

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 221

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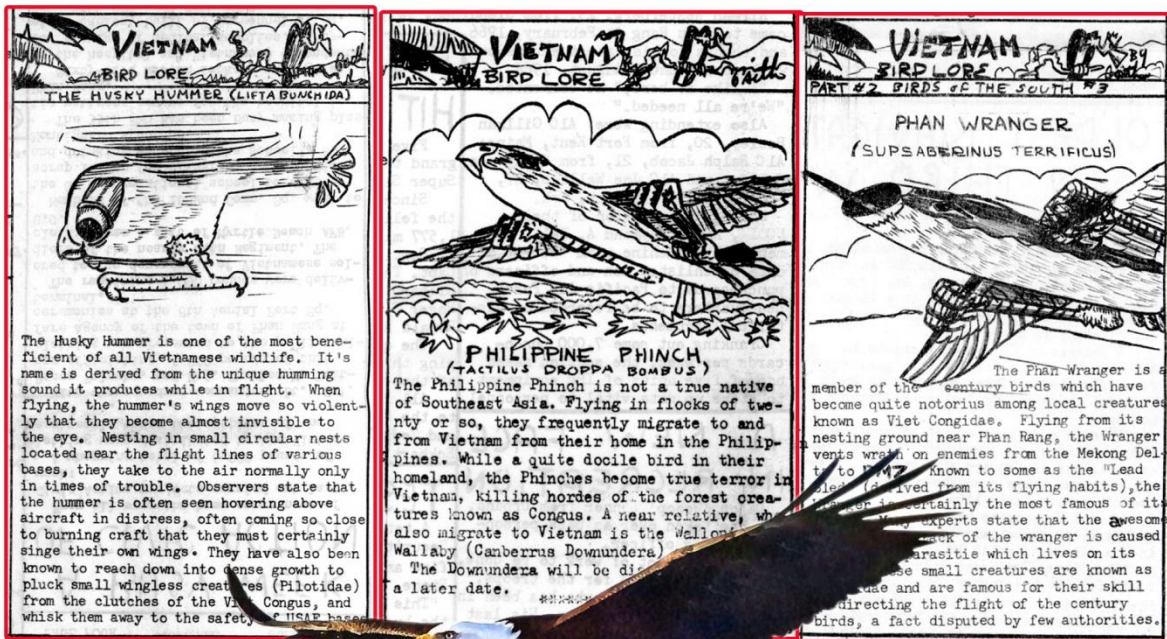
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## The Art of William 'Bill' Gaither

By Jim Lombard and Douglas Severt

For almost a year while being assigned to Phan Rang AB, A1C Bill Gaither contributed his artistic talents to the Phan Fare, a weekly publication of the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wings Information Office. Airman Gaither was actually assigned to the 1882<sup>nd</sup> Communications Squadron as a radio repairman. Besides creating hundreds of cartoons that mirrored life on Phan Rang during

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that time he also was a collector of snakes. RAAF serviceman Leigh Boileau remembers that he enjoyed his snake collection and he actually contributed to it.

Additionally he spent some of his off-duty time making a little extra money on the side by doing painting for many of the guys wherein he would put their girlfriends ‘heads’ on the bodies of Playboy pinups! For some reason some in his squadron didn’t approve of that so his CO (who was universally disliked) banned all Playboy pinups in their quarters. He declared that only “Tastefully mounted nudes” could be displayed. Leigh remembers that when one of our (RAAF) aircrew who was leaving after a 6 month Phan Rang tour, to rain in the USA on our newly acquired F-111s, decided to take a camera down to “The Strip” and created a file full of “Tastefully mounted nudes” which were delivered to the CO after his departure.

Bill created so many drawings during his tour at Phan Rang that I will only be able to present a sampling of them because just his cartoons alone would probably fill a book.



For starters here is a ‘masthead’ that he created for the Phan Fare and as far as I know it’s the only one that he drew or at least claimed credit for it. His signature is in the swirls by the dog handler, but it’s very difficult to make out. On the ‘Bird Lore’ drawings that follow you can clearly see his signature to the right of the vulture in the header and in the ‘meet airman X’ message below is the only instance where I’ve seen him just print his name.

In many of his cartoons I think he was drawing to highlight what was happening and reflected the positive message the wing wanted to project at the time, but I’m not sure how this message was intended, as I never saw the follow-up which might have explained the meaning of this cartoon a little more.

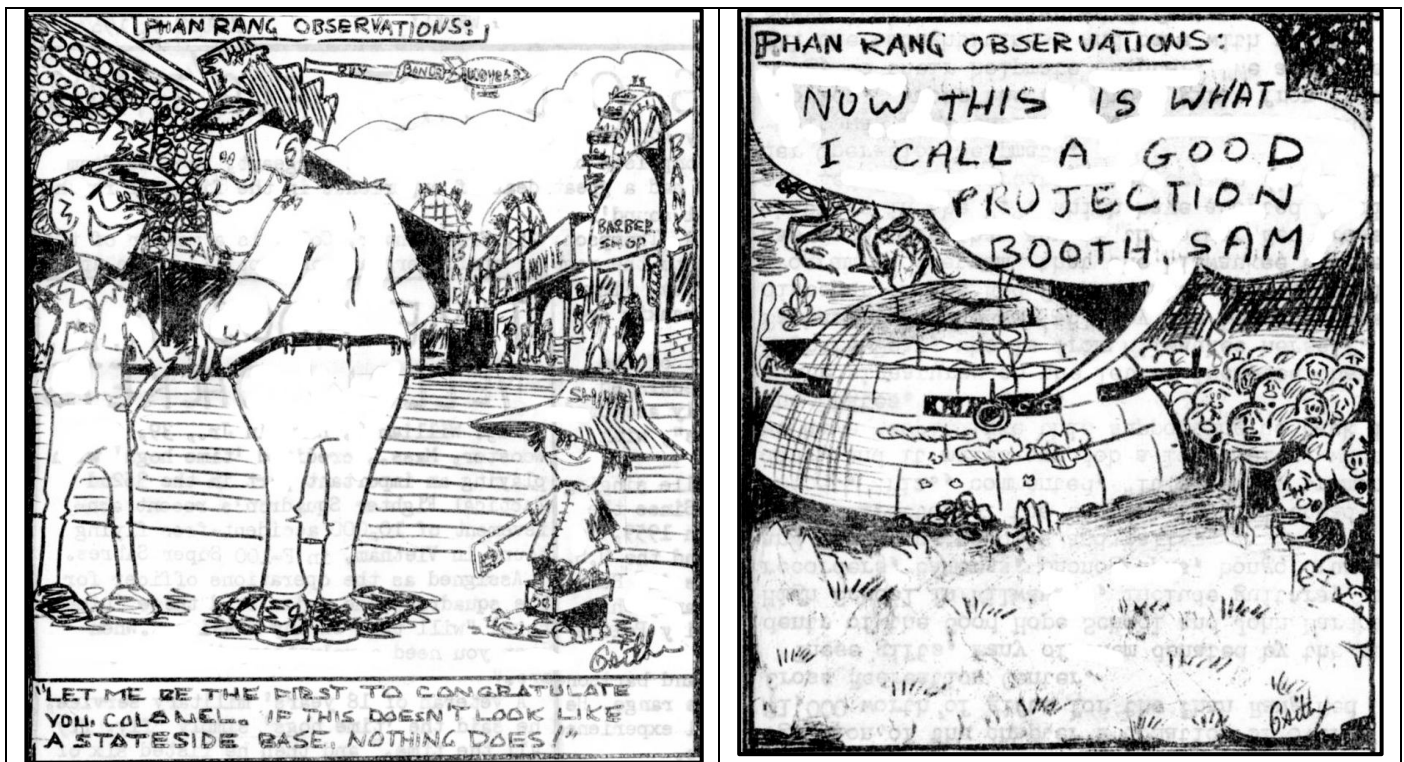
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In this first cartoon he expresses the sentiment of many visiting dignitaries that visited the base and in the second example is anybody's guess as to the meaning. It's circa 1967, so the only projection booth that would have been in existence was the one for the Happy Valley Theater and the indoor Viking Theater wasn't even thought of yet or at least known to the general population. What I don't understand is the surprised look on most of the faces that are all facing away from the screen and they all looked like Martians. It's possible that there was some sort of attack on the projection booth, from behind, at one time because it appears that eyes are peering out through the slits as well as a gun through the sides and rear.



Jim Lombard and Bill were “hooch-mates” in their DIY hooch that they built themselves. As previously mentioned Bill was running a side hustle wherein he would sketch guy's girlfriend's

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heads on Playmate pictures. Guys would bring in the Playmate picture they wanted used, but sometimes they would just bring in the girlfriends picture and he would pick out the model to place the head on. Jim said “it was funny how some of them turned out, but Bill was the consummate artist and always gave it his best shot, many times not only improving the body of the girlfriend, but her other physical characteristics as well.”



**Playmate/Girlfriend  
Drawing**

landing one morning.

Bill managed to become well known in the 1882 for a number of things. He was a scrounge beyond compare. He would trade this for that and we moved stuff through our hooch as varied as steaks, cases of salmon, and the first jungle fatigues (that saga is continued below) that were not those issued to the security forces to be seen on base. Additionally, besides drawing for individuals and the Phan Fare he painted a mural on the main NCO club wall.

His other claim to fame was he was unafraid of snakes and would answer calls at all hours to come get them from wherever they happened to be - his most famous of which was removing a King Cobra from under an F-4 RIO's seat after they made an emergency

The jungle fatigue story deals with the source of the uniforms. Bill would go out on night “search and destroy” missions with the guys from both the 101<sup>st</sup> and ROK - he was called into our squadron commanders office one afternoon and told in no uncertain terms to “knock that shit off - period”. He might have gotten away with it for a bit longer had a company commander with the 101<sup>st</sup> not written an “atta boy” letter telling our commander what a great asset he was on night patrols. A copy of the letter was up on the wall of our hooch. Bill and a couple of guys from the 502<sup>nd</sup> Supply Sq (101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division) were trading partners. Bill had traded the salmon for several cases of steaks and after we took what we needed for a squadron BBQ he traded the rest to the 502<sup>nd</sup> guys for jungle fatigues. These were not new uniforms - they were the uniforms of deceased 101<sup>st</sup> guys most of them killed at Tuy Hoa, where the 101<sup>st</sup> was getting their asses kicked at the time - I remember one month where they lost over 200. The uniforms were sent back to supply for destruction since the Army was not big on giving dead guys gear to guys they were asking to go into battle. We (the Air Force) on

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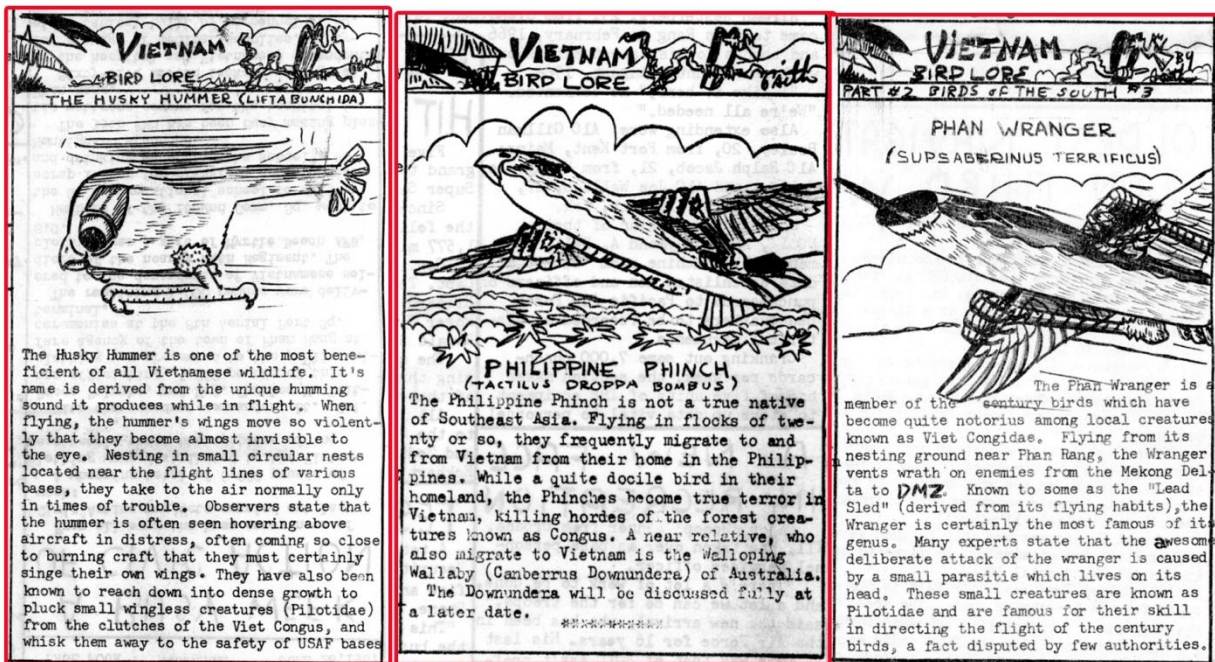
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the other hand, were happy to get them. They came to us stripped of rank and emblems but every now and again we would find something in the pockets and that was a bit spooky. I found a very sweet letter from a girl to her boyfriend in one of mine - I'll be honest - it made me cry.

Bill was the only American I knew who would participate in the Republic of Korea (ROK) “circle” game - usually played at the beach. A dozen or so ROK Marines would form a circle and going one way or the other you hit the man next to you as hard as you could. I assume there were rules on where you could or could not hit, but I really wasn't that interested in finding out. Once the circle had gone around one way everyone bowed and the mayhem began in the other direction. After each round everyone drank a beer or whatever and the whole thing started again. This was NOT just slug a guy in the arm like I used to do in high school - they used feet, legs, and vicious looking blows on each other. The game continued until they ran out of beer or everyone had decided they had had enough. Not a game for the faint of heart, but Bill loved it and they liked him.

These “Bird Lore” drawings are my favorites, not only because of the drawings but the accompanying text that displays such a great imagination.



I've copied the text for each one of them for two reasons, first making it easier for the reader, rather than having to look at a picture and the second reason is that text on a picture is very

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difficult to digitize and not made searchable.

### **THE HUSKY HUMMER** (Lifta Bunchida)

The Husky Humer is one of the most beneficent of all Vietnamese wildlife. Its name is derived from the unique humming sound it produces while in flight. When flying, the hummer's wings move so violently that they become almost invisible to the eye. Nesting in small circular nests located near the flight lines of various bases, they take to the air normally only in times of trouble. Observers state that the hummer is often seen hovering above aircraft in distress, often coming so close to burning craft that they must certainly singe their own wings. They have also been known to reach down into dense growth to pluck small wingless creatures (Pilotidae) from the clutches of the Viet Congus, and wish them away to safety of USAF bases.

### **PHILIPPINE PHINCH** (Tactilus Droppa Bombus)

The Philippine Phinch is not a true native of Southeast Asia. Flying in flocks of twenty or so, they frequently migrate to and from Vietnam from their home in the Philippines. While a quite docile bird in their homeland, the Phinches become true terror in Vietnam, killing hordes of the forest creatures known as Congus. A near relative, who also migrate to Vietnam is the Walloping Wallaby (Canberrus Downundera) of Australia. The Downundera will be discussed fully at a later date.

### **PHAN WRANGER** (Supsaberinus Terrificus)

The Phan Wranger is a member of the century birds which have become quite notorious among local creatures known as Viet Congidae. Flying from its nesting ground near Phan Rang, the Wranger vents wrath on enemies from the Mekong Delta to DMZ. Known to some as the “lead Sled” (derived from its flying habits), the Wranger is certainly the most famous of its genus. Many experts state that the awesome deliberate attack of the wranger is caused by a small parasite which lives on its head. These small creatures are known as Pilotidae and are famous for their skill in directing the flight of the century birds, a fact disputed by few authorities.

Bill became a world traveler, outdoorsman, ecologist, and painter. His prints can be found in the nation's finest galleries and among the collections of wildlife art from coast to coast.

Mr. Gaither's studies, research and field work through North America and South East Asia have given him a remarkable familiarity with both common and exotic species from around the globe.

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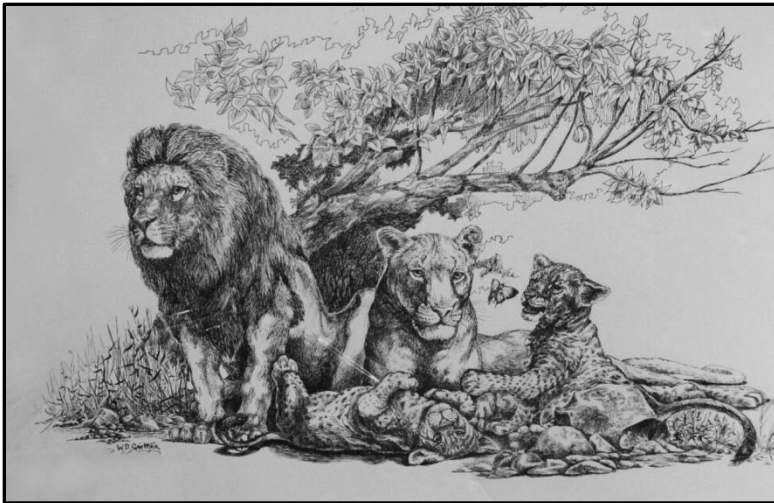
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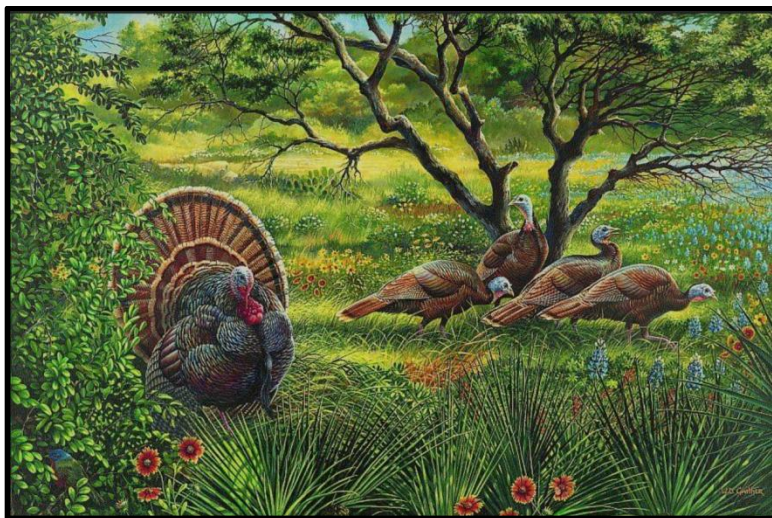
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His numerous commissions from national wildlife organizations, conservation groups, governmental agencies, and associations of sportsmen have spread his fame and reputation. Most of his limited edition prints have been sold out for years and have gained substantial value. Additionally, he had been commissioned by several states to produce their official bird painting used for state presentations.

In the latter years of his life he worked mostly on commissioned pieces but stayed active in other styles as well - taxidermy for example.



This ‘African Lions’ sketch and the ‘Wild Turkey’s’ is just a very small sampling of the thousands of creative works of WD Gaiter.



**Bill wearing his Vietnam Veterans hat with his daughter proudly pose for a picture**

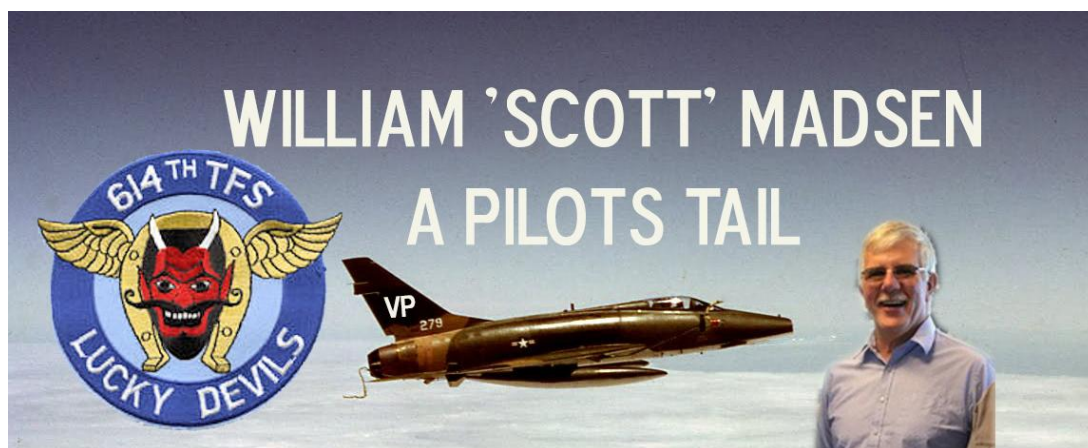
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Unfortunately, life was not always kind. One of His sons was killed in an auto accident around 2000 - perhaps earlier. Bill fought and though he had defeated cancer. The last conversation I had with him was right after he had gone into remission and he was absolutely convinced he had beat it. T was not to be - he died October 2016.



### **WILLIAM SCOTT MADSEN -A PILOTS TAIL**

by Douglas Severt

It was 1962 on the shores of Lake Erie in Mentor, Ohio where Scott Madsen formed his roots. It was a very troubling period in history and also a time that saw dramatic advances in space. The Soviet Union had just put it first man in space and the Americans followed suit in very short order and the country endured the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs Landing in Cuba and the consequences. The cold war was going strong and Berlin was cut in two when the communist built a wall dividing the city.

Football took center stage in 1962 when Scott Madsen was playing for the Mentor High School team on defense...Scott was one of the stars according to the Willoughby News Herald, September 19, 1962. Also in that same year Vietnam started coming in the news when the U.S. announced that it is backing a “broad economic and social” program to raise living standards in the country, but that was only the beginning because Robert Kennedy said that American troops are committed to staying in Vietnam until the Viet Cong are beaten. I would imagine that the news of the day was the farthest thing from Scott’s mind because he was focusing on being the best that he could be and unknowingly he was preparing himself for his future and a leadership role in the United States Air Force.



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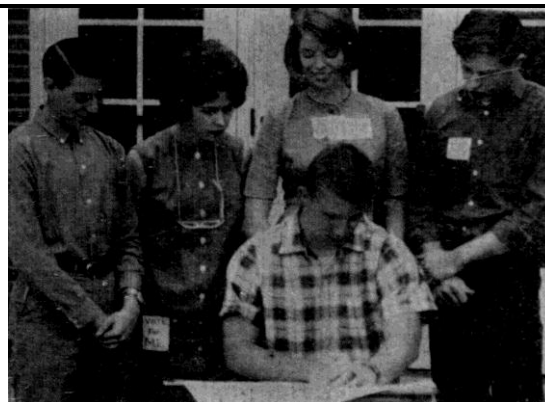
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Scott was the best and also the most irresistible. In fact he was crowned king at the Mr. Irresistible dance sponsored by the Student Council at Mentor High School in 1962 but he did share that honor with several other classmates. (See picture) At the Football banquet in December of 1962 he was honored as one of the 1962 Fighting Cardinals where he received his first year letter. Scott was a strapping young man, very suited for the position he played with the Fighting Cardinals at six-foot and 180 pounds.



Victors' Handshake is exchanged by the newly elected officers of the Student Council for 1962-63. Scott Madsen, treasure is pictured to the left.



Presidential candidates in the student council election are shown with Scott Madsen, seated, approving their posters.

Six boys from the class of 1963 were given the honor of being chosen as delegates for Buckeye Boys' State. Scott was one of the six chosen. The boys were selected by their teachers. Buckeye Boys' State is sponsored by the American Legion.



Scott Madsen was a homeroom leader, a member of the Key Club, Concert Band, Junior Class Play cast, and track squad and treasurer of the Student Council for 1962-63 (see picture). Whatever he did, he did well. As a member of the MHS band he and eleven members of the band traveled to Lorain High School for the district instrumental music contest. Each student hoped for high ratings, giving them a better chance toward working for a music scholarship. The ratings were superior, excellent, very good, good and fair. If the students were rated superior then they went on to Columbus for the state contest. Scott was in the brass sextet playing the tuba and they were rated superior. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Madsen.

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The next four years were turbulent times for our country. The Soviets pull their missiles out of Cuba thus ending the Cuban Missile Crisis and then race relations takes center stage in the United States. JFK was assassinated and news from Vietnam starts to build and Scott attends Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio and became a Buckeye for the next four years.

Scott was commissioned in 1968 upon completion of the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Ohio State University where he earned a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering.

The U.S. Air Force was Scott’s calling after Ohio State University. The year was 1969 and Scott had already been through flight school and now was assigned to Sheppard AFB, d where he met the love of his life, Donna Jo McGraw. Many exciting things were happening that marked that period of time, like mankind making its greatest leap; to the moon and Nixon is encouraged to scale down military operation in Vietnam.

November 1969 saw some of the worst anti-war protest against the war in Vietnam that have spread across the U.S. In small towns and big cities, every region of the country, millions of students, laborers, executives, housewives, school children, the young and the old, the black and the white, the rich and the poor, showed their opposition to the Vietnam War in diverse peaceful ways. Burkburnett Texas wasn’t immune from the fray, in fact with Sheppard AFB next door it provided a perfect place to show their objections. It was here that Lt. William Scott Madsen married the former Donna Jo McGraw in November.

They were married in Chapel 4, Sheppard AFB Nov. 8 by Chaplain (Maj.) Shurai G. Knippers. The bride is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph J. McGraw, 4616 Cypress. The bridegroom’s parents are Mr. and Mrs. William H. Madsen, Sun City. Ariz.

Dr. McGraw gave his daughter in marriage. Miss Catherine Clemmons was maid of honor and bridesmaids were Miss Debbie Higgins, Kansas City, Kan.; Miss Brenda McGraw, the bride’s sister; and Mrs. Tom Heard, Oklahoma City. Lorie Heard, Oklahoma City, was flower girl.

Lt. John Sharek was best man. Lt. Wayne Jones, Phillip McGraw and Lt. Sam Burns were groomsmen. McGraw and Burns severed as ushers with Lt. David Schovill and Lt. Reed Galbreath.

The bride is a sophomore at Midwestern University and employed by Sears. Lt. Madsen was graduated from Ohio State University and is a pilot at Sheppard AFB. (Wichita Falls Times, November 21, 1969)

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By August of 1970 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William S. Madsen was in Vietnam assigned to the 614<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing and before beginning his Vietnam assignment he was with a tactical fighter unit at Luke AFB, Ariz.

An Associated Press dispatch from Saigon states that Lt. Madsen a bomber pilot from Wichita Falls — along with two other Air Force pilots — has been credited with killing 11 Viet Cong soldiers in the Mekong Delta 120 miles southwest of Saigon.

Madsen, a career officer who has been in Vietnam since September, was quoted by the AP as saying, "We Were Scrambled from the alert pad about 4 p.m. We had just joined the forward air controller when the tactical center diverted us to this more important target," which was about 70 miles away.

"On the strike we were working with a Vietnamese air force forward observer and made five bomb passes," Madsen related. "There were quite a few clouds in the area which slightly hampered our run-in and delivery pattern. But it didn't significantly affect the accuracy of our bombs."

Flying with Madsen were two pilots of A37 Dragonfly fighter-bombers 1st Lt. Cort L. Durocher of Miami, Fla., and 1st Lt. Kencil J. Heaton of Lathrup Village, Mich. (Wichita Falls Times, November 11, 1970)

While Lt. Madsen is deployed to Vietnam and his wife and two sons, Tommy (one report says his name was Tony), 4, and William Scott, five months, reside in Wichita Falls. She is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph McGraw.

By February 1971 Lt. Madsen was flying the F-100 Super Sabre, with the 614<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

***"By the time we arrived in the target area the sun was low on the horizon, getting in our eyes, and the haze was starting to obscure things. There was a pretty good fire fight going on between the ARVN and the Viet Cong."***

He recounts a mission where they were providing air support for units of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in the canal-laced Mekong Delta. Lieutenant Madsen and his wingman (Ron Deyhle) on the mission are F-100 Super Sabre pilots.

Their recent strike aided troops of the ARVN 33rd Infantry Regiment who were in contact with a Viet Cong force 17 miles north of Quang Long in Kien Giang Province. Vietnam.

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“By the time we arrived in the target area the sun was low on the horizon, getting in our eyes, and the haze was starting to obscure things. There was a pretty good fire fight going on between the ARVN and the Viet Cong.” recalled the lieutenant.

“The forward air controller, who was flying a O-1 Bird Dog marked the targets for us and we started our runs. We made eight bomb and four strafing passes, he concluded.

The two pilots destroyed several enemy bunkers and an enemy sampan and inflicted enemy casualties.

Lt. Madsen and Lt. Deyhle both received the Silver Star for their heroic actions and gallantry in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an opposing armed hostile force at Fire Support Base SIX, in the Central Highlands, Republic of Vietnam, on 7 April 1971. On that date, Lieutenant Madsen scrambled in his F-100 from the Phan Rang alert facility to provide close air support for a South Vietnamese Ranger camp in immediate danger of complete annihilation by a hostile force. Lieutenant Madsen made repeated low level attacks under hazardous conditions of low weather, mountainous terrain, heavy anti-aircraft fire, less than one mile visibility, and flying through allied artillery. His devastating attacks prevented overrun of the friendly position and allowed the allied troops to hold their strategic camp on the hostile frontier.

Just one month earlier he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-100 Tactical Fighter Pilot at Fire Support Base SIX, near Ben Hep, Republic of Vietnam on 1 March 1971. On that date, he made repeated low level attacks in support of beleaguered friendly forces. At great personal risk in the face of accurate intense ground fire, his precise ordnance deliveries were instrumental in the successful defense of a strategic base camp. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by First Lieutenant Madsen reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

By mid 1971 he ended his tour of duty in Vietnam where he regularly flies pre-planned strikes and close support missions in the supersonic F-100.

After Vietnam he flew T-38s and then F-105s, but after nine years he got out of the Air Force. Scott had an interesting connection to Dr. Phil because his wife’s sister was married to him so he made a career of working for that production as the president of the Dr. Phil TV show.

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**The picture of the “Four Amigos” on the left are four Phan Rang AB Veterans who flew many missions together and still remain close friends. From left to right: Ron Siegfried, Fred Tomlins, Scott Madsen and Ron Deyhle. Photo courtesy of Ron Deyhle.**

Ron Deyhle has contributed many great stories about those that he flew with. In Phan Rang News 194 he wrote the article *“Remembering 1Lt. Clive Garth Jeffs”* and also in that edition is a lot of information about 1Lt. Deyhle. In Phan Rang News 206 he wrote about his friend Chip Taylor in the article titled *“The Great Hurrah, or, How a Fighter Pilot Can Make It Better”*. In Phan Rang News 214 he tells the story of another friend in the article *“Lam Son 719: The Death of Pete Moriarty”*

Ron Siegfried’s tells about an incident at Phan Rang upon returning from a mission titled *“Full Throttle Landing”*.

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### ‘War Prize’

This is the 9 Platoon Charlie Company command group taken in early 1969 with our first 'war prize'. The Viet Cong flag was discovered buried in a tin after we overran a bunker system in Phuoc Tuy Province.



Squatting left front - the late Sergeant Stan Arnold, Platoon Sergeant; standing left rear - Private Dave Stone, Platoon Medic; standing right rear - Private Brian MacDonald, Platoon Signaller/Radio Operator; and kneeling front right - 2nd Lieutenant Roger Lambert, Platoon Commander. (Stan and Dave passed away long after our return to Australia)

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

*(See Phan Rang Newsletter 186 “Blondes, Bombs and Bunkers”, 187 “Magpie 31 Part 2” and 188 “Magpie 31 Part 3” to learn about Roger Lambert’s connection to Phan Rang Air Base.)*

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In common with all bases in South Vietnam, Phan Rang must be secured, as far as this is possible, against ground assault by enemy forces and against rocket and mortar attack. No. 2 Squadron makes an active contribution to the defence of the base with its own flight of airfield defence guards (ADG's).

On 11 February 1970 - Airfield Defence Guards successfully defeat enemy probe at Phan Rang Airbase. A RAAF Airfield Defence Guard patrol outside the Phan Rang US airbase in South Vietnam successfully stopped a North Vietnamese probe.

The RAAF Airfield Defence Guard (ADG) Mustering was re-established in 1965 to provide a security capability for RAAF airfields and contingents operating abroad. Specialist RAAF ground defence training was recommenced in 1966. By late 1966, two airfield defence flights were operating in Vietnam (Vung Tau) and Thailand (Ubon Air Force Base). With the No 2 Squadron deployment to Phan Rang in 1967, a RAAF ground defence presence was then established at that base as well.

The airfield defence elements were responsible for both on airfield security as well as conducting patrols outside the base perimeter.

In the early hours of 11 February 1970, an ADG patrol led by CPL Noel Power had been on a patrol outside of the Phan Rang perimeter when it became aware of possible enemy movement nearby. This had followed earlier incidents. CPL Power quickly repositioned his section into a defensive position with the intent of ambushing the apparent enemy probe. Within minutes of

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establishing their position, the enemy was detected and the ADG’s opened fire in several short engagements over only five minutes.

Later in the morning it was revealed that they had successfully defeated an enemy probe by capturing a North Vietnamese Army artillery major who was in charge of the enemy action and killing two sapper squad leaders. The three personnel were on a recon mission for a combined mortar-sapper attack involving two companies which was to be conducted in the next 72 hours – the subsequent attack did not occur.

For his initiative and leadership in the action, CPL Power was awarded the Military Medal becoming the first RAAF member since the World War 2 to be awarded the Military Medal.



**SGT Noel Powers on patrol near Phan Rang Air Base**

Over 350 RAAF Airfield Defence Guards served with distinction throughout the Vietnam War operating at Phan Rang Airbase (where 2 Squadron (Canberra aircraft) were operating), Vung Tau (where RAAF Iroquois and Caribou aircraft were operating) and at Ubon, Thailand. For airbase defence, they conducted both static security tasks and security patrols outside the base perimeter. They also provided most of the door gunners on 9 Squadron Iroquois helicopters. Further, they also provided security for the evacuation of Australian staff from the embassy in Saigon in 1975. In addition to CPL Powers Military Medal, RAAF Ground Defence Officers and Airfield Defence Guards were awarded an

MBE, eight Mentioned In Despatches, and four Distinguished Flying Medals.

Meanwhile, six RAAF airfield defence members perished in the Vietnam conflict.

**(I’m looking for someone that could write the history of Air Force Security at Phan Rang and**



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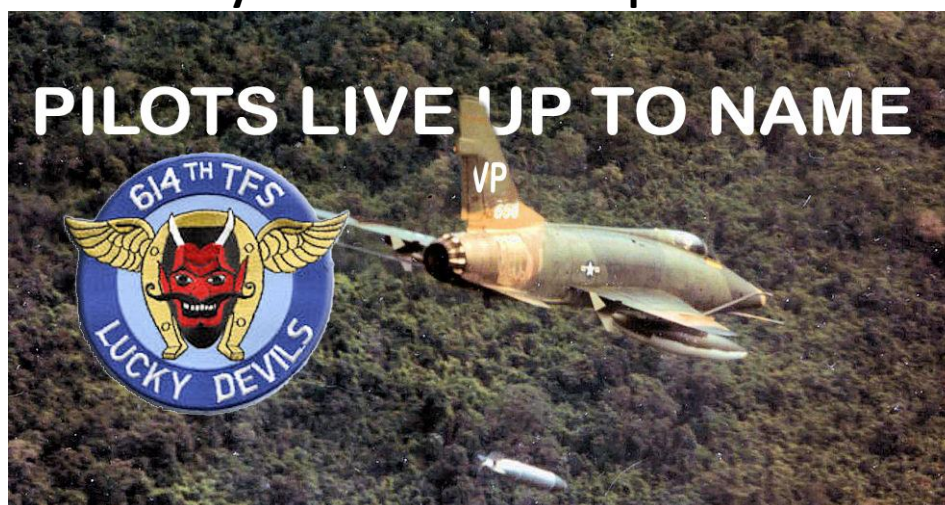
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the assigned organization. There have been 821<sup>st</sup>, 822<sup>nd</sup>, and 823<sup>rd</sup> Combat Security Police Squadrons, as well as “Operation Safeside” and it would be wonderful if someone could clear up some of the confusion as to why so many different organizations. Did they have different missions, areas of responsibilities and methods of operation? For many of us the 35<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron was the main security force at Phan Rang, but that didn’t happen until the 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing became the operational wing for Phan Rang AB.)

### ‘Lucky Devil’ Pilots Live Up to Name



**PHAN RANG, Vietnam (Special) - 24 January 1969 - The Super Sabre was rocked by a terrific explosion. Fire warning lights glowed. Three “Lucky Devils” wondered if their luck had run out.**

The story of how a routine mission suddenly turned into a tense aerial drama was related by three fliers as they sat in the operations room of the 614<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron here. The squadron carries the nickname of “Lucky Devils.”

“Our target for the day was enemy bunkers in the Mekong Delta, 60 miles west of Bien Hoa.” said Maj. Norman H. Ruston, 34, flight leader.

Seated beside Ruston were Capt. Gerald G. Potter, 28, and Donald Muller, 25. On the day of the “routine” mission, Potter was breaking in Muller who had just arrived from the States.

The Devils fly the Air Force fighter-bomber that has flown more combat sorties against the

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enemy than any other airplane in the Air Force: the F100 Super Saber.

On this mission, Ruston flew a single-seater F100, and Muller, who was on his second combat mission, was piloting an “F” model. In the backseat of the “F” was Potter flying as an instructor pilot.

“I flew the first attack pass,” Rushton said of his 118<sup>th</sup> combat sortie in Vietnam. Muller’s “F” followed Ruston as they swooped down and released their bombs.

***“The plane was ripped by a violent explosion just as we were pulling out of the dive over the target.”***

“Then it happened,” Muller said. “The plane was ripped by a violent explosion just as we were pulling out of the dive over the target. “Controls were shaky as the plane just about flipped over, heading for the ground. Fire warning lights lit up the cockpit, and the engines started to become unglued.”

Muller, who arrived in Vietnam just five days earlier, struggled at the controls to get his plane over the nearby Song Co Chien River.

“As soon as we got there, I said, ‘O.K., it’s time to go!’” Muller continued. “Potter ejected first blowing the cockpit canopy. With the right side of the fuselage burning, I took my foot off the rudder and punched out.”

As Ruston circled above radioing for help, both pilots were floating to each about one mile apart, one over land, the other over the river. Potter’s chute was torn badly enough that Muller could see the torn strips of his buddy’s chute flapping as it drifted to earth.

“I got my bearing and looked up at my canopy,” said Potter who had never bailed out before. “It had big holes in it which increased by fall rate. That was all right with me as I wanted to get into the safety of the water - but fast!”

“I could see people on the shore,” Potter continued.

“People were yelling and I could hear gunshots. I got rid of my mask and popped my water

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wings. As I splashed down, I pulled the quick release of my harness, and the chute collapsed.”

Meanwhile, Muller was anxiously pulling on his parachute risers in an attempt to steer his landing toward the river, but wind currents took him inland.

“Floating down, I could see four men shooting at me with rifles,” Muller continued.” How close were they? I could see that two of them were quite old - that’s how close!

“I landed face down in the mud of that rice paddy,” Muller said with a smile. “When I got rid of my helmet and chute, I looked up and saw four men running down the path at me. I radioed Ruston where to strafe and within seconds, just as they were about to run over me, vroom! Here comes Ruston like gangbusters.”

Seeing Muller was in greater immediate danger than Potter, Ruston concentrated his support to him. Rushton’s jet was making tight turns, diving to tree-top level and making strafing passes under direction of Muller and an Air Force forward air controller (FAC) who was flying a single-engine, prop-driven O1 Bird Dog observation plane. By the third pass, the automatic weapons fire coming from the wooded area ended.

Then Muller heard the message on the radio that gave him hope that help was on our way.” “Hold on! Stay where you are.” An Army chopper hovered above him “Can’t see him.” The chopper pilot radioed Rushton.

Making another pass, Ruston radioed the chopper to “Land on the chute. That’s where he is.”

“Choppers were swarming about when I jumped up and ran for one that landed.” Muller said. “Two Army troops with heavy weapons jumped out to cover me as I jumped aboard.”

Meanwhile, Potter was bobbing in the river attempting to paddle away from shore.

“I didn’t know if the people on the beach were friendlies or not,” Potter explained. “Soon a Army Chopper which happened to be in the area attempted to pick up. It had no way to, so it left.

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“Then another Army chopper brought his bird in. Keep in mind that his craft is designed for land operations. He had so fine control that he brought it right down to river level. “The next thing I knew, I could feel myself being pulled aboard.

The two recovered piled reunited at Can Tho. There, they boarded an Air Force C-123 transport and flew back to their home base at Phan Rang.

Potter was flying his 233 combat missions when he bailed out. With 11 months in Vietnam he is scheduled to rotate back to the United States, March 1.

Ruston had flown 102 combat strikes out of Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon in 1965. He was on his 154<sup>th</sup> combat sorties when his wingman went down.

**Muller arrived in Vietnam, Sunday, flew his first strike Wednesday, bailed out Friday and was back to duty by Saturday.**

### **Three lucky Devils, for sure.**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT</b>	<b>ORG/AIRCREW</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
24 Jan 1969	F-100F 56-3731	614 TFS, 35 TFW 1Lt J. D. Muller (Survived) Capt G. G. Potter (Survived)	One of Phan Rang’s two-seat Super Sabres was taking part in a close air support mission near Truc Giang in the Mekong Delta, 40 miles southwest of Saigon. 1Lt Muller was diving at a target when his aircraft was hit by ground fire. The crew ejected a few miles to the south and 1Lt Muller was rescued by an Army helicopter while Capt Potter was picked up by a USAF HH-43.

To read more about the ‘Lucky Devils’ see Phan Rang News 6 *“‘Lucky Devils’ Kill 20 VC”*; 125 *“Lucky Devils Prove Luck In Dual Bailout, Pickup”* (This article appearing in the February 13, 1969 Phan Fare is a story of the same event.) and 142 *“Lucky Devils Hit’em Hard”* 157 *“A sad day for the 614th TFS ‘Lucky Devils’”*.

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### The Legacy of Pete Moriarty

Pete never returned from Vietnam, but his legacy lives on through his children and grandchildren.



By Kim Bauer and Doug Severt

Sightings of tanks in southern Laos were becoming a more regular occurrence as the North Vietnam Army became bolder. However, when caught in the open, tanks became priority targets and every effort was made to destroy them wherever they were found. A flight of F-100s was sent on a raid from Phan Rang Air Base to attack a group of four tanks that had been seen just inside Laos, about 10 miles to the west of Khe Sanh. Capt Moriarty was making his first pass when his aircraft was hit by 12.5mm ground fire and burst into flames. The aircraft crashed before the pilot could eject. Lt. Ron Deyhle who was flying alongside Pete on that fateful day said there were nine tanks in the queue when he was shot down.

### *Pete was one of more than almost 7,300 souls lost during 'Lam Son 719'*

Pete was a catholic man of faith, and a dedicated family man. He was married with two small children, a boy and a girl and those two have received the responsibility of carrying Pete's legacy forward.

Peter Gibney Moriarty and Carolyn Moriarty were married in June 1963. They had a daughter, Coleen, born May 1964 and a son, Kevin, born September 1968. After the March 22, 1971 tragedy in Vietnam, Pete was declared MIA, but people told Carolyn that there was no way he

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survived and that pilots had seen his plane go down in flames. Even though he wasn't considered KIA until almost a year later, Carolyn tried to move on after her husband, Pete's, death and eventually did. Pete's wife, Carolyn, remarried another fighter pilot, Lt. Col Richard “Dick” Bauer. He is 10 years older than she and has 5 kids of his own from his previous marriage. Together, Carolyn & Dick raised 7 kids (her 2 and his 5). Dick Bauer legally adopted the young Moriarty kids as his own and gave them his last name of Bauer. In honor of Pete, they made Kevin's middle name Moriarty, changing his name from Kevin Michael Moriarty to Kevin Moriarty Bauer.

*Pete's name wasn't only carved on a tombstone but his legacy is etched into the minds of those two small children, Kevin and his older sister Coleen and they will and have passed it on to their children.*



**Kevin Moriarty Bauer (born 1968) and his older sister, Coleen (born 1964)**



**Kevin Moriarty Bauer and his son, Heath Moriarty Bauer**

Carolyn and Dick are still happily married and retired living in Lakeland, Florida. Pete's kids (Coleen and Kevin) had a great childhood. Of course they missed out on knowing their father, Pete Moriarty, but their stepfather raised them as his own and was/is a wonderful father. Dick has always shown much respect for Pete, a fellow fighter pilot. Kevin and Coleen were raised (mostly) in Cape Coral, Florida. They are both married with kids of their own. Pete's daughter,

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Coleen, has three kids and Pete’s son, Kevin (my husband) and I have one son. Coleen gave her son the middle name of Peter, after her dad. Kevin and I gave our son the middle name of Moriarty, in honor of his father. Kim said “Pete’s legacy continues in our children”.

Kim and Kevin’s son, **Heath Moriarty Bauer**, is graduating from high school in May. He will be attending Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, where he will pursue a degree in Homeland Security. **Heath knows the full weight of his middle name and Pete’s legacy continues.**



**The legacy of a hero is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example.**

(Peter Moriarty’s story is in Phan Rang Newsletter 214 “*Lam Son 719: The Death of Pete Moriarty*” by Ron Deyhle. In Phan Rang Newsletter 155 which is a listing of all the casualties from Ninh Thuan Province (Phan Rang) and how they perished. Phan Rang Newsletter 197 lists all of the aircraft losses and the details of the event of U.S. Air Force losses from Phan Rang Air

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Base assigned aircraft. The cover photo of the F-100 flyover is by Sam Lewis and Bauer family photos by Kim Bauer.)



**Doug’s Comments:** I was so happy to receive the story of Peter Moriarty’s children and particularly the renaming of Kevin after he was adopted by Richard Bauer to carry on the Moriarty name and then have Kevin use that same naming pattern for his son Heath is just extra special. What a wonderful combined family they’ve become and what a wonderful story!

The 2021 Phan Rang Reunion T-Shirts are now available on-line at Design-Apparel.com. Click [here](#) to order yours now and shipping is on 1 March. The much coveted Phan Rang hats are also available.

This newsletter was composed and all graphics by Douglas Severt unless otherwise stated. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, mailto: [dougsevert@cox.net](mailto:dougsevert@cox.net) and put ‘unsubscribe’ in subject line.