

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 232

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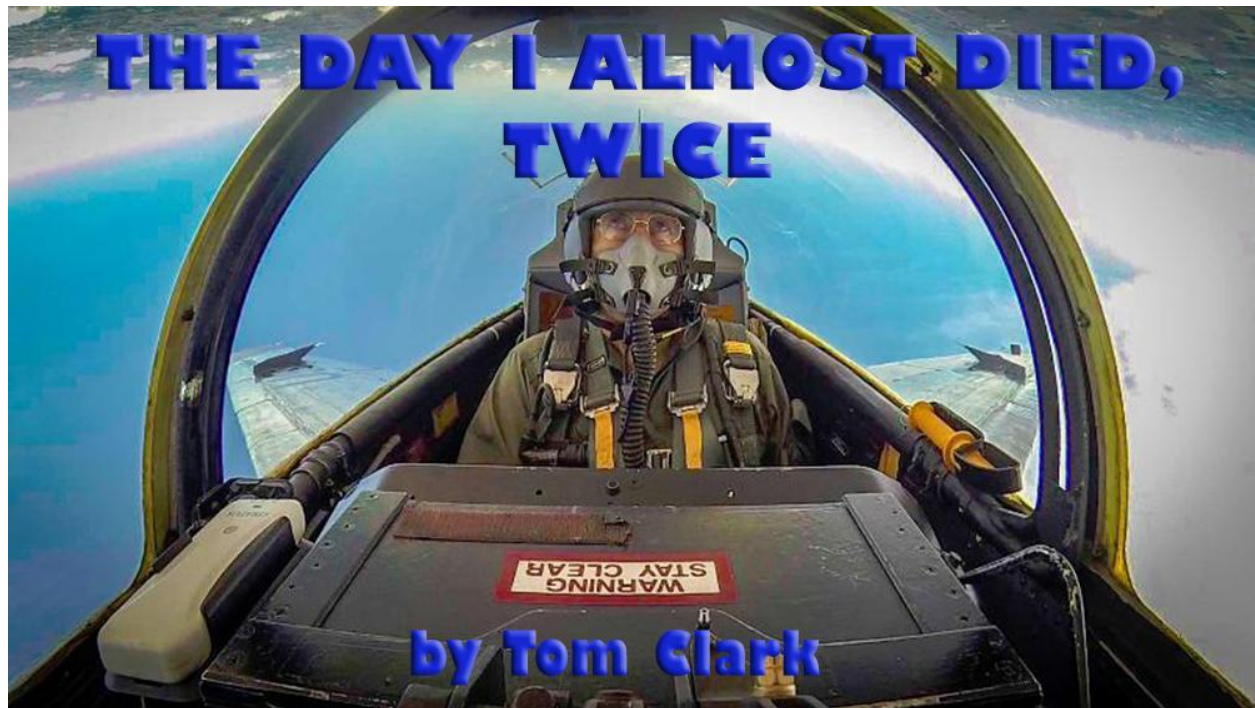
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## THE DAY I ALMOST DIED, TWICE

*By Tom Clark*

**What you need to know before reading this story:**

**IAF (Instrument Approach Fix)** is a series of predetermined maneuvers for the orderly transfer of an aircraft operating under instrument flight rules from the beginning of the initial approach to a landing or to a point from which a landing may be made visually. I equate that to my drone that has a home-point established and if necessary the drone could return, using GPS, to that point

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with the parameters previously selected for a safe flight.

**IFR (Instrument Flight Rules)** used to regulate the flying and navigating of an aircraft using instruments alone.

**TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation System)**, a navigation system used by military aircraft.

**VFR (Visual flight rules)**, used to regulate the flying and navigating of an aircraft under conditions of good visibility.

**IAF (Instrument Flight Rules)** Navigating entirely on instruments, or under ATC control.

**GCA (Ground-controlled approach)**, is a type of service provided by air-traffic controllers whereby they glide aircraft to a safe landing, including in adverse weather conditions based on primary radar images.

**VMC + visual flight conditions**, i.e. not in the clouds where a mid-air could be easier to understand. Like a car accident at night in heavy fog and drizzle, as compared to a clear, bright sunny day. so perhaps in "broad daylight in clear air". As you may suspect, "combat loss" was used often to cover up a pilot error and having to explain that up the food chain. For example, a pilot rolls into his dive too steep and stays too long trying to get bombs on target, and hits the ground during his pull out. "Combat loss" - he got shot, was incapacitated, or the flight controls got shot causing the accident, not pilot error as any of those could be true, so "combat loss". A mid-air inside a violent thunderstorm could be put in that same class as combat required us to go thru such a rough storm we would normally avoid and maintaining separation without losing sight of lead would be easy to do in the extreme turbulence- been there, done that, came close. We all did that which we would never ever have done in the USA.

**Note: Knowing these terms does not qualify you to fly an F-100, but it will help you understand Tom's story.**

*"...I was the World's Greatest Fighter Pilot."*

Fresh out of undergraduate pilot training at Williams Air Force Base Az. (Willy) and F-100

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Combat Crew Training at Luke Air Force Base Az., I joined the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang in late April 69 just before the start of monsoon season in August, with 325 hours total time, 101.7 of it in the Hun, and perhaps 0.3 of actual instruments (Willy, Luke). But I was the World’s Greatest Fighter Pilot.

In the Philippines I bought my first Nikon and tried to carry it and a recorder on most missions, “in case”. Well, about two months into my tour (and about 30 hours real IFR), I was scrambled off alert to a III Corp firefight, lead with nape and me with 8, yes 8, MK 82 HDs. We quickly joined up underneath and broke out just above what I recall was about a 14,000’ solid undercast. With bright sun reflecting off the clouds and lead’s shiny nape, I decided that I had to get “the shot”. So the dumb 2nd Lieutenant and I drops behind and goes wide route, then pushes it up and coming abeam, pulls up to barrel roll around lead and get a shot from directly overhead looking down on his canopy. With nearly full drops and a combat load.

*“Pull, roll, let go, grab camera and frame, shoot, then....”*

Now that simply requires releasing your mask, putting the camera in your lap, pulling the nose up, starting the roll, letting go of everything, picking up the camera, getting it to the top of the canopy, framing and shooting, then continuing the roll to lead’s left side and rolling out. Now any experienced-fighter pilot would have noted the omission of one-key step– trimming nose down to hold you above lead while shooting. So here it comes: Pull, roll, let go, grab camera and frame, shoot, then.... find yourself not directly overhead yet but having difficulty focusing because the distance to the subject is closing... rapidly! Then follows dropping the brand-new Nikon and a huge cockpit sweep with rudder and stick to get some bank back in and pull like crazy to avoid falling through for a canopy-to-canopy midair. Imagine if lead had made it home, how the accident investigation team could have found a way to declare a top-to-top-mid-air collision while straight and level in VMC enroute to the target a combat loss?

But the story doesn’t quite end there. Of course, I plop right into the soup now nose way low, inverted, with barely enough speed to maneuver a fully-load Hun through a no-crap real IFR unusual attitude recovery. When I finally popped back out on top, I was merely 2 miles in trail, breathing hard with my mask off at 15,000’, and already wondering how bad an ass chewing I would get on return. But as I finally pulled up alongside, lead was looking straight ahead and he

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didn't even seem to notice my return. Had I just escaped death and, double win, gotten away with a really Dumb-Assed Thing Done in a Hun? Seemed so. **But this was just a preview to a much, much more exciting adventure to come.**

After the mission, flying right wing again on top of horizon-to-horizon-solid clang, dutiful two is trying to maintain nav-situation awareness as a back up when he notices the Phan Rang IAF to our instrument runway, 4L, passing off the right wing. (There was no GCA at Phan Rang.)

### Act two begins

“Blade 1, 2 - notice IAF passing off the right wing”. Lead, in a very sarcastic voice, “Two, can't you see the huge thunderstorm sitting on the IAF?” Me, “Toop”. We then wander out over the South China Sea to perform for my first time the unpublished “*Phan Rang Over-water to VFR Underneath Water Let Down #1.*”

So we plop into the soup together and head down, but now it's getting rough and very dense and I'm hanging on to lead's right wing-tip-light with my teeth and using up lots of hydraulic fluid trying to hang on. I think it was this mission when I first discovered the wing-tip light is held on with slotted, not Philips-head screws. Down and down forever, until I finally see faintly the appearance of nice blue water under lead. While not looking at my altimeter, instinctively I know we are somewhere just above low-level napalm delivery height. When I look forward, it looks like flying into a fire hose, but toward Phan Rang we proceed, still not having talked to anybody about field conditions.

Now Happy Valley is so named because it lays in a North-South valley surrounded on the West, North and East by high mountains. That means there's a row of mountains between us and the base and I can't see the antenna on top of the intake 10" in front of me. I am already minimum fuel and about ready to make another “Blade 1” call when I hear lead say “We're diverting to Cam Ranh”, about 30 miles north. Then “Go Cam Ranh Approach” as we begin a climbing right turn and get cleared to the IAF for Cam Ranh runway 20R at FL20. Now my gas is really getting low and as we depart the fix, the last check was less than 800 pounds. We get cleared to land Cam Ranh 20R, told to go to tower on break out, and get configured for landing, while still bouncing like hell in turbulence. However, the weather at Cam Ranh is above 1000 and 3 and

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I’m beginning to look forward to touchdown, having a good cold one and a not-so-cold conversation with lead. How about a weather check with Phan Rang before descent which would have told us they were closed in heavy thunderstorms? Or a minimum fuel call to Approach instead of a full climb out?

*“We’re at Phan Rang’s North end...He never changed the Tacan!”*

Finally, we break out! I look down expecting to see ocean, a nice white beach and a big long runway in VFR. Instead I see rice paddies, hootchs and pouring rain. We’re at Phan Rang’s North end! He never changed the Tacan!

“Lead – THIS IS PHAN RANG, go button 2”. Lead, “Phan Rang tower, Blade 1 and 2 landing runway 22. Phan Rang Tower, “Negative, Blade one the active is 4L and we’re still closed”. Lead, “Phan Rang, landing 22, two take spacing”. Take spacing!!! We’re at the end of the overrun and I’ve got something like maybe 400 pounds. Full military power, as tight a turn as I can make to save gas, roll-out and touch down in heavy rain. “Happy as a Lark, Believe Me” I’m starting to sing as I reached for the parachute handle when I hear this strange-soprano-like voice call out, “Taking the barrier.” Back to “*rectus-tightenitis*” as somewhere ahead there is now a Hun in the middle of the runway in the barrier. Anti-skid cycling, hydroplaning probably, get stopped!

I was under control when I found him, but he had let it roll backwards and the cable was on the ground with enough room to go around on the right so I didn’t have to stop and backtrack. I passed without looking at him and on into the dearming area but waited a long time for the bread truck to come from 2 miles away while dodging fire trucks and blue sedans going out to meet lead. I figured if it flamed out, I was just climbing down, putting my parachute under the front of a main and my helmet bag and clip board behind and walking back in the frickin rain, after first kissing the tarmac.



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**Lt. Tom Clark poses with his aircraft. Where was the Nikon?  
Photo by Tom Clark.**

But I actually taxied back, shut down, filled out the forms, and went to our squadron debriefing room as I assumed we would not be going back on alert that day. There I pulled out the let-down-chart to Cam Ranh 20 (there is none published to Phan Rang 22 for comparison) and plotted that approach to the Phan Rang tacan location. The reason the Cam Ranh

main landing runway is to the South and Phan Rang's is to the north is the big mountain range between the two. As I plotted the Cam Ranh 20 inbound course 194 and DME cross-at-or above-step-down altitudes to the Phan Rang Tacan on a topo wall map, I noticed a small problem. The 15-mile-2600-foot min is about half way up the slope of a 4109' peak on centerline. However, that mountain had a steep shoulder that fell rapidly into a 2200' saddle across a ridgeline about a mile east of centerline. Had we been on centerline or not at least 1500 feet above the crossing altitude, we would have been two side-by-side smoking holes in the mountainside. Why Cam Ranh Approach never noticed our position on radar I'll never know, but again, another dilemma avoided for an accident board.

There never was a debriefing as I assume others had one still on-going privately with lead, so I went to the bar and later we silently drank lots of beer together. Clouded perhaps by 50+ years, but still as clear in my mind as if over Willy at FL 40. Lead went on to become a Thunderbird.

**Do you know what the difference between God and a jet fighter pilot is? God doesn't think he's a jet fighter pilot.**

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(Tom Clark has had inputs with pictures or stories in Phan Rang Newsletters 117, 118, 164 and 216. He is also the author and starred in the YouTube video “A Christmas Thought”, a short story about a pilot flying an F-100 mission on Christmas Eve.)

## **FLYING BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON**

BY PHILLIP NOLDEN



*“I was totally blacked out – not even any instrument panel lights – flying by the light of the moon...”*

The worst scare I ever had was one night over Laos. I was totally blacked out – not even any instrument panel lights – flying by the light of the moon and playing a propaganda tape. All of a sudden, a giant pillar of fire appeared a couple of hundred feet off of my left wingtip.

I instantly realized that a gunship just above me was working the same target. I was totally blinded, especially since I was dark adapted, and had two choices: turn into him in the hope that I’d pass behind him, or turn away from him and hope that he’d cease fire.

I just couldn’t make myself turn toward him, since he was so close, so I made a hard right turn and in a few seconds the pillar of fire disappeared. I was flying totally by the seat of my pants,

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since I was completely blind.

I went straight to back to Ubon, landed, and went to bed. I never found out who was out there with me, but I came very close to being nothing more than shreds of aluminum; no one would have ever known what happened – I’d have been MIA forever.



### MY STORY

Michael J. Drzyzga Jr.

17th SOS, Phan Rang, Da Nang, and Phu Cat, 1970-71

Born in Irvington, New Jersey on May 13, 1948. In April 1968, I was working full-time in a pharmaceutical business in New Jersey while taking night classes at Seton Hall University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. Unable to carry 12 credit hours in night courses, the dear draft board changed my draft status from 2-S (student deferment) to 1-A. Since I possessed a serious enthusiasm for flying and a severe aversion to running through the jungle, I enlisted in the Air Force. On May 7, 1968, six days before my 20th birthday, I unhesitatingly headed to Amarillo Air Force Base (AFB), Texas for basic training.



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With a high mechanical aptitude test score, I was assigned a 462 career (weapons mechanic) and subsequently reported to Lowry AFB, Denver, Colorado for Technical School. Any thoughts of ever flying vanished from my mind. My first permanent assignment was with the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin AFB, Florida. In late 1968, the 40th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) received the first F-4E Phantoms fitted with a 20mm Vulcan nose gun. As the number three man on a weapons load crew, I loved the flightline work... being in and about the Phantoms was better than being a draftee in the Army and better than working in the dreaded hot, greasy, smelly Gun Shop.

### ***“...a black-painted C-119 with jet-pods and guns appeared...”***

Three occurrences would then change my course: First, a black-painted C-119 with jet-pods and guns appeared at Eglin’s Armament Development Test Center. It would circle (later I learned the correct term –“orbit”) over Eglin. I was awe-struck at this Korean War-era armed cargo plane. Second, I met an ex-Shadow Aerial Gunner (AG) who joined the 40th TFS after his tour of duty with the 17th SOS at Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. And the AG was wearing Stripes and Wings! Third occurrence, which made my heart pound to high heaven, was reading the posted announcement in the weapons flight line hootch about Project “Palace Gun”. Good Lord, I saw the chance to fly and the possibility of Stripes on my sleeves and Wings on my chest. I volunteered!!

I completed training at Lockbourne AFB from February to April 1970 and Physiological Training back at Eglin AFB. After a month’s leave home in New Jersey, I headed for Survival School at Fairchild AFB, then jungle survival training at Clark AFB, Philippines.

On June 7, 1970, I arrived at Phan Rang “Happy Valley” via Tan Son Nhut Airport (Saigon). Shadow 61 and Shadow 62 where what I usually considered my crews – although we did switch crews as needed, at what seemed a random manner. Although stationed at Phan Rang, I experienced some interesting missions while TDY to Da Nang in December 1970 where we supported some I Corps fire camps, and while TDY to Phu Cat AB in February 1971 where I logged many combat missions over- the-fence. One mission was a back to back (double-shooter), or turn-around mission. Our Shadow was closer to Thailand than Vietnam, so we

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landed at Ubon Royal Thai AB for full regeneration of fuel and ammo before flying another mission back at the same target area.

During my tour of duty, I did get out of Vietnam twice other than by flying combat missions over-the-fence. I was able to enjoy a week of R&R in Taiwan and a three-day visit to Hong Kong thanks to and via a C-47 resupply mission.

In June 1971 when my DEROS arrived, I received orders for Hurlburt Field (Eglin Aux. 9) and the non-flying duty of the Gun Shop – ugh! My last of four years in the USAF would be swabbing gun barrels. I did write a letter to the Special Operations Wing commander, convincing him that my proficiency as an AC-130 gun mechanic would be improved with insight obtained from a gunfire mission. So one sunny day, I donned the flight gear and spent almost five hours aboard Spectre over a Florida water gunnery range. That brought back good memories. Project Palace Chase provided me a last chance to fly again. I was accepted for development of the AU-24 Helio Stallion. Many ex-Nam ex-fliers were rejoined to make a single-engine, high-wing, tail-dragger into a multi-purpose attack aircraft. We were trained on Eglin’s TAC area by EC-121 crews on the techniques of dropping and listening to strings of sensors. We spent 4.5 hours on UH-1Ns learning the art of using a spindle mounted mini-gun. The Stallions were equipped with left-side mounted 20mm Vulcan cannons with three-barrels. Additionally, we dropped 500 lb. hard bombs. What a great experience! I almost extended my enlistment to deploy back to SEA, but the Project was to remain stateside for development and I separated from the USAF without much fanfare on May 7, 1972 (six days away from my 24th birthday). I returned to New Jersey and the pharmacy business.

I completed my B.S. in Chemistry at Seton Hall (Go Pirates!) and subsequently earned my Masters in Science degree in Radiation Science at Rutgers University. I worked as a Health Physicist (radiation protection), eventually becoming a Radiation Safety Officer (believe it or not, a US Navy term from the nuclear Navy). When people ask me if I am concerned about the risks of working with radioactive materials, I think back to my experiences in the Air Force and reply with a combat veteran’s look, “Risk is all relative.” Memories of Vietnam: The following three experiences have been retold so often that they have become war stories in their own right. Although the facts are as true as memory allows, the stories can be validated by fellow Shadows.

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### **Cobra in the Hootch**

One day in September or October 1970, the inside of the enlisted quarters was pretty normal for midday. It was dark and cool; only a few cubical lamps lit from those airmen awake and listening to their new hi-tech Japanese sound systems purchased either via PACEX or obtained from a Hong Kong resupply mission. There was the ever-present low rumble of the wall-mounted air conditioners. Outside was typical Phan Rang weather – cloudy, hot and humid like it could rain any minute. Most of the flying crews, me included, were sound asleep. Suddenly, one airman heading down the middle aisle (most likely returning from the Phan Rang Post Office to catch the day’s mail) was “spit at” from something behind the metal personal lockers. With a very loud and somewhat high-pitch yell, he flipped on the very bright overhead fluorescent lights and alerted everyone to this still unclear situation. As we awoke and slipped on our combat boots, we realized that we were not armed and there was a snake in the hootch. What to do? A short-timer, I believe AG **Staff Sergeant Goodson**, who after returning from an overnight stay in Thailand, owned a fully functional cross-bow and arrows that hung displayed on his cubical wall. He loaded up, as two other airmen pulled the lockers apart while I was still fumbling with one of my cameras, as usual. The coiled Cobra raised its puffed head to strike, but within two seconds of striking out, the venomous serpent was impaled by one accurately aimed arrow against the cubical plywood wall. It was definitely a Kodak moment! The moral of the story is “Never Walk Barefoot in a Shadow Hootch.”

### **Runaway Prop on Take-off**

After flying for nearly ten months as a Shadow Gunship Aerial Gunner in 1971, “Vietnamization” of the war was accelerating. We learned at Phan Rang that some of the airmen ending their tours would not be replaced. I was chosen to be certified as an instructor and join a crew to begin training Vietnamese C-119 and/or AC-47 crews to fly Shadow gunships. I was very confident in my flying skills. I had experienced many interesting, awesome, tiring, funny and sad times during my tour of duty. I was extremely happy to have never experienced an engine failure on take-off because every Shadow crewmember knew about the fatal crashes that claimed the lives of Shadow crewmembers at Tan Son Nhut. At Lockbourne, I had picked-up on the riddle “*What is black and green, smoldering in a rice paddy, and full of crispy critters?*”

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Damn those riddles!! Our current crew training standards and lowered take-off weights should prevent such a recurrence. Nevertheless, I said a prayer from the moment of the Pilot’s call for “gear-up” to the Copilot’s reply “gear up...gear is up and locked.”

*“They fondly learned the expression, “Monkey see, Monkey do”.”*

Training the Vietnamese crews was challenging because the enlisted men spoke very little English. They fondly learned the expression, “Monkey see, Monkey do.” We showed them all the tricks and shortcuts that made a great working Shadow crew. During pre-flight for a routine training mission, Shadow Operations called us with a request to “top-off” for support of a hot target area. Trusting the best weather service known to man at the time, we fueled and loaded ammo to the maximum safe limit. We expedited the taxi to the end of the runway, smoothly completed the engine run up tests, and set Shadow’s nose on the runway centerline. We accelerated quickly and rotated normally as I, as usual, recited my prayer at “gear up”. I learned to feel (in-the-seat of my Nomex flight suit) for the clunk of the landing gear locking in the wheel wells. At that moment, before the Vietnamese Copilot could say, “gear up,” a stomach-sickening yaw of the gunship occurred as Shadow’s No. 2 propeller ran away, out of control. The unusual new sound was weird and instantly foreboding. Oh God, not with less than a month to DEROS, I thought.

The Vietnamese student pilot followed his reflex experience from the C-119 Flight Manual and dropped the nose a bit to maintain airspeed. I knew that the procedures for runaway props had been rewritten by Shadow gunship pilots and that the current procedure was to attain best air speed to control a runaway prop, which in our case we needed NO additional airspeed. With a slight struggle on the flight deck, instructor pilot, Captain **Dick Howze** took control of the gunship and managed to nurse the Shadow around the mountain just north of the runway to head back toward the air base. We slowly lost altitude pushing Shadow while circumventing the mountain in what seemed like an eternity. All the while, the IO prepped the flare launcher for ejection and I had the ammo cans ready to throw out the door if the call came to make Shadow lighter. I unconsciously calculated the weight loss if we ejected students onboard. Captain Howze called for “gear down” at 250 feet over the threshold. The landing gear lowered with three green lights showing down and locked. We safely landed. After departing the gunship, we Shadow instructors huddled together as Student crewmembers huddled to discuss

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our aborted mission. The instructor crew agreed to board another Shadow gunship and proceed to the target area while the students decided otherwise. So, did we fly again that night? I cannot recall going back out, but Dick Howze says we convinced the students to fly, and we did fly. Such is my memory of 36 years ago.

### **A FNFLCP (Friendly New First Lt. Co-Pilot)**

At the beginning of a routine Shadow 61 mission out of Phan Rang heading over the mountains to a near-border SEL (suspected enemy location), AC **Major Golden** told everyone that he intended to provide our new co-pilot, 1st Lt. **Newell Lee**, some “stick time” for his pilot’s log. As the intercom conversation waned and the ever-present roar of the two R-3350s, just a few feet away from me, became too melodic on the flight to the target area, “Goldie” as we called the Major, quite deliberately asked Lieutenant Lee if he would “take control of 61 for a while.” Normally, a two-second transition, Goldie deliberately slowed the transition by making a few trim adjustments. That delay was more than enough for the Aerial Gunner #2, the IO Bill Kitt and me to grab two full ammo boxes and “tip- toe” to the forward bulkhead. When Lee said, “I’ve got the aircraft”, the three of us pranksters slowly walked to the rear of the cargo deck. As a new flier, I was amazed that you can actually feel Shadow slump a bit and the increased drag reducing airspeed. Goldie calmly said, “I’ve got it back” and he re-trimmed 61. “OK, you got it Copilot” and Lee replied “For sure.” The three Shadow pranksters slowly walked forward toward the front bulkhead. Shadow 61 began to pitch forward slightly and the airspeed and altitude picked-up. This time Goldie (fully aware of the cargo crew shenanigans) more sharply said, “I’ve got it!” Lee was beside himself. I think he tried a few weak explanations over the intercom. It was so hilarious, I almost pissed in my Nomex flight suit. I can image what it looked like if viewed from the outside as Shadow porpoised through the night sky. Even with the engines roaring, the four of us (NOS included) laughed so hard you could almost hear us. Lee finally figured out that it was not his inability to fly Shadow but it was his inability to see that he was the butt of a joke on new pilots just reporting for flight combat duty in-country. The fun abruptly ended when the Table NAV said, “We’re here; time to descend to firing altitude!” No Kodak moments on this one; only a sweet memory to carry with me for a very long time.



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**YOU’VE SEEN THIS PICTURES HUNDREDS OF TIMES, NOW FIND OUT THE ORIGIN OF IT.**



### **What is this red tornado?**

It is a 2.5 min. timed lapsed photo of an AC-119G “Shadow” gunship flying in a standard firing circle, with four 7.62 mm GAU-11 mini-guns each firing 6000 rounds per minute.

### **The Story**

#### **Sept. 1970, Phan Rang AFB, RSVN**

As an AG and part of the Shadow 61 crew, I was upset to say the least that the Flight Surgeon grounded me (DNIF for 8 days) after a really bad experience with the base D.D.S. relative to an impacted wisdom tooth. On a stormy night, Shadow 61 launched without me as I played cards with alert crews in the hootch. “61’s” frag<sup>1</sup> was cancelled and had to RTB due to very bad weather. While returning, “Charlie” was attempting to infiltrate the base perimeter with sapper explosives. As the base alert siren motivated most in our hootch into a defensive posture, the phone rang and I learned from the Shadow Ops Officer that Shadow 61 would be firing on Phan Rang’s perimeter to repel the attack. Cool !!!---I ran for my Minolta 7s rangefinder camera freshly loaded with Ektachrome 160. Without a tri-pod of my own (yet), or other airmen in sight outside the hootch to borrow one from, I propped the camera on top of a Ford F100 pick-up truck. I took only two exposures: one about 40 secs., the other 2.5 min.

I helped set-up the Phan Rang Photo Hobby Shop to develop Ektachrome transparency film (slides). It was a wonderful place to get-away on a “day-off”. In the fine print of the Kodak developing instructions, I learned you can “push” the ASA160 to

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ASA400. A few days later, I spent some nervous time in the dark room processing and pushing the film. While wiping off the final rinse solution from the developed film strip, I could feel other airmen peering over my shoulder to see what the images from the other night looked like. WOW was the mildest of adjectives used.

Many reproductions were made for Officers and Enlisted, and Flight and Maintenance crews. Over the years, it has been published in various aviation periodicals regarding Vietnam.

Michael Drzyzga (former Aerial Gunner, SSgt, 17<sup>th</sup> S.O.S)



### **Flying into the Eye of the Volcano**

*by Myron Janzen*

5 Mar 1971

First thing in the morning was to go to briefing to discover your mission for the day . . . if any was there. The briefing officer began by naming the individual and the mission. About halfway through the list, the 1st Sgt rushed in and handed the officer the note.

He said, "Janzen, you fly up to Da Nang . . . they'll tell you what is needed. Burk, you go too and Ellett, you too. NOW!!!!

*“About 200 Marines were trapped inside the volcano by the North Vietnamese...”*

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In about 2 hours we arrived and there were several O-2B's loaded and ready for takeoff. Imagine a 1/2 mile long volcano-like terrain. About 200 Marines were trapped inside the volcano by the North Vietnamese; the Marines were holding their own but were running out of ammo, water, food, rations, etc. and needed to be re-supplied.

We would approach the end of the volcano at 1500 feet, (max-effective range of an AK-47), and then drop to about 25 feet within the volcano to push out the aforementioned supplies. That had to be done at full speed to allow us to get back up to 1500 feet at the other end, that's where we would be most vulnerable. The Marines knew that we would be vulnerable too! There were four other O-2B's making that run. . . . one after another, but not too close.

When we got back to Da Nang, there was another O-2B loaded and running, and my kicker and I jumped and went back to the volcano. I made four such trips and other O-2B's did the same.

***"It (was) the noisiest flight that I had ever made!"***

As we flew along the "bottom" of the volcano depression. Douglas A-1 Skyraiders were strafing the long outsides of the volcano. It had to be the noisiest flight that I had ever made!

The O-2B's did take some hits, but no engine-stopping hits. The Marines eventually made it out of the "volcano" mostly intact. I'm glad that we weren't asked to do that job at night. The O-2B's were the only vehicles that would fit inside the "volcano" and there wasn't much room to spare.

**The flight was like flying in a tube . . .**

**can't go up** (possible damage to survival goods)

**can't go down** (gear is up and ground not suitable)

**can't go right** (volcano wall is higher than you)

**can't go left** (volcano wall - ditto)

## “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. 232 “...keeping the memories alive”



### FROM BUTTERWORTH TO PHAN RANG AIR BASE



Control of No. 2 Squadron handed over to the United States 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force when Wing Commander Rolf Aronsen, with navigator Flying Officer Frank Burtt, led his Canberras from Butterworth on 19 April 1967.



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### The Formation for the Squadron’s deployment to war comprised:

A84-230	Wg Cdr Aronsen	Flg Off Burt
A84-236	Plt Off O’Hanlon	Flg Off McKenzie
A84-231	Sqn Ldr Thomson	Flt Lt McIndoe
A84-245	Flg Off Walters	Flg Off Halvorson
A84-234	Sqn Ldr Kilian	Flt Lt Hanigan
A84-240	Flt Lt Montgomery	Flt Off Gribble
A84-237	Flt Lt Squires	Flt Lt Furlonger
A840242	Flg Off Biddell	Flg Off Waring



### First 2 Sqn Canberra Crews, Phan Rang, Vietnam, 20Apr 1967.

**Standing** L-R: Trevor Noblet, Wally Walters, Bob O’Hanlon, John McKenzie. Pete Hackett, Trevor Kilian, John Chesterfield (Base Admin), Rolf Aronsen (CO), Jock Thomson, Errol McCormack, Brian Frost, Ron Biddell, Bob Montgomery and Barry Squires.

**Kneeling** L-R: Chris Lake, Lance Halvorson, Jim Hannigan, Charlie Furlonger, Frank Bunt, Gus Gribble, Tom Wright, Charlie Reif, Blue O’Neill, Julie Wills, Bob Waring and Pete Ekins.

**Note:** Not in Picture is Wg Cdr Vincent Hill



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