

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 216

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Full Throttle Landing - by Ron Siegfried

FULL THROTTLE LANDING

by Ron Siegfried

Plus several other significant events during his flying career

Throttle Linkage Failure?

I don't recall the exact date, but it was about April 1971 when Gary Silence and I took off for a road cut on the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos. All was normal until I started my roll-in for a 45-degree ripple pass. As usual, I retarded the throttle handle, but the RPM remained at its last,

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setting 92% thrust! I wasn't sure if I was going supersonic in that dive but was probably pretty close to it.

“...chalked it up as just another day's work.”



After the delivery, we had full internal fuel so there was no rush to divert or make a quick decision about what to do with that stuck RPM. The SOF that day was Al Edwards, and we discussed on a discreet frequency how to handle the situation. After slowing by dropping all my drag devices, I made a tight descending turn over the approach to runway 04 at Phan Rang. I held about 200 knots so as to not get on the back side of the power curve. However, as soon as I unloaded to continue on the glide path, the airspeed quickly accelerated to 250K +. So, I had to cut the engine with the fuel shutoff switch at about 400 feet; and then my concern was not going into null flow with the ram air turbine. What a difference it made to have the 157 unwind to zero versus normally to idle power. The temptation, of course, was to pop the drag

chute too early, but as the aircraft rapidly decelerated I pulled the handle at exactly 180 K and it deployed as advertised. I managed to get the Hun to a full stop in about 7,000 feet ... never did take the departure end cable. Later, I was told that a cotter pin that held the throttle linkage connected had not been installed. And, wouldn't you know, on the day the event took place, the incident aircraft flew again that afternoon ... and thus I chalked it up as just another day's work.

But it turned out to have been much more than that. The wheels of the Awards & Decorations guys started grinding away and much later, I received a citation saying (among other good works) that my bombs hit right on target that day, and I guess if the target was the ground, it must true. Here's more about that citation that I was proud of.

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Until this day, my family members were the only people who have ever seen and read this citation. The event chronicled by this citation occurred near the end of my tour. And the paperwork for the citation that I received didn't arrive until I was at my next assignment, a T-38 IP at Williams AFB. The citation and its paperwork just appeared in my document box one day. It turned out to be a PACAF safety award known as the "Order of the Able Aeronaut," the citation of which we quote verbatim here (for readability), beside a picture of the framed document.

ORDER OF THE ABLE AERONAUT



CAPTAIN RONALD R. SIEGFRIED, F-100 PILOT, 35th TACTICAL FIGHTER WING, DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY DISPLAYING OUTSTANDING AIRMANSHIP DURING A SERIOUS IN-FLIGHT EMERGENCY. DURING A HIGH ANGLE ORDNANCE DELIVERY ON AN ENEMY POSITION, THE THROTTLE LINKAGE MALFUNCTIONED, PREVENTING CAPTAIN SIEGFRIED FROM REDUCING OR INCREASING HIS ENGINE POWER. WITH THE ENGINE SET AT 92 PER CENT POWER, CAPTAIN SIEGFRIED CONTINUED HIS ATTACK, AND BY USING LOAD MANEUVERING AND SPEED BRAKES

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TO MAINTAIN DELIVERY AIRSPEED, PLACED ALL ORDNANCE PRECISELY ON TARGET. AFTER PULLING OFF THE TARGET, HE TURNED TOWARD HIS RECOVERY BASE AND PREPARED FOR THE EMERGENCY LANDING. CORRECTLY ANALYZING HIS SITUATION, CAPTAIN SIEGFRIED REDUCED HIS LANDING WEIGHT AND SKILLFULLY POSITIONED HIS AIRCRAFT ON FINAL APPROACH. WHEN THE LANDING WAS ASSURED, HE SHUT DOWN THE ENGINE BY USE OF THE FUEL SHUTOFF SWITCH AND SAFELY LANDED THE POWERLESS AIRCRAFT. CAPTAIN SIEGFRIED'S SUPERIOR AIRMANSHIP UNDOUBTEDLY PREVENTED DAMAGE TO A VALUABLE AIRCRAFT AND REFLECTS THE HIGHEST CREDIT UPON HIMSELF, HIS UNIT, AND THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

Several other significant events during my flying career

I was blessed to have a 24-year military flying career, eight on active duty and 16 with the Missouri Air National Guard. On March 12, 1987, I ejected from a burning F-4 while on a range mission at Ft. Leonard Wood. The irony of that event was that the right engine was supposed to go through an entire overhaul at the 700-hour inspection. In order to save money, that deadline was extended to 750 hours. The engine physically came apart at the 17th compressor section at the 735 hour point. The ejection was uneventful, and only a few burned trees were the ground casualties.

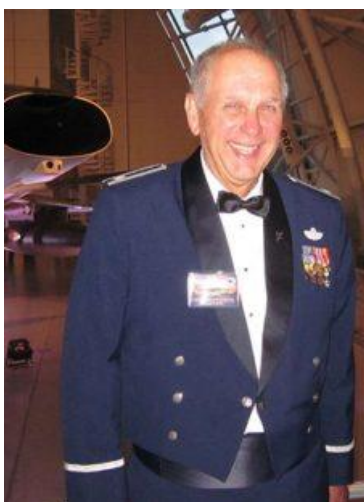
My most harrowing experience during my 24 years, was while I was the Range Officer at the now-closed Maniago range complex a few miles east of the runway at Aviano AB in Italy. It was the last overseas deployment of the F-100, circa 1977. As number four pulled off his last pass, he radioed that his engine was compressor stalling and rolling back, and that he was getting ready to eject. I remember the names of all the pilots: Garity, Ish, Finch and Earls [who was 4]. I quickly told him to check throttle inboard, push the air start button and go to emergency fuel. After what seemed like an eternity and while I was looking for a parachute I heard "OK, it's running again." His next comment was that he was heading out to the Adriatic to eject. I said NO, hit the panic button, clean the wings (as he was over the range), go to Guard and land against traffic at Aviano, because he could probably deadstick it in there. That was what he did, and saved the aircraft, accompanied by lots of accolades. But he made my day by telling me how much my comments reengaged his brain! Several years later, at a stateside O' Club I was talking with another pilot who recalled that Hun "save" because he was there, waiting for takeoff at the time. He related the incident accurately, saying he had just been cleared on to hold when he heard the guard call. What are the odds we both remembered that close-call

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incident ... because they were there.



Preferred Name: Ron

Nickname/Call Sign: Big Bird

Date of Birth: 12/09/1945

Highest Military Grade Held: (O-5)

Lt. Colonel

Hometown: Bethlehem, PA

June 67-June 68, UPT Webb AFB Class 68-H, Oct 68-Oct 69, 457 TAS (C7-A Cam Rahn Bay RVN), Dec 69-June 70 426 TFS Luke AFB F-100, July 70 -Oct 70, 306 TFS Tuy Hoa, RVN, Nov 70-Aug 71, Phan Rang, RVN, Sep 71-Jan 75 97 FTS, T-38 Williams AFB, AZ, March 75-Sept 91 F-100 & F4, 110 TFS MoANG, St Louis, Mo.

- Deadsticked an F-100 at Phan Rang with throttle linkage failure
- Ejected out of an F4 on March 12, 1987
- Commodity Broker for Merrill Lynch for several years.
- Retired at age 60 as a B737 Captain after flying 22 years for People Express and then Continental Airlines.



After receiving Ron’s story, I started looking for more material and I posted the picture that appears at the beginning of this article on the Phan Rang Facebook page and almost as soon as it was posted **Jerry Gerald Navin** commented that he was the crew chief for Ron’s aircraft. I then informed Ron of that fact and he sent me this picture of him and Jerry pausing for a picture in the front of his aircraft.

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YAW, PITCH, ROLL & GRAVITY

by Jim Mattison

Early generation Air Force fixed wing gunships flew an orbit around a fixed point on the ground.

YAW, PITCH, ROLL AND GRAVITY

by Jim Mattison



The concept was, despite altitude, flying a 30 degree left hand bank (the guns pointed out the left side so the pilot could see where he was shooting), at 130 knots.

Basic aircraft flight controls are yaw, pitch and roll. The pilot could control the point of impact of the rounds fired by adjusting these three basic controls. Effects are as follows:

- **YAW**, controlled by the rudder, impact point moves left or right
- **PITCH** controlled by the elevators, tightens or loosens the firing orbit (tighten the cone or widen the cone)
- **ROLL** controlled by the ailerons, impact point moves up or down

With the science out of the way, I'll elaborate on the final component of the story, gravity. Our ammunition magazine was merely ammo boxes strapped to the cargo deck opposite our four miniguns. I manned the two forward miniguns and the Armament Control Panel, which was above the magazine.

Being tall and slender at a mere 150 pounds, I developed a technique to get a fresh ammo box from the magazine to the loading position. This was a distance of about 7 feet. The ammo cans weighed 75-100 pounds, so there was quite a bit of weight involved, especially in a 30 degree bank exacerbated by increased G force from the constant left hand bank.

My technique was to grab the ammo box on the floor by its two handles and yank with all my might to get the box airborne, guiding the ammo box to land near the loading station of my minigun.

This worked very well for me and I could keep up a pretty good flow of ammunition.

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The first time I ran afoul of my Aircraft Commander, Major Morgan was during a very active TIC (troops in contact mission). Terry and I were at our stations on the gun bay, feverishly working to keep up with the intense rate of fire of our miniguns. Being right handed, my right arm was the strongest, so I usually faced towards the rear of the aircraft when I grabbed an ammo box to reload my guns. Major Morgan was really hosing down the area, engaging the attacking enemy soldiers on the ground. Much like being on a boat, the airplane was rolling and heaving as he altered his impact point during the orbit.

I had just grabbed a fresh ammo box, which was airborne in it’s arc towards my minigun, when Major Morgan kicked the rudders to adjust his fire. As my ammo box hit the gun deck, the airplane went one way and I went the other way. I was thrown over the ammo box and tumbled uncontrollably towards the rear of the aircraft. As I rolled towards the rear, my intercom cable disconnected. Thankfully we had a flare launcher mounted in the right rear cargo door opening. I slammed into the flare launcher and got stuck between the door opening and the launcher frame with my upper body flailing about in the air stream. Don, the Illuminator Operator, at his station near the flare launcher, rushed to my aid, untangling me from my plight.

Angrily, I reconnected my intercom cable, keyed my mike and yelled “what the hell you doing up there”?. After a moment of intercom silence, Major Morgan came up on intercom with “who’s talking”! I responded with “sir, ease up on the rudders, you’re killing us back here”. He responded with a very curt “we’ll talk about this on the ground”!

Pirkkala in the News



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F-100 Pilot Brings In Runaway

(The Missileer)

Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., an F-100 pilot with the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron, halted his runaway Super Sabre after the throttle stuck at 87 per cent power.

Captain Pirkkala, and his wingman, Capt. Sloan L. B, Brooks had been scrambled from the alert pad at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, to aid troops in contact with the enemy in IV Corps.

It wasn't until he was returning to Phan Rang that Captain Pirkkala realized he was in trouble.

“I was in the traffic pattern and couldn't understand why I seemed to be going so fast.” he said. “I touched down about 1,000 feet down the runway. I wasn't decelerating as normal. I pulled the drag chute.” he said, “started the stopping procedures and hit the brakes.

“I put the hook down, caught the barrier at 70 knots and then turned off the master switch.” Captain Pirkkala concluded “The airplane came to a nice stop.” (AFNS)

(The Missileer, Aerospace Power for Peace, Air Force Easter Test Range, Patrick AFB, Fla., November 8, 1968.)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE ENGINE AUTOMATICALLY GOES TO 89 PERCENT RPM?

It was broken throttle linkage. When that happens, the engine automatically goes to about 89 percent RPM. I had no idea what happened, it failed in the traffic pattern after I pitched out and in the turn to final I couldn't slow the Bird down even in idle. Got the chute out, jammed on the brakes but running out of runway. I dropped the hook, and then remembered the engine master switch.

I hit the guarded switch but the engine runs for about 30 seconds, once turned off. By that time I caught the barrier with the tail hook about 100 kts and it stopped me and then the engine shut down. Now, I'm in the barrier with no engine.

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How embarrassing is that. The DO (col.) was out there and came up the ladder and said, “what happened perk” Still trying to figure out what happened I said, “I don’t know. just couldn’t slow down”.

Some guys would never experience a throttle linkage ever; super rare malfunction!

I wasn’t exactly a master of knowledge about the airplane in the first place. Never heard of another the whole time I was there. Of course there are the smart asses who said, “You should have known right away what the problem was”. To which I responded, “YEAH—RIGHT” Give me a break!!

That was Childs play compared to a stuck stick that happened to me in the traffic pattern at night. It took me two hands to move the stick---and hit in the overrun, bounced about 15 to 20 feet in the air, pulled the drag chute in mid air and smacked down on runway about 2000 feet down. I was too low and going down to Punch out of it. I missed the left ejection seat handle my first attempt so I was committed to fly the airplane. Some sort of bell crank assembly that controls the slab broke loose. Maintenance Said “the cables would have completely snapped in a couple of minutes.

“When the Shit hits the fan—keep flying the airplane”

An old instructor I had in pilot training said, “When the Shit hits the fan—keep flying the airplane” Probably saved my Life.

I was almost killed a couple more times, but those are stories for another time.



1967 NEW CASTLE NEWS

RECEIVES WINGS — Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Ave., has been awarded U.S. Air Force silver pilot wings upon graduation with honors at Laredo Air Force Base, Tex. He is being assigned to Cannon AFB, N.M., for flying duty with the Tactical Air Command. He is a 1958 graduate of Union Township High School and received a degree in

history in 1965 from the Municipal University, Omaha, Neb.

(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1967)

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1968 NEW CASTLE NEWS

Men in Vietnam - Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala Sr. of 280 Atlantic Ave., recently participated in a successful strike mission over Vietnam. He and a fellow F-100 Super Sabre pilot were credited with destroying three enemy fortifications in a strike that aided friendly forces in the Mekong Delta.

An Air Force forward air controller directed the two Super Sabres against a number of enemy fortifications and troops along a canal. “He told us to expect ground fire,” Pirkkala said. “There had been another strike in there earlier and the friendlies were keeping the pressure on them.”

The captain is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing based at Phan Rang Air Base. He was commissioned through the aviation cadet program. A 1958 graduate of Union Area High School, he received his B. G. E. degree from the Municipal University of Omaha, Neb., in 1964. His wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hink of 1104 Miller Rd., New Castle.

(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, October 16, 1968)

1968 BIG SPRINGS DAILY

Three Instructors Get DFCs For Viet Action - Three Webb instructor pilots received Distinguished Flying Crosses Saturday morning for actions while serving in Southeast Asia late last year and early this year.

The trio—Captains Mark Stahl, **Henry Pirkkala** and David Peters — received the DFCs during the graduation ceremony of Class 70-03 on the Webb flightline.

Capt. Stahl, currently a T-37 instructor pilot in the 3561st Pilot Training Sq uadron at the base, earned the DFC for his performance as an A-37 pilot in Vietnam between September 1968 and May, 1969. According to the citation accompanying the award he flew extremely hazardous missions through adverse weather conditions and through the constant threat of hostile ground fire and attack, yet he accomplished his objectives. He was stationed at Bien Hoa AB, Vietnam.

The others receiving DFCs were T-38 instructor pilots in the 3560th Pilot Training Squadron.

Capt. Pirkkala won his DFC for his actions as an F-100 Super Sabre pilot in Southeast Asia, Nov. 16, 1968. He flew a close air support mission for the Vietnamese army. Despite marginal

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weather conditions and intense hostile ground fire, the captain delivered his ordinance precisely on target, completely neutralizing the large enemy force.

Capt. Peters attained the DFC for participating in aerial flight as an RF-4C Phantom II aircraft commander who flew over classified targets in Southeast Asia Jan 9, 1969. The citation accompanying the award said the captain was specially chosen to fly a top priority reconnaissance mission over a high threat target area, performing his mission with professional expertise.

(Big Spring Daily Herald, Big Spring, Texas, October 26, 1969)

1969 NEW CASTLE NEWS

U S COMBAT AIR FORCES Vietnam — U.S. Air Force Captain Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala Sr., 280 Atlantic Ave., New Castle, Pa., recently completed his 200th combat mission in Southeast Asia. Captain Pirkkala, an F-100 Super Sabre pilot, flies with the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

The captain, a 1958 graduate of Union Township High School, received his B.G.E. degree in 1964 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hink, 1104 Miller Road, New Castle.

(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, March 27, 1969)

1969 NEW CASTLE NEWS

U S Air Force Capt Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., New Castle, Pa., recently participated in a successful strike mission in the Mekong Delta area of Vietnam. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala Sr., 280 Atlantic Ave., New Castle, Pa., Pirkkala and a fellow F-100 Super Sabre pilot from the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, destroyed or damaged 14 enemy fortifications, 5 sampans and 4 bunkers. “The target was located about 70 miles southwest of Bien Thuy,” the captain recalled. “We contacted the forward air controller and he put in a mark for us immediately.”

The captain is married to the former Carolyn Hink, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hink, 1104 Miller Rd., New Castle. The Pirkkalas’ have two daughters, Lisa, 5 and Sonja, 2.

(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, January 22, 1969)

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1971 NEW CASTLE NEWS

Pirkkala promoted - BIG SPRING, Tex. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Ave., has been promoted to captain in the Air Force. Capt. Pirkkala is a T-38 Talon jet trainer flight commander at Webb AFB, Tex.

He was commissioned in 1960 through the aviation cadet program and has served in the Republic of Vietnam.

He is a 1958 graduate of Union High School, and received his bachelor's degree in history in 1964 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Capt. Pirkkala's wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hink of 1104 Miller Road.

(New Castle News, New Castle, Pennsylvania, March 10, 1971)

1971 NEW CASTLE

WEBB AFB. Tex. - Henry J. Pirkkala, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Avenue was recently promoted to the rank of major in the U S Air Force here.

Maj. Pirkkala is a flight commander in the 3560th Pilot Training Squadron and serves as an instructor pilot in the supersonic T-38 Talon Aircraft. He was graduated from Union area High School and attended Youngstown State University and Omaha University in Omaha, Neb.

He is a veteran of 11 years in the Air Force, and is married to the former Carrie Hink of New Castle. The couple has two children.

1971 BIG SPRINGS DAILY

Six Promoted At Webb AFB - The Air Force has identified 2,470 officers for promotion to major under the fiscal year 1971 temporary promotion program. The selections include 2,345 Primary-zone selections, 2,163 of whom are line officers. Webb AFB officer affected by the announcement is Capt. **Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.**, 3560th Pilot Training Squadron.

(Big Springs Daily Herald, Big Springs, Texas, US February 01, 1971)

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The following is from

**“A Vietnam Donut Dolly’s
Recollections and Reflections”**

from a soon to be published book

by Carol Clarke, a Donut Dolly, and used with permission.

Christmas and Hanukkah Away from Home



As Christmas approached, we decorated the Du Drop Inn, our rec center at Phan Rang. We built a little stage with a fake fireplace complete with stockings and a place where you could sit and just look at it if you wanted to.



Carol in her uniform

We had more than one Christmas tree with homemade decorations, and various Christmas mobiles hung from the ceiling. It made the place sparkly and magical, even in a war zone. Guys painted snow scenes on butcher roll sized paper that we hung on the walls. We did our best to make the center a festive place for the holidays.

Outside on the lawn, we had a lighted nativity scene complete with star. There was a tree that grew past the eaves right next to the front door; it was decorated with colored lights, mostly red, since it seemed we had a lot of

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those. The entrance had a white awning with a fairly decent-sized opening that we adorned with tinsel and white lights. We designed a Christmas card that had five bells in a decorative arrangement with each of our names on a bell. We wrote a corny little poem and printed the cards black and white (the only option back in those days) and then colored them using markers; it took an eternity to do but the colors stood out in the olive drab world of the mail room and the guys said they brought Christmas cheer.

A couple of Jewish GIs came to us to ask if they could schedule space for a Hanukkah party during the season. A rabbi from Cam Ranh Bay was coming to visit, along with a few Jewish GIs from other posts and bases.

The local guys wanted to offer hospitality to the group and we thought it was a great idea. The big front room was fully decorated for Christmas but we had not done anything much yet in the smaller back room. They said that room would be fine and they made plans for cooking Jewish food in our “kitchen.”

We decided to decorate the back room for Hanukkah and leave it throughout the season. We had to ask questions and do a little research, but we came up with bright blue crepe paper and we made white Stars of David to brighten up the room. The dreidels rolled and the party was a success. The rabbi suggested that they give us a few cases of their matzoh ball chicken soup as a thank you gift.

The Jewish Welfare Board of New York looked out for its own and they regularly shipped some Kosher foods, including the chicken soup, to take care of their boys. On a chilly rainy night, a bowl of that soup was just the right supper.

We were grateful to them as well for letting us celebrate with them. They played Jewish music and danced and no doubt dreamed of being home for Hanukkah just as other guys dreamed of a white Christmas.

We started planning for Christmas shortly after I came in-country in October. At Phan Rang, we had a fabulous helpmate Red Cross Chapter in Indiana. Those ladies baked cookies in great abundance, then packed them in coffee cans.

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They were instructed to alternate rows of popcorn and cookies and fill the coffee cans to the top. The popcorn, somebody reasoned, would buffer the cookies and help them travel halfway around the world without breaking. They would decorate the cans and send them in boxes to our rec center. The boxes started to arrive and we eventually had them stacked to the ceiling in our office.

We decided to give them out on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We thought we could make it work to promise every guy who showed up at the center a Christmas present of a can of homemade cookies. We really wanted them to come to the center and be with other people on the holidays. We started advertising in early December our tempting offer of cookies.

I got a phone call mid-December from a guy who asked if we were really going to give out homemade cookies. I said, “You heard right.” He explained that he and his fellow MARS operators would be busy all day and night at Christmas helping GIs make phone calls back home. He wondered if I could put back cans of cookies for him and his co-workers since they would be working and could not come to the center.

I said, “Sure” and commiserated with them because as a newbie, I would be working all that time, too. I set aside a big box of coffee cans for them and they came by the week before Christmas to pick them up.

On Christmas Eve, we went caroling to several locations on the base. We would sing a few carols, wish everyone a Merry Christmas and then move on to another site and do it again. A few guys with good voices hung in there with us until we made it back to the center.

Around 11:00 pm, we loaded a jeep with goodies and set out to visit every guy on guard duty that night around the perimeter. Their commanding officers went with us and as we arrived at each location, the CO would climb the tower or stand watch at the guard post. This relieved the GI guard so he could come to talk with us and enjoy a few refreshments on Christmas Eve.

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We're off to visit everyone on guard duty on Christmas Eve.

We were proud to be able to say that every man on guard duty that night had a visit from Red Cross donut dollies. It was after 3:00 am when we got back to the center.

In just five hours, we opened the center again early on Christmas morning. We put out goodies and played Christmas music on cassette players. Some guys brought the packages they had received from home so they could open them under the Christmas tree next to our fake fireplace.

Others opened their presents in their barracks but came to the center wearing obviously new shirts and pants. Many shirts still had the wrinkles, but the guys were proud of their new clothes and so we complimented them. It was gratifying to hear a guy say, “My wife picked this out” or “My mom sent me this; she thinks I look good in brown.”

It was hard to close the center at 9:00 that night but eventually we got away. The party in our hooch had already started, so the two of us who had worked didn't bother to change from our uniforms. We just grabbed a plate.

We were enjoying a Christmas dinner and sharing with friends when the phone rang. The

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operator asked for the girl named Carol and he told me how much the operators had enjoyed those cookies. He said they had helped a lot of guys make their Christmas phone calls.

Then he said, “Where do your parents live?” “Austin, Texas,” I replied. “Hmm,” he said, “I know an operator at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth; let me see what I can do.”

We were still partying when the phone rang again and the operator had my parents on the line. I hardly knew what to say; I had no expectation of being able to talk to them at Christmas. It was awesome to hear those familiar voices saying “Merry Christmas.”

“Happy Holidays” means different things to different people but many of us discovered in Vietnam that while we missed being at home, the holidays are to be celebrated wherever we are. And so we did.



Our platform living room with the cardboard Christmas fireplace and the decorated tree that reminded us of home.

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The text of our card read:

Ring the bells, strike the chimes!
For the merriest Christmas of all
times

And may your New Year come in
with a bang.

Season's greetings from
the “Donut Dollies” of Phan
Rang.

Back when there was no color photocopying, we made mimeo copies in black and white and then colored them ourselves.

On December 26th, the Aussies celebrated Boxing Day which comes the day after Christmas in parts of the world like the United Kingdom and Australia. The blokes built box cars which they raced down a hill most of the day. They were cheered on by Americans and South Koreans who were their fellow residents at Phan Rang.



The Aussies built cars for racing down the hill on Boxing Day, December 26th.

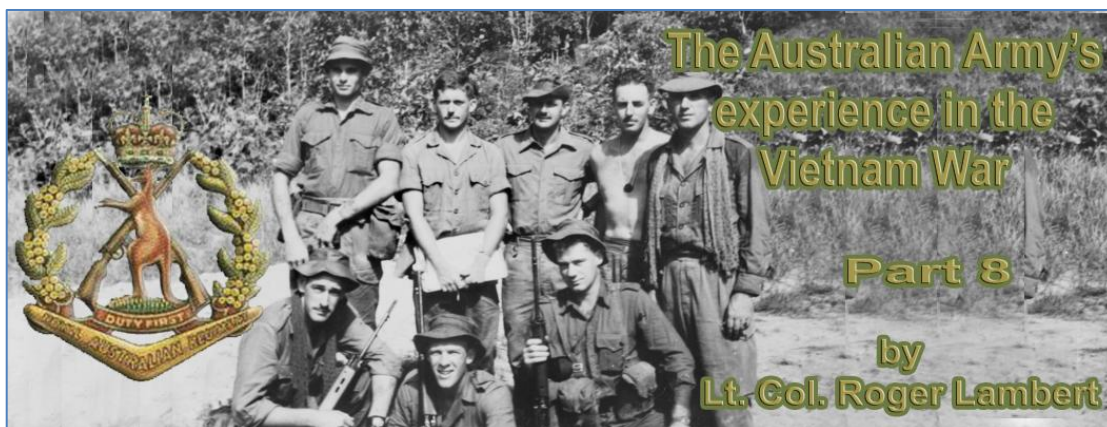
“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 216 “...keeping the memories alive”



We are grateful to Carol Clarke for sharing her story about celebrating Christmas and Hanukkah at Phan Rang and we are looking forward to the publication of her book “**A Vietnam Donut Dolly’s Recollections and Reflections**”. Carol is a member of a very small fraternity of Donut dollies and I believe one of the few that has written a book about her experiences. For another story about Carol and the Donut Dollies, see Phan Rang Newsletter 35 “RC Dollies Deal in Charm, Not Donuts” and Phan Rang Newsletter 138 “Carol Clarke Donut-Dolly”. For a story and pictures about our Aussie friends Soap Box Derby antics, see Phan Rang Newsletter 135.



THE NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

by Roger Lambert

In February 1970, as our tour of duty was coming to an end, it was our turn to host the Advance Party of 7 RAR who was to take over from us in country. Officers, SNCOs and NCOs of the Advance Party were ‘married up’ with their counterparts across 5 RAR and the business of imparting local knowledge began in earnest.

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“Night of the Living Dead” movie poster

To set the scene, 9 Platoon’s tent lines were on the perimeter of the Company area with only the sentry machine gun pits, wire and Claymores between us and the enemy. The lines were in two rows of tents parallel to the perimeter.

Now, one of the few pleasures we had in camp was the odd movie that would be shown (the ‘theatre’ was conveniently located next to the C Company area). There was some rudimentary wooden bench style seating but for the most part, ‘movie goers’ took along their “chairs, canvas, folding, troops for the use of” to watch the movie.

On this particular night, for some inexplicable reason, the movie being shown was that old B Grade B&W horror movie “**The Night of the Living Dead**”. As the title suggests, it was about what we now colloquially refer to as zombies and included cannibalism. It was pretty full on for its time.

Now, after a twelve month tour of duty, it would take a lot to upset the seasoned veterans of C Company. Not so our 7 RAR counterparts who were fresh in country.

At the conclusion of the movie, everyone folded up their canvas chairs and retired to their respective tent lines.

Now after what seemed to be a fairly short time after lights out (which was, if I recall correctly, at 2230 hours (10.30pm)), I was woken by a blood curdling scream from the far end of 9 Platoon lines. It was one of those screams in the night that could make the hair on the back of your neck stand upright and that took some doing at this late stage of our tour.

After disentangling myself from my mosquito net, I was out of the cot and out of the tent with my trusty 9mm Browning pistol in hand wondering what on earth had happened. Had a VC got through the wire and past the gun picquet and infiltrated the lines? Was someone being attacked by one of the myriad of poisonous creatures we’d learnt to live with over the preceding 12 months? What on earth was going on?

I was greeted by a voice from the end of the tent lines reassuring me all was well. “It’s OK, skipper. One of the new blokes was having a nightmare. Scared the crap out of himself and us momentarily but all’s well – now.”

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“Roger that” says I. And to the few diggers who had been roused from sleep (by now most would sleep through an artillery barrage), I simply said “OK, stand down you blokes and hit the cot.”

It was only then that I realized that I’d leapt out of the ‘farter’ in my usual sleeping attire, grabbed my 9mm pistol and holster, slipped my feet into flip-flops (thongs) and proceeded out of the tent and down the lines. It must have been a sight to behold – a naked subaltern, with nothing but thongs on his feet, a pistol belt and holster around his hips and brandishing a 9mm Browning ...that’d be enough to put the fear of God into any enemy!

“Mental note for future reference” I chuckle inwardly. “Don’t show horror movies to newbies in a war zone.”

“Welcome to country, 7 RAR” I thought as I climbed back under my mosquito net and once more drifted off ...our own “wakey” was not far away. And no zombie was going to change that

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



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CAPTION THIS



I asked the group on Facebook to come up with a good caption for this wonderful picture by *John Anthony Ward* and it was impossible to pick the best one because in my humble opinion they were all good and worked so well with this picture, so the following are those captions.



**Can you caption
this picture?**

	<p><i>Bob Tucker</i> “Oh, Oh, I Tawt I Taw a Puddy Tat”</p>
	<p><i>Wayne Rodgers</i> “It was there a moment ago!!!”</p>
	<p><i>Vincent Fairbrother</i> “Was that a SAM that went by?”</p>

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	<p><i>EL Hoard</i></p> <p>“Hey! Hold my beer!! Watch this”</p>
	<p><i>Jim Bulen</i></p> <p>“Is that a flying saucer?”</p>
	<p><i>Reeves John</i></p> <p>“Sunroof really!”</p>
	<p><i>Dave Hooton</i></p> <p>“Is that the Goodyear blimp?”</p>
	<p><i>Arthur E. Frank</i></p> <p>“In auto rotation the blades do what?”</p>
	<p><i>Jimmie L Jenkins</i></p> <p>“Is that the enterprise?”</p>
	<p><i>John Campbell</i></p> <p>“Uh Oh....”</p>
	<p><i>Greg Schmidt</i></p> <p>“Wow. I coulda had a V8!”</p>
	<p><i>Thom Myers</i></p> <p>“Ah crap...out of gas!”</p>
	<p><i>Larry Martino Sr</i></p> <p>“Damn birds!!”</p>
	<p><i>Thomas McBriarty</i></p> <p>“The next Para Trooper that Steps on my aircraft is going to pay for the Plane Wash.”</p>
	<p><i>John Ryan</i></p> <p>“Someone get that spider out of here.”</p>
	<p><i>Bruce Barstis</i></p> <p>“What the F***?”</p>

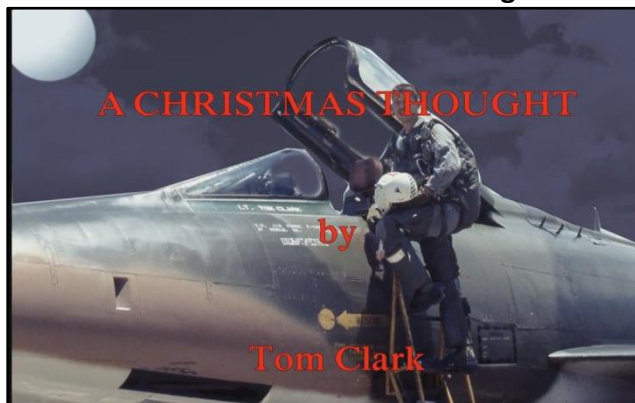
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	<p><i>Tom Strait</i></p> <p>“Why do I have to look up to see the ground?”</p>
	<p><i>Tom Parsons</i></p> <p>“Gee, I wonder what that button is for?”</p>
	<p><i>Charles Lee Simmons</i></p> <p>“God you're my co-pilot today.”</p>
	<p><i>Donald Nixon</i></p> <p>“Damn ricebugs”</p>
	<p><i>Dean Delongchamp</i></p> <p>“I’m the Nav, who in holy hell strapped me into this seat!”</p>
	<p><i>David Knighton</i></p> <p>“Hmm! I wonder what that switch does?”</p>
	<p><i>Thomas McBriarty</i></p> <p>“Yes Captain, it was a Small Jumper, we can clean it up in a hurry before the IG Team shows up.”</p>
	<p><i>Kenneth Rowsey</i></p> <p>“The war will be over soon, here comes Sky King!”</p>

**At this time of year our thoughts turn
to Tom Clarks’ Christmas Thoughts**



Click on the photo to view a short video

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PHAN RANG STAFF MEMBERS

Douglas Severt: President

Lou Ruggiero: Vice-President

James Kucipeck: Secretary

Elizandro De Los Santos: Treasure

Ed Downey, Barbara Brandt & John Ploof: Drill &
Ceremonies

Christopher Boles: Photographer

Kirk Minert: Aircraft Historian

Bob Tucker: Keeper of the Rolls

Joe Kaupa: In Memoriam Board

Bruce Muller: Badge Board

Jim Erixson, Charles Simmons & Tony Schommer:
Chaplains

Bob Howe: Australian Ambassador

Kristina Ho: Vietnamese Ambassador

Doug Severt: Facebook Administrator

Kirk Minert: Facebook Administrator

Bob Tucker: Facebook Moderator

Joe Schwarzer: Facebook Moderator

Kristina Ho: Facebook Moderator

Wise Sayings

"The only mystery in life is why the kamikaze pilots wore helmets." – Al McGuire

"The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits." – Albert Einstein

"War is God's way of teaching Americans geography." – Ambrose Bierce

"It would be nice to spend billions on schools and roads, but right now that money is desperately needed for political ads." – Andy Borowitz

"At every party there are two kinds of people – those who want to go home and those who don't. The trouble is, they are usually married to each other." – Ann Landers

Doug's Comments: Coming soon to the Phan Rang Newsletter will be an issue that will contain the tail number of all Phan Rang AB assigned aircraft. This is a herculean task undertaken by Kirk Minert and will greatly add to the history of Phan Rang. Also, there will be another issue devoted to your stories in the form of autobiographies or biographies or whatever format you choose to tell your story, so if you haven't already sent yours to me for publication, please do so soon so YOUR story can be told. 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:<mailto:dougsevert@cox.net> and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.