

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 235

In this issue:

The Phan Rang Vietnam Veterans Reunion

Reunions with a Phan Rang connection

- The "Lieutenants Protective Association" Reunion
- 57th Alumni Association Reunion



The Reunion

**Autumn leaves, rustling together to the appointed
place, the old warriors come.**

**Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.
Where they meet is not so important anymore...They meet and that's enough
for now.**

**Greetings echo across a lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close.
Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to
accept so lovingly.**

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

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But deep, within these Indian Summer days they have reached a greater understanding of life and love.

The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous remembering.

On a table someone spreads old photographs; a test of recollection. And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, or merely gone.

The rugged, slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength. Some are now sustained by one of "medicines miracles," And even in this fact they manage to find humor.

The women, all those who waited, all those who love them, have watched the changes take place. Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other; as glad to be together as the men.

Talk turns to war and planes and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again, reweaving the threadbare fabric of the past. Mending one more time the banner of their youth.

They hear the vibrations, feel the shudder of metal as propellers whine and whirl, and planes come to life.

These birds with fractured wings can see beyond the mist of clouds, and they are in the air again, chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of flight, close to the heavens; the wild and blue yonder of their anthem.

Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.

Each, in his own way, may wonder who will be absent another year.

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The room grows quiet for a time.

Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns. The talk may run to other wars and other men, and of futility. So, this is how it goes.

The past is so much the present.

In their ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches, and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the deep eternal love of country they will forever share.

Finally, it is time to leave. Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday, but the past cannot be held too long for it is fragile.

They say, "Farewell...See you next year, God willing," breathing silent prayers for one another.

Each keeping a little of the others with him forever.

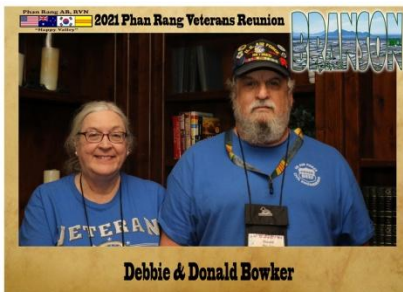
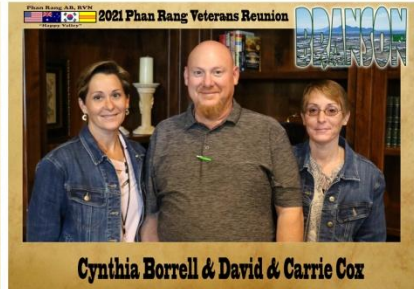
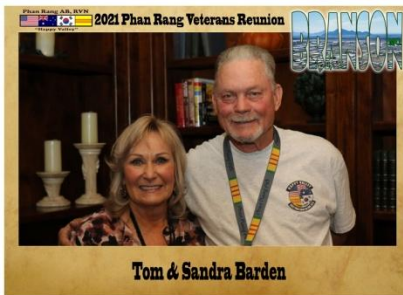
(Note: The header picture used for “The Reunion” is a group photo of the veterans that attended our first reunion in 2012 in Dayton, Ohio, taken at the Wright-Patterson Officer’s Club. Three of those have since passed away and are: David McGaughey, Rex Close and Roger Burchett. Four individual that are also pictured attended the most recent reunion and are: Albert Roark, Lou Matherne, Douglas Severt and Sam Lewis. Previous reunions were held in **San Antonio (2013), Tucson (2014), Charleston (2015), Oklahoma City (2016), Seattle (2017), Nashville (2018) and Savannah (2019).**

The following pages are couple and individual pictures of attendees at the 2021 *Phan Rang Veterans Reunion* in Branson, Mo., 14-17 Oct.

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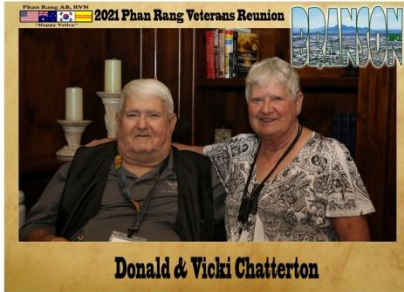
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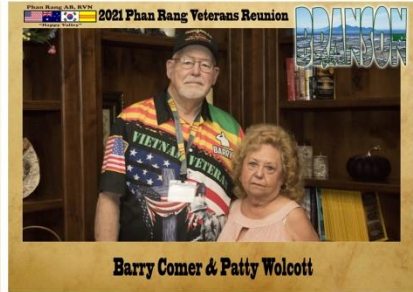
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Donald & Vicki Chatterton



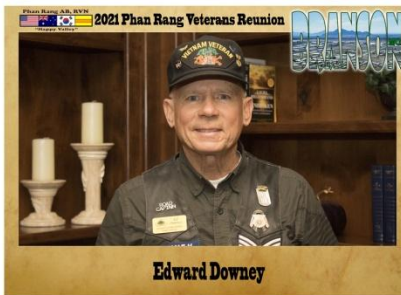
Donald Chatterton



Barry Comer & Patty Wolcott



Barbara Brandt & Edward Downey



Edward Downey



Robert & Janis Freeman



Tom & Nancy Gates



Bruce Gordon



Bruce Gordon & George Varney



John and Linda Graham



Dean Harrison



James & Judy Hemphill

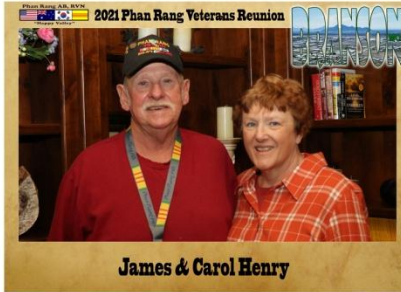
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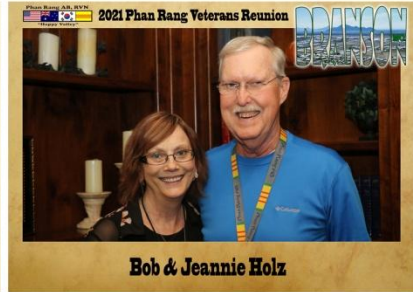
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James Hemphill



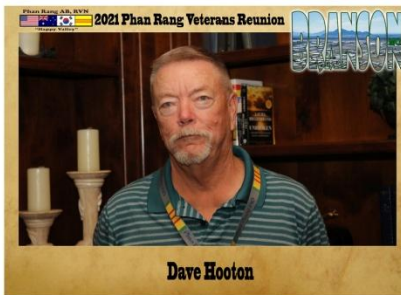
James & Carol Henry



Bob & Jeannie Holz



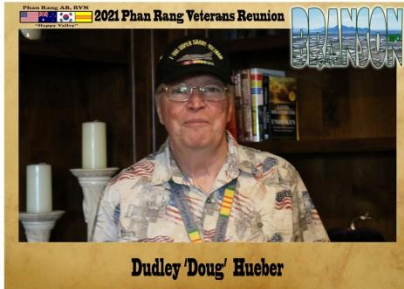
Bob Holz



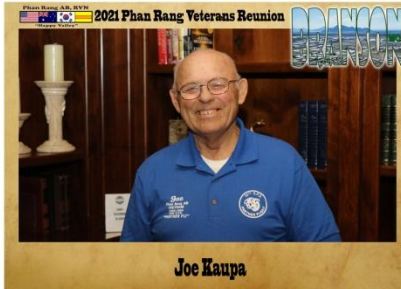
Dave Hooton



Dudley 'Doug' & Marlene Hueber



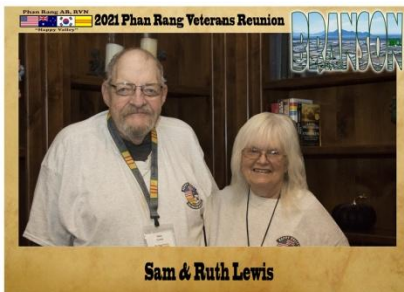
Dudley 'Doug' Hueber



Joe Kaupa



Scott & Joe Kaupa



Sam & Ruth Lewis



Richard & Carol Long

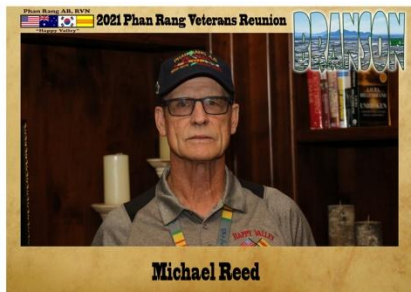
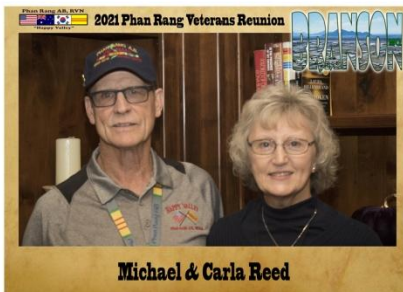
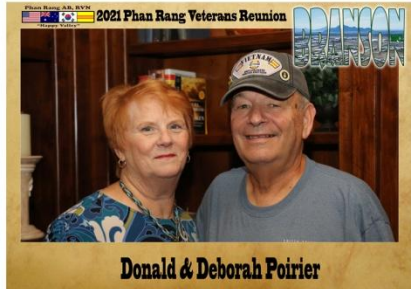
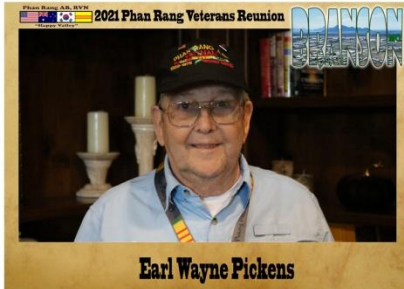
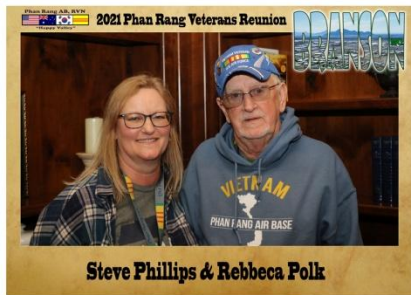
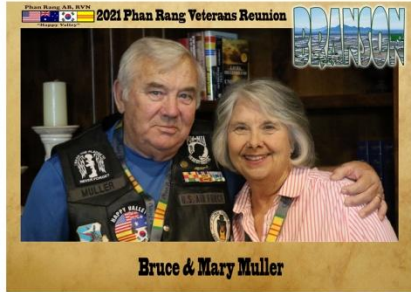
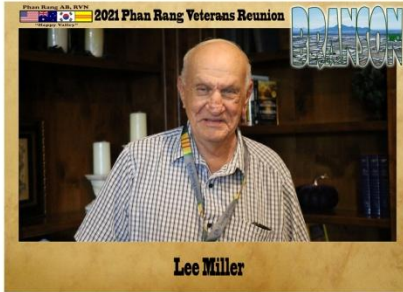


Lou & Sue Matherne

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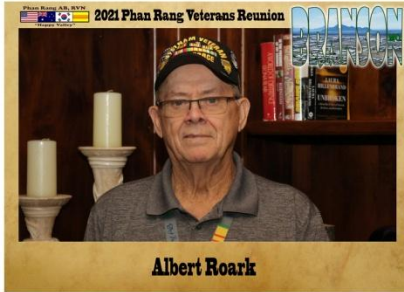
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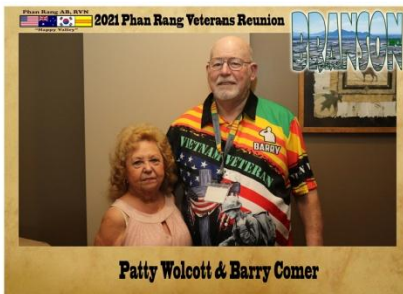
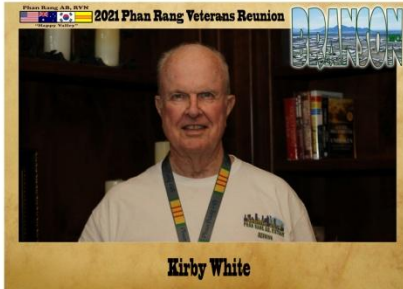
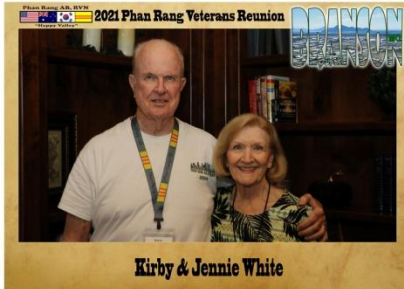
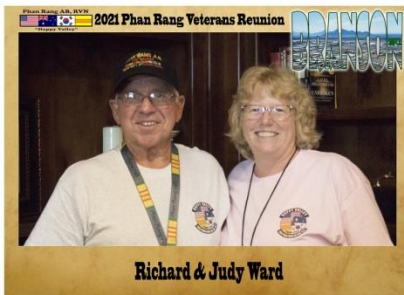
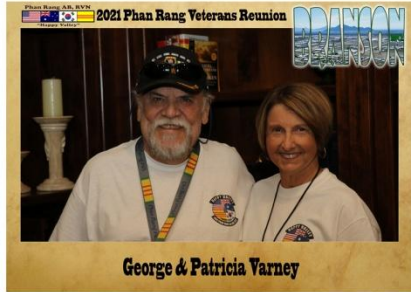
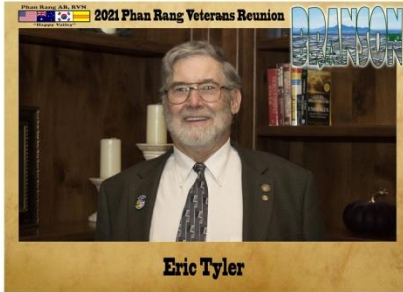
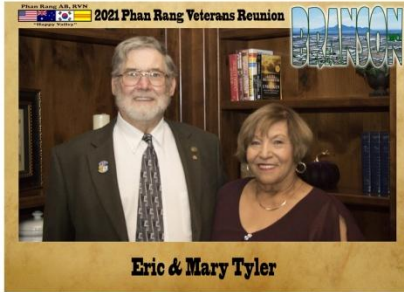
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The following individuals attended, but did not have their picture taken: Ronald Ambrose, Richard and Ruth Learst, Michael Oliver and Stephen and Faye Peck.

The Whole Gang (Lodge of the Ozarks)



WHY DID WE JOIN THE AIR FORCE? by ED DOWNEY

The reasons can be as individual as a fingerprint. A sense of patriotism and duty to country comes to mind. Family history in the military can be a factor. A desire for adventure or a need to get out of one’s current environment. Or how about avoiding the draft by enlisting, to have more input into one’s future. And then there are those to whom a judge in a court of law made them an offer they couldn’t refuse. Any number of these examples can be considered in the important decision that changed our lives.

Whatever the reason, we enlisted, completed basic training and tech school, then were

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assigned to our duty station. As destiny would have it, we eventually were all assigned to the 35th Combat Support Group, APO San Francisco, 96321, Phan Rang Air Base Vietnam. Happy Valley. We all had different jobs, and as it turned out, we did them very well. So well in fact, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing was presented with the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm on March 18, 1971. Col. Greg P. Nolen, Jr., 35th Commander, accepted the award in behalf of the 35th Wing and its subordinate units from Brig. General Vo Can Canh, commanding general of the 23rd Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The citation states that the wing, from September 1968 to October 1970 had performed in a fantastic manner because of its dedicated support personnel, and heroic pilots who, under extremely difficult mission situations, and with personal disregard for the dangers involved, have conducted air strike missions against communist strongholds and provided air support to operations organized by both the Armies of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States of America in military regions 2, 3, and 4. This information came from a Phan Fare article dated March 21, 1971. **Like a winning team, it's the people that make the difference.**

While we were actively doing our jobs, back in the U.S., protesters and draft card burners abounded across the nation. Our country was in turmoil, and upon our return, we received the wrath of their anger. The only way the Vietnam Vet would get any recognition was to recognize ourselves. And we did that with a simple “Welcome home and thank you for your service”. Then over time, that simple greeting caught on and has become commonplace.

Now we witness another generation of service men and women come home from a war with a similar outcome of the Vietnam War. We have welcomed them home and thanked them for their service. Let us continue.

I thank you for your time and I am proud to be in this room with the airmen of Phan Rang and the ladies who support them.

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Ed Downey salutes while John Ploof lights the remembrance candles and Barbara Brandt reads the script.

SELF-RELIANT MEN

by Ed Downey

This country was not built by men who relied on somebody else to take care of them.

It was built by men who relied on themselves;

Men who dared to shape their own lives,

Men who had enough courage to blaze new trails – with enough confidence in themselves to take the necessary risks.

All of the veterans in this room tonight have proven they are self-reliant, they chose to fight for their country, and they chose to join the Air Force and do

whatever job was asked of them.

Their self-reliance is our American legacy.

It is the secret of that something which makes Americans – Americans!

Some call it individual initiative, others backbone.

**But whatever it is called, it is a precious ingredient in our national character,
one which we must not lose.**

**We take this opportunity to salute the men of Phan Rang and their assigned
duties.**

**To the pilots and flight crews whose missions were the purpose of Phan Rang
Air Base.**

To the security personnel and dog handlers who kept the base safe.

To the crew chiefs and maintenance specialists who kept the aircraft flyable.

**To the logistics and supply people who got the necessary supplies to those who
needed them.**

To the medical and food service personnel who kept us healthy.

To the civil engineers who built and maintained the base.

To the administration and other general fields who kept the base running.

**These seven candles are lit for the men of the Seventh Air Force who are with us
here tonight.**

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But in our joy of assembling here tonight, we must not forget our fellow brothers who no longer walk among us. Our brothers who have passed since our last reunion. We light this 8th candle in remembrance of them.

Thanks to Bruce Gordon, Bob Holz, Brice Harris, Cindy Weber, Barbara Brandt, Ed Downey and John Ploof who all made the programs on Thursday and Saturday evening special. If I were to thank everyone for their contributions to the reunion I would be listing all of the attendees...so thank you!

Two other reunions with a Phan Rang AB connection



The “*Lieutenants Protective Association*” a group of former young F-100 Super Sabre pilots held a reunion in Whitefish, Montana, August 2021.



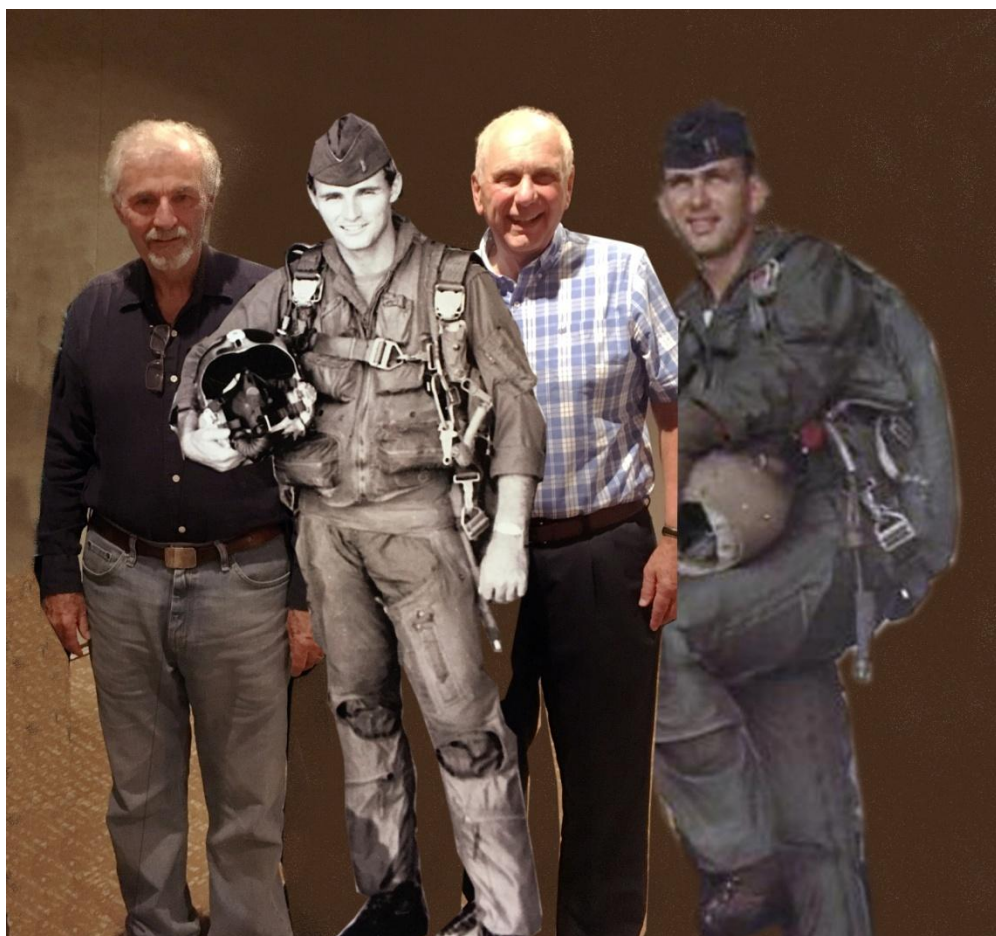
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These are the Legends of Phan Rang AB that as young men flew some of the most perilous missions of the Vietnam War.

Left to right: Ron Siegfried, Chip Taylor, Sam Digirolamo, Jim Kilpatrick, Charlie Sublett, Don Schneider, Ron Chadwick, Fred Tomlins, Ron Deyhle, Sandy Avery behind Ron Deyhle, Charlie Harr, Dewey Clawson, Lee Howard, Jerry Hover. Two people in attendance, but not in the picture, are Scott Madsen and Gary Silence.



Ghosts of Missions Pasts

Ronald Russell Deyhle and Ron Siegfried

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(Stories about these hero’s can be found in *Phan Rang Newsletter* in these issues: **Chip Taylor** 214, 221; **James Kilpatrick** 30, 214; **Charlie Sublett** 214; **Ron Chadwick** 214; **Fred Tomlins** 30, 194, 206, 214, 221; **Ronald Russell Deyhle** 194, 206, 217, 221, 225; **Charlie Harr** 30, 158; **Lee Howard** 66, 194, 206, 214, 219; **Scott Madsen** 46,152, 194, 206, 221, 214, 225; **Gary Silence** 152.)



The 57th Alumni Reunion, Branson, Mo. 23-26 September



Just some of the notable members of the 57th Alumni: Lt. Col. Carleton Philbrick, former commander, Gene Arndt (flew C-123's from Phan Rang AB), Mike Bruce, Woodie Hall (Stationed at Phan Rang AB), Bob Brumbaugh, John Burkhardt, Mike Caulfield, Jim Doombos, Troy Fore,

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Cecil Fultz, Doyle Gerber, Jerry Harvey, Keith Hankins, Chip Haughey, Sean Haughey, Joe Henderson, Beryl Hull, Claude Irelan, Don Jenkins, Cary Martin, Bob McDaniel, Mike McDonough, Larry Murphy, Boone Nicolls, Mike Peters, Douglas Severt, Phillip Pierce, Larry Pohl, Henry Schulman, Mike Shedd, Bob Shirey, Phil Vaughn, John Weldon, Wim Wetzel, Ron Wolfe, Jim Aaron, Ora Conlon, Tom Gamble, Doyle Gerber, Keith Hankins, George Liley, Larry Murphy, Tony Oliva and Kent Woosley.

Garnett C. Brown was one of the notables that eventually found his way into the 57th family of organizations. Garnett or “Charlie” was stationed at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam from 1970-71, assigned to the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing as a Flying Safety Officer, attached to the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron for flying duties. Colonel Kenneth Blood 315th Wing Commander, asked him to write a story for the 7th Air Force Combat Safety magazine. He wanted a story about what it was like for a new guy in the C-123 Provider. The story that he wrote is **“A Day in the Life of a Trash Hauler”** and is included in its entirety in Phan Rang Newsletter 182. Charlie eventually went on to fly C-124’s which were affectionately called “Old Shakey”. He wrote a book about those experiences and the book is titled *“Here We Go!”* Recollections from the Golden Age of Airlift.

In Closing:



Powerful.. Joshua Dyer (aged 14) was tasked at school to write a poem for Remembrance Day.

An hour later (without any help) he produced this...

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**One thousand men are walking
Walking side by side
Singing songs from home
The spirit as their guide
they walk toward the light milord
they walk towards the sun
they smoke and laugh and smile together
no foes to outrun
these men live on forever
in the hearts of those they saved
a nation truly grateful
for the path of peace they paved
they march as friends and comrades
but they do not march for war
step closer to salvation**

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**a tranquil steady corps
the meadows lit with golden beams
a beacon for the brave
the emerald grass untrampled
a reward for what they gave
they dream of those they left behind
and know they dream of them
forever in those poppy fields
there walks one thousand men**
Joshua Dyer 2019 (aged 14)



SEE YOU IN PENSACOLA IN 2022



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. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, mailto:dougsevert@cox.net and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.