best student he had while he was in the Air Force Training Command, and he also stated that Vance was always coming up with questions that pushed his instructor's ability to answer them. Vance's first year of training was done in Alabama, and the normal course was six weeks in propeller driven T-41 before transferring to jets. After a stint in the Cessna T-37 jet trainer students were finished up in the supersonic, poor man's rocket: the T-38. Toward the end of the Northrup T-38 training, instructor and student get to take a cross county flight to a far-away base, and when Vance's instructor asked him where he preferred, Vance answered, "Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring,

Texas, where my parents can pick us up and give us a place to stay."

The instructor agreed and the mission began.

Vance's parents, Trigger and Ed Phillips, were notified and they obligingly drove the hour from Odessa to Big Spring and did indeed meet their son and his flight instructor and then drove them back to Odessa for a meal and a night's rest. After the meal and visit time, all retired for the night, but the instructor recalled not being able to sleep at first and he finally gave up trying and went into the living room and sat in a chair with a reading lamp and found something to hold his attention. To his surprise, Vance's dad appeared and sat down across from him and

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asked how Vance was doing.

The instructor recalled assuring him that due to his talent and motivation he thought Vance had a real promising career in the Air Force. After answering all the questions from an interested and concerned dad, the instructor eventually found his way back to bed tired enough now to sleep.

The next morning Vance and his instructor were driven back to Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring where they started the process of preparing for the trip back to their home base, but while on the flight line, Vance pointed at a railroad track paralleling the old Highway 80 that led both east and west, a highway very familiar to Vance and the rest of us who grew up out there. Vance told his instructor that he wanted to follow that railroad track a ways, and it was said with a twinkle in his eye. The instructor consented.

“...Vance saw what he wanted to see while streaking down that lonesome railroad at no more than 500 feet above ground level.”

A T-38 is a trainer used to compete with the tough warbird fighters that Vance would see in his next phase of training, so it would not take long before Vance saw what he wanted to see while streaking down that lonesome railroad at no more than 500 feet above ground level. By car in those days Big Spring and Odessa were an hour away from one another. Vance probably easily made that trip in less than ten minutes that day.

And, as any Odessan knows that railroad track runs right through the middle of downtown Odessa, and the middle of Odessa is represented by the two streets we still know as 2nd and Grant Streets, and that is where Vance was when he pulled the sharp nose of his aircraft straight up into the sky and lit both afterburners in his twin engine jet, resulting in a noise not easily forgotten by those who have experienced such a feat. I know.

Vance corkscrewed up into the vast west Texas wild blue yonder, no doubt leaving a lot of surprised and questioning people below him. But those folks at a particular business named Vance Supply at that intersection probably knew it was their boss's son saying a spectacular hello and good-bye in one literal fell swoop. Of course an air force pilot could not get away with that today, but there was a full blown conflict in Vietnam at the time and the country's

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skies were filled with brave young men like Vance training for that war, and Vance would do his part in the near future and do it well, well enough to be remembered by those who knew him long after he left us.

James Vance Phillips, A Fighter Pilot

Vance Phillip's younger brother Dee told me this story first in 1990 at a high school reunion in Odessa, Texas, where I just accidentally ran across him. Some of the other information came to me via Vance's wife Nancy Hinds Phillips when she moved to Round Rock, Texas in the late seventies. When Dee told me the story I remember wondering if Dee might have been slightly embarrassed in the telling of the story to me, but I have recently talked to Dee by phone to make sure of the accuracy of some of my facts and he has reassured me that he fully understood the environment in which this story took place, and like me and numerous Air force pilots to whom I have related this event, was more than a bit amused by it all. In fact, Dee said even his mother got a kick out of it.

In a letter to me, Dee said he was “glad that Vance did what he did.” This shows the sense of humor in the Phillips family because Dee has a son in the Navy in this year, 2003, and that son is flying F-18 Hornet Fighters off of a carrier, so Brother Dee is more than aware of the factors that existed during the times and situation that existed years ago.

Before I get into the incident itself, and just for the sake of veracity and history, I need to state that I followed Vance's career the best I could because he was a friend and secondly because I am an aviation freak and I have been since the mid-60s when I became a civilian flight instructor training USAF pilots in the Air Force T-41 program.

The T-41 program was a primary flight school funded by the USAF for the purpose of teaching new Air Force student pilots how to fly. The aircraft used in this T-41 program was a military version of the Cessna 172. Of course, all the students were military and all of us instructors were civilians employed by contract and supervised by military officers. The program was designed to shave the cost of flight training for new pilots by identifying those potential pilots who would or could not hack the program. The guys who had no aptitude for flying were washed out in a relatively inexpensive to operate airplane rather than in the jets that were used before Viet Nam heated up into a full-blown war. Vance went through this program as the first

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phase of his military flying, and even though he was not stationed where I was an instructor, we were both aware of each other’s activity at the time, so much for the veracity.

As far as the history goes, Vance and I lived on the same block of Windsor Drive within a few doors of each other in Odessa, Texas in the 50’s, and early 60’s. His best friend at that time was also a pal of mine, Johnny Ben Sheppard, who lived just across the street from me. The three of us together would often dream up mischief at night together in our old neighborhood. The specifics of those adventures are best left untold, but we were in our mid-teens and mischief came easy with us.

After graduation from high school and after we all went our separate ways, and as the years passed, I would occasionally call Vance’s parents, Ed and Trigger, to keep track of Vance. I know he entered the Air Force in 1967 just after I started my aviation career as a flight instructor in the aforementioned USAF T-41 program. In 1967 Vance and I once talked by phone in Odessa over a Christmas holiday season right before he was to report to pilot training in Alabama early in the year of 1968. After that conversation, many years went by without any contact between us until around early 1976. In that year I wrote to him by addressing the letter to his parents’ home in Odessa, knowing they would forward it to him. I wrote him and his wife Nancy Hinds a letter asking to be updated on his career. I got back a very warm letter from the two of them. I remember that letter vividly even though I can no longer find it.

At the time of the update, Vance and his wife Nancy were stationed at Nellis Air Force Base outside Las Vegas, Nevada. It was then that I began learning just how spectacular his Air Force career must have been. Vance had become a flight instructor in the Aggressor Squadron. It was said at the time that the Aggressor Squadron flight instructor job was the best job to be had in the Air Force in that era because it was a squadron designed to simulate air combat conditions that would be encountered with the best of the Russian pilots flying the best of the Russian fighter aircraft. The Aggressor squadron was similar to the Navy’s Top Gun school and it was in addition to The Red Flag program the USAF had put together for Air combat training earlier on for the Viet Nam War.

Those guys in the aggressor squadron got to do what any fighter pilot loves to do, dogfight all day in fast jet airplanes. Any fighter pilot of that era would have given all he had or could ever hope to have for that job because they flew against the best we had and they flew the hottest

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airplanes we had. It was a dream job. You can be the United States Air Force offered that job to the best pilots they had. Vance Phillips evidently was among the best in the Air Force at that time.

“ It is said that the F-100 was the last fighter that was strapped onto the pilot.”

I do know that he had to graduate very high in his class to get the assignment that he got after finishing flight training. He got an F-100 fighter assignment and at the time that assignment was rare because other types of airplanes were starting to replace that favorite. It is said that the F-100 was the last fighter that was strapped onto the pilot. In other words it was a pure fighter and it was not asked to do so many other things that the next generation of fighters were being asked to do. Fighter pilots loved it. In those days it was the vision of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the fool, that the military should have an all around airplane that could do a multitude of jobs. This was not a good idea and it did not work. But in the mean time there was a war in Southeast Asia that was being fought and Vance found himself right in the thick of things flying his choice of airplanes, the F-100 Super Sabre.

After his tour in Viet Nam, and while in the Aggressor Squadron assignment, Vance was killed in early May of 1976 on a training mission in a T-38 jet trainer eighty miles off the coast of Virginia when his ejection seat malfunctioned by arming itself and firing without warning to Vance. It was a freak accident. Neither Vance nor his aircraft was recovered. The student flying with him survived. The news of that accident was broadcast nationwide. I’ll never forget the sickening feeling when I heard the story.

Big Spring Herald

‘The crossroads of West Texas’

May 8, 1976

Odessa pilot down in ocean, assumed dead

PORTSMOUTH, Va. (A P) — A wide-ranging air search was resumed

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Saturday for an Air Force pilot from Odessa, Tex., missing and presumed dead in the crash of a T38 jet off the Virginia coast.

A Coast Guard spokesman here said an aircraft from the Elizabeth City, N.C., Coast Guard station conducted search patterns 68 miles south of the crash site during the morning without success.

An Air Force plane joined the search later, and between them the two aircraft were expected to cover a 2,700-square-mile area, the spokesman said.

The pilot, Capt. James V. Phillips, 33, of Odessa, has been missing since he and his copilot, Lt. Neil G. Kacena, 25, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, ejected when their plane came down Thursday while on a training mission over the Atlantic, 70 miles off the coast.

Kacena was plucked from a life raft by a Navy helicopter and was not seriously injured, but Phillips was not found although his opened parachute and helmet were discovered floating in the water.

Phillips, attached to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, was on temporary assignment at Langley AFB at Hampton. Va.

There was another time when Vance made the news nationwide in his career while flying an F-100 Super Saber fighter over Cambodia in some of the hottest action of the war. Vance's airplane was hopelessly damaged by enemy fire, but he managed to eject over water and was successfully rescued. I know the Cambodia story because I was zooming across the remote plains of Wyoming driving back to Denver in the late 60's listening to the car radio when the news came on telling about Air Force Lieutenant Vance Phillips from Odessa, Texas, surviving that experience. It was a strange feeling to hear that news, in that time, in that place, of a friend of mine from our home town.

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Some months later while on another mission in Viet Nam he again had to eject because his airplane had just been shot up so badly that he could not have landed it. The second incident resulted in his receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross. I have the feeling Vance hung on in tough situations when few others would. It is no secret that some pilots in that war had to be urged to fly some of the crazy and too dangerous combat missions that Defense Secretary McNamara dreamed up on his own in those days. I'll bet that Vance Phillips did the job he was asked to do and more. That was his style.

Dee Phillips' story to me is one story that will never be told in the news, but it is a story that I can say typified the Vance we all knew growing up. Keep in mind, Vance lived at full throttle, the same way he flew fighters, all out. He flew the Air Force's fighters "like he was trying to tear them up." I heard that statement from Vance's Uncle Chuck Phillips of Austin, Texas, where Chuck and I became friends in the early 70's. Uncle Chuck was a bomber pilot in World War II. Chuck and Vance's dad were brothers; both of them were very fine men. Over the years in the early to mid seventies I kept up on the news of Vance's career through Chuck in Austin, Texas right up to the time of Vance's death in May 1976.

To fully understand the following incident and to keep it all in the proper perspective it needs to be well understood by any reader that the rivalry between our Navy and Air Force Pilots is more intense than any rivalry such as the rivalry between schools like the University of Texas and Texas A&M or Notre Dame and Southern Cal, or Arizona State and University of Arizona or Ohio State and Michigan. Put all of them together and multiply them by a factor of your choice. It is fierce rivalry. Also, it is important to remember that the hottest aircraft in the USA are often flown by fuzzy face kids fresh from our colleges, and those fuzzy face kids who eventually are chosen to fly fighters are always at the top of their class out of pilot training. They are at the top of their class because they fit a profile of being the most competitive and self-demanding of all the guys in the program. It is a hot mixture of factors and knowing that, please realize anything can happen with these guys. It is a man show with fighter airplanes.

Plus, consider that the Navy pilots boast they are the best pilots in the world because they are able to conduct their combat missions while performing the most difficult flying task in the world: flying off the deck of an aircraft carrier at night and in bad weather when the ship is pitching, rolling and faced into high gusty winds and bad seas while churning along at nearly 30 knots. It is a tough job and the Air Force knows it.

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Also, at the heart of the rivalry is the Navy's perceived arrogance and pomposity toward their fellow brethren in the blue suits whom are seen by those Navy pilots as just incapable of doing the job the Navy has to do.

Of course the blue suiters in the Air Force say that any of them could do the job if they were given the same training. So goes the bantering and debating between these highly competitive souls. The rivalry is made even the more bitter over the media's presentation of the two services, with both services pouting that their respective service gets less favorable publicity than the other. The most famous pilot of all history is probably the Air Force's Chuck Yeager, who broke the sound barrier in 1948, and has mountains of pages written about his exploits. His notoriety alone accounts for a great deal of the acrimony between the two services, and to the uninitiated, the movie industry's movie, TOP GUN made Navy flying legendary to the latest generations. It was too cheesy for me, but I loved the music!

Dee Phillips story began by his telling me that in 1974 at age 31 Vance got accepted into an exchange program between the Air Force and the Navy in which he would go aboard a Navy carrier, and a Navy carrier pilot would likewise go through the Air Force combat mission training. It was an honor for Vance to be picked by the Air Force and to be handed over to the Navy for a Navy tour at sea. The Air Force wanted to send one of their best and most competitive pilots to the Navy. They picked Captain Vance Phillips of Odessa, Texas. It was a good choice. *(That program was ongoing in 1971 with Capt. Robert Pahl from Phan Rang AB served aboard the U.S.S. Hancock on service in the Gulf of Tonkin. See Phan Rang News 30 for the complete story - Doug's comments)*

Events like this are not news items we civilians would ever hear about, but the fighter pilots on each side of that infamous rivalry know how it all worked.

One way that it all works is that the Navy jocks are in constant competition with one another when it comes to the best execution of landings on the carrier deck. There is a fierce scrutiny of each approach and landing; each exercise is graded, and the flight crews throughout the tour monitor their grades. The leader with the highest score is like a rhinestone cowboy with honors and recognition and probably a lot of ribbing along the way. Frankly, for an Air Force guy to lead that competition on their carriers is, well, a painful slap in the face to those who love to dig

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at the "inferior" flying the USAF does compared to the “superior” flying of the pilots of the Navy. The rivalry is fierce.

Let the record show Vance Phillips, the Air Force pilot, won that competition during his tour at sea with the Navy.

So, upon his departure of the carrier at tour's end, there was a farewell ceremony honoring him as the hottest jock aboard. These ceremonies are the climatic event of a lot of stress and then relief from getting back home alive and it is a little more than likely that a bit of alcohol is consumed during said meetings. Navy gatherings can be infamous. Tail-hookishly infamous.

Vance was a guest of honor at this gathering of his peers and they all were celebrating his accomplishments while sending him back to the Air Force. There were high-ranking officers and their wives in attendance and Admirals and other officers in bright white uniforms. Vance was introduced and went to the podium where he was given his award, and where he was expected to say a few words.

After saying a few words Vance the honoree said something to the effect, “ Now here is what I think of you Navy pukes.” He then turned around, bent over and mooned the Navy.

Brother Dee, in his letter to me further states, “It is unclear to this writer whether this was done linen up, or linen down, but it is definitely the thought that counts.” Dee further stated in effect that even though Vance always was for a good time he doubted Vance would have totally insulted the Admiral’s wife. Case closed. Linen up.

There was no doubt raucous laughter and returned gestures of some type. Vance then left the stage.

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Dee assures me that the family understood the circumstances, so I don't know for sure if there might be some who knew Vance who wished that he had not done what he did. It is a reasonable guess that some of them might have wished he had accepted the honors in a humble and grateful fashion, in a way that would have allowed them to write home to the local newspaper of his accomplishments. But, that was not the way of one of the Air Force's most competitive pilots. I can dang sure guarantee that the entire USAF who became aware of what he did in his farewell address to the Navy, got the laugh of their life, and they loved Vance for doing what he did.

The pilots who were his friends in the Air Force and who knew Vance Phillips understood that he did what he did for his pals who endured the insufferable taunting of those who fly off carriers and say, "I can do it and you cannot do it."

Should anyone in our civilian world think that this was ungentlemanly and crude, I also would like to point out that it did not diminish the respect the Navy pilots had for Vance. In that world, it was nothing to them except a hearty laugh given to them by someone as competitive as they were and they respected him for his abilities and élan.



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Friendships were made on that cruise that outlasted the farewell. In fact, some years after Vance's death, an old Navy buddy looked up Vance's widow, Nancy Hinds Phillips, and married her. I'd like to think that Vance, being the man that he was, would have wanted the best for his wife and kids he left behind. I'd bet on it.

I miss Vance Phillips

I RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER IN RESPONSE TO MY STORY. IT IS SELF EXPLANATORY.

Dear Mike,

Dee just sent me a piece that was forwarded by Nancy...one you had written regarding my cousin Vance Phillips. I enjoyed it immensely and could only think of the times Vance and I had cooked up our own brand of mischief here in Pampa, Texas. It prompted me to write and tell you one other humorous story, one that Vance could have probably had his stripes pulled, but one of those "insider" family-stories.

My dad was Fred Vanderburg and Vance adored everything my dad was and stood for. Some of his favorite times were spent in the Panhandle on our farm and ranch. I have several fond memories about Vance...like riding a horse and running a herd of cattle through a barbwire fence-- out on wheat ground (He thought he was Roy Rogers the second), or his suggestion that he could "kill" the boar pigs better than my dad as they were being castrated, but this short story has to do with his ability as the pilot we loved.

Dad just happened to be putting out fertilizer in the field-- which up here is done by pulling an applicator with a tractor. Dad's hired hand, Callan George was a short distance away tending to a chore, when out of nowhere came a sound from you know where...a sound way louder than the noise of the tractor. Of course it was Vance...flying just above the tractor. As Callan later reported, he spotted my dad jumping out of the tractor and circling it and the applicator two or three times trying to figure out where that dang noise had come from. . Of course Vance was completely out of sight by the time dad had the tractor stopped. As only Vance would do he made another pass over Dad's tractor ending it by cork-screwing up over the tractor and straight into the sky. Not too long later there was a telephone call from Vance, someplace in Louisiana, which verified the culprit. Needless to say, the hogs went

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crazy and the rural neighborhood still speaks of the day they thought the world had ended.

It was indeed a painful day for us all when we lost Vance. The only consolation in it is we know he was doing what he loved. Once again, thank you for your wonderful story, and I hope I haven't bored you with my sharing another "Vance Story."

Sincerely,

Joy Rice (Vance and Dee's first cousin)

BELOW IS AN EXCHANGE MADE BETWEEN DEE PHILLIPS AND I ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED IN MY LIFE OCTOBER 30, 2010 AT A GATHERING OF PILOTS IN AUSTIN, TEXAS. TO ME, IT WAS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE.....MLM

SHAMELESS WANNABE

Dee, It has been a strange day. I am member of a flying fraternity called the Quiet Birdmen. They call themselves an Ancient and Secret Organization, uh, so I cannot tell you much about it except that it started after the first world war, and several famous people, like astronauts, and Lindberg have been members. You have to be invited in, and meet certain qualifications. Today we met for lunch at Lago Vista airport west of Austin and on Lake Travis. I flew my RV-6A over there to show it off. As I was standing in line to get my burger for lunch, there was a guy in front of me wearing an F-100 T-shirt, announcing an organization of some type. Curious, I asked him if he flew them in VietNam, of course thinking about Vance, and the guy replied yes, and I further learned he did his pilot training in 1957, and that little factoid stopped me from asking the burning question in my mind, and the question was, did he ever run across Vance Phillips. As we sat down to eat he was talking to the guy on his left, and it both turned out that they both were from Walla Walla, Washington. The guy on his left then mentioned something about the other guy the two of them had run across in Vietnam that also was from Walla Walla, and he had been a FAC, and the FAC driver had helped the the guy next to me, a 100 driver, in a SAR mission in Cambodia. The third guy said, and what was that Hun driver's name, the one who punched out? The answer was Vance Phillips! I spit my beans out and said, "What did you say?" "You just mentioned someone's name, what was it?'.....Again he replied, "Vance Phillips."

I quickly told him my story of knowing Vance, and he was absolutely astonished. He stood up

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and told the story to the whole bunch about the SAR and told them he was sitting next to a guy who personally knew his lead the day the lead got the whole belly knocked off his F-100. Below is the story as he published it on the web. He does not mention Vance’s name, but Vance was leading the two-ship formation that day on an air-strike to knock out two camo boats on the river that had been identified as bad guys. I was just floored. Michael Lewis Moore.

Below is a narrative written by Vance about his second time he had to punch out of another damaged airplane.

Lt. James Vance Phillips

Aircraft /Accident/Combat Loss Narrative

On 10th February 1970 Major Burney and myself were returning from the target having expended soft loads on suspected enemy positions. At about 1415, one hour and ten minutes after takeoff, I noticed vibrations throughout the aircraft. These, I thought, or hoped, might be coming from the tail hook, so I asked lead to take a look at the underside of my plane.

Having done so, he reported no abnormal appearance of the tail hook which left only the engine as the source. By this time the vibrations had increased to the point of shaking the aircraft.

The shaking appeared to be a long series of staccato compressor stalls (the engine was failing) that steadily increased in proportions. This all occurred at between 91 and 94 percent RPM,

Our position at this time was 40 miles out from channel 75 and turning to intercept the 225 degree radial. Thinking to make a straight in approach from 17,500 MSL, I pulled the power back to 87 percent. The shaking stopped momentarily (approximately 5 to 10 seconds) and then 3 extremely large compressor stalls in rapid succession. The engine flamed out after the last of the three stalls.

We had, at this point, turned toward feet wet (over water) and I began to go through the

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emergency procedures for air start. All attempts and re-attempts failed to show any indication of a restart.

In the meantime, I had begun to clean up the cockpit for a controlled bail-out over the water. I took out my water bottle from the G-suit pocket and slid it along with my checklist and brain container under the rudder pedals. The latter I concluded to be non –essential and the former dead weight to be avoided in the lower extremities due to the flailing of the legs that might be caused.

During this same time period, I tried to assess the situation, deciding the best bail out altitude and airspeed. Dive angle did not enter my mind as I had associated the upward vector to be related to a need for increase in altitude prior to ejection. (I recommend this procedure be stressed to other pilots.)

At 5500 feet MSL (above sea level) and with 3 degrees nose low, at 245 knots, I raised the handles and the canopy left the airplane. Thinking somebody must hate me, I pulled the triggers and felt the extreme acceleration forces and wind blast. The next thing I knew I was coming out of the seat and immediately the chute opened.

My head was down (about 30 degrees) when the chute popped and my helmet came off. From the loss of the helmet I received the only scratches of the incident about my face and cheeks.

I “cut four” the first thing, deployed the seat kit and opened one L Pulls, deciding to save the other until I was in the water. I did not open the J-! releases for fear of separating from the chute and possibly puncturing my good LPU on impact.

After accomplishing this, I took out my URT-64 (HAND HELD RADIO) and talked to Major Burney to relay my good fortune at a good chute and successful ejection in general.

We talked for a while and continued, of course, to descend. As I neared the water, I stowed the radio and prepared to enter the water. I turned in the chute so I was facing the wind and hit the water shortly thereafter.

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Not having opened the J-1's earlier, I was dragged beneath the water about 10-15 feet by a reported 125 knot wind before I could get the canopy detached.

I opened the other LPU (LIFE PRESERVER UNIT) and got into the life raft butt first from the back of the raft. I got in on the first try with no problem whatsoever. After getting settled and comfortable in the raft, I again took out the URT-64 and spoke to lead, who was running low on fuel by this time. He told me that there was another flight of F100's on the way to take over the rescap duties. (rescue combat air patrol) Then I opened the survival seat pack and took out the flare and sea marker dye and toyed with the idea of going fishing but decided against it due to the near presence of Pedro. (Note from Mike: Pedro was the rescue helicopter) He was not even airborne yet.

I rummaged through the seat pack but found nothing else of use at the time, so I set out the sea marker dye and readied the flare and settled back for what I hope would be a short wait for a rescue chopper.

When Pedro came onto the scene, he had a little difficulty in locating me since an army helicopter had been orbiting for near to 10 minutes and gave him vectors to my position.

A horse collar was lowered to me and I got into it without difficulty, however the L.P.U.'s were somewhat in the way while being raised on the hoist and I had to hold on tighter than otherwise have been required had they been deflated.

The return trip in Pedro was uncomfortable due to my damp state and the drafty machine caused a chill to set in.

As far as my recommendations, I would like ask that angle of attack on ejection, unfastening the L-1 release covers and possibly opening both L.P.U.'s be stressed to other pilots. I am not sure, even now, about the L.P.U. procedure. The procedure I used has its merits but so would the water entry use of both. I would like to know the official recommendations on this.

James V. Phillips L. USAF

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The above typewritten narrative was taken from a hand-written document sent to me by Vance’s widow, Nancy Hinds Phillips. I thank her from deep down because it came to me because she knew I was interested and cared, not because I asked her for it

MORE FLYING FOR AIRMEN

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (AP) — What began several months ago when a 35th Tactical Fighter Wing F-100 Supersabre pilot decided to make model airplane in his spare moments has grown into the Phan Rang Model Airplane Club, a rapidly expanding group of officer and airmen model enthusiasts.

"A few of us wanted to get together and fly our models," explained Sgt. Jerry R. Lloyd Friona, Tex, "We really didn't expect much participation, but on the day of our 'fly-off' model airplane buffs literally came out of the woodwork — and we drew at least 50 spectators, too."

The radio-controlled versions, Sergeant Lloyd admits, sometimes have their drawbacks.

"Recently a friend of mine launched his craft expecting to have an enjoyable session but something went haywire, he recalled. "The plane made a beeline for the base perimeter and has not been seen since. I guess 'Charlie' probably thinks we're launching some type of new weapon at him." (*Oswego Palladium Times, Oswego, New York, March 18, 1970*)

Fan Club Causes Cramps

PHAN RANG — One Portsmouth man serving in Vietnam has a private fan club which gives him writers' cramps.

T.Sgt **Joseph H. R. Gregoire**, USAF, 23 Edgewood Road, Portsmouth, is assistant supervisor of the aerospace ground equipment branch of the 35th FMS at the Phan Rang AFB.

The club consists of seven of his nine children — Gerald, 13; Roger, 12; Suzanne, 10; Ronald. 9: Donald, 7: Michael, 6 and Colette, 4. They write him letters twice a week and he spends two hours a day answering them.

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The two youngest, Thomas, 3. and Colette, 4. can't write yet and it may be just as well for the hard-pressed dad.

Little Colette can muster only a scribble, but it is intelligible to her father who sometimes has been so confused by the mountain of mail from his children he has written two letters on the same night to the same child by mistake.

Gregoire says the youngsters keep him posted on all their little problems and are not above an occasional tattle tale.

"Suzanne wrote to say Donald got in my coin collection." he noted.

The steady stream of mail awaits the sergeant at the post office each day and lots of kidding awaits him from his coworkers in the section.

Gregoire has more children than any other man in the 35th. His wife, he says, has 10 brothers and sisters and she told him she wanted to beat her mother's record.

"I thought she was joking." he commented

(Portsmouth Herald, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, May 1, 1968)

Unique Perspective Coming to the Phan Rang Newsletter

Most of the stories about Phan Rang Hero's center around what they did during their Vietnam assignment and sometimes touching on a little bit of their careers after Phan Rang, but hardly any of them cover their careers or significant events before Vietnam.

Many of our senior flyers started their careers during World War II and of course serving in the Korean War and every conflict leading up to the Vietnam War. Several were even German prisoners of war. Our own Col. Frank Gailer, Jr., who was the 35th TFW wing commander, was one of those prisoners and just like most Vietnam Veterans those veterans of other wars didn't dwell on the past. Neither has Wing Commander Bob Howe, RAAF (Retired), but he has shared a story with us about his experiences before Vietnam that I'm sure you will enjoy.

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Maj. Stevens Fini Flight, 614th TFS “Lucky Devils”

Sgt. Skip Ruedeman is congratulating Maj. Stevens on his last flight and the insert is a group picture that originally appeared in Phan Rang Newsletter 204 taken after the hose down and champagne toasting.

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CAPTAIN CHARLES M. PIEPER, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kilroy J. Pieper, Henning Route 2, has received the Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. A veterinary officer, he was decorated for meritorious service with the 35th USAF Dispensary. The doctor, who previously served at Nha Trang AB, Vietnam, entered the Air Force in October 1968. He is a 1562 graduate of Henning High School and received his D. V. M. degree from the University of Minnesota. (*Daily Journal, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, April 4, 1970*)

- O -

Sgt. **James F. Hover**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hover, former residents of Lore City, is serving a tour of duty at Phan Rang Air Base in Vietnam. Sgt. Hover is a computer programmer with the 35th Supply Squadron at Phan Rang. He arrived in Vietnam on Nov. 3, 1967. He has extended his tour in Vietnam to June, 1969, when his enlistment ends. (*Cambridge Daily Jeffersonian, Cambridge, Ohio, July 24, 1968*)

- O -

Capt. McGovern Awarded Air Medal At Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam - WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORES, Vietnam — U.S. Air Force Capt. **Michael D. McGovern**, whose wife, Ann, is the daughter of Mrs. Anna Hessian 27 Broadway, has received the Air Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Capt. McGovern, an F-100 Super Sabre fighter bomber pilot at Phan Rang, was decorated for his outstanding airmanship and courage on important and successful missions completed under hazardous conditions. He is assigned to a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. Captain McGovern, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin McGovern of Stony Point, is a 1959 graduate of Haverstraw High School. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 1963 from Manhattan College, Riverdale, N.Y., where he was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program. (*Haverstraw Rockland County Times, Haverstraw, New York, January 21, 1971*)

- O -

County Serviceman Arrives in Vietnam - PHAN RANG, Vietnam — Army Pfc **George M. Duke**,

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son of Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Duke, Coalport, Pa., arrived in Phan Rang, Vietnam, last month with his unit, the 529th Transportation Company. The company, previously located at Ft. Euslis, Va., will provide Transportation for Headquarters, Phan Rang Sub Area Command. Pfc. Duke, a truck driver in the company, entered the Army in November 1965 and completed basic training at Ft. Jackson, S. C. (*Clearfield Progress, Clearfield, Pennsylvania, February 11, 1967*)

- O -

VETERAN — SSgt **Calvin McKinney**, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. McKinney, 3128 E. 5th St., received a letter of appreciation from his commanding officer for outstanding performance of duties as Quarry Supervisor while serving with Company A, 589th Engineer Battalion in South Vietnam. Sgt. McKinney, who is a native of Panama City and attended Bay High School, has been in Vietnam since May 12, 1968, and is now stationed at Phan Rang. He also served tours in Germany, France and Korea. (*Panama City News, Panama City, Florida, April 22, 1969*)

- O -

M.SGT. **JOHN A. EVERY**, formerly of Davenport Center, now of Dayton, Ohio, has just returned from Vietnam after serving there 11 months at Phan Rang. He has served 21 1/2 years in U.S. Air Force and will be discharged July 31 at Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton. (*Oneonta Star, Oneonta, New York, July 23, 1969*)

- O -

VIETNAM - U.S. Air Force Sergeant **Kenneth D. Long**, son of Robert D. Long of Vandergrift, is on duty at Phan Rang Air Force Base here. Sergeant Long is a medal working specialist assigned to the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron, a unit of the Pacific Air Forces, headquarters for air operations in Southeast Asia, the Far East and the Pacific area. Before his arrival at Phan Rang, he served at Charleston AFB, S. C. Long is a 1967 graduate of Worthington (Pa.) High School. His wife, Barbara, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elton M. Gaiser of Worthington RD 1. (*Kittanning Simpson Leader Times, Kittanning, Pennsylvania, August 6, 1970*)

- O -



A1C **David Woodman**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence B. Woodman, Rt. 2, is serving with the 315th Combat Support Group at Phan Rang AFB, Vietnam. Woodman left from McChord AFB, Wash., Nov. 21, and stopped at Anchorage, Alaska; Tokyo, Japan; and Cam Ranh Bay, scheduled to go to Phu Cat AFB. Arriving at Cam Ranh Bay, he learned that Phu Cat AFB had been turned over to the South Vietnamese Forces, so his orders were changed to Phan Rang. Woodman, who served at K I. Sawyer AFB, Mich., the past year, was graduated from AF Technical School, Chanute AFB, Ill., in September,

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1970. A Craig High School graduate in 1968, he attended Platteville State University before entering the Air Force. His address is: 394563960, Box 5828, 315th CSGP (PACAF), APO San Francisco, Calif 96321, Pas: PRRHYK Phan Rang AFB, Vietnam. (*Janesville Gazette, Janesville, Wisconsin December 15, 1971*)

- O -

Rimersburg AF Colonel's Vietnam Unit Commended - WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES

VIETNAM - Lieutenant Colonel **Craig C. McCall**, son of Mrs. Mae McCall of Rimersburg, Pa., is commander of a tactical fighter squadron in Vietnam which has been commended for its part in providing outstanding air support to U.S. Army units during recent military operations south of Saigon. Colonel McCall commands the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron which, along with two other squadrons of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, were praised by Major General Julian J. Eqell, commander of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division. In a letter to Gernal W. Momyer, Seventh Air Force commander, General commended the U.S. and Australian aircrews for a superb job in identifying targets for air strikes, and for accuracy and timeliness with which the ordnance was delivered. The pilots were credited with breaking the Vet Cong resistance enabling General Eqell's infantrymen to decisively defeat the enemy. Colonel McCall a veteran of World War II, was commissioned in 1943 through the aviation cadet program. He also served during the Korean War. A graduate of Sligo (Pa) High School, he is married to the former Nancy J. Hinkle. (*Kittanning Leader Times, Kittanning, Pennsylvania, July 16, 1968*)

- O -

Trains Gun Crews - U.S. Air Force Major **Donald D. Fraker**, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. G. Fraker of HI. 3, Greeley, is helping train Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) AC-119 gunship crews at Phan Rang Air Base. Major Fraker, an instructor pilot in the 17th Special Operations Squadron, Trains his VNAF counterparts under a program scheduled for completion in August. The Vietnamese gunship crews composed of .pilots, co-pilots, navigators, flight engineers and illumination system operators — are scheduled for assignment to a unit expected to be flying combat missions this year. When activated, the unit will be the first VNAF organization to fly the AC-119 gunship. It will join other VNAF units now operating the older AC-47 gunship in combat. The AC-119 features added firepower having four 7.62 millimeter miniguns. "The crews I have worked with have done exceptionally well. The language barrier has caused some minor problems as some technical terms defy translation into Vietnamese," commented Major Fraker. "A great deal of emphasis is placed on having the crews use English as much as possible." Before beginning his assignment at Phan Rang, Major Fraker served at Clark AB, Philippines. A 1950 graduate of Pawnee High School, Grover, the major received a B.A. degree

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in 1954 from the University of Northern Colorado and was commissioned there through the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program. He holds the aeronautical rating of command pilot. His wife, Patricia, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Richards of Grover. (*Greeley Daily Tribune, Greeley, Colorado, June 3, 1971*)



Doug, I am Jack Dole the C-123 Pilot in this article (*Phan Rang Newsletter 189 “Hell on Runway 25L”*). Thank you for putting this all together. I few years back I wrote to USAF for a copy of the accident report and their reply said they could not find one to send me. Several years ago I also was called by the F-105 pilot’s son and talked with him. He was looking for more information. At that time he only had the F-105 folks version so I sent him my version. He was only 1 years old when his father was killed.

Jack Dole

Doug, great story on the F-100's (*Phan Rang Newsletter 207*) which I lived and breathed working with the 614th TFS. Fond memories of yesteryear..... **Terry Brodt**

Doug, I just finished reading PR News #207. One of the Phan Rangers that sat at the same table as Susie and me was Bob Agrifoglio. This was at our Charleston Reunion. It was Susie and my 1st Phan Rang reunion. One of the jobs, that I hated, working the C-123 Phase Docks was removing the flaps and doing a dye inspection of the flap brackets. Prior to those inspections, C1123K number 55-4527 had crashed because of the failed flap brackets. Sitting at the same table as Bob and finding out that he was the lone survivor brought tears to Susie's and my eyes, and taught me how important those inspections were. **We will never forget meeting Bob. RIP.**

Greg Schmidt

Dear Doug, I served with No 2 Sqn, RAAF at Phan Rang from April 67 to April 68 and made a bunch of USAF friends. One of these was Bill Gaither (1882nd Comm. Sq.) who had an excellent collection of snakes, to which I contributed. I would like to get in touch with Bill and wondered

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if you are in a position to assist?

Kind regards and many thanks.

Leigh Boileau

leighboileau@bigpond.com

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.