

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 237

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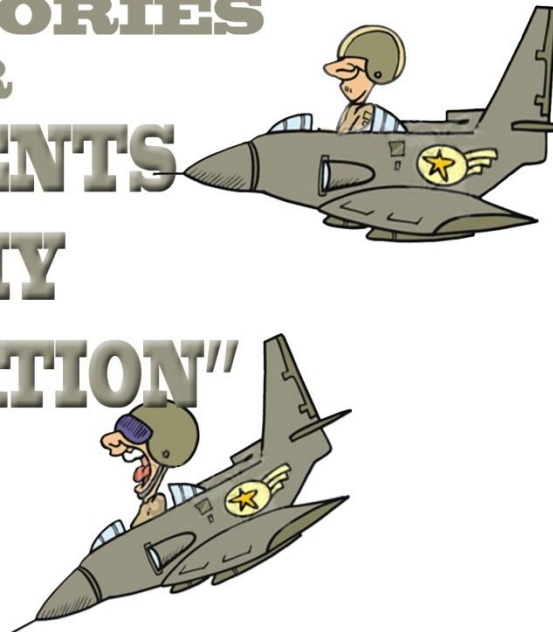
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MY MEMORIES OR "FIGMENTS OF MY IMAGINATION"



by **Richard E. Weizenegger Jr.**

Well written Pete¹. All these years I wondered what happened to you. Now I know...Nothing!!!
You're still the same. We had great times together at Luke and at Phan Rang.

"I knew you weren't a Nazi".

Actually, you saved my career at Luke by pulling me away from a drunk Major with whom I was playing Bumper Pool but quit when he started cheating. He was mad because he couldn't beat

¹ Charles P. Peterson "Memories" follows this story.

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me and didn't want me to stop playing. (My father had taught me to play bumper pool years before and I was quite proficient) You and I were then drinking at the bar when he came over and started talking about my hair length. I said my hair doesn't determine my bomb score. Then he made a disparaging remark about Weizenegger being a Jew. As I moved toward him some friendly hands grabbed me and said we're leaving. As we stated to go the Major said he would see me thrown out of the program. The next morning after our last mission, he was standing there looking at our scores. Luckily I had the top score that day and he just looked at me with death in his bloodshot eyes. I smiled/smirked at him and he turned around and left. Thanks for saving my Nazi ass. But alas, years later we found out that I roots are from Bragens, Austria. Finding that out, my wife (if you remember Muffett) exclaimed "I knew you weren't a Nazi".

"Weizenegger, you will never light the barbeque again."

Only because you brought it up will I tell these two dumb moves. Remember the barbeque pits outside the door of our hootches. Well, they were doubled sided. We wanted to barbeque one evening and I volunteered to light the charcoals. The tops were closed so I opened the one on the left and loaded the charcoal and then proceeded to flood the coals with a very flammable fluid. Knowing it was going to ignite fast and furious, I decided to stand quite a ways back and light a big wad of paper and toss it in the pit. Which I did, And....nothing happened The entire squadron was behind me and none of us wanted to go close to maybe help it along. As fate would have it, unbeknownst to us there was an interconnecting tube between the two pits. I hereby lay claim to have invented the first air-fuel bomb. Fumes went through the tube into the other pit with the top closed. Now this took many seconds to happen. The fuel vapor



moved across the tube and filled the closed pit and my burning wad of paper finally ignited a little fuel in the left pit and sparky decided to run through the tube and find the enclosed fuel -air mixture. Now right next to the barbeque was a beautiful Palm tree about 25 feet tall. All of a sudden

there was a huge explosion which blew open the closed lid on the right almost tearing it off. This was followed by a monstrous fireball that went straight up and singed the top of the Palm tree. I think it was a very worthy way for Hun pilots to start a barbeque. However, the squadron commander, Joe, said 'Weizenegger, you will never light the barbeque again.'

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"In finger tip formation with eight 500 pound bombs diving for the ground."

I always carried my camera with me, but there was one time I wasn't ready with it because it was a last second flash of genius that made me do something and time became a limiting factor. You had mentioned the single ship "Sky Spot" missions. The GCA in the sky. I think it was about 26,000 feet straight and level following a ground controllers instructions. He had a pre-computed drop point for the bombs to fall on a desired target. I was getting bored because he couldn't get me lined up correctly even though I was flying PRECISELY where he directed me. Finally, he counts down and says Mark, Mark Drop. Bombs away, And I quickly do a 180 degree roll to the right for some separation. I don't mean slow roll. I mean fast roll with a little down vector like if I were a bomb. And there I was. In finger tip formation with eight 500 pound bombs diving for the ground. The first thing I realized was that all the bombs right off my left wing tip were not smoothly going downhill. They all were wobbling and oscillating amongst themselves to see which one could be first to the target. Then I noticed that those little propellers in the nose of the bomb were all spinning really fast. Made me think they were armed by now. Since they were wobbling close to each other it was conceivable one or more could collide. The picture in my mind was not pretty. I decided to go lost wingman on bomb formation and keep that dumb but fun move to myself, until now.

"...dumbest stupidest immortal fighter pilot stunt...would go something as follows."



Richard E. Weizenegger Jr.

But the dumbest stupidest immortal fighter pilot stunt I ever did I just can't tell yet. To this day I have never told a soul. But assuming someone did this it would go something as follows. There I was leading a two ship mission that had no mission. We just got airborne and I noticed an Arc Light flight of 3 B-52s high above us heading north. I knew they were flying at 35,000, 33,000, 31,000 feet. Why not say hi? Burners now and away we go. The first thing I noticed was that they are really going fast that high. It's a slow closer and I started

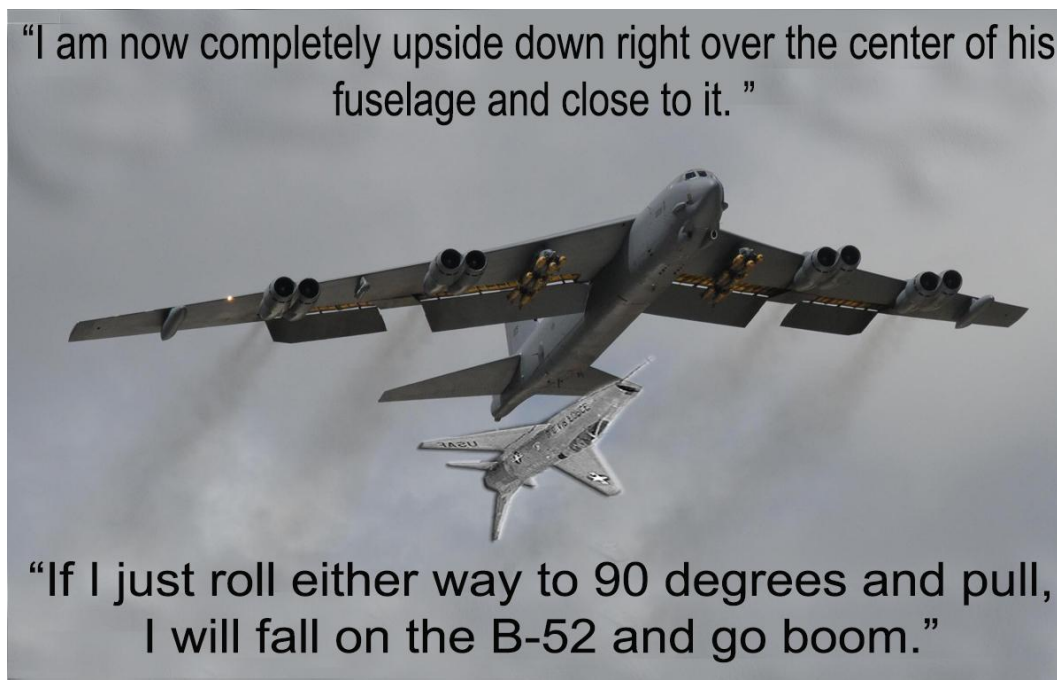
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to think we could run out of fuel before we get to them or find ourselves over Laos with no tanker to get us back. Luckily we caught them and I made it to a position right off the right wing. I kid you not, they are really fast and if I come out of burner we will flat fall behind. Now this is way before Tom Cruise ever even dreamt of this. We need to turn and get back to Phan Rang.



“I am now completely upside down right over the center of his fuselage and close to it.”

“If I just roll either way to 90 degrees and pull, I will fall on the B-52 and go boom.”

So, I will tell the story because you all are my F-100 mates and you will understand someone had to do it. I've done rolls over F-100s, T-38s, AT-33s. Piece of cake. At 31,000 feet, pull up and start the roll over the B-52. Son of a B....., that wingspan is freaking huge. The other wingtip is in Cambodia. I am now completely upside down right over the center of his fuselage and close to it. If I just roll either way to 90 degrees and pull, I will fall on the B-52 and go boom. Only one way to save this: pray that the Hun can fly upside down and climb away from the monster at 31,000 feet. After some climbing away I have to roll and pull hard to clear the fuselage and the wing. And at 90 degrees I will have no lift and start falling toward the tail. Ahh, the best laid plans of mice and men. I rolled right at least 90 degrees and pulled hard. I have no idea how close I came to any part of that plane. The next thing I noticed was that I was going down through 26,000 feet. I asked my wingman if he had me in sight and he calmly said yes, and I heard him in his mind say, you dumb shit. There was no mention in the debrief of our

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encounter and there was never mention of it the rest of my career and life *so I'm thinking it was just a figment of my imagination*. So I didn't do it, no one saw me do it and you can't prove I did it. I sure wish I knew who my wingman was. I'd like to ask him if he had any figments during that flight.



The Daily Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Wednesday, May 1, 1963

Two Youths Appointed to Air Academy - Washington D.C. (Special) Gary L. Holmen Cameron and Richard E., Weizenegger, Jr., 1821 Valmont Ave., Eau Claire, have received appointments to the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colorado, according to word received today by Cong. Lester Johnson from the Academy.

Cong. Johnson nominated Holmen and Weizenegger for appointment last December. Since that time, they have passed the physical scholastic and aptitude test required for entrance to the Academy. They will begin their four-year course of study there in July of this year.

Weizenegger, 18, will be graduated in June from Regis High School, where he ranks in the top tenth of his class. He has been active in student government and athletics and was a member of the Boy Scout Explorers Squadron. In 1961, was one of four students chosen to represent Regis High School at the American Legion's Badger Boys State.

His is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Weizenegger Sr., 1821 Valmont Ave., Eau Claire.

The Daily Telegram, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Wednesday, January 8, 1964

Obituary - Funeral services for Richard W. Weizenegger Sr., 43, of 1821 Valmont Ave. who died Tuesday morning at Sacred Heart Hospital, will be hold at 9 a.m. Friday at the Golden Funeral Home and at 9:30 at the Immaculate Conception Church with the Rev. Daniel J. O'Reilly officiating.

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Mr. Weizenegger is survived by his wife, Patricia, a son, Richard a student at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.; three sisters, Mrs. Frank Cobb, Rose Park, Mich., Mrs. Al Hall, Memphis, Tenn., and Miss Florence Weizenegger of California; and one brother Joseph of Long Island, N.Y.

He was a member of the Elks Lodge and served in the Air Force in World War II. He was a foreman at the U.S. Rubber Co. where he had been employed for 25 years.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, Friday, June 2, 1967

Mrs. Richard Weizenegger and Mrs. Adolph Ackerland left recently for Colorado Springs, Colo., to attend the graduation of Cadet Richard E. Weizenegger from the U.S. Air Force Academy June 7. They will be there for all June Week activities. Miss Louise Meyer and Miss Gene Olson will also attend the ceremonies.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, Saturday, August 22, 1970

R. E. Weizenegger Married June 13 - Miss Marcijane Meairs married Capt. Richard E. Weizenegger Jr., son of Mrs. R. E. Weizenegger, 1821 Valmont Ave., and the late Mr. Weizenegger, on June 13 in Colorado Springs, Colo., at the Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus W. Meairs, Riverside, Calif.

After the ceremony a reception was held at the Officers Club at the Air Force Academy, and a reception was held Aug. 2 at the home of Weizenegger's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Ackerland, 925 5th St.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram Wednesday, June 2, 1971

U.S. Air Force Captain Richard E. Weizenegger, son of Mrs. Patricia S. Weizenegger, 1821 Valmont Ave., was decorated with the Air Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam where he is a pilot.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram Wednesday Thursday, August 26, 1971

Capt. Richard E. Weizenegger, son of Mrs. Patricia S. Weizenegger, 1821 Valmont Ave. has received the Distinguished Flying Cross for aerial achievement in Vietnam.

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Captain Weizenegger is an F-100 Super Sabre fighter bomber pilot at Phan Rang Air Base. He is assigned to a unit of the Pacific Air Forces.

Captain Weizenegger a 1963 graduate of Regis High School received his B.S. degree and commission in 1967 upon graduation from the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram Wednesday, Saturday, May 31, 1975

Air Force Captain Richard E. Weizenegger, son of Mrs. Patricia Weizenegger, 1821 Valmont Ave., has received his second through 13th awards of the Air Medal at Williams AFB, Ariz., for achievements as a pilot in Southeast Asia.



MEMORIES

by Charles P. Peterson

I read every issue of Intake from cover to cover and almost everything reminds me of some event or thing I experienced in the Hun. Most of you have neat accomplishments and great war stories to tell and I love it all. I do not; however, see much in the way of little things and stupid things that I did or remember (this may be because I'm one of the few who did all those stupid things!) ---so I thought, heck, I will just write down some of what I remember.

It would be fun and I am certain will bring back interesting memories for anyone who flew the Hun in particular or fighters in general---and so, what follows is simply my memories and

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thoughts in no particular order of any sort, certainly not composed with any proper grammar/composition rules of the road and no research, but I am going to have fun doing it! By the way, I had always wanted to fly fighters because my father did---some of you older farts may have known him---Charles O. "Pete" Peterson. He was squadron commander of the P-51 squadron at Scott AFB in '51-'52 (mission was to protect St. Louis in event of attack!) He got promoted and was given a wing of F-86's in the Korean war---was killed checking out in the F-86 in '52 at Wright Patt--go around after an SFO, fuel control failure and flameout, too low and slow, failed ejection, but not pilot error. If any of you remember him, I sure would like to talk to you.

"I was finally going to get to do what I wanted all my young life."



Charles P. Peterson

I reported to Luke in the summer of '69---I and my family climbing the old wooden steps in the VOQ and as I recall it was close to the O'Club. It was just after sunset as I looked down at the runway and a formation of two Huns were just lifting off with burners blowing---God, it was beautiful---I will never forget that sight---I was finally going to get to do what I wanted all my young life. I never tired of that sight---in Vietnam even, sitting up at the O'Club at Phan Rang watching the night sorties take off. That was a great six months for me although Luke lost three Huns/pilots while I was there.

I was about average to a little above in all the gunnery etc. for my class---however, two things I specifically remember. I got the dart on mission one and I thought the IP in the back seat was going to have an orgasm---made me feel good. Then there was BFM 1 with, as I recall, Ed Cole. I was tooling along fat dumb and happy and he came from behind and below at warp 8 and pulled up directly in front of me---how he missed the pitot boom I'll never know. Oh yeah, almost forgot, Luke AFB O'Club is where I learned you don't walk into the bar with your hat on...cost me about \$40, a small fortune then.

So, off to war and assignment to Phan Rang to the 615TFS, 35TFW. I had been to Happy Valley, Phan Rang before in 1967-1968 as academic instructor/IP/SEFE in O-1's and O-2's at FACU,

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forward air controller school where I always envied the Hun guys for their air conditioned hootches and bar maids!

Well, I must now confess, as I have had to do everywhere all my life---I flew B-52's. I even qualified as Aircraft Commander and completed that checkout on a night combat mission out of Guam to Vietnam, refueling at night on seven motors (yes 7---fire light on #1 during climb out, no actual fire, shut it down and press on) and 108 Mk 82's---I'm impressed. Anyway, back to Phan Rang, where the fact I had flown the Buff came to the attention of a crusty old major who must have been born in a fighter cockpit and who took it upon himself to see if I could hack it. We proceeded to become highly inebriated into the wee hours and, yes you guessed it, we had an o-dark thirty briefing that morning...not the next. I hung in there and dropped good bombs. I guess I passed and by the time my tour was up I was a Flight Commander/IP/SEFE. Ah Ah, so I must have been pretty sharp Huh? Nope, let's see, there was the time that **Lee Seymore** and I were returning from a mission and I did the 'ole waggle wings' into formation, give the speed brake signal whereupon I light the burner and the fight is on and we wind up on the treetops, you know, where the bad guys are, in a lufbery under 300kts. **It is important to remember at that age I/we were immortal, indestructible, irreplaceable and even invisible.**

Then there was the "*laughing box*"; remember, those plastic things in a cloth bag you could press the button and get a recorded laugh? I used to carry that thing with me on every mission. Numerous times I almost busted my arse getting my oxygen mask off, pushing that button and sticking it in my mask and pushing the transmit button to humiliate someone for dropping a bad bomb or some other thing almost as stupid as what I was doing to them. I was probably the only one who really thought it was funny, but I enjoyed it. I continued this pastime in the A-7 world later on.

Remember curvilinear approaches? That was to complicate the 9-level gunner's chances of hitting us and the F-100's were much better at it than the F-4 pukers. Well, of course they hardly ever got close enough to the ground to be in range or just about anybody else and that's a fact, as I also saw it from the FAC viewpoint. Well, I was so good at it that on one mission I whipped off and back in to the target better than John Wayne could have done it at under 400k on target and then off into a rising hill in front of me. I pulled all I thought the machine could take without a stall, and we all know what would have happened if I had tried to light the

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burner, and considered myself done fer. I'm surprised I didn't bring home tree limbs or, for that matter, a soiled flight suit. I have gun camera film to show this dumb act and still marvel how I made it over the top of that hill.

Now how 'bout this: one night after many 'drinky poos' and with an o-dark thirty mission the next morning, I run into the squadron commander, **Paul Kasarda**. I don't remember all that transpired but know I was grounded for a day or so, but I remember the guy with me was **Jerry Hover** who pulled me away and probably saved me from saying/doing anything to cause me to be in even further doo-doo. Until his going away party, I never spoke to the commander again. He gave me a 8 OER in the combat zone, which I deserved but survived. If you are out there colonel, I know you were just trying to save a not too smart young captain.

Hey, for some really smart moves, we used to fire flares at the 352 TFS hootch right across from us, and, of course, smoke grenades down the hallway. The field grade guys tried to control us but it didn't work...God bless 'em. The "Bookie Bus Stop" episode is another story and for all who were not there when it happened I will try to make this succinct. The trash haulers, called "Bookie" because their mission call signs always contained that term along with a mission number, on base had a little covered bus stop shack they used when leaving their hootches to go to the flight line, etc. It sat on our "property" right by the 352 TFS. We used to write and draw uncomplimentary things about trash hauler pilots, etc. on the bus stop---the 35 TFW/CC, Cregg P. Nolen Jr. finally told us to cease and desist, but we got him back. With assistance of the ADO we painted that bus stop up, had it hauled up on a big flatbed and met the wing CC with it at the end of the runway on his last flight---that was fun.

While I was on the F-100 tour at Phan Rang, 7th Air Force did an article on me as the "*Triple Threat Pilot*", because I had flown the B-52/bombers, O-1, O-2/forward air controller, FAC and F-100/fighters all in the Vietnam war/conflict from 1967-71. Great, just what I needed, another reminder for everyone that I flew B-52's!

In my other life, while flying the B-52s, I remember taxiing the 'Buff' in after a nice short 12 hour mission and the control tower calling and telling me my wife had called them to let me know my F-100 assignment had just come in! Hot Damn, I almost shut down the wrong engines---we always shut down 1,2,7 and 8 before getting to the chocks...arrgghh. But how I

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got the Hun assignment is another story.

In the area of "visuals" I will always remember this: At Phan Rang, we would sometimes get launched off alert (call sign "Blade") at night as a single ship and go do a radar controlled level bomb drop. One night after doing this and with plenty of petrol I lit the burner and climbed to 40,000'. The glow around the cockpit was really neat and on a clear night looking over most of South Vietnam with all the little lights was a beautiful, peaceful sight. Of course, some of those little lights were blinking and people were dying as I looked...back to reality. Then there was "Misty" South. I don't remember how it got started or whose idea it was, but **Harry Brown** and I attempted to do the Misty kind of thing using an F model with the GIB using a map and camera and tooling around low level to find bad guys. No armament except guns, which we were not supposed to use as I remember, however, we had to use them often for such things as enemy water buffalos. Anyway, I don't think the program was very successful. I'm sure Harry has a much better memory about it than I do, and no intent to make fun of the real Misty program as you guys are some of my heroes! Speaking of Harry Brown, wasn't it you who pulled up as #3 in one of our many missing man formations and did an aileron roll at the top? I believe you were "debriefed" on that? Then there were 2 or 3 of our guys at the end of their tour who bought the farm in the back of a C-130 that ran into a mountain on the way to Cam Ranh Bay for their flight home---but there were a lot of sad things like that I want to avoid in this memory lane stuff.

Then they told us to take all the Huns back to the states. I was going to be leading something or another and really looking forward to it, but came down with amebic dysentary, which wasn't fun believe me. So I stood on the flight line and watched the whole gaggle take off. Many of the guys gave me a formation wing dip...damn, I'll never forget that either. As an aside, whilst I was in the hospital a bunch of the guys snuck in the hospital through my window and brought adult entertainment and beverages. I still remember going down the corridor pushing my IV pole to watch the "movies" in the conference room, but a nurse caught us and that was the end of that! I recall she was a field grade good 'ole big 'un so if anyone remembers exactly what happened, let me know.

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“So back to the states...”

So back to the states to the 357 TFS/355 TFW, first operational A-7 wing (I think) for a couple of years and I was proud to have been selected for that. Then a desk job at AGOS at Hurlburt Field, Fl. for a couple years and THEN: three choices: (1) ANG advisor to a national guard unit converting from Huns to A-7's meaning I would have(GET) to check out in the Hun again, (2) F-4's, or (3) F-104's to train Germans at Luke, so after about a millisecond consideration I took the ANG/RAFSOB (regular air force son of a _____) job because and only because I would get to fly the Hun again. F-4's at that time would have been much better for a career, but that did not matter.

Well, that's enough ---it was fun putting this down but there is so much more, plus it is hard to keep it just concerning the F-100. So, here's just one little deal on each other airplane. A-7, wow, how 'bout trying to outdo the Marine F-4's at Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station on who could pull the most contrails and make the most noise on initial and pitch out to land---450kt+ initial---someone put a stop to that(**Boyd Van Horn** or **Chuck Bradley**?) or trying to find the nudist camp by air---I found it. Or me being on the receiving end of a little ACM on the way home---**Tom Tapman** did that to me. We wound up in a vertical scissors over the ocean. Or A-7's at DM and conflict with SAC about fighter pilots not being allowed in the main O'Club wearing goat bags and somehow O'Club furniture finding its way to the swimming pool--- Charlie Harr, Steve McClain, Don Austin, et al, where are you? How 'bout O-1's/FAC in Vietnam where I stole, er, borrowed, uh traded “willie petes” for some Army 2.75HE,s to load on my 8-tube O-1 fighter with crew chief in back with a BAR and grenades (he had rigged some elastic ropes to hold that BAR in the rear window and it worked great as we did not shoot our own airplane even once although a few hot empty shells did hit the back of my neck) ---we were awesome---the number of rules/reggs. we violated would have taken up a few pages. Or Red Flag in '77 or '78 with ANG F-100's and we proceeded to try to get the lock off the beer cooler in the O'Club after hours and then to have fire extinguisher fights in the BOQ---I remember the ANG/CC went to Base/CC next day to plead forgiveness and I also remember writing a check for damages to O'Club/BOQ. B-52's?---well, only airplane I ever took a dump in---I once crawled all the way back to the tail gunner I guess just to say I did it---it was hard to do anything out of the ordinary as everything required a committee of six reading 12 page checklists.

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So, that's it, it was 30-40 years ago. Also, I didn't research anything, so my memory may be slightly hazy---feel free to critique me or whatever. I never had grown up then and still haven't. One thing for sure tho---the Ernest Hemmingway poem about losing your virginity in fighters to a beautiful airplane and it always remaining your favorite is one I certainly agree with---F-100 SUPER SABRE.

Flight Info: T-27, T-38, T-33, B-52 D/G, O-1, O-2, F-100 D/F & A-7D

Breakfast at the Mess



One of the things I remember most about Phan Rang was eating breakfast at the mess during my time there in 1968.

I have never been a big breakfast fan, but when I had an early, early combat flight I always made a point of going to the mess and trying to choke down whatever it was they were serving. My

thought process was to fly with a full stomach in case I ever got shot down on the mission. I would have been really pissed to be in the jungle, outgunned, scared...and hungry too!!

The mess was a raucous place that early in the morning because we USAF folks shared it with the Aussies who were flying night B-58 missions up toward Laos, the Ho Chi Minh trail, etc. So when I was half asleep, trying to swallow something which looked like eggs, these guys were usually well into their cups, smoking cigars, and singing some pretty bawdy songs. The mess reeked of beer and smoke, and made eating quite a chore.

To seek refuge, we'd try to eat on the nice deck they had, but even at those early hours the humidity was so high, and we were wearing nomex flight suits, we'd be sweating into our flight boots by the time the meal was over. There were some pretty sunrises though!

Great memory!

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Rich Buickerood

Colonel, USAF, retired

(Col. Buickerood flew the hun for only one year, logging more than 200 combat missions in Viet Nam in support of ground troops. But it was a great plane to "cut your teeth on" just coming out of pilot training. It could be a fun plane, but at times it was quite unforgiving, requiring you to be vigilant, respectful, and professional at all times. The discipline required to fly this single-seat fighter set the stage for a very successful, 26 year career, flying a multitude of different aircraft. GREAT memories!! Stories about and by Rich Buickerood can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters 195, 196 and 199.)



In Phan Rang Newsletter 236, “35th TFW Awarded Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry” and Vietnamese Vice President Ky’s visit to Phan Rang AB, Jon Alexander wrote the following:

A little back story on this article. On the morning of 21 March, I got a call that Air Traffic Control reported an unknown aircraft was headed for Phan Rang and was not talking to anyone. I raced up the stairs to the Control Tower and quickly accessed the situation. I keyed all Tower Frequencies and attempted to contact the unknown aircraft to no avail. I saw that we had a Yellow Jacket flight of 4 F-100s that called for recovery. I asked Yellow Jacket Lead if he had any ammo left and he answered in the affirmative. With the all frequencies available to the tower, I explained there was an unknown aircraft on final, position your flight in his 6 O'Clock and prepare to fire. Then I told the unknown aircraft he had 30 seconds to identify himself or the 4 F-100s in his 6 O'Clock position would open fire. An excited voice came back immediately that "*This is Vietnam One.*" I said, "Who the hell is Vietnam One?" The response was, "Vice President Ky." The Yellow Jacket Flight was instructed to report Initial for an overhead approach and Vietnam One was cleared to land.

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Col. Nolan monitors the Control Tower frequencies and heard everything. He called the Tower and instructed me to join the 8 people receiving the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. He told me to give my rank, name and what I do. So I did just that. When it was my turn, I gave my rank, name and told the Vietnamese General that I was the "Welcoming Committee." Col. Nolan turned his head away so you couldn't see the smile.

In Phan Rang Newsletter 236 “Confirmed Rabies Case Spurs Action by Base Medics, Security Police” Bruce Gordon responded:

That 9 May 1971 rabies scare at Phan Rang affected me! I had been transferred to HQ 7th Air Force in Saigon, and came back to Phan Rang to get a few missions to keep my hand in. While there, I played with two puppies that were pets of the 612th TFS. After I got back to Saigon, I got a call telling me that one of the puppies had just died of rabies!

Contrary to what the article says, I understood at the time that ALL dogs were put down and pet dogs were no longer permitted.

He also wrote in his book “The Spirit of Attack”: “Once or twice a month the pilots from Headquarters would go back to their original squadrons and fly a few missions to keep up their flying proficiency and to be aware of changes in the field. I flew from Saigon back to Phan Rang and flew with my squadron. They had acquired two German shepherd puppies which ran around the barracks and slept in one of the rooms. I finished flying several missions, and went back to Saigon.

I had been in Saigon for about a week when the phone rang. "When you visited here, did you play with the puppies?" "Yes". "Did you get your hands in their mouths?" "Yes—of course—you always get your hands in a puppy's mouth!" "One of them just died of RABIES!"

The news hit me like a blow to my stomach. "Tell me more", I demanded. "Everyone's getting the 14-day rabies shot treatment — one shot in the stomach every day for 14 days — guys are having bad side-effects and some are in the hospital, others suffer in the barracks". "Then the whole squadron must be GROUNDED!" I gasped. I was right - our whole fighter squadron had been grounded because pilots were sick with rabies shots!

“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. 237 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

Now I was in trouble, and didn't even know it — all our phones were tapped by our own intelligence services, and I had just blurted out a SECRET — that a squadron was not ready to fight! About a day later I was called on the carpet to explain why I was so stupid as to reveal a secret over a telephone.

I had a more personal problem, though — would I die of rabies? I rushed over to the hospital and talked to the Flight Surgeon. He listened carefully to my story, and asked if I had any sores on my hands. "Rabies usually causes a festering infection at the point of entry. You don't have any sores, so you probably didn't get infected. However, you can't be sure. I have the serum here to give you the 14 shots in the stomach, but they're bad shots and will probably give you pain, severe stomach cramps, and hives. However, if you don't get the shots and wait until symptoms of rabies appear, then you will die — there is no way to save you from a horrible death if you wait until symptoms appear. The choice is up to you. **Do you want the shots?"**

What a decision — to endure 14 days of shots and agony, or to trust my luck, not take the shots, and risk a death caused vomiting, choking, and insanity. A chill of fear came over me. I looked at my hands — no sores. **"Thanks for the advice, Doc. I won't take the shots. I'll go back to work and sweat it out".**

I went back to work, waiting the 15 days until rabies symptoms would appear. My throat was dry, and I imagined that death was creeping up on me. The critical days passed — and I was alive!

I later learned that this was the largest rabies crisis in the history of the US armed forces. The order was given that all pet dogs must be destroyed. There are sad tales of men crying as their pets are taken from their arms and shot. War leaves different scars on different people . . .

(**“The Spirit of Attack”** is a fascinating book that will take you back to Phan Rang and along the way you'll meet a lot of the notables that we've read about for years. To get your copy send \$20 (cash, check, or PayPal) to Bruce Gordon, 105 Broadbill Ct., Georgetown KY 40324 and receive it taxes & shipping paid (in the USA). It's also available on Amazon at a higher cost.



DEAR MOM LETTER FROM USO TROUPE TRAVELING THROUGH VIETNAM

Dear Mom:

Don't you worry now because I got shot at by the Viet Cong snipers. It made the whole trip.

When a politician doesn't get shot at, in an election year, the trip's a bust. And when a columnist doesn't get fired on, it's downright humiliating.

Now it can be told — about how unalarming it really was.

I say "it" because our pilot. Lt. Col. Bob Parker, is an honest man (" I was born in Las Vegas, roughly on the site of the Desert Inn") and though he thought we were shot at several times, we couldn't pin him down specifically to more than one (We tried, though.)

We were strapped in our seat belts on the runway over at Cu Chi.

Raquel Welch was combing her hair and fixing her makeup. Miss World, the Peruvian beauty. Madeline Hartog Bel. my seatmate was combing her hair and fixing her makeup. That's what they did constantly. They were doing their hair for the GIs.

Suddenly our big C-130 which had about five bullet-patches on it seemed to shoot suddenly into the air and take off for Phan Rang.

Later a note was passed to me:

"We were shot at by small arms fire on the runway on the takeoff. That's why the sudden steep rise."

The word had come from Bob Hope and writer Bill Larkin in the cockpit. The pilot told them. " The tower advises me we were shot at on the runway."

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The tower had told him.

The planeload soon buzzed with the news. I forgot to mention it to my seatmate.

Miss World. She was too busy combing her hair. Raquel Welch, who was also still combing her hair, said, “I hope that’s not the only way to fly.”

Phil Crosby, an ex-GI. who had a can of beer, said. “Oh. they can't do much but ping at you unless they get your gas tank or your tires.”

Elaine Dunn, the singer and dancer, didn't get scared till she phoned her husband in Las Vegas later and he shouted: "ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?"

Truthfully, we all found the helicopter "contour flying" — scraping the grass and treetops to avoid getting “ zapped” — much scarier.

Several were willing to quit flying right there. I was one of them.

And it was pretty embarrassing that Miss World didn't even know we were shot at.

A reporter breathlessly asked her about it here, and she said, a comb in midair, “We were shot at? When — where?” She started trembling. And still is.

Not much of a shoot-up we were in Mom, but it’s the only one we had.

...USO Show

(Woodland Daily Democrat, January 5, 1968, Woodland, California.)

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Eau Claire Leader-Telegram Wednesday, June 2, 1971, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Airman 1.C. Robert W. Erickson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Carl C. Erickson, Rt 1, Frederic, Wisconsin is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Airman Erickson is an aircraft maintenance specialist.

Graettinger Times, June 3, 1971, Graettinger, Iowa

Sgt. Alan Gjerde's Unit Earns Presidential Unit Citation In Viet - With the U.S. Combat Air forces, Vietnam - - U.S. Air Force Sergeant Alan D. Gjerde, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gjerde of R.R. 2, Emmetsburg, is a member of the 14th Special Operations Wing in Southeast Asia that has earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

Sergeant Gjerde, assigned at Phan Rang AB, is an aircraft accessories repairman with the wing which has received the highest U.S. organizational award for its performance as the only USAF unit of its kind in the combat theater.

The 14th is headquartered at Phan Rang and operated from nine major locations in Southeast Asia. Wing aircrews fly seven types of aircraft - including fixed-wing gunships and Air Forces only armed helicopters - on such special missions as leaflet drops, defense of allied outposts and escort for search and rescue. The 14th was credited with the defense of more than 3,600 allied positions, hundreds of ground teams and patrols, and the surrender of more than 33,000 enemy troops.

In February, the 14th also implemented Vietnamese Air Force combat crew training in AC-119 gunships into its mission to support the Vietnamese Improvement and Modernization Program.

Sergeant Gjerde will wear a distinctive service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the wing. The sergeant, a 1966 graduate of Emmetsburg High School, attended Luther College.

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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. Also upcoming issues will have more member profiles, so if you haven’t already written your story, now is the time to do it. 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.