

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 209

In this issue:

How To Acquire Cambodian Pilot Wings - by Lester G. Frazier

‘Dollars for Scholars’ Students Tour Air Base

Dramatic Mid-Air Rescue of a Crippled USAF Survey Plane - by Bob Howe

Secretary’s Report from 2 Squadron September 2020 Newsletter

Honoring Four Passengers from Mission 702

Serving Our Country

Doug’s Comments

HOW TO ACQUIRE CAMBODIAN PILOT WINGS - by Lester G. Frazier



How to Acquire Cambodian Pilot Wings by Lester G. Frazier

This is the story of a rather unusual combat mission. The fact that I acquired a set of Cambodian Pilot Wings as a result of the mission is ancillary, but it's a good story and a true one.

In 1970, I was posted to Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, flying F-100Ds. It was my second combat assignment to Phan Rang in the F-100 and my third In-Country tour, having flown the L-19 out of Phouc Long Province back in 1962-63. We had an Alert Pad at Phan Rang with eight Huns uploaded, in flights of two, on five-minute alert. The object of the alert pad was

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

to provide immediate air cover for friendlies needing it or for high priority targets that could pop-up and need prompt attention.



Lester Frazier with the crew chief for his aircraft.

My first tour on the alert pad was as the number two man in a flight of two. Although I probably had as much combat time as my young leader had total time, the regulations stated that you couldn't lead off the pad until you followed at least once. I didn't have any problem with that as my leader, although a relatively inexperienced

lieutenant had a good set of hands and was aggressively disciplined. His name was Vance Phillips.

We reported to the pad early in the morning, relieving the night alert crew, and preflighted our airplanes, uploaded with four 500-pound Mk.82 high-drag snakeyes.

The high-drag snakeye had a steel umbrella that opened on release, slowing its speed considerably. This did two things: it allowed the pilot to get in close to the target and allowed him to egress the fragmentation envelope before the bomb detonated. Our birds also had all four 20 millimeter cannons loaded with a high-explosive incendiary and armor-piercing incendiary mix.

We sat around all day and finally received a scramble order late in the afternoon. We were airborne within three minutes and copied target information as we climbed out. All we were told was that our target was boat traffic on the Mekong River in Cambodia. Nothing to write home about.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

We usually worked with a Forward Air Controller (FAC), a pilot of a slow moving aircraft who spotted targets and controlled the fighters attacking the target. When we were within radio range, my leader contacted the FAC, Rustic 08, and told him who we were and what ordnance we carried. Zero Eight told us that our targets were two 100 foot camouflaged ships, nestled in the trees, up against the western bank of the south flowing Mekong. He included other information such as the position of the nearest friendlies (none around), target elevation, altimeter setting and recommended attack heading, which was from east to west. He correctly determined that it was impossible to visually acquire the targets on any other heading. However, an east-west run-in would have us attacking directly into the sun in the late afternoon of a high humidity day with associated haze. Adding to the attack problems was a 50% cloud cover at the altitude best for commencing the attack. Zero Eight also recommended that we circle to the north after each attack, as a huge mangrove swamp north of the target would preclude bad guy harassment as we set up for the next attack.

At one point my leader asked Zero Eight how he knew the ships were unfriendly. He said that he had a Cambodian pilot in the back seat of his OV-10 Bronco and that the Cambodian government had declared the ships unfriendly. We were all jaded enough to realize that the target could be a business rival of the local commander, but ours was not to reason why...

When Zero Eight said he had a Cambodian in the back chair, I jumped on the radio and asked if he could get me a set of Cambodian pilot wings since I collected military pilot wings.

In a fighter flight, protocol dictated that everybody in the flight keep his mouth shut, except for leader, but, I wasn't about to miss a chance to acquire a set. After some discussion with the Cambodian, Zero Eight said that he would take care of my request if I called him that night. I made sure that they understood I wanted pilot wings and not hat brass, air force insignia, stickpins or whatever, got his phone number and we proceeded with the mission.

We set up our switches for bomb-single, took spacing and Zero Eight rolled in and marked the ships with a white phosphorus smoke rocket. Zero Eight moved away from the target and told leader he had him in sight and he was cleared to drop on his smoke. All total, we probably made seven or eight passes, dropping all of our bombs. We damaged the ships but did not sink them, and I could truthfully say that I never saw the targets. But, one of our bombs opened up

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

the jungle just west of the ships, exposing an oil storage depot. Clearly now, these were the bad guys.

I saw Rustic 08 pull straight up, hammerhead his Bronco around into a ninety degree dive, and drill a rocket straight into the middle of the depot. The depot started to explode and burn and Zero Eight cleared us in for gun attacks. Almost as an afterthought, he said, "move it around, the guns are up." What he meant was that he had taken ground fire, and suggested that we keep our flight paths unpredictable. We made several passes, adding to the general morass, when leader attacked the depot amidst tracer fire from south of the target. I told him he was taking fire, and went back to pulling my airplane around for another pass when leader transmitted, "OH SHIT, I'VE JUST HIT THE TREES!" I aborted my pass and asked him his position. He said he was turning north and losing hydraulics. Rustic Zero Eight transmitted that he had him in sight and was taking up a chase position. To do so, he had to fly across the guns, which shot at, but missed him. I remembered thinking what a gutsy FAC, to have flown across hostile guns to assist a Hun driver he had never met and couldn't possibly catch. A few seconds later leader transmitted, "My hydraulics are gone; I'm stepping out." I still couldn't see him and asked his position again. He said he was north of the target, headed southeast. I knew he was over the mangrove swamp and if he jumped out, he'd spend the night there, if he survived the landing. I asked him if the bird was still flying, and he said that it was, but his control stick was frozen. I told him to stay with the bird as long as it was flying.

Zero Eight gave him distance and heading to Bien Hoa Air Base, the nearest suitable landing field. About that time, I spotted Zero Eight and eyeballed a line-of-sight directly ahead of him. About 10 miles ahead and high was my leader. He was just a tiny speck in, and amongst, the clouds. Without taking my eyes from him, I slammed in the afterburner and closed rapidly. I came aboard at about Warp Nine, threw out the speed brakes and performed an energy-losing maneuver (called a high-speed barrel roll) around leader. I matched his 240 knots, which was over 100 knots slower than his best climb speed. But leader, with no airspeed indicator, had no idea what his air speed was.

As I eased onto his right wing, I was shocked to see the entire bottom section of the fuselage missing from the main wing's trailing edge to the tail. I could see the entire engine and various accessories attached to it. F-100 Pratt & Whitney J-57 engines were shoulder mounted and, for that reason, it was still positioned correctly within the fuselage. The rest of the airplane was

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

garbage: the wings and horizontal stabilizer were torn up, the nose was bent and the pitot tube (airspeed measuring device) was missing and tree branches driven vertically into the underside. I had seen other F-100's that had hit trees and returned to base. They all had foliage buried in the wings leading edge. For that reason, I hadn't thought my leader had hit the trees. Rather, it looked like something had blown up underneath him and ripped his airplane apart. Leader told me he had some control. By varying his engine power, he could raise or lower his nose sluggishly, and the rudders still worked. About eighteen years later, Captain Al Haynes of United Airlines would face a similar dilemma, as he and his crew heroically guided his passenger filled DC-10, onto the runway at Sioux City, Iowa.

With the sun setting, we dived, zoomed and skidded our way through the clouds 147 miles to the South China Sea. Leader had decided that he did not want to eject over the jungle if he was able to make it to water. The entire time, Rustic 08 had given us the best information he had on our position, safe bail out areas and weather data. I had called up SAR (Search and Rescue) and we managed to make one large circle, while the Jolly Green positioned himself below us, just off the coast of Vietnam, near Vung Tau. Leader successfully ejected from 12,000 feet, and the chopper picked him up immediately and took him to Bien Hoa. Needing fuel, I landed at Bien Hoa right behind Rustic 08. The ground crew took me to his operations, where I thanked him for his superb support, and gave him my address for the wings (which arrived in a few days). I then went to the hospital and checked on my leader, who was uninjured.

A couple of weeks later, the Phan Rang newssheet carried an article about the rescue. As always, they listed name, rank, age and hometown of the article participants. The information about me was correct but no hometown was listed. This didn't surprise me because I wasn't interviewed for the article. But, the hometown of the rescue pilot was



listed: Walla Walla, Washington, which is my hometown. As Chief of the Command Post, I had extensive communications available to me, so I located the pilot who was now flying out of

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

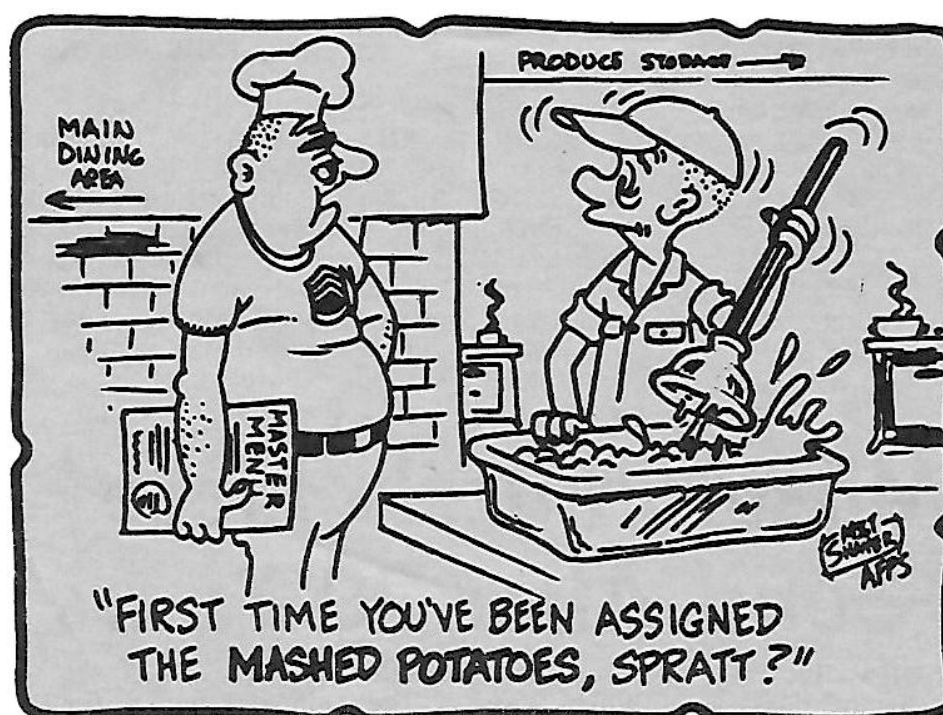
The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 "...keeping the memories alive"

Danang, and thanked him for his efforts. I asked him if he really was from Walla Walla. He said yes, and named an uncle, Lester Keen, who still lived there. Lester Keen, of course, was my dad's best friend and the person for whom I am named.

(Note: Lester and his wife Sharon attended the 2013 Phan Rang Reunion in San Antonio and he was the key-note speaker talking about flying F-100s in Libya and demonstrated the importance of a 'dentist mirror' for mission accomplishment.)

THE END



'Dollars for Scholars' Students Tour Air Base

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Procedures for receiving educational assistance through the Phan Rang AB "Dollars for Scholars Program" were switched recently when some 110 Vietnamese students from Duy Tan High School in nearby Phan Rang City were invited to the base to spend a day as guests of airmen of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW).

The day's activities and base tour was arranged by Maj. **William S. Pantle**, 315th community relations officer. During the tour, they saw a U.S. Air Force C123 Provider, inside and out, and

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

were told of its role as a cargo and troop airlifter in the Republic of Vietnam. Capt. Nguyen Qui Chan, a Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) pilot undergoing training here under the VNAF Improvement and Modernization Program, acted as interpreter for the day.

Another stop on their tour was a visit to the reciprocating engine shop of the 315th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Sq., where the students saw the various stages of engine build-up prior to being installed on the jet-assisted "Providers." While there, each student was presented a monthly "Dollars for Scholars" scholarship of 750 piasters from airmen of the wing.

Next on the agenda was the dining hall where many of the students had their first sampling of American food — hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, french fries, salad and dessert. The final stop of the day before they returned to school was the 35th Security Police Squadron's Canine Section, where they watched three teams of sentry dogs and handlers go through their paces of simulated attack, search and guard procedures.

The "Dollars for Scholars" funds donated to the student marked the final financial assistance for this school year for the 315th TAW. However, members of the Phan Rang AB Community Relations Fund Council, primary organization on base for coordinating the program, hope to extend the program to the next school year.

During the last school year, students of the nine high schools in Ninh Thuan Province were supported with tuition assistance through "Dollars for Scholars." Some 477 youngsters received approximately 3,580,000 piasters (\$12,645). The scholarships provided students with enough money for their tuition fee, as well as a book and clothing allowance.

Maj. **Russell A. Young**, 35th Avionics Maintenance Squadron commander and chairman of the fund council, describes the program as a worthy cause. "Students are selected on the basis of need and attainment of satisfactory grades to receive aid. In many cases they would not have been able to remain in school for the entire year without our help," he said. (*Pacific Stars and Stripes, Tokyo, Japan, June 26, 1971*)

A Unique Perspective 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,

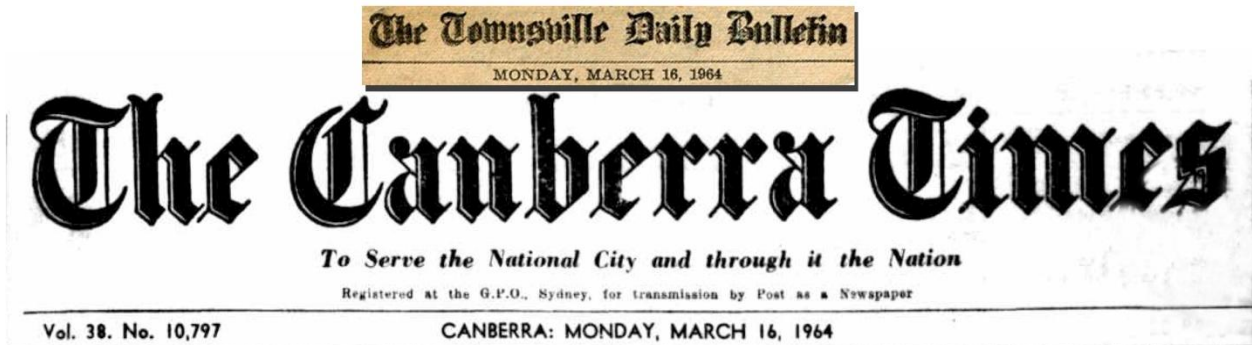
“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”

but hardly any of them cover their careers or significant events before Vietnam.

The following story by Wing Commander Bob Howe, RAAF (Retired), shares the following story with us about his experiences before Vietnam that I’m sure you will enjoy it.



The Headlines

**CRIPPLED AMERICAN B-50 BOMBER
JETTISONED VALUABLE
ELECTRONIC GEAR**

**R.A.A.F. PLANE GUIDES CRIPPLED B50 TO
SAFETY**

DRAMA OVER PALM ISLAND

**DRAMATIC MID-AIR RESCUE OF A CRIPPLED USAF SURVEY PLANE
NORTH QUEENSLAND**

As recounted by **Bob Howe** (10 Squadron RAAF, 1961-1964)

“Mayday, Mayday”

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

It was a weekend and all was peaceful, but No 10 Squadron RAAF remained, as always, on 24-7 Search and Rescue (SAR) standby alert. Normal weekend practice was for married aircrew members to stand down to be with their families, leaving the duty to us single guys less burdened.

Saturday passed uneventfully. Being on the duty roster, I was hoping for a quiet time across the region ‘emergency-wise’ and looking forward to an enjoyable Sunday afternoon playing cricket in the local Townsville competition, even though the weather was somewhat overcast. However it was not to be.

At 11 am, on Sunday 15 March 1964, a *Mayday* emergency distress call was received by air traffic control personnel on duty in the RAAF Garbutt (Townsville) control tower. However, instead of the usual sea or land-borne subject suffering adversity, the call for help had come from a stricken United States Air Force B-50 Super Fortress, on its way from Townsville, bound for Port Moresby, New Guinea, its operating base.

USAF Survey Operations

From September 1962 to June 1964, a small detachment of four specialized Boeing RB-50Fs was based at Jackson Field, Port Moresby. They were from the 1370th Photo Mapping Wing of the Air Photographic and Charting Service (APCS) of the United States Air Force’s Military Air Transport Service (MATs). Their home was Turner Air Force Base at Albany, Georgia, USA and their crews were very experienced flyers, a significant number being command pilots and master navigators.

“The American plane, a four-engined World War II B50 bomber, was one and a half hours out from Townsville’s Garbutt Airfield on a flight to its Port Moresby base when parts of one engine fell away.” *The Canberra Times*

Even though it was based at Port Moresby, the USAF’s Aerial Survey Team 7 (AST-7) relied for much assistance on Australia. For example, their aircraft were flown south to Trans-Australia Airlines (TAA) workshops at Essendon for regular maintenance.

The Super Fortress in question (RB-50F, 47-0138) had flown into Townsville to collect 1,800kg of special electronics, unloaded from a US Navy landing ship (USNS *Harris County*), with the aim of transporting the gear back to Port Moresby for use in AST-7’s airborne survey operations.

10 Squadron Springs Into Action

As soon as the *Mayday* call was received, all listed standby SAR crew members were

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

immediately called up on our fixed line telephones (we had no mobiles in those days). We responded extremely well, mostly driving in from the nearby suburbs, promptly arriving at the tarmac to find that the duty ground crew had already prepared our SP-2H Neptune A89-281 for its flight.

Thanks to them we only had to collect our flying gear, navigation equipment etc. and hop on board without delay. A quick start up of the engines and within 25 minutes of being called, we launched off at 11.25am into the air. Heading north, we received a full briefing on the situation from RAAF air traffic control personnel and proceeded en route to locate the disabled aircraft.

“The plane's navigation equipment was shut down because of the engine failure and it was flying "blind".” *The Canberra Times*

We were told that the B-50 had already lost two of its four engines. As we subsequently found out, they had reached a cruise altitude of 28,000', and then the crew was surprised to see parts fly out of No 3 engine which was duly feathered. Ten minutes later they lost the other inboard engine, No 2.

“...Captain Meek decided to return to Townsville, 300 miles away.” *The Canberra Times*

Turning back towards Townsville, the Super Fortress lost height at around 500 feet per minute down to 10,000'. With only one generator working and most of their electrics out of action the hapless crew was in effect lost, flying blind in widespread cloudy and rainy weather, somewhere in the Hinchinbrook Passage-Palm Island region. The highest point on Hinchinbrook was Mt. Bowen at 3,680 feet. Not too much further north towards Babinda and Innisfail was Queensland's highest peak, Mt. Bartle Frere, at 5,320 feet.

After take-off we headed north towards Hinchinbrook, some 60 miles away, proceeding “with both piston engines turning and both jet engines burning”, flying beneath an extensive low cloud base.

Our crew, captained by Flying Officer Les Morris, with Flying Officer Lyn Winn as co-pilot, included three navigators - Flight Lieutenant John Gazley, Flying Officer Les Fisher (later Chief of Air Force) and myself, plus three signallers. We knew each other well and worked closely as a team.

Making Contact

As we got closer we made radio contact with the Americans and reassured them that we were

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

on our way to help. We suggested that they turn east to head out to sea and away from the threatening Hinchinbrook hills as they continued to lose height.

We tried using our on-board Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio direction-finding gear to get an idea where to steer, but with not much luck, no doubt hindered by the terrain below and bad weather in the area.

Our Neptune was fitted with a very powerful 1-megawatt radar, the AN/APS-20, optimized for detecting submerged submarines out at sea, elusively poking up their periscopes and radio/radar antennae. Although we really hadn't tried it out in an air-to-air mode before, we decided to tilt the powerful radar antenna up in the hope of detecting echoes reflected from the B-50 (and hopefully without incurring any enduring radiation damage to those in the front seats).

Staying at a reasonably low, but safe, level above terrain, we sector-scanned the radar looking ahead. Before long we discerned a fleeting target out of the ground clutter and our pilots were advised to turn directly towards this object. As we got nearer the radar echo became stronger, although still intermittent.

Not long after, we were most fortunate to break out of clouds temporarily, whereupon our pilots up front immediately caught sight of the disabled aircraft. It was headed east as we had suggested and by now was down to 3,000' above sea level, with its two inboard engines stopped and feathered.



Flying beside the crippled B-50.

With feelings of great jubilation amongst both sets of crews, we banked starboard and gently

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

climbed to join in a tight close formation position, waving happily at each other through respective windows. Throttling back to the B-50's reduced airspeed; we then took over the lead and told them to stick with us, as we headed away from Hinchinbrook Island, safely out over the water, turning back for Townsville.

The USAF Super Fortress crew was ready for the worst. They all had their Mae West inflatable life preservers strapped around their waists in case they needed to ditch in the sea. They also had their parachutes on, ready to bail out if necessary. Our crew was also prepared for any emergency that might arise, as our Neptune 'bomb-bay' carried rescue equipment, including a dinghy, for dropping if needed. Of course, we hoped to ferry the ailing aircraft back to Townsville safely, if only its two remaining engines could keep going.

Heading for Home and Safety

Inbound to Townsville, the B-50 still lost height, albeit at 100 feet per minute, but by this time we were collectively down to 500' above the sea. We had steered clear of Palm Island (22 miles south of Hinchinbrook and 44 miles north of Townsville) when the B-50 started to lose height more rapidly, causing the anxious Americans to hurl out their valuable cargo of HIRAN (High Frequency Ranging and Navigation) advanced electronics in order to maintain height.

Our signallers in the rear of the Neptune could see the stricken aircraft out of their window and we carried on board an old World-War II vintage F.24 camera for SAR missions. Holding the camera by hand, they were able to capture good photos of the stricken aircraft as we escorted it clear of the dangers of a cloud-enshrouded mainland. It had gained some altitude after the precious survey gear was thrown overboard, but was unable to retain this height, and slowly descended further.

Tucked in beside the temporarily stabilized Super Fortress, we maneuvered safely around Magnetic Island, now only 5 miles from the airfield. We lined up carefully, aiming to bring the aircraft in to land on the nearest runway, approaching straight in from the sea. We were well aware that the Super Fortress's chances of going around again were virtually zero, so we had to be right on target.

The control tower operator had already alerted emergency crews with their vehicles as they waited at both sides of main runway 20. We continued to lose height slowly in close formation together on the final approach and landing run.

Indeed, the Base Officer Commanding, Group Captain W.L. (Bill) Brill, who was on the spot monitoring our activities, had also called in ambulances from the Townsville General Hospital, in case of a crash-landing. The RAAF's air-sea rescue launch, which had already carried out a mercy mission to Magnetic Island earlier that day, was also on standby off-shore.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**



Neptune A89-281, piloted by Flying Officer Les Morris, watches over B-50 crossing the threshold of runway 20

Once within visual range of the runway and satisfactorily below the cloud base, we watched with great satisfaction from overhead and slightly off the runway centreline, as the crippled plane lumbered over the threshold, to flop down safely on the runway, just as its other two engines failed.



**RB-50F 47-0138 touches down safely on runway
20**

Apparently one of the two remaining live engines over sped on the way in and Captain James Meek, the pilot, seriously considered ditching the plane at the last minute. He feared that he wouldn't even make it through the last few hundred yards to the edge of the airstrip. Without hydraulics his crewmen had to physically wind the landing gear down by hand, and with flaps fully down and out, the stricken B-50 drew to a halt right in the middle of

the only operating runway (02/20), unable to move any further.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”

Barred from landing until the runway was clear, we poured on power and entered a low level holding circuit pattern. We flew beside the blocked main runway, past the disabled B-50, taking more photos.



Left: Broken down B-50 blocks Garbutt runway, as the crew look up in appreciation

Having evacuated the aircraft with alacrity (*brisk and cheerful readiness*), the American crew stood outside and waved cheerfully up at us as we went by. We remained airborne as a tow was arranged to remove the disabled plane from the strip.

After 20 minutes, the B-50 was finally towed clear of the duty runway and we landed, taxiing in to our normal parking ramp. Shutting down our engines on the tarmac, we hopped out to be welcomed by a gleeful group of very relieved US airmen.



Left: 10 Squadron rescuers, l-r, Tony Trafford (signaller), Lynn Winn (co-pilot), Les Morris (captain), Les Fisher (nav.), greet RB-50 skipper Captain John Meek

Celebrating

However, as 10 Squadron Public Relations Officer (PRO), my working day wasn't yet over. I saw it as a great opportunity to share this joyous

occasion with the wider public.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”

First things first, though. With our proud OC amongst the welcoming party, he was asked if we could open the Officers Mess bar and invite both crews, irrespective of rank, to celebrate a once-in-a-lifetime, highly successful, rescue mission. He instantly gave his approval for this blatant breach of protocol.

Fortunately our duty barman was also on the spot and so, suitably fuelled by our favorite brew – XXXX beer (recognized by us acclimatized North Queenslanders as the best of Australia’s beers), we re-ran the whole incident amongst all concerned.

In our haste to get to the bar, I had forgotten to take along a note-book or spare writing paper with me, so I borrowed a few pages ripped out of Captain Meek’s cheque book (Bank of NSW, Port Moresby Branch). I needed to jot down a few key notes to use when I called up the Townsville Daily Bulletin office to brief the local newspaper staff on our dramatic air rescue mission.

When I rang the newspaper up to tell our tale, I was informed that they would like to send a reporter out to interview both the rescuers and rescuees. Again Group Captain Brill readily agreed and by the time we were into our second and third beers, the reporter had arrived.

The squadron’s duty photographer also began to beaver away to develop the film that we used to capture the mid-air drama.

On the following day, Monday 16 March, details of the rescue dominated the front page of the Townsville Daily Bulletin, together with a set of processed photos that were delivered to the newspaper in time to go to print.

CRIPPLED AMERICAN B-50 BOMBER JETTISONED VALUABLE ELECTRONIC GEAR Drama Off Palms

A disabled United States Air Force bomber, on Sunday, had to jettison 4,000 lb of valuable electronic equipment into the ocean off Palm Island after two of its engines cut out on a flight to Port Moresby.

The aircraft—a four-engined B50 bomber—lost one engine 100 minutes after taking off from Garbutt at 9 a.m., and the second 10 minutes later. The discarded equipment is understood to be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, but this could not be verified on Sunday night.

A Singapore maritime reconnaissance plane from Eastport had to use its radar to locate and help bring the crippled bomber down after the air drama began.

R.A.A.F. Plane Guides Crippled B50 To Safety

TOWNSVILLE, Sunday. — A disabled U.S. Air Force bomber today jettisoned 4,000 lb. of irreplaceable electronic equipment into the ocean off Palm Island after two of its engines cut out on a flight to Port Moresby.

The plane was flying over the region 700 feet above the sea when the trouble occurred, but it was jettisoned before it could crash. The plane was seen by a Singapore maritime reconnaissance plane from Eastport and as far as 110 miles from the town. Captain Brill, who was in the air at the time, said the plane was seen to be in trouble and he was able to guide it to safety.

The aircraft was a B-50 Superfortress, a four-engine bomber. It was carrying a large amount of electronic equipment, which was jettisoned into the sea. The plane was seen to be in trouble and he was able to guide it to safety.

Thrown Away

It was only the first of a series of jettisonings. The second, and Captain Brill said it was the most valuable, was jettisoned 10 minutes after the first. The plane was seen to be in trouble and he was able to guide it to safety.

Fatal Fight Over Table

MELBOURNE. — A fatal fight over a table in a restaurant in Melbourne today resulted in the death of a man. The man was killed by a woman who was sitting at the table with him. The woman was charged with manslaughter.

A GRADE

GRAMMARS v NORTH'S	
GRAMMARS, First Innings:	
W. Lobegeier, b Jalland	2
Hoey, b Sager	25
Moody, run out	45
Howe, absent	0
Hooper, c Campbell, b Williams	23
Nott, c and b Jalland	0
McIntyre, run out	19
Jalland, c Sager, b Williams	2
Agar, c Jalland, b Williams	8
C. Lobegeier, l.b.w. Sager	2
Savage, not out	16
Sundries	10
Total	152

Bowling: Inglis 0/38; Jalland 2/37; Sager 2/33; Skau 0/19; Williams 3/15.

**Townsville Daily Bulletin
Monday 16 March 1964 front
page coverage and The
Canberra Times, same date.**

Alas, on the back page of the newspaper in the weekend sporting section, were the cricket results. For the first and only time in my cricket career I was listed as being given out as “absent – nil”. No doubt my fellow team-mates would have forgiven me for my unaccounted absence after they read the front page of their Monday morning edition.

Townsville Daily Bulletin Monday 16 March 1964 back page

The Phan Rang AB News No. 209

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

cricket results with Howe listed as “absent”.

“Special parts for the disabled engines are being flown to the base and the plane is expected to continue its interrupted flight to Port Moresby tomorrow.”

The Canberra Times

Post Script

The next day’s paper (Tuesday 17th) contained an editorial praising the efforts of ‘Townsville’s own’ RAAF squadron. It began “Townsville people - and Australians generally - must have felt a surge of pride....”. That’s how certainly we felt - it was indeed an unforgettable experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - Bob Howe is a frequent contributor to this newsletter and has a long association with the Royal Australian Air Force and Australian Defense community. Growing up in Canberra in the 1950’s, Bob heard stories from his uncle Max who was a RAAF pilot during World War II. After several years as a cadet in the Air Training Corps, Bob joined the RAAF and trained as a navigator, going on to fly Lincoln, Neptune, Canberra and Phantom Aircraft. During his operational tour in Vietnam, he flew over 260 missions as navigator/bomb-aimer on Canberra aircraft, and held the position of Bombing Leader. Bob arrived in Vietnam in 1969 as a youthful Canberra navigator/bomb-aimer, but much of his time there was spent as a specialist in bombing techniques. His time there provided him with the first-hand experience and detailed information to write “Dreadful Lady over the Mekong Delta” which looks at the men of No 2 Squadron and the operations they flew in Vietnam War in their Canberra Bombers. He continues to be an ardent supporter of the Phan Rang Alumni Group and is a point of contact for anything related to No. 2 Sq. and the RAAF.

“Dreadful Lady over the Mekong Delta” not only fills a gap in the recording of the RAAF’s operations in Vietnam, but also describes how crews overcame the difficulties of operating in an intense Asian war in an aircraft that was designed for a completely different environment.

Bob’s book is available at RAAF Amberley. Click [here](#) to purchase.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**



Reprinted from 2 Squadron Association Inc. September 2020 Newsletter

Secretary’s Report (Arthur Rennick)

What a year, to plagiarize the title of Stan Fenton’s book, “What a Ride”, the year of 2020 is beyond our wildest nightmares, so many plans did not get off the tarmac, turbulent days indeed.

It is reminiscent of our tour of duty at Phan Rang, the sirens wailed and we sprinted to the bunkers.

Cornered in the bunkers with unguarded entrances at both ends, at the risk of an explosive device thrown in by a silent enemy in the dark of night, sitting silently with just your thoughts waiting for the “all-clear” signal.

Fifty plus years later, Covid 19 is a replay, we can take cover, but we cannot defend ourselves from a silent and invisible enemy, without the sirens to warn of impending danger.

The only discerning difference, we were alone in Phan Rang, now we are facing an enemy together with our families, friends and neighbors.

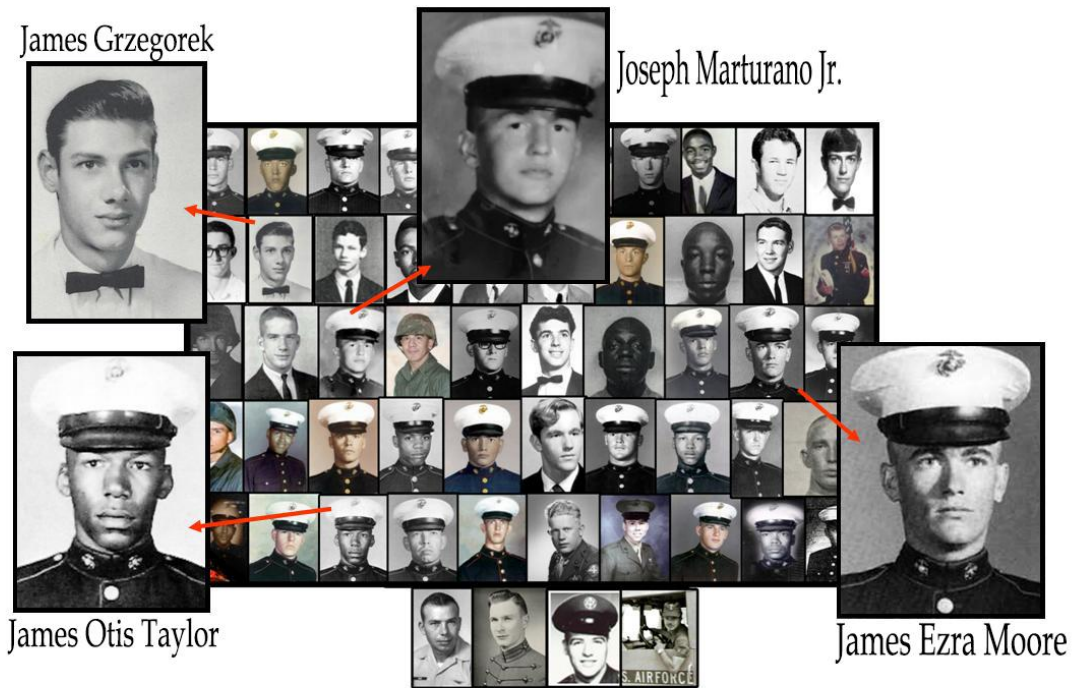
The veterans from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing were looking forward to the events on Anzac Day and the trip had to be cancelled at the last minute. The suburban front gate ceremonies in place of the official Anzac Day Marches and reunions were fitting and moving replacements.

Honoring Four Passengers from Mission 702

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”



Crew & Passengers of C-123K 54-0590

Hit by ground fire on approach to Khe Sanh

James A. Grzegorek, James Otis Taylor, Joseph Marturano Jr. and James Ezra Moore along with 50 others were passenger aboard the C-123K #54-0590 that was shot down by hostile fire 8 kilometers east of Khe Sanh Combat Base. There were no survivors. The story of this incident was covered in great detail in Phan Rang Newsletter 198 and one of the passengers Cpl. Stanley Grant Strong (First row from the left) had special significance to Donald Luke, because he was his best friend in high school. All the crew members and passengers are honored as American War Hero's, but I've singled out just these four individuals to honor.

THE FOLLOWING IS A RECAP OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CRASH OF THE PROVIDER. A

U.S. Air Force C-123K was scheduled to fly to Phu Bai Airfield, South Vietnam on 6 March 1968, some thirty-nine miles northwest of Da Nang, then on to Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province. Aircraft commander LTC Frederick J Hampton, co-pilot 1LT Ellis E. Helgeson, and crew chief SGT Jeffrey F. Conlin comprised the crew of the C-123K (serial # 54-0590), Mission # 702. All members of this aircrew were assigned to the 311TH Air Commando Squadron, 315th Air Commando Wing, Phan Rang Air Base, South Vietnam and were detached to Da Nang Airbase. Mission # 702 departed Da Nang with its cargo for Phu Bai. After off-loading its cargo was accomplished, the

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

aircraft was subsequently loaded with 43 U.S. Marines bound for Khe Sanh. Phu Bai’s passenger representative assisted the aircraft’s loadmaster in organizing various pallets loaded with the passengers’ gear, another set of pallets stacked with M-60 machine guns and other weapons, and more loaded with beer and soft drinks that were all to be delivered to Khe Sanh. When Mission # 702 departed Phu Bai Airfield, it carried a total of 51 passengers and crew--43 Marines, 1 Navy corpsman, 1 civilian photographer, 3 U.S. Air Force passengers and the 3-man Air Force aircrew.

Once in the vicinity of their destination, LTC Hampton established radio contact with ground control and was cleared to land. He initiated his final approach to Khe Sanh’s airfield, but was forced to abort the landing because of a South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) light aircraft that obstructed the runway. The Provider circled around at low altitude to set up for a second approach. However, as it did so, it was hit by enemy ground fire in the port jet engine. LTC Hampton climbed for altitude as he transmitted their situation and reported that he was returning back to Da Nang with battle damage. Shortly thereafter, the Provider spiraled into the ground exploding on impact.

The crash site was located in extremely rugged jungle-covered mountains that was dotted with small clearings covered with elephant grass and bamboo just a mile southeast of the base’s runway, less than a mile east of the closest point along Route 9, and just north of the closest location on the Song Quang Tri River that nearly encircled the loss location. The crash site was also located approximately 14 miles east of the South Vietnamese/Lao border, 58 miles west-northwest of the Phu Bai Airfield and 100 miles northwest of Da Nang Air Base. Due to the tactical situation in and around Khe Sanh, ground search parties first reached the aircraft’s wreckage on April 26, 1968 to begin the grizzly task of recovering remains. Other search teams returned to the crash site on June 24 and July 3, 1968 respectively. On each occasion, human remains, dog tags, other identification media and personal effects were recovered. All possible human remains and personal affects that were recovered were transported to the U.S. Army mortuary facility at Da Nang for the arduous task of identification. Military morticians were able to positively identify less than half of the men aboard the Provider. Those remains were embalmed and returned to each man’s family for burial.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”



James A. Grzegorek - Information from a local newspaper: A Buffalo marine, missing since his airplane was shot down trying to relieve the Marine bastion at Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, has been killed, his parents have been told.

Pfc. James A Grzegorek, 21, of 217 Willet St., is the 59th Buffalo serviceman and the 110th from Erie County to die in the war.

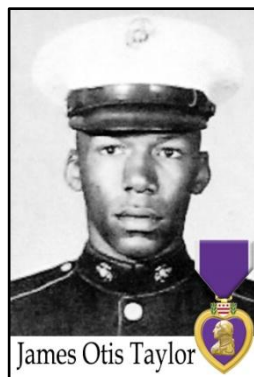
His father, Alfred Grzegorek, said Defense Department notification of his son’s death said it was in a crash caused by ground fire as his C-123 approached the surrounded Marine outpost. A native of Buffalo, he entered the Marine Corps 5 ½ months ago and trained at Camp LeJeune, N.C., and Parris Island S.C. His unit of assignment in Vietnam was H&S Co, 1st Bn, 26th Marines, 3rd MARDIV, III MAF. He was in Vietnam only five days before his death. Surviving besides his parents is a brother, Alfred Jr.



Joseph Anthony Marturano Jr.

PFC Joseph Marturano Jr. was born 11 January 1950 and he was only 18 years old at the time of his death. He was a Marine Rifleman. It was reported by a family member that Josephs father was never the same after learning of his son’s death.

He had the rank of Private First Class. Occupation or specialty was Rifleman. Service number was 2391172. Served with 3rd Marine Division, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines, G Company.



James Otis Taylor

James Otis Taylor was born on November 9, 1949, Oneida Country, New York. According to records Missouri was his home or enlistment place and St Louis County with the city of St Louis listed as his home of record. He had entered the service from Kentucky. He was a rifleman with 2nd Bn, 26th Marines, 3rd MARDIV, III MAF. Unfortunately I couldn’t find any more information on James.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”



James Ezra Moore

James Ezra Moore was born on August 17, 1949. According to records and Kansas was his home and enlisted in Kansas City, Kansas. He had enlisted in the Marine Corps. He had the rank of Private First Class. Occupation or specialty was Rifleman. Service number was 2415185. Served with G Co. 3rd Marine Division, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines.

ALL REST IN PEACE, YOU WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN



SVEN T. GUSTAVSON Airman First Class **Sven T. Gustavson**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Oke L. Gustavson, 4378 Avenida arrived for duty at Ramstein AB .Germany. Airman Gustavson, an administrative specialist, is assigned to a unit of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, America’s overseas air arm assigned to NATO. He previously served at Phan Rang AB Vietnam AB, Vietnam. A 1968 graduate of Thousand Oaks High School, he attended Moorpark College. (*Oxnard Press Courier, Oxnard, California, May 31, 1972*)

- O -

A retirement ceremony was held for Lt. Col. **James W. Kinney**, chaplain at Kessler Air Force Base recently. A native of Winston-Salem, he is the son of Annie Mae Kinney of Burlington and the late Rev. Paul G. Kinney. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C. He did graduate study in counseling at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Tex. Ordained a Lutheran pastor in 1963, he served civilian churches before being commissioned an Air Force chaplain in 1968. He served at Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, with other overseas tours in Italy, Australia and Turkey, and temporary duty in Saudi Arabia, and became senior chaplain at Moody Air Force Base in Ga.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 209 “...keeping the memories alive”

in 1985. His awards include the Bronze Star, and Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters. He is the husband of Lois Marie Bouknight of Rock Hill, S.C. and they have two children. (*Burlington Times News, Burlington, North Carolina, February 28, 1996*)

- O -

EQUIPMENT OPERATOR Airman 1-C **David L. Murphy**, son of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Murphy of Rt. 1, Bluefield, Va., is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Airman Murphy, a construction equipment operator, is a member of the Pacific Air forces. The airman was graduated from high school in Pocahontas, Va. (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph, Bluefield, West Virginia, February 5, 1968*)

- O -

JOE A. JORDAN, son of Mrs. Ruby Jordan of 1217-A Jeanette, has received the Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang, AB, Vietnam, from Col. Walter C. Turnier, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing commander. Sgt Jordan distinguished himself by meritorious service as an electrical power production technician at Phan Rang. (*Abilene Reporter News, Abilene, Texas, December 21, 1970*)

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.