

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 246

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**BELIEVE IT OR NOT – A WHEELS-DOWN BOMBING MISSION**

**by Bob Howe**

**Day 239 of my one-year tour in South Vietnam produced one of the more bizarre experiences of my bombing operations, in fact I believe - unique.**

It was Tuesday 20 January 1970 and I was teamed with No 2 Squadron Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Jack Boast, tasked for an early morning bombing mission in Canberra A84-247 down in IV Corps.

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We duly went through our normal pre-flight briefing, aircraft and bomb-bay checks and clambered aboard. We taxied out and I read out our speed each ten knots as we accelerated slowly down the Phan Rang runway. Reaching take-off speed Jack pulled back on the stick to leave the ground and once clear of the runway, proceeded to raise the undercarriage.

*“...we had a problem. Sure enough, we did – the wheels wouldn't come up.”*

Uh oh, the cursing from up front told me that we had a problem. Sure enough, we did – the wheels wouldn't come up. Staying in the vicinity, we gradually climbed a few thousand feet as Jack moved the gear lever, hoping that our undercarriage would rise, but to no avail.

Having gone through the whole process of preparing for our bombing sortie, I wasn't pleased to contemplate the fact that we may have to abort the mission and land with a full set of six 750lb live bombs on board. So I looked up my bombing tables to see if I could extrapolate (i.e. “guess”) a suitable bombing angle for what I knew would be a much lower air speed than the normal 270 knots indicated air speed that we were used to.

I knew that, even if we were to contemplate disgorging our bomb-load, then in order not to damage our suspended undercarriage, and open bomb-bay doors, we would have to fly at 150 knots or less. My bombing tables didn't go that far down, but I was able to make what I believed was a reasonable estimate of the correct bomb-sight angle setting for flying at such a low air speed.

We duly notified our ground controllers that we had to cancel our pre-arranged rendezvous with our distant Forward Air Controller (FAC). Most of our 8 a.m. take-offs were planned for the IV Corps region, as the USAF's 7th Air Force Tactical Air Command Center (TACC) staff very much respected the RAAF Canberra's good endurance. It meant that we had the ability to reach the southern tip of the Mekong Delta and still have enough fuel to bomb and return to Phan Rang, without having to divert to another air base to refuel. Most USAF fighter jocks had to have air tankers or land to refuel in order to get back to their home bases.

Jack and I discussed our situation as we circled lazily not far off Phan Rang. I was keen to give it a try – bombing with our wheels down, which, as far as we knew, hadn't been done before.

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Neither of us wanted to return with our bombs unleashed, so we eventually agreed to ask our local tactical controller to see if he could contact our Phan Rang FACs – with call-sign “Walt”.



We often bombed close to Phan Rang, enjoying deterring the enemy from raining down mortars and rockets on us at night-time. We knew many of the Walt FACs personally, having shared a few beers with each other in respective hooches. We also knew that they would probably have on their lists nearby active targets, such as known enemy base camps, which could be suitably attacked.

After a little while, we were called up by a Walt FAC, who was already on stand-by duty, and he led us over to a known target area, not far from our departure base, where we could drop our bombs with some purpose.

*“He was worried about...a stall situation ...with the Canberra's nose pointing up so high..”*

Grudgingly willing to give it a go, the CO maneuvered our lumbering machine into our normal

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race-track bombing pattern, but at a much lower airspeed than usual. He was worried about too much drag resulting in a stall situation and with the Canberra's nose pointing up so high, compared with normal, he had to rely on my directions as the bomb-aimer lying on my stomach, peering through the adjusted bomb-sight. Once we were into our final approach on the bombing run, Jack couldn't see past the Canberra's nose and sight the target – it was totally up to me.

After several dummy runs to get used to our awkward configuration, we agreed with the FAC to drop a single bomb as a sighter, to see how close we could get to the target. The Walt FAC rolled in and launched his smoke rocket marker. It was an accurate shot and he told us to aim for the smoke as it started to rise through the undergrowth below. We ambled in on our bomb run at 3,000' above the ground, selecting Start and Stop for Bomb Number One, as I steered Jack towards the smoke source.

He continued to mutter as to whether we should be doing this, but he persevered. With Master Arm Switch ON, I pressed the bomb release button as the smoke passed beneath the cross-hairs of my bomb-sight. Lo and behold! I had guessed the bombing angle right, having had to extrapolate well beyond the limits of my bombing graph/chart. The result was virtually a direct hit (DH).

This was important to me as I was No 2 Squadron's Bombing Leader, and I was sick and tired of assessing the daily bombing photographs that our crews returned with, to see that they were bombing better than I was. They were denying me the opportunity to be named as “Top Gun” of the month.

*“...bombing accuracy...within No 2 Squadron...amongst the bomb-aimers was fierce.”*

We were unique with our Top Gun awards, compared with our fellow USAF brother squadrons who judged their best by the amount of Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) that was achieved. We preferred to do it based on bombing accuracy and, within No 2 Squadron, competition amongst the bomb-aimers was fierce.

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I now knew that if Jack and I could continue to drop the other five bombs with the same degree of accuracy, then I would be able to submit six separate photos, and if they were DHs or close to it, then I (we) would stand a great chance of becoming Top Gun for the month

And this we did – with Jack cursing each time under his breath, we staggered around our race-track bombing pattern and impressed the Walt FAC with our continued accuracy – 4 DHs out of the 6 dropped. Our last bomb gone and results recorded, we returned to base, landed and handed the aircraft back to our hard-working maintenance staff. We left it to them to figure out what might be wrong with the aircraft and also left the bomb camera for our duty photographer to collect and take the film back for over-night processing in the photo laboratory.

That afternoon I flew on another mission, only this was merely to assist US controllers to calibrate their ground-based radar. So it was a busy day for me, and my diary further notes that as I was walking back from the Mess after dinner, I saw two explosions – sparks and loud bangs. They were not far away and were from incoming enemy 107mm rockets – not very nice.

The following day I was looking forward to receiving the processed photos from Photographic Section knowing that the ones that I would be examining that day would prove beyond all doubt Jack's and my prowess at bombing so well in such an unusual and challenging situation.

***“I had been cruelly cheated and thus never became No 2 Squadron's Top Gun for the month.”***

To my horror, I discovered that the film processing had been taking place in the photographic lab right at the time the rockets came in after dinner. In accordance with standard practice, as the alarm siren screeched away remorsefully, the duty photographer immediately headed for the nearest shelter. When the all-clear signal sounded, he returned to the lab and, sure enough, the film was so over-exposed as it sat in the mixture that there were no photos at all to give me to be assessed. I had been cruelly cheated and thus never became No 2 Squadron's Top Gun for the month.

Moreover, I can't recall whether or not our maintenance guys found out that 247's wheels



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didn't come up because the locking pins were not removed or due to just another electrical fault, not too uncommon in hot, tropical weather conditions. Perhaps the maintenance records for 20 January 1970, if available, might tell.

Finally, to add to my chagrin, with no records to prove my claim, with Jack now deceased, and with my fruitless efforts to find the Walt FAC who controlled our bombing mission on that day, I am unable to verify the above.

**You could be forgiven for considering it all to be just another unbelievable wartime yarn.**



**Bob Howe, the author, holding his book “Dreadful Lady Over The Mekong Delta” An Analysis of RAAF Canberra Operations in the Vietnam War, with a background, taken from Nui Dat, that was the RAAF domestic area at Phan Rang AB, RVN.**

(Bob Howe has penned many stories over the years about himself and his experiences during the Vietnam conflict that have sometimes brought tears to our eyes and sometimes a smile to

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our face, but they all have so eloquently depicted life that so many Vietnam veterans can identify with. For all of this we are eternally grateful not only for our own self-gratification, but future generations will have a better understanding of the human side of war.)

### **RAAF Airfield Defence Guards**



**Photo of my patrol section, RAAF ADGies early-1968, Phan Rang.**

**Left to right back row:** Ben Hall, Peter W. Taylor (tec), Merv Reid (Section Leader), Mick Mischlewski (Rifleman), Bob Hepe (Rifleman).

**Left to right front row:** Mick McPhail (Lead Scout), Graham Maher (2<sup>nd</sup> Scout), Ken Thackeray (2<sup>nd</sup> In-Command), Alan Donaldson (2<sup>nd</sup> on the (Machine) Gun), Pop Purdon (#1 on the GPMG (M-60 General Purpose Machine Gun). Photo by Peter W. Taylor

**One Rifleman may also carry the back pack radio PRC-25 (in our day). We also used the US 10 set over there.**

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(Additional information on Air Defense Guards please see Phan Rang Newsletters 124 "RAAF Air Defence Guards (ADGs) at Phan Rang", Phan Rang Newsletter 133 "Joint Effort Foils Sapper Attack - 35th SPS, Aussie Patrol", Phan Rang Newsletter 157 "Airfield Defence - The Aussie's Mission" and Phan Rang Newsletter 221 "Aussie Airfield Defence Guards (ADG's)".)

# The Canberra Times

*To Serve the National City and through it the Nation*

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## No. 2 Squadron strikes by night - The RAAF's Canberras In Action In Vietnam

**PHAN RANG**, South Vietnam, Thursday. — Australia's squadron of Canberra jet bombers, No 2 Squadron, has flown more than 300 missions from this coastal base since arriving here a little over a month ago.

It is a topsy-turvy war for the Canberra pilots. They sleep by day and bomb by night.

From this US base 165 miles north-east of Saigon, 500mph jets have attacked targets all over South Vietnam, from the demilitarised zone to the Vietcong-dominated south Delta.

The eight, aircraft, under Wing Commander **Rolf Aronsen**, of Canberra, have bombarded Vietcong troop concentrations, base camps, bridges, fortified posts and bunkers with more than 600 tons of explosives.

"I have been extremely pleased with the results", Wing Commander Aronsen said today.

Although the Canberras have done a few four-air craft formation daylight raids against the Vietcong, they are mainly reserved for highly-specialized ground radar-controlled night strikes.



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### **‘Bus runs’**

Flying high above anti-aircraft fire, the pilots make their runs in total darkness, never seeing the enemy, with only the red puffs of their bombs landing to remind them they are actually fighting a war.

And they know only rarely if their bombs have had any effect.

The pilots describe their flights as "bus runs" and find it frustrating that bomb damage assessment is impossible in the dark.

But most of them are pleased that the Canberras once considered obsolete — are now doing a job of work.

“This is no different from Malaysia”, one pilot said.

"We're working for our living now before it was just training and more training".

The Canberras fly seven nights a week, and eight missions are flown each night.

The Australian pilots have been praised for their accuracy with their 500 and 1,000lb Australian-made bombs.

### **Some fire at aircraft**

On one or two occasions pilots have felt they have scored a direct hit on heavy enemy troop concentrations of up to 500 men, but because ground action has been taking place at the same time, a “kill count” has been impossible.

During the missions the pilots have been subjected to some anti-aircraft fire, but no one has been hit. Some of the fire has been taken close to the Phan Rang air base as the pilots circle in to land.

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One pilot is Flying Officer Peter Hackett, of the Melbourne suburb of St. Kilda. His wife and two young boys are staying at Ipswich, Queensland.

This morning, sipping coffee in the RAAF operations room at Phan Rang, which sports a plaque from a United States bomber unit with the inscription "Devil's Own Grim Reapers", Hackett told the story of the latest mission of the almost 30 he has flown.

His bomber had been loaded at dusk the night before and he was due to take off after midnight.

As arc lights spotted the Canberras in their bays, Hackett sat in the operations room and recorded a tape to his wife as he waited for his turn to fly.

His Canberra was carrying ten 500 pound bombs.

It was to be a routine strike against two targets in the Southern Delta. With his navigator. Flt Lt **L. R. "Blue" O'Neill**, Hackett walked the short distance to his blue-green camouflaged jet and prepared for takeoff, shortly after 2 a.m.

"We flew down there at 24,000 feet and then we picked up the ground radar", he said.

### **Radar Guided**

"The radar guided us in and we bombed the two Vietcong positions, six bombs on one and four on the other, all in total darkness.

"As the bombs hit we could see the red flashes.

"We had a look to see if there were any secondary explosions we didn't actually see what we hit — then we just turned around and came home".

It was daylight when his Canberra landed on the giant Phan Rang strip. Then came an intensive report on the mission— the debriefing followed by a shave and breakfast.

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Another routine flight had been completed. It was time to sleep.

As one officer remarked: "It looks somewhat odd, to say the least, to see pilots sitting around the operations centre drinking beer at 9 a.m. until you realize it's dinner time for them and they are just having one - for the -road before going to bed". (*Canberra Times, June 2, 1967, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, AU*)

### **AFTER THE FALL**

**by Steven Bullard**

Dr. Steven Bullard is a Senior Historian in the Military History Section of the Australian War Memorial.



**Cramped conditions inside a Hercules from Detachment S, transporting Vietnamese refugees from Phan Rang airfield fleeing from advancing North Vietnamese forces.**

The initial plan was to use the Australian Hercules to evacuate civilian refugees from Da Nang, but the city fell to communist forces before the detachment could be mobilized. The focus then shifted to the next major centre in the path of the advancing North Vietnamese troops.

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Australian aircraft flew their first mission on 2 April, evacuating more than 1,100 refugees from Phan Rang airfield to Can Tho, south of Saigon.



Two aircraft flew in from Butterworth, Malaysia, on 2 April and each completed several flights to Can Tho over the course of the day, during which matters became progressively more chaotic. Flight Lieutenant Brian Young from No. 36 Squadron piloted his Hercules that day with more than 100 refugees crammed onto the seatless flight deck for each trip of about 150 kilometres. When four enemy rockets impacted on the airfield 400 metres from where one Hercules stood, the aircraft was mobbed by panic-stricken refugees. A Vietnamese soldier attempting to quell the pandemonium fired warning shots into the air — and holed the aircraft’s elevator. Other soldiers forced their way onto the aircraft, trampling anyone who got in their way. Airfield staff later used fuel tankers to obstruct the last departing Hercules until given assurances that it would be returning. The RAAF was lucky not to lose an aircraft that day.

A number of South Vietnamese soldiers fleeing the fighting apparently made their way onto the Australian aircraft during this airlift. This led the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, to direct that only humanitarian supplies be carried on subsequent flights. The majority of these flights took food, fuel, canvas for tents and other relief supplies from Saigon to An Thoi, on the southern island of Phu Quoc, to assist more than 40,000 refugees who had earlier fled North Vietnamese forces by sea.

The members of Detachment S were accommodated in the Embassy Hotel, just along the street from the Presidential Palace in Saigon. Mitchell and a small staff also established an office in the Australian embassy in the nearby Caravelle Hotel. On 8 April, as members of the detachment were eating breakfast in the hotel dining room, several 500-pound bombs were dropped on the nearby palace by a defecting South Vietnamese pilot. The blast smashed windows and glass doors in the dining room, covering the room with broken glass, without causing serious injury.

After security conditions in the capital deteriorated, the detachment was moved to Don Muang



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airport in Bangkok, with personnel staying at the Sheraton Hotel.

Aircraft would fly into Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airfield each day for taskings within the country, before returning to Thailand in the evening. Airport loading facilities in Bangkok were rudimentary. It was not unusual for an aircraft to take many hours to load by hand, as only a limited amount of mechanical loading equipment was available.

With North Vietnamese forces drawing closer to Saigon, the last three Hercules flights on 25 April evacuated the Australian ambassador, embassy staff, several journalists and a limited number of Vietnamese refugees. Four Australian airfield defence guards were the last to leave. The earlier aircraft were packed with luggage from the embassy, obliging the guards to wait for a reserve aircraft, which had been circling off the coast for such a contingency.

Aircraft of Detachment S accumulated a total of 465 hours of flying time during the mission. Apart from evacuating more than 1,100 refugees to safety, the detachment transported more than 900 tonnes of essential relief and medical supplies from Bangkok to Saigon, and from Saigon to refugees at An Thoi. Apart from minor problems, all aircraft remained serviceable during the mission and returned to Australia from 20 to 28 April.

Earlier, on 2 April, the Australian government announced a plan to transport from Saigon to Australia some 200 orphans, in line with the US government's announcement of Operation Babylift, which would evacuate some 2,000 orphans and children of American servicemen. The first Australian flights on 4 April were hastily arranged: four Australian aero-medical evacuation teams, each consisting of a nurse and a medical officer, were rushed from Butterworth air force base in Malaysia to accompany 194 children on two Hercules from Detachment S. As with many who fly on a Hercules, the young passengers had to sit on the floor of the flight deck. Infants were strapped to medevac litters, as many as five to a litter, and given bottles of water to suck to help them cope with changing air pressures during the flight. The Hercules flew the infants to Bangkok, where they were transferred onto a chartered Qantas aircraft with three doctors and 20 nurses for the flight to Sydney.

As the aircraft were waiting to leave Saigon, disaster struck a US C-5A Galaxy aircraft that had on board the first load of 243 Vietnamese children. A faulty cargo door damaged control lines in

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the rear of the aircraft soon after takeoff. As the pilots attempted to return to the airfield, the plane crashed short of the runway, killing some 200 of the children and crew. Two Australian volunteers on board, Margaret Moses and Lee Makk from Adelaide, also died in the crash.

A further planned evacuation of orphans on 7 April was cancelled after the South Vietnamese government temporarily banned such flights. Although the Australian government limited the evacuation of orphans to cases that met strict criteria, the operation faced strong criticism. The North Vietnamese government accused the Australians of taking part not in humanitarian operations, but in "an American plot". Nevertheless, two Hercules aircraft made a final evacuation of 77 orphans on 17 April, although sadly an eight-monthold boy died during the flight.

The humanitarian aid offered by Detachment S assisted Australia's ally in the Vietnam War, namely South Vietnam. Neighbouring countries, however, were also facing humanitarian crises – Australia offered assistance. In early March, the RAAF participated in one such mission when a Dakota aircraft from the transport flight in Butterworth assisted for a week and relocated more than 500 refugees from Vientiane to the Plain of Jars in Laos.

With the imminent fall of Saigon, Australia's Whitlam government, which was critical of Australia's previous role in the war, wished to provide humanitarian assistance to all sides of the previous conflict in south-east Asia while remaining sensitive to public opinion and without offending anticommunist countries of the region. To this end, the Australians offered the United Nations the use of two Hercules aircraft to transport humanitarian supplies into and within southeast Asia, under the auspices of the UN.

The offer was accepted by the UN on 22 April, and approved by the Australian government the following day. Headquarters Operational Command N, or Detachment N, was formed from two Hercules in No. 37 Squadron, and led by the commanding officer of the unit, Wing Commander Stewart Mitchell. The detachment was assigned to the UN coordinator of relief assistance for Indo-China, Sir Robert Jackson, a former Australian soldier and now a senior official with experience in UN development and relief programs.

To ensure the neutrality of the mission, all national and military markings were removed from

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the two Hercules. The UN initially requested that the aircraft be painted in UN colours, a job that would take about three weeks; in the end, the RAAF roundels were covered with decals depicting UN symbols, and the aircraft were renamed UN177 and UN181. The crew wore UN armbands over their standard service dress, although there had been some discussion of requests that RAAF personnel wear civilian uniforms or UN peacekeeping uniforms while piloting the aircraft. The detachment left Australia on 29 and 30 April, with three aircrew, two ground crews, an air movement officer, a supply officer, an administration officer, and six airfield defence guards. Several other crews rotated through the detachment, which initially was to operate until 20 May.

The first flight on 3 May, carrying a load of canned milk from Bangkok to Vientiane in Laos, was the start of a deployment in which the two aircraft amassed 207 flying hours in 91 sorties. These flights transported about 450 tonnes of relief and medical supplies, tents and blankets from Bangkok to Vientiane, as well as a variety of cargoes between Butterworth, Singapore and Hong Kong. The mission was extended beyond 20 May, but only until early June, when the aircraft returned to Australia and embassy staff from Vientiane were also evacuated.

Most of the supplies delivered into Laos by Detachment N were forwarded to Hanoi on aircraft chartered by the UN. Whitlam's stated policy was to provide humanitarian assistance to all sides of the conflict, so the government may have wanted the RAAF aircraft to deliver relief supplies directly to the North Vietnamese capital. The government in Hanoi, however, maintained a strict policy of prohibiting the arrival of military aircraft and personnel, even under the auspices of the UN.

The Whitlam government was criticized in some quarters for the small number of refugees it allowed into Australia in the period leading up to and immediately after the fall of Saigon. The UN estimated that by early June, more than 140,000 South Vietnamese had fled the country, but by the end of September only a little over 1,100 had been accepted into Australia. Nevertheless, from March to June 1975, RAAF personnel had played their part in providing tangible assistance to alleviate the suffering of thousands who remained in the region.

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### Troops Getting Fresh Vegetables

(European Stars And Stripes, February 12, 1968)

**PHAN RANG** (Special) — For more than a year, the Army and Air Force have been working together to insure that airmen and soldiers in South Vietnam get fresh vegetables with their meals.

Organized in July 1966, by the Army Procurement Agency, 1<sup>st</sup> Logistical Comd., the program maintains three field offices to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from Vietnamese farmers. The offices are located at Saigon, Can To and Da Lat. Da Lat, about 30 miles inland from here, is by far the largest of the field offices. A budget of \$13 million is allotted for the purchase of produce, of which \$8 million is consigned to Da Lat.

#### Went to Market

"We made the first purchase at Da Lat in August 1966 and shipped it out by air," said Maj. **Charles K. Smith**. "We've been shipping every day since and are growing larger."

"When we first began to buy, the farmers thought we could take everything that they grew," the major said. "At that time, the farmers weren't growing much because they had no way of getting it to the markets because they were afraid of the V.C. on the roads.

"But when they realized that we couldn't take everything, they began taking their produce to markets in Saigon and Phan Rang by road. The railroad from Da Lat to Phan Rang was making runs to the coast twice a month. About 25 per cent of our produce is shipped to Phan Rang and Cam Ranh Bay by rail.

"But the railroad is uncertain because the V. C. blow up the bridges. Then the movement of produce is given to the Air Force. And they're doing one great job," Smith said.

The procurement of the vegetables and fruits is made once a week. Bids are submitted by Vietnamese vendors and the lowest bidder is awarded the contract to deliver the required amount of the vegetable for which he submitted the bid.



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When the product is delivered, it is checked by two Army food inspectors. If it is rejected, the vendors bear the loss on their contracts.

After acceptance, the produce is crated and palletized for shipment. At this point, Smith turns the vegetables over to M.Sgt. **Ronald L. Leighton**, NCOIC of the 14th Aerial Port Sq at Da Lat.

Leighton is responsible for getting the vegetables to the distribution points. Each afternoon he receives the palletized produce and determines how many aircraft he will need the next day. Then he asks the Airlift Control Center at Tan Son Nhut Air Base to make them available to him.

"We move from 35 to 50 tons of vegetables each day," Leighton said. "Normally, we have four C123s available for us, and they fly three sorties a day. In addition we usually have two C130s and several C7A Caribous available every day."

The C123 Providers belong to the 310th Air Commando Sq. at Phan Rang. In November, the air commandos carried 800 tons of produce to distribution points throughout II Corps. That was 50 per cent of the total amount shipped by air. The remaining percentage was carried by C130 Hercules and C7A Caribous, and other C123s of the 315th Air Commando Wing.

### **Rain a Problem**

"The biggest problem is getting the loads out during the rainy season," Leighton continued.

"This creates a backlog and then we need every plane we can get.

"The longest that the produce is allowed to sit at the aerial port is three days. After the third day, it is condemned.

"When a bridge is blown, we take the produce that the railroad would normally carry, Leighton said.

After the produce is delivered to the distribution points, it is broken down into loads for other bases and stored until it can be moved.

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With inter-service cooperation, personnel morale is being bolstered and an important part of the Vietnamese economy is being strengthened through the vegetable procurement program.



**Joins Exclusive Club** - Major **George Reuter Davidson**, navigator stationed in Vietnam, has covered himself with glory. He has by his prowess joined aviations “Centurion Club”. Stationed at Phan Rang Air Base, George and his crew are credited with the destruction of at least 111 enemy trucks. (*The Recovery Journal, November 14, 1968, Fort Recovery, Ohio.*)

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*)

**PLAQUE FOR THE PRESIDENT** — Republic of Vietnam President **Nguyen Van Thieu**, accepts an engraved 35th Tactical Fighter Wing plaque from Air Force Col. **Walter C. Turnier** of Eatontown, commander of the Phan Rang AB fighter wing, during an official luncheon in Phan Rang City Sept. 26. President Thieu, who grew up in the hamlet of Tri Thuy a few miles east of Phan Rang City, was visiting his home. (*Red Bank Register, October 7, 1970, Red Bank, new Jersey*)

**Oceana Man Gets Air Medal** - Air Force Maj. **Charles B. Haskins**, son of Mrs. Louise Smith, Oceana, has received the Air Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Maj. Haskins, an F-100 Super was cited for his outstanding airmanship and courage on successful and important missions under hazardous conditions. He is assigned at Phan Rang in a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. The major, a 1954 graduate of Oceana High School, received his commission in 1957 through the aviation cadet program. His wife, Eleanor is the daughter of Earl Cook of Oceana. (*Post Herald*

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*and Register, August 3, 1969, Beckley, West Virginia)*

**KEERNS AT PHAN RANG** - Staff Sgt. **Richard L. Keerns**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Keerns. 525 S. Broadway, Pendleton, is on duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. He is a communications supervisor with the Air Force Communications Service in support of the Pacific Air Forces in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to 780<sup>th</sup> Radar Squadron at Fortuna Air Force Station, N.D. He is a graduate of Wilkinson High School. (*Anderson Herald Bulletin, August 5, 1968, Anderson, Indiana*)

**WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES**, Vietnam -- Major **Howard H. Haskin**, son of Mrs. George H. Haskin, Rt. 1, Ingleside, has received his second award of the U. S. Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Major Haskin was decorated for meritorius service as assistant administrator of medical material services of the USAF hospital at Plattsburg AFB, N.Y. He is now at Phan Rang where he serves as a squadron commander. The major is a veteran of World War II. He is a 1945 graduate of Ingleside High School and received a B.B.A. degree in 1955 from the University of Texas. His wife is the former Theresa M. Lewis. (*Aransas Pass Progress, October 13, 1971*)

**FINAL 2 MEMBERS OF AIR GUARD TEAM BACK FROM VIET** - The final two members of seven-man Hoosier Air Guard team returned Saturday to Terre Haute from Vietnam where they prepared equipment and supplies for shipment to the 181st Tactical Fighter Group at Hulman Field. Arriving home shortly before noon yesterday were Col. **Ralph Spencer** of Seelyville, and Lt. Col. **Earl Higbie**, RR 31, Terre Haute. Spencer left for Phan Rang, Vietnam, June 14 and had longest stay in the country of any of the local Guardsmen. Higbie left for Phan Rang July 18. The equipment and supplies obtained by the team in Vietnam will be utilized with the F-100 Super Sabres which are replacing the F-84F Thunder-streaks of the 181st TFG. (*Terre Haute Tribune Star, August 15, 1971, Terre Haute, Indiana*)

**County Serviceman Arrives in Vietnam PHAN RANG**, Vietnam — Army Pfc **George M. Duke**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Duke, Coalport, Pa., arrived in Phan Rang, Vietnam, last month with his unit, the 529th Transportation Company. The company, previously located at Ft. Euslis, Va., will provide Transportation for Headquarters, Phan Rang Sub Area Command. Pfc. Duke, a truck driver in his company, entered the Army November 1965 and completed basic training at

## **“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN**

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Ft. Jackson, S. C. (*Clearfield Progress, February 11, 1967, Clearfield, Pennsylvania*)

**Winburne Serviceman Arrives in Vietnam** - Phan Rang, Vietnam, Army Spec. 4C **Gary L. Rocky** son of Mrs. Emma Rocky, Winburne, Pa. arrived last month with his unit the 529th Transportation Company. The company, previously located at Ft. Eustis, Va. will provide transportation for Headquarters Phan Rang Sub Area Command. Spec. Rocky, a truck driver in the company, entered the Army in November 1965 and completed basic training at Ft. Jackson, S C. The 20-year-old soldier was graduated from West Branch Area High School, Allport, in 1964. (*Clearfield Progress, February 11, 1967, Clearfield, Pennsylvania*)

**Lockridge Man Commander Of Vietnam Base** - LOCKRIDGE - U. S. Air Force lieutenant Colonel **Emery J. Crane**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Emery R. Crane, Lockridge, has assumed command of the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Phan Rang Air Force Base, Vietnam. Colonel Crane served at Andrews Air Force Base, Md, as Military Airlift Command liaison officer at Headquarters, Air Force Systems Command, prior to his appointment at Phan Rang. Col. Crane, who holds the aeronautical rating of command pilot, was commissioned in 1950 through the aviation cadet program. The 1940 Lockridge High School graduate received his BA degree in 1952 from Iowa Wesleyan College. His wife is the former Janet L. Smith. (*Fairfield Ledger, December 14, 1970, Fairfield, Iowa*)

**PHAN RANG AF BASE, Vietnam** — **David A. Sulava**, 24, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Sulava, 1704 Bridge St., Leechburg, Pa., recently was promoted to Army specialist five while serving with the 513th Engineer Company at Phan Rang Air Force Base, Vietnam. A truck driver in the company, Spec. Sulava entered Army in 1964 and was last stationed in Korea. The specialist's wife Kathryne, lives at 1460 Luxton St., Seaside, Calif. (*Kittanning Simpson Leader Times, September 23, 1970, Kittanning, Pennsylvania*)

**Phan Rang** — Air Force Technical Sgt. **Elmer J. Thies**, son of Mrs. Ruth M. Thies of 5915 Kim Ave., Atwater, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sgt. Thies, a supply inventory supervisor, is assigned to a unit of the Air Force Communications Service. He previously served at Castle AFB. (*Modesto Bee and News Herald, October 27, 1969, Modesto, California*)



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Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, Adelaide, South Australia, depicts both Australian and US service personnel. **Lest We Forget.**



### Doug's Comments:

I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. Reunion planning this year has been very taxing, mainly because our reunion hotel had so many problems with their reservation web site and the fact that inflation is at a 40 year high and rising, which makes planning seven months in the future almost impossible. Even as we've gone to press with the cost, we had to use estimated cost for meals. Originally we had hoped to have the group fund a meal for Thursday, but with the cost of food rising, we will have to plan something else. 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](mailto:dougsevert@cox.net) and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.