

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 243

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HEAVEN-SENT

WAR WARRIORS - B-57 CANBERRA

One of the most widely used workhorses in the Korean War was the Douglas B-26 Invader. Its effectiveness on night intruder missions was outstanding and its alignment with Marine Corps Vought F4Y-5N Corsairs and Grumman F7F-3N Tigercats produced some of the highest number of kills against locomotives and trucks.

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But, the USAF knew that its Invader force was not going to remain effective in post-Korea world that was destined to be dominated by jets. The British already had an answer to the problem with their English Electric Canberra which entered service with the RAF in May 1951. Its capability was noticed by the USAF as they had already issued a preliminary request for a similar light bomber that would be very fast with a service ceiling of 40,000 ft. (12,200m).

On February 21, 1951, Canberra B2WD932 became the first-ever jet to make a non-stop unrefueled flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Its purpose was to be put through a thorough evaluation by the USAF against the Martin XB-51. The head-to-head test took place on February 26, 1951 and the Canberra came out the clear winner.

Although its tri-jet XB-51 did not get the contract, the Glenn L. Martin Company was still a victor-being awarded license construction of the English Electric type, which received the designation B-57. The first B-57-MA flew from Baltimore, Maryland, on July 20 1953. Initially, few changes were made although the crew was reduced from three down to two and the bomb-bay doors were replaced with a low-drag rotating door. By the time the B-57B came along, with its tandem, fighter-like cockpit, it was beginning to look very different.

From the point of view of the US Military, the B-57 was **‘heaven sent’**, but strictly as a stop-gap move. Something better would come along.

FLEDGLING WAR

When President John F. Kennedy took office in January 1961, the situation in South Vietnam was just starting to heat up and with very little coverage by the media, the US Public was unaware of the North’s intentions. At first, the US sent advisors to train the South’s military forces, but it didn’t take long to realize that American troops on the ground, with ample air support were needed to put down the insurgency.

Two of the earliest units to respond to this were the famous 8th and 13th Bomb Squadron - “The Liberty Squadron” and the ‘Grim Reapers’ respectively. Their lineage dated back to 1917 with heavy service in World War Two and Korea. They had turned in their B-26s in late 1937 to convert to the new B-57.

The 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron was scheduled to be deactivated from frontline service, but then the famous Gulf of Tonkin incident of August 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo-boats and USS Navy vessels clashed, changed everything.

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The first B-57 unit to deploy from Japan to Clark Air Base in the Philippines was the 13th TBS on April 9, 1964. Eight days later, the 8th TBS arrived at Clark and both operated under command of the 405th Fighter Wing. Once settled in, the training regimen using conventional weapons tactics was intense.

At 16:30 hours on August 5, 1964, the alarm call came in for both squadrons of B-57Bs to prepare for immediate deployment to South Vietnam. They left quickly for Bien Hoa, but there was some delay due to awful weather conditions. Upon arrival of their support crews, ordinance and equipment, the B-57s were ready for action in a few days.

They were not the first of type in theatre. A year earlier, two RB-57Es had come to South Vietnam under Project PATRICIA LYNN to provide infrared coverage of enemy movements at night for a brief period. However, the 8th and 13th were destined to be the first B-57s units to be engaged in shooting or bombing in the fledgling war. It would still be seven months before they embarked on actual bombing missions.

Tragedy struck on October 31 1964 when the Viet Cong (VC) executed a well-planned strike against the Bien Hoa. A mortar attack centered on the B-57 flight line was uncanny in its accuracy: five Canberras were totally destroyed and several others were damaged. After this incident B-57s flew low level reconnaissance missions over suspected VC territory to act as a deterrent.

'IRON' BOMBER

By this time the USAF had ruled the B-57 as obsolete for its original mission — nuclear weapon delivery. But the situation in Vietnam demanded a fast high-flyer that would be able to carry a heavy load of 'iron bombs' and loiter over a target for lengthy periods of time without having to refuel. Counter insurgency tactics required accurate dive-bombing and strafing while being slow enough to work easily with airborne forward air controllers. The B-57 easily met all of these requirements and found new life in South East Asia.

Captain Bill Madison had great respect and affection for the B-57 and was a high-timer over enemy territory during his lengthy tour in Vietnam:

"We called it the '**Cranberry**' and it was a joy to fly with a 65ft wingspan and cord of nearly 30ft, it could make very short radius turns. It held 3,000 gallons of fuel with wing tip tanks which gave us range and loiter time over any target, and we always carried a wide variety of ordnance.

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"The Canberra had a rotor-type bomb door that when closed was an upside-down bomb rack. The door could hold 21 260lb 'fin' bombs or 12 250lb GPs. (Fragmentation and general purpose, respectively.) Or, we could come in with nine 500 or four 1,000 GPs. The four external pylons under the wings could hold anything up to the large cluster bombs.

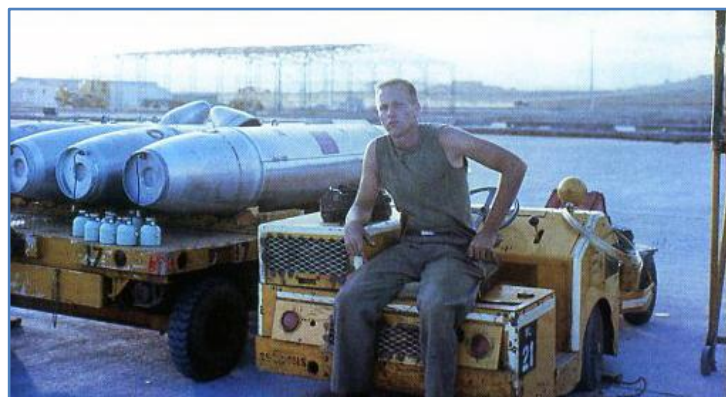
“Outside of the wing bomb racks were two rails that could be loaded with rocket pods that carried either seven or 19 2-3/4in rockets. It could carry the larger 5in rockets also, but during my tour, I didn’t see any of them.

“We didn’t have self-sealing fuel tanks, instead we carried nitrogen that would be gently blown into the empty tanks, greatly reducing the risk of fire should we have taken hits from ground fire.

“The aircraft was well known for its accuracy and dive-bombing capabilities. This meant that we stayed down low on many of the missions which put us well within range of enemy ground fire, but, on the other hand, we could easily cruise up above 40,000ft. One day on a test hop, I took one up to 54,500ft and that was about the maximum!”

BOMBER DEBUT

The arrival of the two full squadrons was probably monitored closely by the VC, but it did not deter them from continuing their aggressive tactics at night. After a long wait to get into combat, the bombers finally lined up, to hit targets on February 19, 1965. Thus, the B-57 became the first US jet bomber to drop live ordnance in combat.



A1C James Holenfeider, an ordnance loading specialist, waiting to load napalm canisters on a B-57B for the upcoming mission into Laos from its base at Phan Rang in 1967.

On February 18, 1965, the ground crews worked throughout the night loading all of the bombers with 750lb (340kg) bombs on the pylons under the wings and the bomb bays were filled with 500-pounders. The guns, located in the wings, were loaded with 20mm high explosive rounds or 0.50 calibre (depending on the model).

Although the target for the first mission was only about 50 miles (80km) away, **the crew chiefs knew**

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everything had to be perfect.

Major Frank R 'Smash' Chandler, of the 13th TBS, was one of the most experienced B-57 navigators in theatre during this period. He and his pilot Major 'Nails' Nelson (the Squadron CO) took the first B-57 on the type's debut combat mission on that day:

"On February 19th, near the small Vietnamese village of Bien Gia, which is 45 miles east of Saigon, our lone Canberra rolled into a dive and dropped two 7501b bombs into the thick green jungle canopy below. Our bombs fell squarely on the smoke grenades that had been dropped seconds before by a forward air controller [FAC].

"Our intelligence indicated it was a major VC command post and communications centre. We sure struck a nerve with the bombs because there was a huge secondary explosion that followed producing a dirty grey mushroom cloud."

Smash's B-57 was not the only one to strike that area on the 19th as both the 8th and 1th Squadrons flew another 15 sorties, with many of their bombs causing secondary explosions. Every one of their bomb runs were controlled by a FAC.

They had found a large ammunition dump. When the dust settled, troops entered the area and determined that it was almost totally destroyed. What was left of the VC had pulled completely out.

Smash continues: "The Canberra provided a somewhat unexpected bonus in its potential because it carried two crew members. The navigator-bombardier was able to keep the FAC in sight, with the target area, direct the rest of the flight and call off instrument readings to his pilot during the bomb run. He could also compute corrections and call out check list items to assure that cockpit configuration was correct for each type of attack.

"This crew co-ordination allowed the pilot to keep his head in the gunsight and concentrate on flying the aircraft during a bombing or strafing run. This two-man concept gave the B-57's pinpoint accuracy and the FAC's soon became avid boosters of the 'A-1 Skyraider of the jet set'. For a while, our aircrews averaged two missions a day per man, following their initial strikes."

AMMO DUMP RAID

On March 2, 1965, the 8th was tasked with hitting a major ammo depot up around Xom Bang from its main base at Bien Hoa. In this case, the bombers hit in flights of four in ten-minute

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intervals. This gave the smoke a chance to clear before the next flight and if an FAC was directing the strike, each group could be more effective.

Captain George B. Rose was an experienced navigator who had already flown a tour in B-26s, attacking movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He related the details of this particular mission:

"Our target was in North Vietnam and it was a huge focal point for distributing ammunition to VC forces working in the south. The mission would consist of five flights of four B-57s and we would be arriving over the target at intervals. My pilot was Captain James Lewis.

"We were loaded with four external 7501b GPs and nine 5001b GPs internally. Since we were known as very effective strafers, we had 2,400 rounds of 20mm for our four wing guns.

"When we went to mission briefing, we were told that this target area was defended by up to 160 triple-A positions! [Anti-aircraft artillery.] We were also told that fighter-bomber types would be working suppression ahead of us, so many of these guns would be knocked out... at least we hoped that was the case!

"Our flight [Delta' Flight, flying in the No.4 position] launched at approximately 15:20 local time and flew direct to Da Nang at normal cruise altitude and once we reached that area, we descended down to about 200ft for our run to Xom Bang which was about 17 miles north of the DMZ [de-militarized zone].

"...we discovered that we had a jagged two-inch hole that had come up between the pilot and navigator positions."

"When we were in a position adjacent to the target, we popped up to our perch altitude and dove down on the ammo depot, releasing all external and internal bomb loads in train.

"The intervals between flights had not been long enough as we were given a specific aiming point in the ammo bunker complex, but there was so much smoke and so many explosions going on from the flak suppression aircraft and the three flights of B-57s before us that we could not see our aiming point, so we released our bombs into the billowing smoke and secondary explosions.

At that time, we immediately hit the deck again and proceeded to our exit point from North Vietnam, then climbed back to altitude for the flight back to Bien Hoa. Upon arrival back at

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base, we discovered that we had a jagged two-inch hole that had come up, between the pilot and navigator positions. It probably got us as we pulled out.

"All 20 B-57s made it back safely, with two of them landing at Da Nang because of low fuel." Intelligence related to the aircrews, based on bomb damage assessment, was that the target had been 95% destroyed. This was attributed to a well-planned and executed mission. The only down side of it was that three of the flak suppression aircraft (NA F-100 Super Sabres and Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs) had been lost.

DOOM PUSSY

Of all the missions that George flew in the war, this was the only daytime example, as the rest were night missions working with flare ships over roads that carried heavy vehicular traffic. Some of these involved the DOOM PUSSY Or BLIND BAT missions that originated from Da Nang and ranged into North Vietnam.

During the B-57's tenure in Vietnam, they were operated effectively from four major air bases; Bien Hoa, Da Nang, Tan Son Nhut and finally **Phan Rang**. At Da Nang, there was a tradition that involved a carved figure of a cat and it was positioned on the back of the bar at the officer's club. When B-57 crews launched for night missions over North Vietnam, the cat was positioned to face the wall and when they safely returned, it was turned forward.

This was in the Da Nang Officers' Open Mess (or DOOM) hence the code-name DOOM PUSSY. There was a special emblem made up and worn by all the aircrews who flew these missions.

BLAST FURNACE

Due to the speed that the B-57 could achieve in a dive, it was easy to misjudge the release point, and some of the bombs were either slightly short or long, but most were dead centre. That was on daytime missions, but the B-57 did a lot of night work that became legendary while teamed with a flare-ship and a Marine Douglas EF-10B Skyknight electronic jammer.

One remarkable mission was written up in Tan Son Nhut base newspaper in February 1966. B-57 pilot Captain C. E. Farley of the 13th's 'Grim Reapers' remembers:



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"It was about 2am and our flareship was up ahead of us dropping flares along one of the main roads in the hope of lighting up some truck traffic. Intelligence had reported that the convoys were heavy in that area and we wanted to have a go at them.

"The first two flares didn't show any trucks, but on the third one we were over a river and I noticed a lot of enemy troops in the water and they appeared to be working on a submersible bridge that was far enough below the surface that it wouldn't be noticed from the air. What aroused my suspicion was the water was clear above that point and very muddy below it.

'About that time, there was a barrage of tracer fire heading up toward us so there must have been something down there that they didn't want us to see. Our first bomb run put a 500-pound GP into the trees next to the river and all of a sudden we got a huge secondary explosion that shot flames almost as high as we were.

"We made several more bomb runs and strafing passes and each time, we ignited more explosions. It was like hitting a target during the middle of the day, the flames were so bright. We expended all of our ordnance and by this time, a second B-57 had arrived on the scene, so we departed the area en route to our base."

The story did not end there because the second B-57 pilot stated that it was like peering into the middle of a blast furnace and he figured that there were no targets left. As he circled the area, tracers suddenly started coming up from the edges of the flames.

They immediately began dive bombing and each of their bombs triggered more secondaries. This went on until their weaponry was used up and the pilot radioed to scramble the alert B-57s that were loaded and ready to go.

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One of two B-57s kept on ‘Alert’ at all times. If they were scrambled, two more would take their place. Photo by John M. DeCillo.

When the attack was over, the FAC confirmed that 19 trucks had been destroyed and that the bombs had caused at least 25 secondary explosions and at least one square mile of the terrain had been totally destroyed. It had been one of the luckiest and most successful of the night intruder missions flown by the B-57s.

PATHFINDERS

Until the electronic countermeasures Douglas EB-66 Destroyer made its appearance in South East Asia, the USAF and Navy depended on Marine Corps' EF-10Bs to escort the fighter-Bombers into North Vietnam.

By taking advantage of the EB-66's capabilities, the B-57Bs could strike key targets at night and during the day when the ground was covered by heavy clouds. These were referred to as Pathfinder Missions and they proved to be very successful.

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Most of them were flown at night or just at sunset often along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and in the mountain passes of Laos and North Vietnam. The F-105 'Thuds' were also used in these and they were equally effective.

One of the more experienced of the pilots was Captain Bill Madison who had developed his skills as a gunnery instructor in NA F-86 Sabres right out of pilot training. He explains the, Pathfinder Missions that were flown out of Da Nang with the Canberras:

"The B-57 was, by far, the best gunnery and dive bombing platform I ever flew and believe it or not, with a light fuel load it would outperform the F-86 in an aerial rat race!

"As far as the Pathfinder concept went, we usually did them at night or in bad weather or on days of low visibility when we could not get below the cloud layer to get a visual on our target. On a typical Pathfinder mission, we would brief on the target area which included the join-up point with our EB-66.

"Once we hooked up, we moved into a diamond formation with our EB-66 in the lead. As we headed toward the target, we would hold an altitude of about 24,000ft." "We had a 'tattletale' beeper and flashing light box that came on during radar or surface-to-air missile [SAM] detection and our escort would shut the threat down. About two minutes out, we would get a call to arm.

At that time, we would rotate our bomb doors open and arm our entire bomb load. We had a time-release mechanism to schedule bomb separation and 150ft was a good setting. I have to admit many of our pilots, with a fast thumb, did not use the installed release timer.

"As we pulled up to leave, we saw a Douglas AC-47 gunship arrive over the smoking column and we watched as it leveled everything on both sides of the road."

"After the release, the EB-66, using its great jamming capabilities against SAMs and radar, would lead us to a safe area where we would part company and return to our respective bases. On one occasion, one of our B-57 pilots elected to turn and go back the same way we came in to the target area rather than continue over North Vietnam. A SAM got him in less than two minutes after he broke away from the shield of protection provided by the Pathfinder."

"One night while we were out there bouncing around on the wings of a Pathfinder inside of the very low visibility clouds there was a lightning strike that lit the sky around us, and one of the B-

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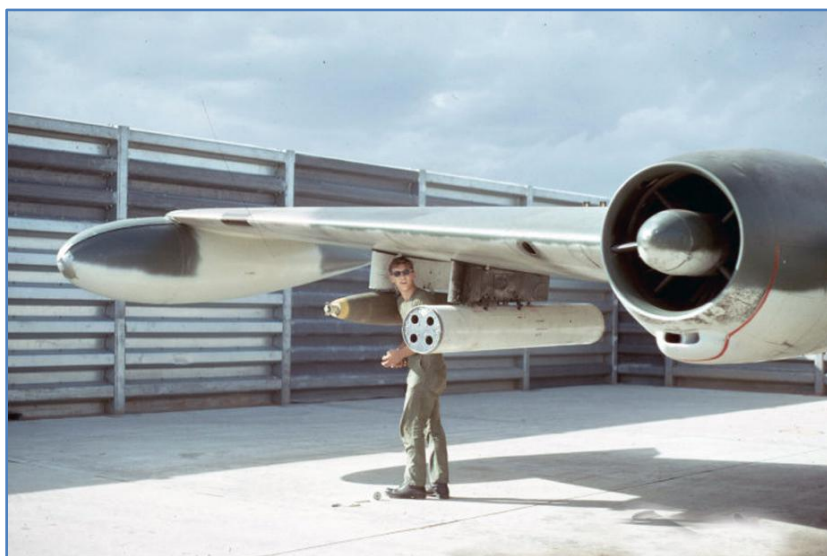
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57 navigators got on the radio and said: 'Did you see the bottom of the lead aircraft? It looks like a comb!' Of course he was talking about all the antennae from our ECM E13-66 that was keeping us out of harm's way."

'HARD' AND 'FUNNY' BOMBS

On some of the daytime search and destroy missions, the B-57s were loaded with four 500lb 'hard' bombs and four 'funny' bombs. The GPs were used to cut the road, the other ordnance was used to destroy the stranded road traffic.



C.N. “Chuck” Morris standing under the B-57 wing next to 20mm gun with 500lb low drag and flare pods. Night mission intruder “Funny” incendiary bomb in the bomb bay. Photo by John M. DeCillo.

The 'funnies' were designated M62s and each carried 900 1b Thermite bomblets. The primer cord would open the bomb up like a clam shell at about 1,000ft above the ground and they would disperse out over an area roughly the size of a soccer field. Major Ernie Carlton, a pilot in the 8th TBS, flew these types of missions:

"We were vectored north of Dong Ha to hit some North Vietnamese Army trucks coming down the coastal highway at night. The mission was pretty routine as we 'walked' our four GPs across the road, blocking it both ways.

"As we leveled out to climb up for the 'funny' bomb run all hell broke loose. The 35mm flak looked like blanket of red at their burst altitude of 12,000ft. I often wondered how they got by us without us taking some hits!

"At this point, we immediately decided to drop all four of the M62s in one pass. This meant coming in at a smaller angle to the road, but it reduced our total exposure time to the flak than

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if we had made two normal passes. We made the drop and hit at least four of the trucks while rolling out on a heading for Nakhom Phanom (NKP). The reason for this was we had spent more time in the area than anticipated, which put us too low on fuel to get back to Phan Rang."

"The sun was just coming up when we took off from NKP. I put a gun powder starter in the nose of each engine with two large puffs of black smoke; we started back toward our base, leveling off at 28,000ft. Suddenly, we heard a frantic call on the guard channel and it was in Vietnamese.



Two large puffs of smoke, from the gun powder starter cartridges placed in the nose of each engine.

"We were just passing over a small base in the central highlands [Pleiku]. We called down to see if we could help as we still had all of our 20mm rounds. We learned that a South Vietnamese truck column had been ambushed and the lead one was on fire.

"They were awaiting the arrival of gunship, but they were in dire straits, so we rolled over and went down to help. It was the only strafing run I ever made that started at 28,000ft as we skimmed down over the trees still firing on one side of the road. After climbing and making a quick 180-degree turn, we went down the other side of the column and shredded a lot of trees as we expended the remainder of our ammo.

-"As we pulled up to leave, we saw [Douglas] AC-47 gunship arrive over the smoking column and we watched as it leveled everything on both sides of the road. We never heard any more

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on the incident, but it had been a night and it had just been another average day for a B-57 aircrew."

SURVIVING EARLY SERIES B-57S

52-1426	RB-57A Yankee Air Museum, Detroit, Michigan
52-1446	RB-57A Glenn L Martin Museum, Baltimore, Maryland
52-1459	RB-57A Wings of Eagles Discovery Centre, Elmira, New York
52-1467	RB-57A Glenn L Martin Museum, Baltimore, Maryland
52-1475	RB-57A Warner Robins as '52-1457'
52-1480	RB-57A Air National Guard, Topeka, Kansas
52-1482	RB-57A Lackland AFB, Texas
52-1485	RB-57A Selfridge Military Museum
52-1488	RB-57A New England Air Museum
52-1492	RB-57A Heritage Museum, Hill AF
52-1499	EB-57B National Museum of the USAF, Dayton, Ohio
52-1500	EB-57B Air National Guard, Burlington, Vermont
52-1504	EB-57B Linear Air Park, Dyess AFB, Texas
52-1505	EB-57B Malmstrom AFB, Montana
52-1509	EB-57B Laughlin AFB, Texas
52-1516	EB-57B USAF Armament Museum, Eglin AFB, Florida
52-1519	EB-57B March Museum, March ARB, California.
52-1526	EB-57B Museum of the Kansas National Guard, Topeka, Kansas
52-1548	EB-57B South Dakota Air and Space Museum, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota
52-1551	EB-57B Smithsonian Institution, Washington-Dulles Airport.

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52-1584	B-57B Kalamazoo Air Zoo, Kalamazoo, Michigan
53-3841	B-57C Little Rock AFB, Arkansas
53-3846	B-57C Pakistan Air Force Museum, Karachi, Pakistan
53-3957	B-57B Pakistan Air Force Museum, Karachi, Pakistan
55-4244	B-57E Strategic Air and Space Museum, Ashland, Nebraska
55-4253	Castle Air Museum, Atwater, California
55-4274	B-57E Pima Air Museum, Tucson, Arizona
55-4279	EB-57E Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado
55-4293	EB-57E Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum, Denver, Colorado
N809NA	RB-57B Air Force Flight. Test Center Museum, Edwards AFB, California (52-1576)
Notes: A further 12 USAF examples are stored at AMARC, Arizona: EB-57Bs 52-1506, 52-1511, 52-1521, 52-1545, 52-1564 and B-57Es 55-4238, 55-5285. The following B-57Bs are known to be held at Masroor Air Base in Pakistan: 53-3947, 53-3949, 53-3952, 53-3956 and at least three others. Serial numbers maked in RED were previously stationed at Phan Rang AB.	

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(Additional reading about the B-57 see Phan Rang Newsletter 5 *“Famous 8th TBS in Fourth War”*; Newsletter 10 *“First B-57 Jets Reach Japan”*; Newsletter 16 *“Canberra Truck Killers Form Centurion Club - Eligibility Requirement: Destroy 100 Vehicles”*; Newsletter 102 *“Remembering Col. Donald Paxton and Maj. Charles Macko of the 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron”*; Newsletter 115 *“The Doom Pussy”*; Newsletter 135 *“Doom Pussy Facts, Legend & Myths”*; Newsletter 145 *“Sad Day for the 8th by Jack Anderson”*; Newsletter 166 *“The Bummers Sage Continues - 8th and 13th Da Nang and Phan Rang Air Bases, Vietnam by John DeCillo”*; Newsletter 197 *“Chronological Order of Phan Rang AB Air Losses”*; Newsletter 227 *“Aircraft of Phan Rang AB, RVN”* and many more as this is only a fraction of the stories available in the Phan Rang Newsletters because the 8th and 13th TBS were an integral part of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing and their achievement are woven throughout the history of that organization.)

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“IT WAS PART OF THE BARGAIN WE ALL MADE, THE REASON WE WERE ALL WILLING TO DIE FOR ONE ANOTHER. AS LONG AS I HAVE MEMORY, I WILL THINK OF THEM ALL, EVERY DAY!”



Romancing the “Hun”

A legendary aircraft from which heroes were made

by Julie Summers Walker

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It is 1968 and I am 10 years old. My beautiful cousin, Cynthia Gay, has brought home yet another handsome young man in uniform, on his way to Vietnam. He is such a romantic figure; I cannot take my eyes off him or keep from holding his hand. Years later the memory of that young man stays with me. There is, as they say, just something about a man in uniform.



Illustration by Melanie Judd, photography by Mike Fizer

100, the Hun, the aircraft that challenged a select generation of young men and made them heroes in a time when heroes were hard to find.

Touched with fire

"DAD WAS A FIGHTER PILOT. I

remember seeing a photograph of my mom with Dad. I'd never seen her look like that—like she had caught something very special. I teased her about it, and she laughed and said that's exactly how she felt about marrying Dad."

Mike Fizer's father, Bob, grew up in Staten Island, New York. He was a scrappy kid who enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after high school on March 9, 1951, and said that after that day "I never worked a day in my life." He and his wife, Barbara—whom he met on a blind date—hailed their three kids around the world as he lived his life as a fighter pilot. Bob Fizer flew nearly 4,000 hours in his career, 3,000 of those in the F-

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In September 2021, members of the Super Sabre Society gathered in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for the final flight in the only operational F-100, a restored F-100F Super Sabre belonging to pilot Dean "Cutter" Cutshall. The 63-year-old aircraft would take men who risked their lives flying the first supersonic fighter jet for one last flight. The wiry young men in white T-shirts and regulation pants who climbed over that aircraft are now old men with bent backs and sloping shoulders. Their skin hangs heavy off well-worn faces, yet their eyes are bright and their enthusiasm contagious. I once heard a man say his mind thinks he's 40 while his body knows it's 92.



Left: Bob Fizer and his wife, Barbara Jean Ellison (couple on right), on a date in the early 1950s.

Center: Dean Custshalol takes his friends for flights in his restored F-100F at Super Sabre Society events, this one in Fort Wayne, Indiana. **Right:** The distinctive wide intake scoop on the F-100; Bob Fizer said he always looked forward to “that kick in the ass’ from the afterburner during the Tex offensive in 1968.

From military schools to those who enlisted immediately after high school graduation, the young men who piloted the North American F-100 Super Sabre were—for lack of the word to describe the impossible—brave.

According to Defense Media Network, from May 1968 to April 1969 alone, Air National Guard Super Sabres flew more than 38,000 combat hours and more than 24,000 sorties. Over the lifetime of its service, 889 F-100 aircraft were destroyed in accidents, involving the deaths of 324 pilots. The deadliest year for F-100 accidents was 1958; 116 aircraft were destroyed, and 47 pilots were killed.

To revere such a killer seems ironic. But here on the ramp at Fort Wayne, these former pilots are remembering their first flights in the F-100, and their remembrances are with respect,

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honor, and affection.

John C. Morrissey, who flew the F-100 in 1962 and who took a flight with Cutshall in September, quoted Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.: **"We have shared the incommunicable experience of war, we have felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top. In our youth our hearts were touched with fire."**

Morrissey held back tears as he recounted his flight. "I figured I had one more burner light in me before I go to fighter pilot heaven. To smell the jet fuel; to hear the afterburner; to feel the sensations again. It was like a symphony of a way of life—a life like no other. If I got to do it over, I'd consider myself blessed."

On April 16, 1961, six Super Sabres deployed from Clark Air Base in the Philippines to Don Muang Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand, the first F-100s to enter combat in Southeast Asia. In 1965, the United States began expanding the number of F-100 squadrons in the conflict area. Most of those F-100s were painted a green-brown color scheme known as T.O.114 camouflage, the T.O. for a technical order. Developed as an air-to-air fighter with great capability—including a redesign of the tail after the crash that killed Welch—the F-100 was affectionately called the Hun.

Don Shepperd said he dreamed of being an F-100 pilot after seeing the aircraft as a U.S. Air Force Academy cadet. He flew the Hun in Vietnam and was a member of the Mistys, an elite group of F-100 pilots who flew some of the most dangerous missions during the conflict. Top secret, the missions involved low-level flying to seek out targets in flights lasting four to six hours with in-flight tanker refueling three times.

The Hun was the first U.S. Air Force fighter used for electronic warfare in the "Wild Weasel I" program, which used the F-100F in missions to seek and destroy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites. One of the most dangerous missions was the Misty operations; the two-seat F-100F flew low along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. "Misty" was the radio callsign used by the F-100F Fast Forward Air Controllers (Fast FACs). There were 157 pilots officially assigned to fly missions over North Vietnam from June 15, 1967, to May 19, 1970, according to Shepperd. "We were shot at all the time. We lost an airplane every fourth mission, and then we'd try to find them [the pilot]. said

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Shepperd.

The last F-100 left Vietnam in 1971, after nearly eight years of combat. The F-100s were the longest serving U.S. jet fighter-bomber in the Vietnam War. Shepperd became a writer and CNN correspondent, and co-wrote *Bury Us Upside Down*, a book about his time in Vietnam. "It was a dumb-ass war; we went in for the right reasons, but war is not that simple," he said. He writes, he says, to "remember the people we lost, the things we did, the things we were required to do."

Farm boys

Most of the young men who signed up were "farm boys," Reither said. "They were clever guys, but most were just high school graduates....But everyone wanted to fly that jet, to go supersonic."

The F-100 was tricky to fly. The pitch angle made it seem like you had a rocket at your back and the tail was too small, Reither said. "They always put a too-small tail on the prototypes," he said. But the Air Force built 171 of those test models, and 128 crashed. The boys just came off the farm and flew supersonic. It was like being the quarterback on the football team. They couldn't write good sentence, but if they took you, they'd train you."

Win Reither flew 292 combat missions in the F-100 in Vietnam. On May 3, 1968, he was flying to Bien Hoa near Saigon behind U.S. Air Force academy graduate Jim Martin who was moving fast in his F-100. Reither tried to keep up. He soon realized Martin's aircraft was hard hit, having sustained damage from an engagement with a hostile North Vietnamese Army unit with semi-automatic and small arms fire.

"Somewhere in the mission Jim got hit pretty bad and started streaming fuel and we headed to the nearest base," Reither remembered. "Afterward, I learned that Jim was losing fuel fast and, as he understood the complexity of the F-100, he turned off the AC generator so the fuel transfer would slow, and he wouldn't run out of fuel. His airplane had a lot of holes in it and he was lucky to get on the ground. I finally caught up with him and was happy to see him land successfully. I was the awards and decorations officer for the squadron; I decided to put the flight in for a Distinguished Flying Cross."

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In hindsight more than 50 years later, Reither says he wishes he'd put Martin up for five DFC medals and had better thanked his operations officer. "We wrote mission reports like it was just another day, and we got up and flew another mission the next day."

Last flight



The Super Sabre Society was formed in 2006 to preserve the memory of the men who flew the Hun in Vietnam. Cutshall, purchased 63948, the F-100F, in 1996 with the help of his Crew Chief Paul Swick and Engine Technician Jim "Prez" Prezbindowski, both who have many years of experience with the Hun. Cutshall initially paid \$250,000 for the F-100, then "after two years and \$700,000, old 948 looked and performed as if it was just rolled out of the factor," Cutshall said. Swick and Prezbindowski, along with their friends from the 122nd Fighter Wing, worked many hours restoring the aircraft. For the past 25 years, Cutshall and crew have shown off the airplane at airshows around the country and offered rides to former pilots and crew of the Hun.

Reither says Cutshall has said each year this would be the last flight. "I guess we'll see," he said.

The fighter pilot

The younger Fizer's conversations are always peppered with stories about his father, the Hun,

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and the family's various postings across the world. "These guys knew what they were doing was dangerous, but they still wanted to go. They were committed; they were warriors with integrity and courage. It's an ancient story—as long as there is war and there are soldiers."

He uses words like "bravery" and "courage" when he talks of the fighter pilots, who he has met over the years, first as a child and then later attending Super Sabre events like the one in September. This time, however, without his father. Bob Fizer and his friends and fellow pilots are aging, their bravery and feats flying some of the most difficult aircraft in the most challenging circumstances retreating to memories and the history books.

"First of all, let me make this clear: "We were not heroes but rather we were just ordinary men in extraordinary circumstances", said retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Chuck Boyd, an F-105 fighter pilot and seven-year POW who became a four-star general. "The fighter pilots I have known are, by and large, a fiercely individualistic breed of men. There is not a fighter pilot worth his salt who would not prefer to fly alone in a single-seat aircraft, relying totally on his singular skills than to work as a part of a committee on any multi-seated air machine.

"And so, it should not seem surprising that this breed of men would be as well-equipped as anyone to cope with isolation. The enemy captors thought they could divide and conquer; that without collective leadership we would not be able to maintain our resistance and resolve. But they did not reckon with the individual integrity of the American fighter pilot. In this world of changing values where the individual dignity of man seems to be eroding in the society, I think you would do well to remember the example set by men who refused to compromise their individuality."



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SPEC SHEET

North American F-100D Super Sabre

SPECIFICATIONS

Powerplant / Pratt & Whitney
J57-P-21/21A afterburning turbojet
engine,

(10,200 lb thrust dry, 16,000 lb with
afterburner)

Crew / 1

Length / 50 ft

Height / 16 ft 2.75 in

Wingspan / 38 ft 9 in

Wing area / 400 sq ft

Wing loading / 72.11b/sq ft

Empty weight / 21,000 lb

Max takeoff weight / 34,832 lb

PERFORMANCE

Rate of climb / 22,400 fpm

Max speed / 924 mph/M 1.4

Range / 1,995 mi

Service ceiling / 50,000 ft

ARMAMENT

Guns / 4. 20 mm (0.787 in) M3941
revolver cannon each

with 200 rounds per gun

Missiles /4. AIM-9 Sidewinder or 2x

AGM-12 Bullpup or or 4x LAU-3/A

2.75

in (70 mm) unguided rocket dispenser

Bombs / Conventional bombs or Mark

7, Mk 28, Mk 38,

or Mk 43 nuclear bombs



(Romancing the Hun was used with permission of the
AOPA and the author, Julie Walker.)

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Sgt. **William R. Wise**, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Wise, 785 Boughton, Ogden, is now at Phan Rang Air Base in Vietnam, the headquarters of the Air Force rehabilitation center for Southeast Asia. But he won't be there too much longer. After four years in the Air Force and a year in Vietnam, he's coming home next month— Feb. 23, to be exact. He realizes he's

changed during his months overseas. **So he's already sent his parents, relatives and neighbors this "solemn warning:"**

1. Very soon Sgt. William Wise will once again be in your midst, de-Americanized, demoralized and dehydrated, ready once more to take his place as a human being with freedom and justice for all, and engage in life, liberty and the somewhat delayed pursuit of happiness.
2. In making your preparations to welcome him back into respectable society, you must make allowances for the crude environment in which he has suffered for the last 12 months. In a word, he may be somewhat Asiatic; suffering from advanced stages of Viet Congitis or too much Ba Muoi Ba beer.
3. Therefore: Show no alarm if he prefers to squat rather than to sit on a chair, pads around in sandals and a towel, slyly offers to sell cigarettes to the postman and picks suspiciously at his food as if you were trying to poison him. Don't be surprised if he answers all questions with "I hate this place" or "Number One." Be tolerant when he tries to buy everything at less than the asking price and accuses the grocer of being a thief, and refuses to enter the establishment that doesn't have steel mesh over the doors and windows.
4. Any of the following sights should be avoided, since they will produce an advanced state of

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shock: People dancing, television and "ROUND EYED WOMEN."

5. In relatively short time his profanity will decrease enough to permit him to associate with mixed groups, and soon he will be speaking English as well as he ever did. He may also complain about sleeping in a room, and refuse to go to bed without a mosquito net.

6. Make no flattering remarks about Southeast Asia, avoid the mention of overseas duty and seasonal weather, and, above all, ask before mentioning the food delicacies such as "Flies." The mere mention of these particular subjects may trigger off an awesome display of violence.

7. For the first few months before he gets housebroken, be especially watchful when he is in the company of women, particularly young and beautiful specimens. The few American girls he may have seen since he arrived overseas were either under 13 years old or married to personnel who outranked him, therefore his reaction upon meeting an attractive "ROUND-EYE" may be to stare, if you're lucky. Wives and/or sweethearts are advised to take advantage of this momentary shock and move the young lady out of his reach.

8. Keep in mind that beneath his tanned and rugged exterior there beats a heart of gold. Treasure this for it is the only thing of value he has left. Treat him with kindness, tolerance and an occasional fifth of good whisky, and you will be able to rehabilitate the hollow shell of the man you once knew.

9. Send no more mail to the above named individual after the 18th of February for he is leaving the Tropics in five days and heading for the land of the "Big PX."

10. Future address will be

Mr. W. R. Wise

785 Boughton Street

Ogden, Utah 84403

(Ogden Standard Examiner, January 26, 1970, Ogden, Utah.)

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Antonio Salazar Given Duty at March Air Base

Airman First Class **Antonio Salazar**, USAF, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bruno Salazar, 11049 De Garmo Ave., Pacoima, arrived for duty at March Air Force Base. Airman Salazar, a jet engine mechanic, is assigned to a unit of the Strategic Air Command. He previously served at Phan Rang AB Vietnam. The airman is a graduate of San Fernando High School. (*Van Nuys Valley news and Green Sheet, July 24, 1969, Van Nuys, California. Additional*

reading material on Antonio ‘Tony’ Salazar is in Phan Rang Newsletters 7, 23, 49 and 73.)



Tony and Mary Salazar attended the very first Phan Rang Reunion in 2012 and we will always remember and miss them and never forget “Tony the Tiger”.

Bockelmann in Viet

Airman Second Class **Bruce W. Bockelmann**, son of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Bockelmann 39 E. Road, High Falls, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Airman Bockelmann, a weapons mechanic, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces which provides air power to maintain the U. S. defense posture in the Pacific and conducts air operations in Southeast Asia. The Airman is a 1965 graduate of Kingston High School. (*Kingston Daily Freeman, July 27, 1967, Kingston, New York.*)

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In Vietnam

First Lieutenant **Robert D. DeLongchamp**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence DeLongchamp of 637 Carr St., Negaunee, Mich., is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Lieutenant DeLongchamp is a navigator in a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to Kelly AFB, Tex. The lieutenant, a 1962 graduate of Negaunee High School, earned his B. S. degree at Wisconsin State University (Superior) in 1966 where he was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program. He is a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon. His wife, Sylvia, is the (daughter of Mrs. Esther Diaz, 225 S. San. Pedro, Las Cruces. (*Las Cruces Sun News, September 9, 1969, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Additional reading material on R. Dean DeLongchamp (proud ‘Youper’) can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters 162, 165, 196, 216, 217, 225 and 241.*)

Military Men in The News

Sgt. **Larry J. Proffitt**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul N. Proffitt of Midway, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sergeant Proffitt, a jet engine mechanic, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Vietnam he was assigned to Chanute AFB, Ill. The sergeant, a 1964 graduate of Sophia High School, attended the University of Illinois. His wife is the former Linda L. Shaw. (*Beckley Post Herald, June 6, 1968, Beckley, West Virginia. Additional reading material on Larry Proffitt can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters 203 and 218.*)

In Service

JENKINS IN VIETNAM

Sgt. **Jimmie L. Jenkins**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marvin R. Jenkins, 4405 Kevon Dr., is on duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. His wife, Kay, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Andie Phillips, 912 Crescent Dr. Sgt. Jenkins is a munitions specialist with the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia he was assigned to Eglin AFB, Fla. He is graduate of Madison Heights High School and attended Florida State University. (*Anderson Herald Bulletin, January 25, 1969, Anderson, Indiana. Additional reading material on Jimmie Jenkins can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters 89. 90. 91,99, 122 and 216.*)

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NASH OVERSEAS

Airman First Class **Larry J. Nash**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Nash Jr., RR1 Frankton, is on duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam, as a materiel specialist with the Pacific Air Forces. He was assigned at Kirkland Air Force Base, N.M., before arriving in Southeast Asia. He is a graduate of Franklon High School. (*Anderson Herald Bulletin, January 25, 1969, Anderson, Indiana.* Additional reading material on Larry Nash can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 122.)

Roger Phillips Will Marry Arizona Girl

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith, Tucson, Ariz., are announcing the engagement of their daughter, Miss Johnell Smith, to Airman I. C. **Roger D. Phillips**, now on temporary assignment with the 821 Security Police Wing, Phan Rang, Vietnam. Mr. Phillips is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmo Phillips, 220 W. 5th, Konawa. The wedding date will be set when Mr. Phillips returns his base at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson. (*Ada Evening News, May 5, 1968, Ada, Oklahoma.*)

Area Men in Service

WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES Vietnam Sergeant **Juan Rubio**, son of Mrs. Florence Rubio of 402 W. Walker Brady, has received the U.S. Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sergeant Rubio was decorated for meritorious service as jet aircraft mechanic at Phan Rang. He is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. The sergeant is a 1963 graduate of Brady High School. (*Brownwood Bulletin, September 20, 1968, Brownwood, Texas.*)

With U. S. Combat Air Forces, Vietnam—U. S. Air Force Technical Sergeant **Jackie L. Walton**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Walton Jr., 630 Cap-au-Gris St., Troy, Mo., is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. The sergeant, an aircraft mechanic, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, served at Offutt AFB, Neb. Sergeant Walton is a 1961 graduate of Buchanan High School. His wife is the former Jo-Ann A. Morris. (*Troy Free Press and Silex Index, April 23, 1971.*)



PHILLIPS - Army Pfc. **Pat E. Phillip**, 19 son of Samuel I. Phillips of 2117 Sycamore Dr., Simi, and Mrs. Ella M. Higley of Porterville, has been assigned in the 101st Airborne Division in Phan Rang, Vietnam. Phillips is a light weapons infantryman in Company A, 1st Battalion, 327th Regiment, 1st Brigade of the division. (*Oxnard Press Courier, December 21, 1966, Oxnard, California.*)

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Newell Airman Receives Bronze Star in Viet

SAIGON, Vietnam — U. S. Air Force Technical Sgt. **Gerald May**, son of Mrs. Iva May of Grant St., Newell, W. Va., has been decorated with the Bronze Star Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, for meritorious service while engaged in military operations against Viet Cong forces. Sgt. May distinguished himself as an administrative technician; with the 35th Combat Support Group at Phan Rang. The 35th is a unit of the Pacific Air Forces, headquarters for air operations in Southeast Asia, the Far East and the Pacific area. The sergeant attended Newell Wells High School and the University of Maryland European Division. His wife Dorothy, is the daughter of Mrs. Loretta Kiszczak of 612 Florida Ave., Chester W. Va. (*Weirton Daily Times*, August 20, 1970, *Weirton, West Virginia*.)

Phan Rang AB Newsletter Reference Guide

Reference	Edition No.	Article Title
Aircraft Losses	197	Chronological Order of Phan Rang AB Air Losses
Deaths	155	Casualty list for Phan Rang AB Assigned personnel
Attacks	44	Chronology of VC/NVA Attacks on Phan Rang, 1961-1973
Time Line	135	Phan Rang AB Timeline
Aircraft assignments	227	Aircraft of Phan Rang AB, RVN

Doug's Comments:



I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. If you have a story to tell, please write it down and send it 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 unless otherwise stated. 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.