

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 242

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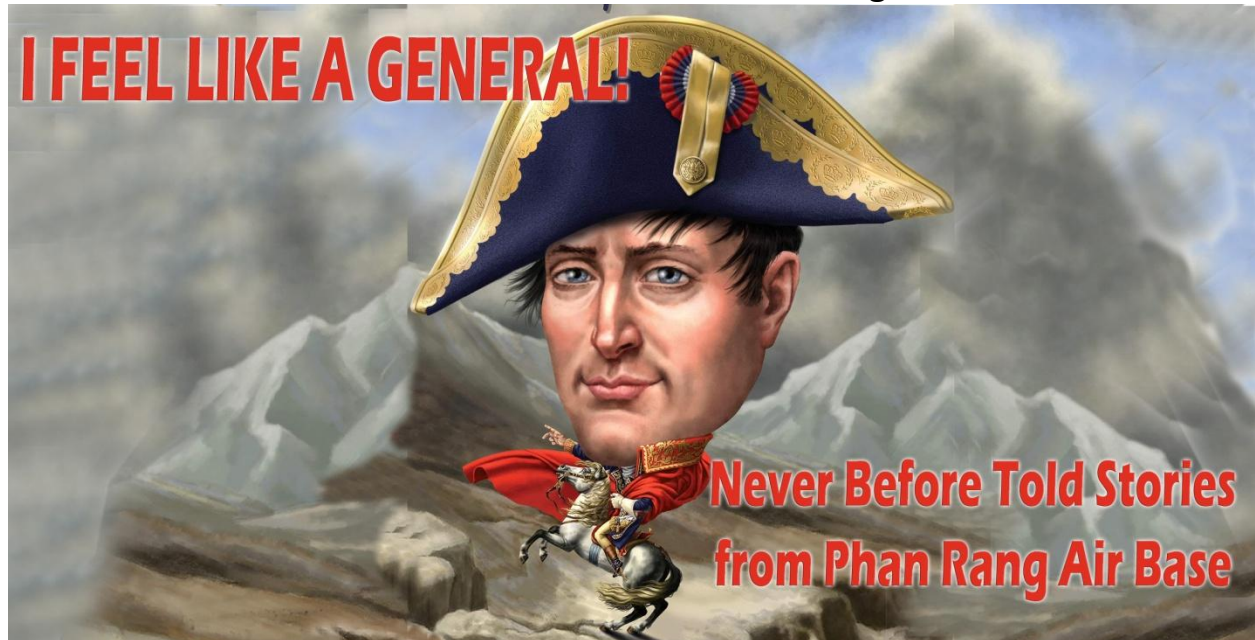
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"I Feel Like a General!"

By Arthur Fry

The No.2 Squadron Canberra bombers of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) had flown into Phan Rang Air Base from Butterworth, Malaysia, on the 19th April 1967. Bombing missions commenced a few days later. Daily life was getting into full swing at the Australian section of the Phan Rang Air Base.



Sergeant **Cliff Buckley**, Aerodrome Defence Guard, (ADG), had arrived with the No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron, Detachment 'B' advance party with

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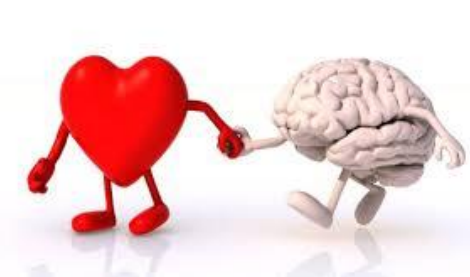
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me from Brisbane, on Australia Day 1967, (26th January,) to oversee the gradual build-up of the Airfield Defence Guards Flight in Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam.

Closer to the arrival of the Canberra’s on the 19th April, Ground Defence Officer, Flight Lieutenant (Captain equivalent,) **Rob Lyons** had arrived in Phan Rang to command the growing presence of the ADG Flight. Bob was a cheerful fellow who was Officer-in-Charge of the ADG Flights, the Base Service Police and The Civilian Labour Office, where I was the NCOIC as the only non-Vietnamese language Interpreter in Phan Rang from the January to the November when a graduate from Monterey, CA, Language School arrived in Phan Rang. Then there were two non-Vietnamese Vietnamese interpreters to cover the entire Phan Rang Air Base.

My teachers at the RAAF School of Languages in Point Cook, Victoria, Australia, spoke North Vietnamese, so when I arrived in Phan Rang, locals, who spoke Southern or Central dialects, were initially suspicious of me, suspecting me to be a ‘plant’ from the North.

In the early days, to provide a bit of Australian humour which always fell flat, I used to ask if they knew Ho Chi Minh? Whatever their answer, my response was, “Ong ay la bac cua toi.” - (He is my Uncle!) I soon dropped that cute saying when it only made my allegiance more suspect!



But I did eventually win their ‘Hearts and Minds’, as during my first tour of Vietnam, the South held the Presidential election. My staff were most concerned that I was not running for President and encouraged me in that they believed I should be the best man to run South Vietnam. Do not forget, I ran the Civilian

Labour Office, and promotion to a higher grade among the local civilian staff was always keenly sought, and I decided who would gain any promotion! Incidentally, I did not run, and Nguyen Cao Ky became President!

The ADG’s built revetments in the main hangar area and in the Airmen’s, Sergeants and Officers’ lines, and began regular protection duties of the RAAF property, with all keenness and determination.



Nguyen Cao Ky

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Rob, however, determined that his ADGs needed a bit of stimulation, so knowing that MACV (the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam,) co-ordinated the ‘stick-by-the-Geneva-Convention-rules-of-engagement’ in Vietnam, in that any aggressive movement ‘outside the wire’ was a ‘no-no’ and that other rules such as, ‘do-not-fire-until-fired-upon’ had to be strictly observed. Rob spoke with the Base Commander, a USAF Bird Colonel, who gave permission for Rob’s ADG troops to conduct a sweep outside the perimeter fence, whenever he wished to organise such a manoeuvre, mainly to keep their military skills honed in the event they were called upon to do so.

With full approval of the USAF Base Commander, early one Saturday morning, Flight Lieutenant Lyons organised for two flights of his ADGs to do a ‘sweep’ outside the perimeter fence of Phan Rang Air Base.

Corporal “**Windy**” Gale led one flight and Corporal, later Warrant Officer, ‘**Danny**’ Kaye led the second flight. All ADGs were excited about getting into the action after months of routine defence duties inside the perimeter. Rob also was pleased to see the excitement and anticipation of his men about to ‘do some real ADG work’.

On the far eastern perimeter of the Phan Rang Air Base, the United States Air Force maintained a non-food disposal dump. It was a regular occurrence that local Vietnamese would jump over the perimeter fence and raid the dump, mostly containing discarded metal objects, by carting off whatever they could carry, throwing it over the fence to be later retrieved by whatever means the load required removal.



When detected by American Forces, the Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) would use jeeps to race to the dump site, only to see the Vietnamese retreat over the fence and stare at the QRF, who could do nothing. In other words, the established Rules of Engagement, created by MACV, prevented the QRF from engaging the potential thieves, until, or if, they were fired upon by the suspects.

While Rob’s troops were on their sweep outside the perimeter fence, the USAF Base Commander contacted Flight Lieutenant Rob Lyons to brief him on the sighting of thieves in the dump. Rob announced that by strange co-incidence, he had two flights of ADGs outside ‘the wire’ that morning, and at that very time, they were not too far away from the dump. So, a plan was concocted between the two Base Defenders.

Rob Lyons called up Corporals ‘Windy’ Gale and ‘Danny’ Kaye, who were just a fair step away from the vicinity of the base rubbish tip. Both flights moved at lightning speed to the rendezvous site, while the locals, dressed in the black uniforms, which usually indicated that

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they were probably Viet Cong, continued to steal all the metal that they could carry to the perimeter fence, where they would throw it over the fence to retrieve their ill-gotten goods later. We were not sure, but they probably converted the metal they stole into cash which in turn, funded the local Viet Cong militia’s costs of their local guerrilla war.

Rob Lyons came to my office for me, as he knew he’d need an interpreter, and away we sped in his jeep to the hill overlooking the dump site. Rob kept in constant radio communication with his Corporals and kept an eye on the busy beavers who kept stealing anything they could lift, with his binoculars glued to his eyes.

When his ADG troops were close to the dump where the intruders had entered the Air Base, Rob gave the order to fix bayonets. Then he called the USAF Defence Commander who, through his channels, alerted the QRF of the situation.

Three things happened in quick order. When the Vietnamese intruders saw the QRF vehicles approaching the dump, they tried to high-tail it over the fence; the two ADG flights came out of the scrub with bayonets fixed and their ferocious appearance, headed by the end of a very pointed bayonet blade, kept all the intruders on the USAF property.

The intruders were herded at bayonet point into the QRF vehicles, and brought up to where Rob Lyons and I were waiting, and from where Rob had directed the ‘snatch’.

Rob told me to tell the twelve locals in their own language, that they were under arrest. I happily complied. The QRF and our ADGs searched the detainees for identification but found none. So, instead of classing them as potential thieves, we classed them as suspected Viet Cong, despite them claiming that they were simply ‘cowboys’, who tended the cattle, although we saw no cattle in sight. They kept that ruse up all day.



Then came the line I will never forget. Rob Lyons, with his hands on his hips, said to me, “**Arthur, I feel like a General!**” To which I replied, “Aw, come on Sir, where am I going to find you a General at this time of day?”

Rob took my reply very well, as he was not only a good Officer, but a good ‘boss’ to me as I ran the Civilian Labour Office with the assistance of the Service Police, in whose office, we were co-located, for whenever there was

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a disturbance of any sort, I was always needed as the Vietnamese interpreter to sort out the cause of the disturbance, or to retrieve someone’s ‘lost’ items.

After further questioning back at my office, which was under the ADG’s living quarters, where we held the prisoners in half completed bunkers, we took the twelve black-suited prisoners down to Thap Cham to MACV Headquarters where a US Army Major told me he couldn’t accept them as it was Saturday afternoon and MACV was closed, but rather, he said to bring them back on Monday morning ‘when the war starts again’.



We then took the prisoners to the National Police Headquarters in Phan Rang, some distance from Thap Cham, and after some difficulty ascertaining who was in charge to raise their hand, I handed the prisoners over with our official paperwork, to the most senior looking policeman in the police yard. We left in our convoy of vehicles that had taken the suspected twelve Viet Cong down to the Phan Rang National Police Station.

I have since joked that the twelve suspects were probably home at the rear of Phan Rang Air Base where we had captured them, well before we were back in our quarters!

And for those who are concerned about Rob’s request of me, I never did locate a General anywhere in Thap Cham or Phan Rang that day!

Arthur Fry

No. 2 Squadron, RAAF

The First Non-Vietnamese Language Interpreter in Phan Rang.

“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

George Santayana, Philosopher

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Col. **Frank L. Gailer Jr.**, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing Commander is being congratulated and celebrating the wing having completed 75,000 combat sorties since it began operations at Phan Rang Air Base in October 1966. This record breaking flight was made by Col. Gailer piloting “Mama’s Boy” an F-100 Supersabre jet, serial number 56-3155.

The 35th TFW consists of tactical units which provide a unique and versatile combination that is unlike any other Air Force unit in Vietnam. Four of the units, the 120th, 352nd, 614th, and 615th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, are equipped with F-100 Supersabres. Another integral part of the Wing is the 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron, flying the B-57 Canberra bomber.

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The Royal Australian Air Force Number 2, Squadron also made an important contribution towards the 75,000 total and to the effectiveness of the 35th TFW. The No. 2 Squadron flies the Australian Canberra, an aircraft similar to the B-57s of the 8th TBS. Photo by Col. Robert Cherry, 120th TFS Commander which was recently scanned from a transparency by his son Bob Cherry.

Note: More stories and pictures of this historic event can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter, 1, 2 and 228. Additional stories and references to Frank L. Gailer Jr. can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters, 1, 11, 20, 24, 40, 41, 55, 58, 60, 65- 67, 69-72, 74, 75, 77, 81, 82, 88, 94, 111, 113, 124, 130, 134, 135, 137, 139, 141, 171, 177, 183, 204, 208, 228)



David Jaynes
35th FMS



My name is David Jaynes I am 68 years of age. I am from extreme eastern Kentucky, a small community called Van Lear which is where Loretta Lynn the country music legend is from. I have been married to my wife Darcia for 35 yrs. We have a son David Lee and two daughters from a previous marriage, Paula and Jennifer.

I entered the USAF in November 1968 and went to Lackland AFB, Texas. for basic training. I was in the 3723rd training Squadron flight 1666th and my Training Instructor (TI) was SSgt. Patty. I left Lackland in late December 1968 as a 1 striper airman. After basic I completed my technical training at Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois. I was assigned to the 3355th student Squadron. I was a 432X0 jet engine mechanic. In April 1969 I was assigned to Cannon AFB, Clovis, New Mexico and was assigned to the 27th FMS jet engine shop working buildup on T-33 engines.

In late November I went to put in voluntary papers for Vietnam. I returned to my duty station

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and already had orders for Vietnam THAT QUICK. I was assigned to Phan Rang AB and arrived December 1969. My unit of assignment was the 35th FMS jet engine buildup. Working mainly on J-57 engines for the F-100 Aircraft. I received orders in October 1970 when they were doing a draw down of aircraft. I was sent to England AFB, Alexandria, Louisiana. I was there for about a year then did a short reenlistment. Then on to my last assignment to Langley AFB, Virginia, working flightline on the C-130 Hercules T-56 engines. I did that for three years and then was discharged in July 1974.

I dedicate this bio to my great friend and brother veteran Roger Burchett who sadly lost his life to cancer

Heritage of the 35th Fighter Wing



Misawa Air Base

Construction of Misawa Air Base (AB) began in May 1939 under the direction of the Imperial Japanese Naval Air Force. In September, construction began on a triangular runway network that included two 3,500 foot runways. However, plans to use Misawa as a long-range bomber

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base never materialized. It was used as a training and aeronautical research and development base. They used Lake Ogawara to train seaplane pilots and had a Kamikaze Corps stationed here, planning to land aircraft at American bases in the Pacific and conduct sabotage and demolition attacks. Carrier-based American F4Us attacked Misawa AB in July and August 1945 and destroyed more than 90 percent of the base. After the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, the base demobilized and the workers and military personnel dispersed across the region.



Just one month later the first American troops arrived at Misawa under the command of Captain Davis K. Stark, commander of the 32nd Army Engineering Construction Group. These troops secured the base and prepared it for the arrival of the 49th Fighter Group and its F-51 aircraft in 1948. The newly designated 49th Fighter Wing moved to Korea during the Korean War and returned to Misawa in 1953. The United States Air Force

(USAF) Security Service assigned the 1st Radio Squadron Mobile) to Misawa in January 1953, the first of several communications units on the base.

Over the next 21 years, eight different units acted as host unit on Misawa AB. A fire destroyed 434 buildings in Misawa City in 1966 and a major earthquake damaged both the city and the base in 1968. These events brought both communities closer together and led to increased cooperation.

Downsizing caused PACAF to leave Misawa in 1972 and the USAF Security Service's 6920th Air

Base Squadron (later Group) assumed host responsibilities. The U.S. Navy activated the Naval Security Group Misawa, here in July 1971 making it the oldest continuous American unit on Misawa (currently designated the Navy



Captain Davis K. Stark (below left) commanded the 32nd Army Engineering Construction Group "Wildcats," the first U.S. unit on Misawa, 1945. Note the Japanese bomber in the background.

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Information Operations Command Misawa). In 1978, the 6112th Air Base Group’s activation marked the return of PACAF units to Misawa.

In July 1984, the 432d Tactical Fighter Wing became the host unit and remained as host until the 35th Fighter Wing activated on October 1, 1994.

Current tenant units include the Naval Air Facility Misawa; elements of the US Navy’s Commander, Task Force 72/57, U.S. Navy Information Operations Command Misawa; the 373d Intelligence Group, the U.S. Army’s 403d Military Intelligence Detachment, and the US Army’s Joint Tactical Ground Station.

Activation of the 35th

The history of the 35th Fighter Wing began when the United States Army Air Corps established the 35th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) at Moffett Field, California on 22 Dec 1939. Flying out of Moffett and Hamilton Fields, the group trained pilots in P-35, P-36 and P-40 aircraft. On December 5, 1941, the 35th sailed for Manila onboard the USS President Johnson to join two of its squadrons in defense of the Philippines. However, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor two days later, the ship turned around and returned to San Francisco. While awaiting further orders, the group continued pilot training and flew patrols along the California coast.

World War II

On January 12, 1942, the group boarded the USS President Polk en route to Australia. After a short stint in India, the group, redesignated as the 35th Fighter Group (FG) in May 1942, returned to Australia and took control of three new fighter squadrons: the 39th, 40th, and 41st. The group received P-400 aircraft, an export version of the P-39 Airacobra, for their deployment to Port Moresby, New Guinea. The P-400’s slow climb rate and insufficient speed at high altitude frustrated 35th pilots. Lieutenant Frank Atkins, after a 20 May 1942 mission, commented in his combat diary, “Could have done better with a truck; it’s more maneuverable and will go higher.”

As one of only two fighter groups charged with halting Japan’s advance, pilots worked with what they had. Armed with a 20-mm cannon, two .50 caliber machine guns mounted in the fuselage, and four .30 caliber guns in the wings, the P-400 proved a deadly weapon in the hands

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of skilled Airman. The aircraft’s armament also made it ideally suited for strafing targets in support of the Australian Army’s push across the Owen Stanley Mountains.



39th Fighter Squadron



40th Fighter Squadron



41st Fighter Squadron

The group’s 39th Fighter Squadron (FS) became the first unit in the Pacific to fly the P-38 Lightning. The first aerial victory with this new fighter came in a most unusual fashion. On November 25, 1942, the 39 FS set out on a mission over Lae, New Guinea. With the new P-38s overhead, the Japanese aircraft stationed there hesitated to get airborne, so each Lightning carried two 500-pound bombs to attack the airfield. One of the pilots, Captain Robert Faurot, spied a Zero attempting to take off and dove down to attack. Midway through his dive, Faurot realized he still had the bombs attached so he jettisoned them and began a climbing turn to set up on the Zero as it cleared the runway. He looked back in time to see his bombs impact water off the end of the runway and the Zero fly through the resulting waterspout causing the aircraft to wing over and crash. At an impromptu ceremony later that day, General George C. Kenney, Fifth Air Force commander, presented Faurot the Air Medal...but advised, “I want you to shoot them down, not splash water on them”.



A 35th Fighter Group pilot posed by his Bell P-39 “Airacobra” on Berry Field, Port Moresby, New Guinea in 1943. Nose art was common place in WWII without the strict guidelines that regulated the painting of aircraft.

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Faurot and many others in the squadron, including two of the best-known aces of the Pacific Theater, heeded that advice. On December 27, 1942, the 39th scored its first real success in the P-38 downing 13 enemy aircraft in one battle. Of that number, two belonged to a young Second Lieutenant, Richard I. Bong, who was on temporary duty with the squadron; two others belonged to Captain Thomas J. Lynch. Bong went on to score another 38 victories (five with the 39 FS) to become America’s leading ace. The Bong Theater at Misawa was named in his honor. Captain Lynch scored another 18 before he was killed during a strafing mission.

The 40th and 41st Fighter Squadrons retained their P400s sprinkled with a mix of newer P-39 models. Despite the fact it took these aircraft 15 minutes to climb to 20,000 feet, they still wreaked havoc on enemy aircraft scoring over 90 kills by the end of 1943. In the final month of 1943, the entire 35 FG transitioned to the P-47 Thunderbolt for the final push across the island of New Guinea and eventually into the Western Pacific. From these new bases the pilots flew long-range missions against airfields in the Philippines in preparation for an invasion. In September 1944, the group moved to the island of Morotai, where it protected the invasion fleet’s southern flank.

In March 1945, the group once again switched aircraft, this time to the P-51 Mustang. Two months after receiving their new aircraft, the group moved from the Philippines to a newly captured airfield on Okinawa, Japan. Once there, they found the shortage of airborne foes presented sparse opportunities to add to their aerial victory scores. As a result, they made a request to General Kenney not to send any additional fighter groups for fear it might further reduce those opportunities. Despite the paucity of targets, they found a way.

On July 30, 1945, Captain Lee Grosshuesch led a flight of four Mustangs into a secluded harbor that, unbeknownst to the young Captain, held the Japanese naval base of Goto Retto. Upon entering the harbor, the flight spied two destroyers steaming across the entrance. Carrying no bombs they set out to strafe the two ships, hoping to inflict some damage. Captain Grosshuesch aimed at the water line of one ship and opened fire. To his surprise, the destroyer went up in flames. In his words, “I had sunk the destroyer, but my poor P-51 was so riddled with shrapnel and debris from the explosion that it had to be scrapped. I don’t know what happened to the other destroyer, but it must have been severely damaged by the huge explosion so close to it.”

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The 35th Fighter Group’s final aerial victory came on October 31, 1945 when 2nd Lt. Albert M. Wiget, 39 FS, shot down his second aircraft that day. Through the efforts of Airmen like Albert Wiget, the 35th compiled an impressive record fighting in 11 campaigns throughout the Pacific. During those campaigns, the group downed a total of 394 enemy aircraft, produced 20 aces, and destroyed countless numbers of barges, trucks and aircraft on strafing runs.

Post-World War II

The 35 FG remained in Okinawa, Japan for a month following the September 2, 1945 surrender ceremony on board the USS Missouri. In October, the group moved to Irumagawa Airdrome, later renamed Johnson Air Base, Japan, for occupation duty. As relations with Japan warmed and the Cold War began, occupation duty gave way to an air defense mission to protect Japan from communist invasion.

The United States Air Force became a separate and equal service on September 18, 1947. One month earlier, the 35th Fighter Wing (FW) activated under the 314th Air Division in preparation for the move to this new service. As the numerically aligned successor to the 35 FG, the 35 FW carries the bestowed honors of the group’s history and honors.

The following year the new wing added the F-61 Black Widow and a squadron of F-82 Twin Mustangs to its inventory of F-51 Mustangs.

The newly redesignated 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing (FIW) transitioned into the jet age in April 1950 when it moved to Yokota Air Base under Fifth Air Force and traded in its Mustangs for F-80 Shooting Stars. Two months later, the 35th again met the call to arms.

Korean War

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces streamed across the border in a surprise attack against South Korea. Far East Air Forces became involved in the conflict two days later by evacuating civilians from Kimpo and Suwon Airfields. When North Korean aircraft appeared over the fields, 35th pilots met them. Maj. James Little in his F-82 downed an LA-7 later recognized as the third aerial victory of the conflict.

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The 35th Fighter Wing initially flew F-80s (foreground) in Korea; however, the Air Force pressed F-51 Mustangs (background) back into service to take advantage of their added range and loiter time.

America’s first operational jet fighter, the F-80, surpassed its propeller-driven predecessors in most measures. However, those early improvements came at a cost in range and loiter time. As a result, the Air Force brought many of the venerable F-51s out of retirement and pressed them back into service. Because of their recent experience with the Mustang, several members of the wing helped establish a training center at Itazuke AB, Japan, for South Korean aviators. Known as “Bout One,” this small unit of Korean pilots flew their first training mission on June 28 and their first combat missions the following day. That same experience led to the wing’s retrograde to the older Mustang. By July 16, the 40 FS completed its conversion and moved forward to Pohang AB, South Korea. Equipped with only 20 aircraft, the squadron averaged 34 sorties each day in a herculean effort to hold the Pusan perimeter. On July 23, the aircraft carrier USS Boxer steamed into Tokyo with 145 additional F-51s, allowing the 40th to reach its full complement of 25. From this delivery the 39th managed to assemble enough aircraft to follow its sister squadron to Pohang on August 7. From there both squadrons and the operations group focused their efforts on halting the North’s advance down the eastern coast of the peninsula. When possible they provided close air support to ground forces, but the majority of missions were armed reconnaissance focused on interdicting the reinforcements and supplies streaming south.

As the Pusan perimeter continued to shrink, the position at Pohang was fast becoming untenable. Sortie rates soared as aircraft dropped ordnance within sight of the personnel who helped launch them. Maintenance personnel worked on the aircraft by day and defended the base from guerilla attack by night. With the situation worsening the group and both squadrons withdrew to Tsuiki AB, Japan, where they continued combat operations over Korea.

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On September 15, 1950, United Nations forces flanked the North Korean offensive with an amphibious assault on Inchon. With their supply and reinforcement routes cut, the frontline communist units began to withdraw from the Pusan line. With the tables turned, the allies pushed north allowing the 39 FS to return to Pohang on October 3rd. The 40 FS and the operations group followed four days later. The offensive soon drove the communist forces across the 38th parallel and eventually back towards the Yalu River.

On November 16, the wing's aircraft began moving forward by landing at Yonpo Airdrome just south of the port city of Hungnam on the Sea of Japan following missions flown out of Pohang. The last personnel arrived on December 1, 1950 and joined the 77th Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force, already attached to the wing. While at Yonpo, the 35th saw action in one of the fiercest battles of the war, the battle for the Chosin Reservoir.

Two days after Thanksgiving the Chinese Communist Forces intervened on behalf of North Korea and launched a surprise offensive against United Nations' troops. Soon the Tenth Corps found themselves in the legendary battle to break out of the Chosin Reservoir. With Yonpo located immediately south of the escape route, the 35 FIW provided close air support for their Army and Marine Corps brethren on the ground. Again the wing's position became untenable and Fifth Air Force ordered its withdraw on December 3, 1950.

From its new home at Pusan AB in South Korea the 35th continued to rain destruction on the Chinese Communist Forces as they pushed south below the 38th parallel. In February 1951 alone, the wing's aircraft expended 12 tons of bombs, 3,400 five inch rockets, 144,000 gallons of napalm, and 639,000 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. This firepower inflicted massive destruction on the enemy, destroying or damaging an estimated 1,700 buildings, 127 vehicles, 15 tanks, 21 pack animals, 17 bridges, 36 artillery pieces and 1,300 communist troops.

Eventually UN forces managed to halt the communists' advance and by April 1951 pushed them back north of the 38th parallel where the battle lines solidified for the remainder of the war. With the disposition of the war changing and additional forces arriving in theater, America's focus broadened towards ensuring the safety of its allies. Accordingly, the 35 FIW's wartime involvement came to an end, leaving behind the 39 FS which went on to become one of the

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leading MiG killing units of the Korean War.

Post-Korean War

On May 25, 1951, the wing returned to Johnson AB where it again assumed responsibility for the air defense of central Japan. To accomplish this mission, the wing used a wide variety of aircraft and often dispersed them throughout the region. The 339th Fighter Squadron, collocated with the wing, operated the F-80 Shooting Star, but its primary operational platform was the F-94 *Starfire*. A heavily modified version of the F-80, the F-94 served as America’s first all-weather jet interceptor. The 40th Fighter Squadron, stationed at Misawa AB until July 1951, continued with the F-51 Mustang until 1953 when it again transitioned to jets with the F-80 and F-86 Sabre. The 41st Fighter Squadron likewise upgraded to Sabres in 1953, having operated the F-80 since 1950. Additionally, an assortment of reconnaissance aircraft made it into the wing, including the RF-51, RF-80, RC-45 and RT-7. All of these aircraft found themselves detached from Johnson AB periodically to ensure a response force could meet any potential threat to Japan.

On October 1, 1954, the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing moved to Yokota AB, after relinquishing control of the 339 FS in June. At Yokota, it continued to support the air defense mission. In August 1956, the 41 FS moved to Andersen AB, Guam. Still attached to the 35th, it left only one operational squadron in Japan, an indication of things to come. By July 1957 the 35 FIW existed only on paper with no personnel or equipment assigned. Accordingly the wing inactivated on October 1 after almost 15 years of service and two wars in the Pacific. However, such a distinguished unit did not remain inactive.

Vietnam War

In 1966 another war in the Pacific Theater pressed the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) back into service when it activated on March 14 at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam. The 64th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron operated F-102 Delta Daggers whose primary mission protected South Vietnam from the unlikely event of an air raid by the North. Two squadrons of F-4C Phantoms, the 390th and 480th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, also joined the wing.

The latter squadrons soon added the 35th to the short list of wings with aerial victories in three

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wars. On April 26, 1966, Maj. Paul Gilmore and 1stLt William Smith of the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron destroyed a MiG-21 in aerial combat, the first such aircraft shot down during Vietnam. The 390th followed a month later by downing a MiG-17, and the 480th destroyed two more MiG-21s in July. These four would be the 35 TFW’s only air-to-air kills of the war as its mission once again changed to a purely air-to-ground focus.

On October 10, 1966, the wing moved to **Phan Rang AB**, South Vietnam, leaving the F-4C and F-102 units at Da Nang. At Phan Rang the 35 TFW oversaw an odd assortment of aircraft. The B-57s of the 8th and 13th Tactical Bombardment Squadrons moved to the new base where Mk-20 Canberras, close cousins to the B-57, from the Royal Australian Air Force’s Number Two Squadron joined them the following year. Together they focused on what was often referred to as “night intruder” missions that interdicted supply routes from the North.



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Once at Phan Rang the wing acquired four squadrons of F-100 Super Sabres: the 352nd, 612th, 614th, and 615th Tactical Fighter Squadrons. A fifth squadron, the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron, joined the others in April 1968 following the USS Pueblo incident. The temporary deployment of this squadron freed an F-4 squadron elsewhere for a show-of-force deployment to the Korean Peninsula. These *Super Sabre* units provided close air support to ground units in South Vietnam as well as performing interdiction work over Cambodia’s Parrot’s Beak and the Laotian panhandle.

In September 1970, the 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron switched to the A-37 *Dragonfly* and became the 8th Special Operations Squadron. With the focus turning toward Vietnamization of the war, the 8th trained South Vietnamese airmen in the A-37. On July 31, 1971, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing again inactivated, having added another 13 campaign streamers and a Presidential Unit Citation to its organizational flag.

Stateside

The 35 TFW returned to its birthplace of California and its first stateside assignment since World War II when it activated at George AFB on October 1, 1971. The wing initially activated with four squadrons: the 434th Tactical Fighter Squadron, the 4435th Tactical Fighter Replacement Squadron, and the 4435th and 4452nd Combat Crew Training Squadrons. The wing’s mission initially involved replacement training for aircrews and maintenance personnel.



A 35th Avionics Maintenance Squadron Airman inspects an F-4 Radome on the flight line at George AFB, California in 1975.

In July 1973, the 35th’s history became intertwined with the Wild Weasel mission. Because of George AFB’s proximity to the range facilities of Nellis AFB, the Air Force relocated the F-105G fleet from McConnell AFB, Kansas, to the California desert. The 561st Tactical Fighter Squadron arrived on July 1 and was followed by the 562nd and 563rd Tactical Fighter Squadrons over the next two years. Together they formed the Air Force’s F-105G and F-4C Wild Weasel schoolhouse with the

former serving as the operational unit and the latter two serving as training units. In April 1978, the first

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F-4G Wild Weasel rolled off the assembly line and arrived at George AFB. The 35 TFW spearheaded the testing and training needed for the eventual Air Force-wide conversion to the newest version of the Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) hunter.

In March of 1981, a second wing, the 37 TFW, activated at George AFB and assumed responsibility for fulfilling the Wild Weasel mission. For the next eight years, the 35 TFW returned to training F-4 aircrew and maintainers. In 1989, the 37th moved to Tonopah Test Range, Nevada, to take over F-117 operations. This move placed the Wild Weasel training and operations back under the 35 TFW who would play a significant role in the nation’s next conflict.



The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing flew the Republic F-105G *Thunderchief* in Wild Weasel operations while stationed at George AFB, California, from 1973 to 1989. The *Thunderchief* became known affectionately as the “Thud” for the sound it made when hitting the ground upon landing.

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Together, 28 nations formed a coalition determined to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein’s regime. In the early morning hours of January 17, 1991, the military forces of this coalition launched a massive air campaign, pummeling Iraq with more combat sorties in the first day than Iraq faced during its entire eight-year war with neighboring Iran.

When the air armada assembled for the initial push into Iraq, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional) was ready, having deployed to Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain. In a cleverly designed attack, 37 drone aircraft entered Iraqi airspace as decoys for the main strike packages. The drones also acted as a catalyst, causing Iraq’s air defenses to engage the supposed attackers. This provided a target rich environment for the 28 F-4G Wild Weasels that preceded the initial

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wave of fighter-bombers into target areas. Another 41 Wild Weasels flew escort missions later that day, launching a combined total of 123 AGM-88 High Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) and effectively punching holes in Iraq’s integrated air defense system.

By war’s end, the 35 TFW(P) flew 3,072 sorties, amassed 10,318 hours, launched 918 AGM-88 missiles, and destroyed or suppressed 254 radar sites, effectively shutting down the entire Iraqi air defense network as remaining sites shut down in self-preservation. Of the 37 allied aircraft lost in combat during the war, Iraqi radar guided SAMs only claimed five. Of those, four lacked Wild Weasel protection.

Just as their predecessors did in three previous conflicts, the warrior mindset of the wing’s men and women guaranteed success. As one story goes, severe weather at Shaikh Isa delayed the departure of a flight of F-4Gs charged with protecting an F-16 strike package destined for a particularly unpleasant part of Iraq. When the Weasels finally received clearance, they were behind schedule and the strike package proceeded without them. Determined to protect their fellow Airmen, the F-4G crews lit their afterburners and overtook the strike package en route to the target. The mission succeeded, but it came with a cost. The high-speed dash used more fuel than originally planned and one of the aircraft failed to rendezvous with a tanker after withdrawing from Iraq. The F-4 crew ejected over Saudi Arabia and the F-16 pilots returned safely to their bases.



Avionics specialists from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional) work on an F-4G radar in the South Loop area of Shaikh Isa AB, Bahrain during Operation Desert Shield, November 1990. The wing flew 3,072 combat missions and launched 905 missiles at Iraqi air defense sites during Operation Desert Storm.

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After the Storm

The Gulf War became a bittersweet victory for the Weasels as they returned home to shrinking defense budgets. Since the F4Gs were the last version of the Phantom in the active inventory, the Air Force determined it was no longer financially feasible to keep this relatively small fleet operational. Even the legendary Weasel lair of George AFB faced closure. Redesignated as part of the objective wing reorganization in October 1991, the 35th Fighter Wing began downsizing in preparation for base closure and officially inactivated on December 15, 1992.

In an effort to protect its legacy, the Air Force instituted a heritage scoring system to ensure units with distinguished histories remained active. Out of more than 200 units, the 35th ranked third, ensuring its place among active units (currently ranked second). As a result, the Air Force activated the 35th Wing at Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland, on May 31, 1993, flying air defense missions in the F-15C Eagle. Sixteen months later the 35th Wing inactivated at Keflavik and activated the same day at Misawa Air Base, Japan, as the 35th Fighter Wing. At Misawa AB, the wing resumed its long association with “Wild Weasel” operations. After achieving initial operational capability on F-16CJ aircraft in 1996, the 13th and 14th Fighter Squadrons deployed 12 times in support of operations SOUTHERN and NORTHERN WATCH in Southwest Asia. The wing’s final deployment brought an end to both of these operations.

Iraqi Freedom

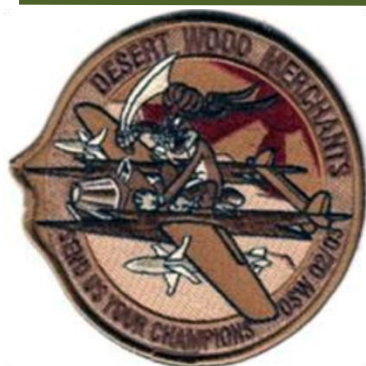
On December 2, 2002, the 35 FW’s 14th Fighter Squadron “Fightin’ Samurai” deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, for OSW. Originally scheduled to return home in March 2003, the squadron remained in-place due to increased pressure on Iraq to comply with UN sanctions. When Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began on March 20, 2003, the 14th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron (EFS) flew the first nonstealth missions over Baghdad. During the remainder of the deployment, the 14 EFS logged 238 sorties and 1,336 flying hours mainly in SEAD (suppression of enemy air defense) and DEAD (destruction of enemy air defense) missions. The Samurai employed all of the air-to-ground ordnance in their inventory, including the AGM-65 Maverick, AGM-88 HARM, GPS guided bomb and cluster munitions, and their 20-millimeter cannon.

The 35 FW deployed again in support of OIF in 2007, this time in a close-air support role. The

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two squadrons flew a combined total of 2,765 combat sorties and personnel received a total of seven bronze stars, a Distinguished Flying Cross, and the MacKay Trophy for the Air Force’s Most Meritorious Flight of 2007.

Conclusion

Nearly seventy years have passed since the 35th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) commenced operations at Moffett Field, California. This distinguished heritage reveals that time after time, Airmen of the 35th stood ready to “**Attack to Defend**” and answered the call to arms with courage and honor.

Lineage

Established as 35th Fighter Wing on 10 Aug 1948. Activated on 18 Aug 1948. Redesignated 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing on 20 Jan 1950. Inactivated on 1 Oct 1957. Redesignated 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, and activated on 14 Mar 1966. Organized on 8 Apr 1966. Inactivated on 31 Jul 1971. Activated on 1 Oct 1971. Redesignated: 35th Tactical Training Wing on 1 Jul 1984; 35th Tactical Fighter Wing on 5 Oct 1989; 35th Fighter Wing on 1 Oct 1991. Inactivated on 15 Dec 1992. Redesignated 35th Wing on 9 Apr 1993. Activated on 31 May 1993. Inactivated on 1 Oct 1994. Redesignated 35th Fighter Wing, and activated, on 1 Oct 1994.

Assignments

314th Air Division, 18 Aug 1948; Fifth Air Force, 1 Mar 1950; 314th Air Division, 25 May 1951; Japan Air Defense Force, 1 Mar 1952; Fifth Air Force, 1 Sep 1954; 41st Air Division, 1 Mar 1955–1 Oct 1957 (attached to 6102d Air Base Wing, 1 Jul–1 Oct 1957). Pacific Air Forces, 14 Mar 1966; Seventh Air Force, 8 Apr 1966–31 Jul 1971. Twelfth Air Force, 1 Oct 1971; Tactical Training, George, 1 Oct 1977; 831st Air Division, 1 Dec 1980; Twelfth Air Force, 31 Mar 1991–15 Dec 1992. First Air Force 31 May 1993; Eighth Air Force, 1 Oct 1993–1 Oct 1994. Fifth Air Force, 1 Oct 1994-present.

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Stations

Johnson AB, Japan, 18 Aug 1948; Yokota AB, Japan, 1 Apr 1950; Johnson AB, Japan, 14 Aug 1950; Yonpo, North Korea, 1 Dec 1950; Pusan AB, South Korea, c. 7 Dec 1950; Johnson AB, Japan, 25 May 1951; Yokota AB, Japan, 1 Oct 1954–1 Oct 1957. Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, 8 Apr 1966; **Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam, 10 Oct 1966–31 Jul 1971.** George AFB, CA, 1 Oct 1971–15 Dec 1992. Keflavik NAS, Iceland, 31 May 1993–1 Oct 1994. Misawa AB, Japan, 1 Oct 1994-present.

Commanders

Col Edgar M. Scattergood, Jr., 18 Aug 1948; Col Ray W. Clifton, 7 Sep 1948; Col William O. Moore, 3 Feb 1949; Col Lawrence C. Coddington, 22 Aug 1949; Col Robert W. Witty, 1 Apr 1950; Col Virgil L. Zoller, 10 May 1950; Col Thomas B. Hall, 14 Aug 1950; Col Frederic C. Gray, 1 Dec 1950; Col Brooks A. Lawhon, 18 Feb 1951; Col Strother B. Hardwick, Jr., 25 May 1951; Col William A. Schulgen, 28 May 1951; Col Jack S. Jenkins, 19 Jan 1952; Col Thomas J. Barrett, 7 Jun 1952; Col Richard S. Morrison, 19 Jun 1954; Col Fred D. Stevers, 1 Oct 1954; Col Eugene B. Fletcher, 31 Jul 1955; Col James E. Johnston, 15–30 Jun 1957; unkn, 1 Jul–1 Oct 1957. None (not manned), 14 Mar–7 Apr 1966; Col Franklin H. Scott, 8 Apr 1966; Col Allan P. Rankin, 10 May 1966; **Col George S. Weart, 10 Oct 1966; Col James A. Wilson, 1 Mar 1967; Col Herndon F. Williams, 1 Feb 1968; Col Frank L. Gailer, Jr., 23 Sep 1968; Brig Gen Walter Galligan, 9 Aug 1969; Col Walter C. Turnier, 10 Jun 1970; Col Cregg P. Nolan, Jr., 1 Jan 1970. 31 Jul 1971. Col Fred A. Treyz, 1 Oct 1971; Col William J. Holton, 20 Jul 1972; Col Charles R. Beaver, 24 Aug 1973; Col Richard A. Haggren, 11 Jul 1975; Brig Gen Robert W. Clement, 2 Feb 1976; Brig Gen Cecil D. Crabb, 9 Aug 1976 (additional duty, 1–20 Oct 1977); Col Dudley J. Foster, 21 Oct 1977; Col Rolland W. Moore, Jr., 22 Dec 1978; Col James D. Terry, 17 Jan 1980; Col Gary F. Fredricks, 8 Jan 1982; Col Needham B. Jones, 6 Feb 1984; Col Thomas R. Griffith, 31 Aug 1984; Col E. James Hardenbrook, 28 Aug 1986; Col George K. Muellner, 1 Jul 1988; Col Russell A. Everts, 15 Aug 1989; Col Merrill R. Karp, 8 Jun 1990; Col Robert T. Osterthaler, 25 Sep 1990; Col Merrill R. Karp, 23 Mar 1991; Col Michael D. Anthony, 30 Jun–15 Dec 1992; Col Thomas L. Allen, 21 May 1993; Col Branford J. McAllister, 11 Aug 1993; Col Richard B. Cross, Jr., 27 Jul 1994; Maj Gen George W. Norwood, 1 Oct 1994; Brig Gen Paul V. Hester, 9 Nov 1995; Brig Gen Bruce A. Wright, 14 Feb 1997; Brig Gen Stephen G. Wood, 13 Nov**

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1998; Brig Gen Loyd S. Utterback,

30 May 2000; Brig Gen Dana T. Atkins, 19 Jul 2002; Brig Gen William J. Rew, 15 Apr 2004; Brig Gen Salvatore A. Angelella, 26 Aug 2005; Col Terrence J. O’Shaughnessy, 17 Jan 2007-25 Aug 2008; Col David R. Stilwell, 25 Aug 2008 - present.

Aircraft

Principally F-51, 1948-1950, 1950-1951, 1951-1953; F-61, 1949-1950; F-80, 1949-1950, 1951-1954; F-82, 1949-1950; F-94, 1951-1954; F-86, 1952-1953, 1953-1957, but also included F-86, 1951; RF-80, 1950, 1951-1952, 1953-1954; RF-51, 1952-1953; RC-45, 1952-1954; and RT-7, 1952-1953. Principally F-4, 1966; F-100, 1966-1971; and B-57, 1966-1969; but also included F-102, 1966; MK-20 (Canberra), 1967-1971; and A-37, 1970-1971. F-4, 1971-1992; F-105, 1973-1980. F-15, 1993-1994. F-16, 1994-present.

Emblem

Azure, a dexter cubit arm palewise Or grasping a dagger with point to base Gules, all within a diminished bordure of the second. Motto: **ATTACK TO DEFEND**. Approved for 35th Group on 24 Mar 1941 and for 35th Wing on 16 Dec 1953.

Phan Rang Reaction Force Aids Bien Hoa Policemen

Phan Rang AB - A quick mobile reaction force of 25 members of the 45th Security Police Sq. was rushed from Phan Rang AB to Bien Hoa AB recently to aid Bien Hoa security Policemen in repelling a fierce enemy attack.

The reaction orce was mobilized at Phan Rang, boarded the aircraft, made the 160-mile flight and were ready for duty at Bien Hoa in just over two hours.

The 35th SPS operations officer, Capt. **John Samuel**, said the 25 men were under enemy fire for three nights at Bien Hoa, and were credited with killing several infiltrators as they assisted Bien Hoa security policemen in clearing the base of enemy troops.

Samuel said **William W. Momyer**, Seventh AF commander, expressed his personal appreciation

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for the quick response of the Phan Rang security policemen. After eight days at Bien Hoa the reaction force returned to Phan Rang and was greeted on the flightline by Col. **Herndon F. Williams**, 35th TFW commander. He told the men that their combat experience would come in handy in case Phan Rang were ever subjected to an enemy attack.

The reaction force was composed of members of the Panther Flight, whose mission consists of defending the perimeters, aircraft and personnel of Phan Rang against night attacks by the enemy.

A second mobile reaction force of the 35th SPS recently returned to Phan Rang after completing three weeks of duty at Bien Hoa.

The 33 enlisted men in the reaction force came under mortar attack and small arms fire while aiding security forces at Bien Hoa. (*Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 1966)

Michael Morgan Amateur philosopher and optimistic cynic reflecting on his Vietnam experience



Michael Morgan wrote on Facebook: "*It Was the Best of Times; It Was the Worst of Times*". It would be my pleasure and honor to do it all over again. I celebrated my 21st birthday in country. Life slapped me in the face and I think in the long run made me a better person. My home sweet home was a Quonset hut. The chow hall was at least ¼ mile from my front door. The avionics shop was a little further, it was a

leisurely walk and I only had to jump one ditch to get to work. I got a lot of cardio while I was there. I thought that the shuttle bus was too slow. We bunked in sort of a rural area. If memory serves me right, we had a softball field, a picnic table, a field covered in brush, the bomb dump, some more brush and then the road to the beach behind us. If you turned left, on that road, the next stop was Cam Rhan Bay. Oh, I forgot about the 105-howitzer located not far from us. It was loud. The good news was that we had very little supervision. The NCO club was even farther away. I was an E3 and sometimes found myself running the radio shop at night all alone. I wonder why. I think it had something to do with the NCO club. Any way when I rotated back to

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the world I landed at Randolph AFB. Shortly after my arrival I was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for my meritorious service while stationed in Vietnam & promoted to E4. Michael A. Morgan, Aircraft Radio Repairman, 14th FMS, Phan Rang AB, Vietnam 29 November 1969 / 29 November 1970. **I must have done something right.**



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. Remember if your stories are not written down and published, they will disappear over time. 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, dougsevert@cox.net and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.