

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 244

In this issue:

Jerry Wilson - My Story

My 367-Day Journey to Vietnam by Colin Benson

Jim Henry Tells His Tale

Farewell My Friend - A Tribute to Herbert Joseph Kaupa

Doug's Comments



JERRY WILSON - MY STORY

My name is Gerald (Jerry) Wilson. I was a Sergeant, USAF (United States Air Force) 1966-1970, and my title was Security Police Specialist.

From 1966-1969 I was stationed at Altus AFB, Oklahoma. I was a Security Police Specialist and worked in the Pass & Identification Office on the base. In Vietnam I was the Liaison Officer and my job was to communicate and plot on a map the locations of the Korean, Australian and American patrols, so they wouldn't be hit by air strikes that were called in by the jungle patrols. In 1965, I graduated from Loveland High School at the age of 18. It was a Government

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The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

requirement to register for the draft if you were a male and 18 years old.

In May of 1966, I was hired by the General Electric Company as a Computer Operator. I thought I was on top of the world, having a good job and earning a decent wage. Then my world was turned upside down when I received my draft notice and date to take a physical exam for the US Army. The Vietnam War had already begun in the early 1960's. The government was escalating the buildup of troops (particularly the Army and Marines) in going to Vietnam. The media and local television networks were very vocal about the escalation of troops for the military. A lot of political unrest and extremely amount of protests were held across America. Lots of turmoil from coast to coast and the late 1960s in the U.S. became a time of youth rebellion, mass gatherings and riots.

There was a very high-profile opposition to the Vietnam War which turned into street protests in an effort to turn U.S. political opinion against the war. The protests gained momentum from the Civil Rights Movement. The opposition to the war contributed to the counterculture youth movement of the 1960s and the war contributed towards youth cynicism towards actions of the government.

My parents were quite aware of this situation. They were in fear as much as I was of me having to join the Army and be sent to Vietnam. There was no doubt as to where I would be going if I went in to the Army. My parents did not want me to make that choice. Their assistance and guidance was to enlist into another branch of the military. I had no choice but to take the physical exam that day.

During the 1960's, you could take the physical exam and still have a choice to select what branch of the service to enlist. My initial and first choice was the Navy. I visited the naval recruiter the same day I took the physical exam. I was disappointed when the recruiter told me that their quota for the month had been filled and that there was not a waiting list that I could be put on.

Fortunately, the USAF Recruiting office was on the same floor as the Navy, so I went next door and talked to the Air Force recruiter. Since I had passed the physical exam all that was required of me, was to pass the selective service exam. I went back the following week to take that

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The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

exam.

After several hours of waiting for the results of the exam, I was told that I had passed. Again, I was disappointed when they told me that I had to wait for the following month to enlist because their quota had also been filled for September.

On October 10th, 1966 I was sworn in to the USAF. We had a few hours to spend with our families before we were immediately loaded on a bus to ride to the Greater Cincinnati Airport to fly to San Antonio, Texas Lakeland AFB to begin (BMTS) the basic military training school. This was a bittersweet moment for me at this stage of my life. I was thrilled about flying on an airplane for the very first time but yet scared in having to leave my family and girlfriend behind for the very first time. I had ten sisters and three brothers and we were very close to each other. I had never spent more than a couple of days away from my family. So this was a very hard adjustment period for me.

My parents were quite relieved when I finished basic training and technical school and would be assigned to the Altus Air Force Base in Altus, Oklahoma. I stayed at this air base from Dec. 1966 thru April of 1969.

I received my orders to Phan Rang AFB, Vietnam in April 1969. I had to report for AZR training once again in San Antonio, Texas for a period of 6 weeks. This was a very intensive combat training while in all kinds of weather elements. The conditions ranged from being very HOT, Humid and at times extremely wet.

These conditions were extreme and very difficult to learn the guerilla warfare and tactical training requirements for ones survival. But learn these requirements I did! I was able to go home for three weeks prior to my departure to Vietnam. I spent this short period of time with my family and fiancée. It was a very tearful goodbye at the airport on the day I left.

I knew several people who were drafted into the Army and Marines. Several classmates from my high school were killed in Vietnam. Most of the friends I knew either went to college or enlisted in the military. I did not have any close friends that tried to get out of going into the military.

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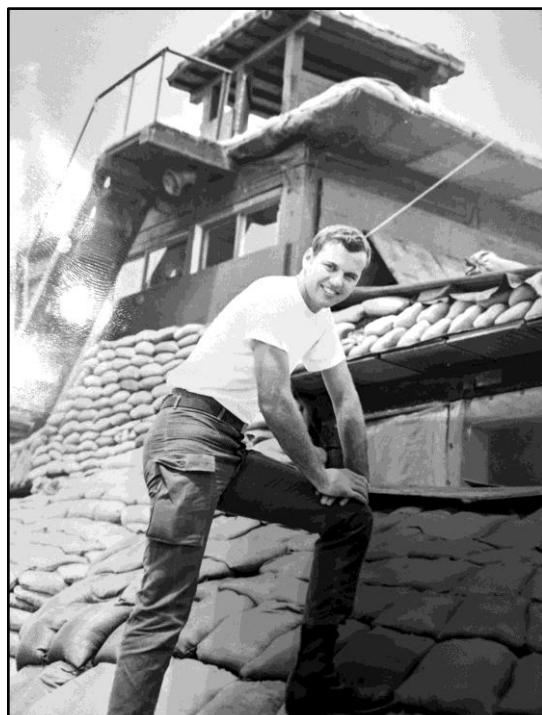
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Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

I had read in the local newspaper at that time that several individuals in the Cincinnati area had evaded the draft and went to Canada. They were soon to be known or labeled as draft dodgers. At the time they were not allowed to come back to the United States to live. The Air Force provided all appropriate military clothing which was camouflaged and light weight. I had to be vaccinated for typhoid, tetanus, malaria, measles, smallpox and diphtheria. My family and close friends naturally did not want me to go but they knew that it was the right thing to do and they were very proud and supportive of me while serving in both the military and Vietnam.

I left for Vietnam on May 26, 1969. I was 21 years old. My thoughts when I left my family for Vietnam were of concern, definitely frightened of the unknown. There were always thoughts of fear and uncertainty.

However, due to my strong Christian faith, belief in GOD and lots of prayers I found the strength and courage to face any obstacles that came along. I received lots of encouragement and support from my family and friends.



Jerry in Vietnam in front of a guard tower.

The military communication about the war was very low key and kept out of the Stars and Stripes newspaper that we read in Vietnam. The war had a major impact on U.S. politics, culture and foreign relations. Americans were deeply divided over the U.S. government's justification for and means of fighting, the war.

At that time, I truly did not understand why we were at war and it didn't make sense to being there at the time. After I got out of the service, immediately following my tour of Vietnam. I was able to comprehend and understand what the war was about and why we were there.

When we first arrived in Vietnam we saw beautiful

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

beaches with white sand and the prettiest blue water that I had ever seen. It was really a beautiful country with the Mountains and ocean so close to each other.

But reality of what lie ahead was the tropical jungle and forest and the many hundreds/thousands of rice patties.

I guess what impacted my memory the most was seeing my first dead Viet Cong. It was not a pretty picture.

I made friends with several Koreans, Australians and other Americans with whom I keep in contact with today.

The worse part of the war for me was being away from my family and fiancée for a whole year. We didn't have computers to email nor cell phones to call home to. Writing letters was our only means of communication, some were few and far between. The best was receiving packages of real food and homemade cookies along with letters filled with love and hope from home.

Being in Vietnam, the military allowed you to take a week of R&R (rest and relaxation) and I chose to go to Hong Kong. I was able to travel there to see the Hong Kong Province and visit the country of China which included seeing the Great Wall.

I left Vietnam on May 26th 1970. I was 22 years old. When I arrived home, I was treated with respect by my family and close friends. However, the public view was entirely different. Protestors were waiting at the airports and bus stations to pounce on the soldiers as they arrived home.

Most soldiers were met with unkind and vulgar words. Large gatherings of people were seen spitting and shouting at them saying that they were baby killers and murderers of innocent men, women and children.

I've often been asked if I would you do it again if requested by the U.S.? Of course my answer would be yes, because I love my country.

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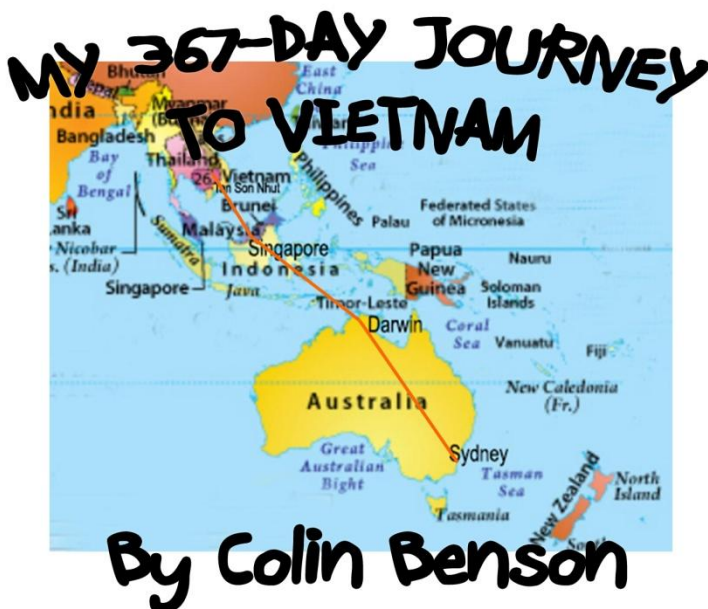
The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 “...keeping the memories alive”

When duty called, we answered. Some were drafted, other’s enlisted. It didn’t matter where we came from and how we got there. None could imagine what waited for us on the other side of the world. More than two million Americans served in Vietnam War.

Together we fought against a relentless enemy in an unforgiving country. Some were wounded, some became prisoners of war, and others paid the ultimate price. **In Vietnam, boys became men, men became warriors, and warriors became Brothers. We built a bond of Brotherhood that will never be broken.**

Thank you for allowing me to share my story. God Bless You and God Bless America.



Colin Benson was a Groundie, one of those blokes who clean the tuning gang plates with a bass broom (tb). Col served with 2 Squadron in Phan Rang from 17 June 1969 to 19 June 1970. He says:

"The start of my 367-day journey to Vietnam from Sydney was via Darwin then Singapore to Tan Son Nhut, on 18-19 June 1969, in a QANTAS B-707 V-Jet. I don't recall walking across the tarmac

at Singapore, but remember that every serviceman aboard (navy, army, air force) changed into a civvy shirt and we walked through the terminal past rope barriers to get to breakfast and return. We changed back into our military shirts (RAAF drab, army khaki) after Singapore, en-route to Saigon. We arrived in Saigon about 0900. As I reached the bottom of the stairs at Tan Son Nhut, my former apprentice course-mate and fellow RADTECHG. Nev Davis, whom I was replacing, was waiting to board. When I asked what it was like, he said, "You'll find out!"

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**



From Sydney to Saigon, I sat beside a young RADTECHA from 19 Radio Apprentice Course who was going to Vung Tau. After Darwin, he had an intimate relationship with his dinner that I have never forgotten. Alan George recalls that even. He later became commissioned and retired as a Group Captain after serving for 39 years! Only recently, I realised, he had graduated only 10 months before being posted to Vietnam. 50 plus years on, we occasionally chat or exchange comments on Facebook.

Throughout the day, at Ton San Nhut, small groups would leave. We weren't given any food during the day and had no money to buy anything if it was available. Some Americans allowed us to have water from their water coolers. The official currency for our use was MPC (Military payment certificate) we'd been told using our Aussie money would have us arrested for black-racketeering. After shifting from side-to-side on our butts and occasionally walking short distances from about 0930 until 1730, those remaining were taken by bus to a USAF C-123 Provider. There was cow manure on the floor, so the bus departed and returned with a sheet of plastic. We were then briefed by an American airman wearing the daggiest fatigues we'd ever seen, "If the hooter sounds while we are taking-off, brace yourselves – we're going-in! If the hooter sounds as we are landing, brace yourselves – we're going-in!" ...a great introduction to the war... being told you're likely to die the first day!

I think officers and warrant officers were told to board and use the seats along the side of the fuselage before the engines were started. As the first engine started, it belched smoke and flames from the exhausts and popped quite loudly. I'm sure several ORs waiting to board soiled their pants! The second engine did the same before they both gained revs. I wasn't concerned as one of my mates, "Shorty" Hodges, had written and told me about these aircraft, and I thanked him! We ORs (I was a corporal; promoted a few months later) were seated on the floor on the plastic covering the cow manure, about five or six abreast with cargo straps as "seat belts". As we rotated on take-off, and we all slid towards the tail, I feared we may change the CoG to the extent that we'd stall... and crash! I'm sure there were more soiled pants!

At cruising altitude of about 1,500 feet, we flew through low clouds and condensation came

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

through the fuselage as a shower of rain and drenched several of us. There was a window missing on the starboard side that let in fresh air – it was a flap just forward of the propeller. As we descended, very steeply, into Vung Tau, all slid forward, I again feared we’d change the CoG such that we’d crash. Upon landing, heavily, on the short, steel runway, we all came forward against the straps as reverse pitch and brakes were applied to stop the aircraft. At Receipt and Dispatch, I saw a familiar face I had known in Darwin, the first person I had known for several days.

I don’t recall having dinner at Vungers that night. I met a few colleagues in the boozier before spending the night in a transit hut at Vung Tau. As a few of us were getting bedding, the WOD told us there was to be a practice attack that night and we were to stay in our room and keep out of trouble! Boy, what is this war with a practice attack, I thought! The following morning, I flew from Vung Tau to Phan Rang in a RAAF Caribou with “Wallaby Airlines”. I had someone to chat with as two TELSTECH from Base Support Flight were going on an end-of-tour jolly to Phan Rang and wherever the Caribou went after that. I was pleased that we arrived in time for lunch. After going to the store to collect a rifle, flak jacket, tin hat and other essentials, I staggered into the COMCEN to introduce myself!

Australia’s defence minister, Malcolm Fraser, was aboard a C-130 that arrived that afternoon. Extraordinarily, it stayed over-night. I was assigned the top bunk opposite Arthur Rennick! At about 0100 hours, I was awakened by the PA system that had more 50Hz hum than audio telling everyone to take cover! “Charlie” was lobbing mortars to welcome Australia’s defence minister! [Someone had told me to always wear my tin hat when going into a bunker! On another night, when running into the bunker, my helmet struck the overhead beam and I landed on my butt!] Once I had settled-in and became familiar with my duties, I found there was a large current flowing along the audio line from the CAT 240 volt generator in the domestic area to the COMCEN PA amplifier. With help from a TELSTECH I worked with (either Steve Abrahamson or John Miller), I made an isolation transformer that eliminated the hum on the PA system in the domestic area.



“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

Later, the Americans gave us a device that activated our PA system and connected audio from their giant PA system on the hill beside 2 Sqn domestic area and over-rode our PA audio. The system was tested each day at 1700 hours and was used as a signal to test our domestic defence system directed by our “new” CO, WGCDR Jack Boast.

On several occasions, as did others, I flew around South Vietnam in C-123s as supernumerary crewman on my day-off. The first of those flights was to Ban Me Thout in the highlands. After the first landing attempt in clouds was aborted, the flight engineer or loadmaster told me to move from sitting on the box of chains to guard against ground-fire to the rear of the aircraft because, “This crazy SOB is going to crash this aircraft, and the only people who survive are in the tail!” We landed on the third attempt, on a sloppy clay runway - a lopped-off mountain top. The tail ramp was lowered and, as we turned at the end of the air-strip, the wing was over the edge. The load of corrugated-iron and other building material was kicked out as an American green beret soldier yelled, “Get out of here, you attract Charlie’s attention!”



Jim Henry
35th FMS

JIM HENRY TELLS HIS TALE

I was born January 5, 1949 in Butler, Missouri, about 60 miles south of Kansas City. I attended school there, graduating from Butler High School in 1967.

I decided to enter the Air Force after graduation. My dad had been in the Army in WW II. My uncle had been in the Air Force in WW II when it was the Army Air Corps. He was a pilot. After the war, he made a career of the military, retiring as a Col. after 26 years. My brother had also

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

served 4 years in the Air Force.

I had worked on farms during my teen years and loved running machinery. I had scored well in mechanical, and decided I wanted a career operating heavy equipment.

In February 1968, I entered the Air Force and went to Lackland AFB for basic training. I remember we went to a large building where we were to put in for the career field we wanted. The sergeant told us that there was a war on, and the mission of the Air Force was to fly planes and drop bombs, and if we scored well in mechanical, we just as well should put in for Munitions and Weapons, because that was what we were going to get anyhow, so that sounded interesting to me and I put in for that.

After basic, I went to Lowry AFB, in Denver where we would either be a 461 Munitions or 462 Weapons. I wound up with the Munitions school.



Jim Henry on a forklift. Photo by Jim Henry.

After graduating tech. school, my first assignment was Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, Nevada. Las Vegas was quite a change for a kid from a town of 3,500 in Missouri. I did enjoy my time there.

While at Nellis, I volunteered for duty in Viet Nam. About the end of April or so, 1969, I got an assignment for NKP in Thailand. I knew some guys that had been there, and they told me about the base and the aircraft there. A few weeks later, I got another assignment to Phan Rang Air Base, RVN. I went and checked at personnel, and they told me the first assignment had been cancelled.

In June 1969, I wound up at Phan Rang. I started my tour on the day shift in the bomb dump. I did that for a while, but I had always enjoyed working nights, so when I had a chance, I switched

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

to nights. My main duties were when I went to work, we would do whatever needed done until the order came down for components for the missions. This would include fuses, igniters for napalm, and various other items. We would load them on a truck, and they would be delivered to the flight line holding area. The rest of the night, trucks would come to the bomb dump and we would load them with bombs. Then along about 4 or 5 A.M., we would take RT forklifts and re-fill the revetments with bombs, fins, and the like for the day crew to build up the bombs.

Also, during this time, I volunteered as a Security Police Augmentee, and spent some nights in towers or small bunkers on the perimeter of sometimes down on the flight line. I loved the night shift there. Between trucks we would have some down time, and I learned to play pinochle. I never took my nights off, as I couldn't sleep when I was off, so I just went on to work. While there, I was promoted to E-4.



Jim Henry forklifting a pallet of bombs. Photo by Jim Henry

When my tour was a couple of months from being over, I elected to extend my tour for 6 months. You could get 30 days free leave, so I put in my paperwork. After I had put in the paperwork, it was time to go down and put in my request for my next base, what we always called a “dream sheet”. We always had to do that, but it seemed nobody ever got the base they chose.

At that time, a lot of munitions guys were being cross trained into other career fields. They wanted you to have a dual AFSC,

so you worked one job in the states, and then they would send you TDY for 6 months to build bombs for B-52's on Okinawa, Guam, or such as that. I didn't want to cross-train especially, so I

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

put in for Nellis as a 461. They had several there, with the bombing ranges.

It took a while to hear anything about my extension being approved or not, so one day they told me I had an assignment. I went and picked it up and it was Nellis as a 461. I got what I wanted, but then my extension was approved, and the assignment was cancelled. So, I had to put in another dream sheet, so I put in for Richards-Gebaur AFB, Missouri, which was 45 miles from home.

After I took my free leave, I went back over and went back to work. I was supposed to leave there I think January or February of 1971. They decided that a bunch of us would get to leave early for some reason, so I left there in November 1970. When I got my assignment, it was for Richards-Gebaur, cross-training into Fire Protection.

I reported to Richards-Gebaur and started my OJT at the Fire Department. It was the headquarters for the Air Force Communications Service. There was also a reserve wing there, the 442nd. They flew C-124's. I asked if I could just live at home in Butler, and they let me do that, so I didn't even have to keep a room in the barracks.

When I started OJT, one of the civilian firefighters asked me if there was a volunteer fire department in Butler. I told him there was, and he said I should join and get some experience there, also.

I did my training and was a 57150, and during 1971 was promoted to E-5. I never did have to go TDY as I didn't have enough time left.

I was discharged in Feb. 1972. When I left, I dropped the hint at the fire department if they ever had an opening for a civilian, I would be interested. In August 1972, there was an opening, so I went to work as a Civil Service firefighter. My plans were to retire right there, doing a job I really enjoyed. As fate would have it, they started talking about closing the base around the mid '70's. In 1978, we were sure the base would close, but we just didn't know when. I had a chance to go to work for the Police Department in Butler, so I left in July 1978. The base closed about a year later, even though the 442nd stayed there for quite a while before the moved to Whiteman AFB. They had changed from C-124's to C-130's and now fly A-10's. I could have

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

stayed with Civil Service, but I didn't want to transfer.

In 1984, I quit working for Butler and went to work as a shift captain at the fire department at the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Independence, Missouri. It was operated by Remington-Dupont, and the fire department was contracted to them. We did Fire and EMS. Not long after I went there, the contract went to Olin-Winchester, I think it was.

I enjoyed working there. They made .223, 5.56, and .50 cal. ammunition. I remember when I had been in the bomb dump, any time I saw a box of ammo with a lot number starting with LCL, I knew it came from close to home. I never dreamed I would see it made.

I had a chance to go back to work for the City of Butler in 1998 as Fire Chief and did that job until retirement on January 1, 2018. I still work part time in Emergency Management for Bates Co., Missouri, and still respond to calls with Butler Fire.

I have been married for 45 years to my wife, Carol. I have 2 daughters, 7 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild. I still live in Butler.

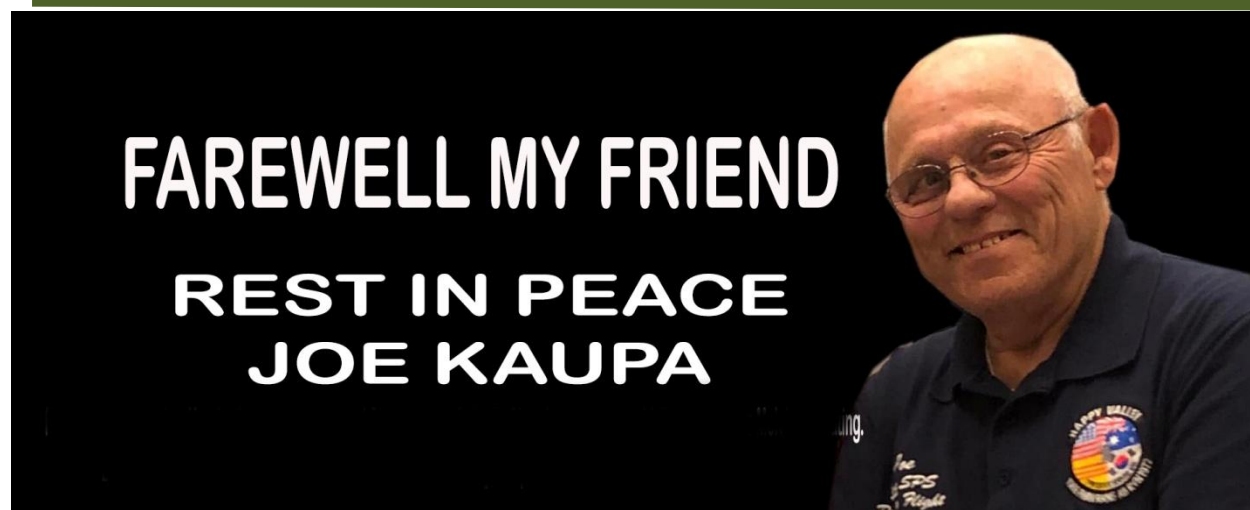
I find it funny how fate changes your plans. I went from a guy that wanted to operate heavy equipment to being in some sort of public service for over 50 years.

I have few regrets for any of my time in the military, other than that I didn't write down a lot of names of people that I served with, and that I failed to take a lot more pictures. I see many faces in my mind that I can't put a name with.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 "...keeping the memories alive"



Herbert "Joe" Joseph Kaupa Jr., 76, of Plainview, MN passed away at home with his family by his side.



Joe was born April 23, 1945 to Herbert Joseph Kaupa Sr. and Opal (Bisher) Kaupa in Springfield, MN. After spending most of his youth in Lewiston, Joe moved to Plainview in 7th grade when his parents bought the locker plant in Plainview. At the age of 14, Joe met the love of his life and soul mate, Nancy (Passe) Kaupa. Joe graduated in 1963 from Plainview High School and was part of the 1963 infamous basketball game against Lake City when the backboard broke. Joe also played football and was voted the first Most Valuable Player for the Plainview High School football team.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 "...keeping the memories alive"



Two weeks after graduating high school, Joe enlisted in the U.S. Air Force as an Air Force Security Policy Officer. He was stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington for two years and then moved to Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City, Louisiana. At one point, he guarded a nuclear storage facility there.

Joe and Nancy were married July 10, 1965 at St. Felix Catholic Church, in Wabasha. Nancy then joined him at Bossier Air Force Base, and were shortly joined by their son, Scott (Vicki) Kaupa and daughter, Debra (Wes) Bruemmer. The only time Joe and Nancy were apart was when Joe was deployed to Vietnam, leaving on May 26th

1968, Scott's 2nd birthday.

In Vietnam, Joe was stationed at the Phan Rang "Happy Valley" Air Base, where he served as an Air Force Security Police Officer protecting the base and working the perimeter towers. During his year in Vietnam he was promoted to SAT Team Leader and eventually Comp Plotter (Desk Sgt.). On January 26, 1969, 12:29 a.m. Joe was on duty when the North Vietnamese started one of the largest air strikes on a US Base seeking to destroy it. Joe coordinated the defense and the military team successfully defended the base even with the MACV Rules of Engagement that did not allow US Servicemen to fire unless they were fired upon. During the air strike, the base endured 78 rounds of mortars during 2 hours. The unit lost one K-9, but no US soldier was killed in action. He was awarded the Air Force Accommodation medal. Joe proudly served with some of the best "brothers" anyone could ask for; some made it home but many did not. He considered every Vietnam Vet a brother and family. **To all the brothers" still fighting the good fight, thank you for your service.**

Joe returned from Vietnam on Scott's 3rd birthday and moved his family to Whiteman Air Force

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

Base, in Knobnoster, Missouri. While stationed at Whiteman Air Base, Joe and Nancy's third child, Amy (Tom) Petersen was born.

Joe was honorably discharged from the Air Force on June 10, 1971. After being discharged, Joe moved his wife and three children to Plainview and put down roots in their new home on 6th Street where he resided until his death.

After returning to Plainview, Joe took a job as a Deputy Sheriff of Wabasha County serving in many roles including dispatcher, road deputy, Chief Investigator, and ultimately Chief Deputy. While with Wabasha County, Joe was involved and solved the murder of a 3 month old baby in Millville. The Minnesota Attorney General's Office handled the prosecution and Joe's investigative work played a key role in getting a murder conviction. Due to his role, the Minnesota Attorney General's Office sent a Letter of Accommodation to Joe, indicating that without his hard work, they would have never gotten a conviction.

In 1976, Joe was hired as the Plainview Chief of Police. He became the longest standing Chief of Police in Plainview's history, serving the community for 23 years. He investigated and was involved in the convictions of shootings, murders, rapes, kidnappings, bank robberies, drug cases, missing person cases, and numerous calls to wrangle animals from various city buildings and streets. His toughest role was giving numerous death notifications to families he knew well.

On April 20, 1980, one day before their last child Katie (Nate) Nolting was born, Joe was on duty when a drunk driver sped through Plainview at over 100 miles per hour. He was able to get the vehicle stopped, but while approaching the vehicle, the driver took off and Joe had to roll into the ditch in order save his life. Additional officers joined the pursuit and the vehicle was stopped without anyone being injured.

Joe has the rare accomplishment of being named in a Minnesota Supreme Court decision in State v. Seefeldt, where the Minnesota Supreme Court upheld the fantastic investigative work he did on an assault with a deadly weapon case.

One of his scariest moments as an officer was an evening in July, 1984 when he backed up the

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

Wabasha County Sheriff's Department on a call in Elgin. Joe was off duty at the time but responded to the domestic assault call involving a firearm. Upon arrival, the suspect was holding a shotgun to his wife's head. The suspect was drunk and Joe's attempts to de-escalate the situation were not effective. When back up arrived, the officers continued to negotiate with the suspect; Joe maneuvered himself behind the suspect and planned to tackle him. Before Joe could tackle him, the suspect heard him and spun around pointing the shotgun in Joe's face. Joe remained calm and successfully convinced the suspect into turning over the weapon. Later, it was learned there was in fact a round in the chamber.

His most memorable case in Plainview was the Petty kidnapping in November, 1985. In response to a welfare check at the Petty home, Joe found the back door forced open and the house ransacked. Joe also observed the Petty vehicle was missing. Following his infamous police intuition, he went to the basement and found a wooden chair by the furnace and a bunch of rope. With the help of the Wabasha County Sheriff's Department and the FBI, Mr. Petty was found a few days later tied to a fence post in a corn field near Madison, Wisconsin. Mrs. Petty was later found in South Carolina tied up in the back seat of the vehicle. The suspect was arrested and charged federally with two counts of kidnapping.

In 1994, Joe's bravery was shown when he stayed with a driver pinned inside a burning vehicle; Joe kept his promise to the accident victim that he would not leave without him. The victim was saved and Joe received a Letter of Accommodation from the Minnesota State Patrol and Honorable Mention as *Officer of the Year* from the Minnesota Chief of Police Association.

After five years of negotiations, Joe was instrumental in bringing a School Resource Officer to the Plainview Public Schools. In 1998, an agreement was reached between the school and the police department, to have an officer in the school full time. Joe felt strongly that the best way to foster a positive relationship between law enforcement and Plainview's youth was by placing an officer within the school. Back then, Plainview was one of a few schools to have a School Resource Officer.

In 1986, Joe was instrumental in adding K-9 Officer King, to the Plainview Police Department. Joe was proud that the department was the first in Southern Minnesota to have a K-9 Officer. Throughout Joe's tenure, several K-9 Officers served and were instrumental in solving

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

numerous crimes all across Southern Minnesota, including several drug busts.

Joe had the keen ability to read people. This aided him in knowing when someone needed a break or needed the "book" thrown at him/her. This ability made him a great investigator. Integrity was important to Joe as he was a man of his word and applied reason when making decisions about people.

Joe dedicated his life to public service, both to his country and community. Joe, along with his wife Nancy, were foster parents for 20 years ensuring children in need were kept safe.

Joe trained and mentored many law enforcement officers throughout his career, including any graduate from Plainview High School entering the law enforcement profession. His professionalism has continue on through many of these officers.

In April of 1999, Joe retired from the Plainview Police Department, ending a 23 year career as Plainview's Chief of Police and 36 years of public service. During retirement, Joe sold cars for Tony Montgomery for a short time and then worked in General Services at Mayo Clinic for 10 years.

Nancy and Joe shared a love for fishing and Nancy occasionally let him catch the biggest fish on their many trips to "The Lake" in central MN, and at Caribou Falls Lodge in Northwest Ontario, and of course the Mississippi River in Wabasha.

Joe is survived by his four children: Scott (Vicki) Kaupa, Debra (Wes) Bruemmer, Amy (Tom) Petersen, and Katie (Nate) Nolting. Eight grandchildren: Joshua, Tyler (Aleisha Leonhardt), and Brady Kaupa, Nicole (Eric) Viegut, Daniel Bruemmer (Gabby Rigden), John Petersen, Miles and Kira Nolting, and four great granddaughters, and his older brother David Kaupa. He was preceded in death by his wife, Nancy Kaupa, father Herbert Kaupa, mother Opal Kaupa, and brother Kim Kaupa.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 “...keeping the memories alive”

FAREWELL MY FRIEND

(A Parting Tribute to Joe by his friend Douglas Severt, at his funeral on 18 March 2022.)

Staff Sergeant Joe Kaupa was many things to many people, but to me and everyone he met in our Vietnam group he was instantly our best friend. I have never met any person that had the charisma and personality of Joe and those attributes can be extended to his beloved deceased wife, Nancy.

I didn't know Joe in Vietnam, even though I was there about the same time; he was doing his job to protect the base so the rest of us could safely do ours. We all did our best, and like all Vietnam Brothers we know them like no other men. That kindred connection formed the basis for my love for this man, but more than that Joe had the personality, smile and laugh that would win anyone over. Our hands would reach out and arms drew each other close. Embraces, that as young men we were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly and to tell each other that you loved them.

Unselfish, generous, artistic, humorous are just some of the adjectives I can think of to describe Joe and they all need to be in bold capital letters because I've never met anyone that exemplified and were the embodiment of his being.

His very existence on this earth was devoted to helping others less fortunate than him and also to helping his fellow Veterans. He remained adamant about promoting and informing other Veterans about health benefits available to them.

His generosity is unsurpassed. There probably isn't a Phan Rang Air Base Veteran that knew him that doesn't have a memento of his artistic endeavors. His annual contribution to the group provided funding for free meals and other reunion activities for everyone. He always had gifts of his artistic work to give.

I'm not sure how it happened that he discovered his latent artistic abilities, but the important thing is that he did. Maybe history will compare him to the likes of Grandma Moses or Howard Finster but until then, he is revered by many and his creations will be treasured forever. He created objects of extraordinary beauty by carving blocks of wood into beautiful birds and fish,

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

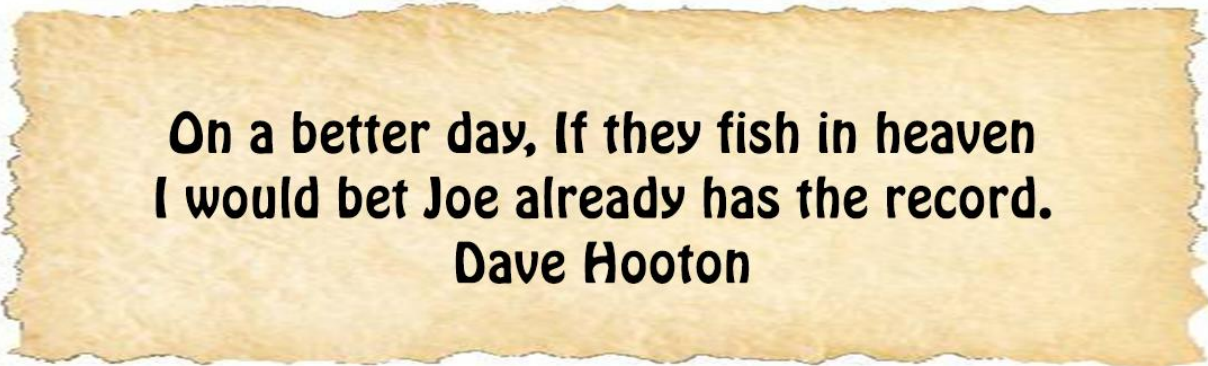
species that he was familiar with and created dioramas of museum quality with his artful mind and hands. He had an eye for color and he painted hundreds of figurines for a local enterprise and his friends and fellow Vietnam Veterans.

Joe’s laugh was infectious and it came so easy for him, along with a smile and sparkle in his eyes. He was always fun to be around and he never had a disparaging word to say about anyone. Simple pleasures like taking a ride on a merry-go-round would spark spontaneous and contagious laughter. He could also laugh at himself like the time he took photo after photo of just his eye because he was holding the phone the wrong way. Joe was a man of his convictions and so sure of himself that he wasn’t afraid to say what was in his heart and when he said “I love you, man” you knew he meant it.

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 not let those that didn’t make it home be forgotten...I will think of them all and do everything I can to keep the memories alive, just as Joe did. Everyday.

Finally, it is time to say farewell for now, but until we meet again I will keep a little of you with me forever. I loved you Joe.

TESTIMONIALS



**On a better day, If they fish in heaven
I would bet Joe already has the record.
Dave Hooton**

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 "...keeping the memories alive"



What do you do with the last of the Apple pie?
A toast to our special friends in heaven.
Joe and Nancy Kaupa, We'll never forget you!
Michael and Carla Reed

Thank you for your service ! It was both an honor and a privilege
to have met you. I sure enjoyed the opportunity
to spend some time with you both fishing
and at several of the reunions my family
was able to attend with my father in law.

May you Rest In Peace!

Tolby polk

Goodby my friend. You will be very much missed.

Until we meet again. Love ya,

Rich Luckhaupt

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 "...keeping the memories alive"

Special thoughts and prayers from Deb and me.
So glad to have met him, and extra pleased that we got to visit
with him at the Branson, Mo , reunion last October.
He was in a place that he loved being with his fellow veterans
and their spouses. I highly recommend that those who
want to know Joe's life better, is to buy the book he authored
about his USAF experiences and his police career.
The love he had for his family is highlighted.
Will always remember my fellow Sp friend.
Donald and Deborah Poirier

We will forever be indebted to these two wonderful folks
and cherish the many memories we have of our time
spent with them. May they Rest In Peace now that
they're together again for eternity.
Dana Anthony

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 "...keeping the memories alive"

Very sad news! Both Joe and his wife, Nancy were such down to earth, gracious people. They will be forever missed but you have to be some what happy as they are together again.
My deepest heartfelt condolences to the Families.

May he Rest In Peace.

Jim Eckardt

This is so sad.

We will remember Joe every time we look at his many gifts we have in our little home.

Rest Easy Brother until we meet again on the other side of the wall!

Sam Lewis

Rest In peace my Brother. You are now in the hands of the Lord and being reunited with your beloved wife Nancy.

Your legacy will always be remembered.

You and Nancy touched the lives of so many of us.

You will never be forgotten.

Joe Schwarzer

(Additional stories about Joe and Nancy and their wonderful children can be found in Phan Rang Newsletters 34, 53, 83, 86, 87, 89, 90-99, 117, 121, 124-127, 130, 131, 134, 136, 138, 140,

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.

Phan Rang AB News No. 244 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

144, 145, 157, 161, 168, 174, 184, 213, 215, 217, 235)



Doug's Comments:

We all lost a part of us this month with the passing of Joe, but we are just thankful that we were able to share some time with Joe and Nancy on our life's Journey. We will all be the better for it as we carry their memory forward and maintain the spirit of life and giving that they taught us all. 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. Please note that all previous issues of this newsletter have been submitted to Ancestry/Fold3.com and are or will be available for viewing. 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.