

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 255

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## 2022 Phan Rang AB Reunion Recap



**Veterans of Phan Rang AB Pose for a group picture.**

*(Note: The picture also includes a son and grandson of a Veteran.)*

The reunion started out with a wonderful dinner cruise on Mobile Bay. This event actually started before the official start of the reunion and was well attended by many of the reunion attendees.

The Mobile Marriott was the perfect venue for our reunion. The Garden Ballroom was one of the largest rooms we’ve enjoyed and there was ample room to display all of our silent auction items without disrupting any of the other activities’. There was also a nice outdoor patio for late night gatherings.



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**Waiting to board the Perdido Queen Riverboat is Jim and Judy Hemphill, Richard Dixon and Sarah Cormier, Barry LaBombarde, Tom and Nancy Gates, Douglas and Joyce Severt, John and Linda Schrank, Lou and Sue Matherne and Kirby and Jennie White.**



John and Linda Schrank (pictured left) celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary on the boat with champagne that they shared with the group. Richard Dixon and Sarah Cormier(center) and Lou and Sue Matherne (right) were just overcome with JOY.

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### The Tour



First Stop

### USS ALABAMA BATTLESHIP MEMORIAL PARK and USS Drum



Everyone swarmed the USS Alabama battleship, exploring every nook and cranny from the engine room to the highest masts. The most frequently heard phrase was “*Boy, I’m glad I*

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*choose the Air Force rather than the Navy”.* **Pictured top right:** Carla and Mike Reed; **Center:** Joe Schwarzer and Christine Eyler checking out the displays on the USS Alabama; **Top Right:** Sue Matherne and Linda Smith standing on the bow of the ship as the wind blows through their hair, pumps their fists into the air and shouts, “*We are the queens of the world!...reminiscent of the Titanic;*” **Center left:** Royanne Ginck, David Albright and Christine Eyler; **Center Right:** Sarah Cormier and Richard Dixon; **Bottom Left:** Patricia Varney, Carolyn Bennett behind Patricia, Linda Smith, Sue Matherne and George Varney; **Bottom Right:** Stephen Peck, George Varney, Douglas Severt, Lou Matherne, Daniel Smith and Mike Mulcahey.



**Daniel Smith emerging from his journey through the tight confines of the USS Drum.**



**Catherine Evans and Mike Floyd in front of the Tuskegee display in the aircraft pavilion.**



**Carolyn Bennett and Linda Smith wait on the deck of the USS Hood, safe in the knowledge, that it isn't going to be diving soon.**

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### **LUNCH IN THE AIRCRAFT PAVILLION**



**Lunch in the Aircraft Pavilion at the battleship memorial.**

After a delicious lunch we boarded the busses to Dauphin Island and Fort Gaines. Yes, Wayne Yuris made it aboard, his wife was afraid we were going to leave him behind.

**Meanwhile back at the hotel the Presidential Boardroom (Hospitality Suite) was open for conversation and refreshments.**



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Fort Gaines is a historic fort on Dauphin Island, Alabama. It was named for Edmund Pendleton Gaines. Established in 1821, it is best known for its role in the Battle of Mobile Bay during the American Civil War.



After a restful trip back to the hotel we returned to the Garden Ballroom for a dinner with two featured speakers that kept us enthralled with each telling their stories. **With their pictures and stories the memories just started flowing.**



Maj. Bruce 'Flash' Gordon wooed the audience with his vivid depiction of actual combat missions.



BGen Jim L. Martins' primary focus was on an amazing video that he made with a Super 8 wind-up camera.



Two legends share their experiences.

Here is a link to Jim's video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_njRFDFeL8&t=21s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_njRFDFeL8&t=21s)

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### **The BANQUET**



Ed Downey, Dana and Marlene Anthony and Cindy Weber memorized fallen members in this very touching ceremony, the script of which follows and the entire video can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcbyugSRPyg>

The flag folding ceremony, has been modified to memorialize and honor the members of the Phan Rang Family who have passed since our last reunion.

AS ED AND DANA ENTER THE BALLROOM AND RETRIEVE FLAG FROM  
THE TABLE THE FOLLOWING WILL BE READ:

The U.S. flag is a symbol of what Americans hold dear.  
It represents the values we cherish Beyond measure.

**Our flag flies high for freedom,  
for legal equality,  
For Constitutional Rights,  
and justice for everyone.**

AS ED AND DANA UNFOLD THE FLAG SLOWLY, ONE FOLD AT A TIME UNTIL THE FLAG IS  
UNFOLDED THE FOLLOWING WILL BE READ:

**Our flag flies high for bravery,  
for the courage it takes to do battle, and even give our lives, for what we know is right.**

**Our flag flies high for compassion.**

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**We quickly help those in need.  
When there’s a call for service,  
Americans are the front runners.**

AS ED AND DANA SNAP OPEN THE FLAG AT THE COMMAND “PRESENT” THE FOLLOWING WILL  
BE READ:

**The American flag is an icon,  
It represents the American way;  
Our hearts swell with pride and emotion  
when we see it flutter and wave in the breeze.**

AT THE COMMAND OF “ORDER” THE FLAG WILL BE CLOSED AND READIED FOR FOLDING.

The first fold is dedicated to **JACK ANDERSON**, of the 8th Tactical Bomber Squadron as a B-57  
crew chief

The second fold is dedicated to **BARRY COMER**, of the 35th Combat Support Group

The third fold is dedicated to **BILLY COOK** of the 35th Supply Squadron

The fourth fold is dedicated to **DONALD GREY**, of the 18th Special Operations Squadron’s AC-  
119 Gunships

The fifth fold is dedicated to **REUBEN GUTIERREZ** of the 35th Security Police Squadron as a K-9  
Dog Handler

The sixth fold is dedicated to **BOB HOFFMAN**, of the 35th Security Police Squadron as a K-9 Dog  
Handler

The seventh fold is dedicated to **JAMES HOLLINGER**, of the 35th and 315th Security Police  
Squadron.



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The eighth fold is dedicated to **FRANK HOWE**, of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

The ninth fold is dedicated to **JOE KAUPA**, of the 35th Security Police Squadron.

The tenth fold is dedicated to **LARRY G. LOY**, of the 35th Fuel Maintenance Squadron

The eleventh fold is dedicated to **HAROLD MADDEN**, of the Army’s 192nd Attack Helicopter Company

The twelfth fold is dedicated to **BERNARD MANNING**, of the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron’s C-123s.

The thirteenth fold is dedicated to **HAZEL PHILLIPS**, of the Nurse Corps

The final tuck is dedicated to **GARY ROSSETT, JR.**, of the 35th Combat Support Group, unit unknown

AS ED AND DANA FINALIZED THE FLAG FOLDING THE FOLLOWING WAS READ:

**As we look out over the crowd tonight, we are reminded of the veterans here among us. We know they have all stood in defense of the principles for which our flag stands. We present this flag with dedication, the flag of our country.**

ED AND DANA THEN PLACED THE FLAG ON THE TABLE AND DID A FINAL SALUTE

Will you please rise for the playing of TAPS



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### **BANQUET PRESENTER - CRAIG LORD**



*The insert is Craig Lord at Phan Rang AB with his Air Force Sentry Dog, performing thier mission of providing air base defense.*

#### **Introduction:**

When Doug dropped me a note and asked me if I would speak about K9 at the reunion I sat in my chair drinking my coffee thinking, “you must have sent this to the wrong email.” I read the note 3 times and confirmed it was the right address and after about a minute I responded that I would be happy to oblige the request.

This is truly an honor to be asked to represent the dogs and my fellow handlers with what it was like to work the perimeter at Phan Rang and a total privilege to share it with the family of Happy Valley.

I will take you through a brief history of the dogs in Vietnam, how the Air Force fit in, how I got involved, and a behind the scenes look of how we went about our business. Then I will take you on a walk at night on the perimeter and explain what it was like when the dog goes on alert. To cap things off I’ll tell a couple of stories that myself and a couple of others experienced and end my incredible story of adventure in K9 and a bond with a dog that will never be broken.

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### **A Brief History of K9 in Vietnam:**

The U.S. Military has used dogs in combat in multiple wars, to include WWI, WWII, and Korea. Vietnam became an unprecedented event in MWD history regarding the number of dogs used. 4,196 dogs served in Vietnam and only 203 returned. Before you get outraged about this you must know that Congress and the DOD considered the dogs equipment and diseases that were not present in the U.S. were prevalent in Vietnam, so not many were allowed to return. This has since been rectified and the current day dogs can now retire and be adopted or used as training dogs. Approximately 10,000 handlers served in Vietnam and that is a close estimate. It is thought that the dog teams saved close to 10,000 lives.

All four branches of the military utilized dogs in Vietnam. Although the majority were Sentry Dogs the Army and Marines also had Scout Dogs. The Marines also had a small unit that did Mine, Tunnel and Booby Trap missions. The Army in addition had a specialized group called Combat Tracker Units that searched for downed pilots and went after the enemy if a patrol lost contact. The Navy was primarily Sentry Dog, however, they also had “Water Dogs” that patrolled from a boat and sniffed out underwater sappers that tried to sabotage ships or boats. They could pick up the scent from the snorkel, usually a bamboo tube.

For now, we will be talking about Sentry Dogs and how the Air Force used them.

### **How the Air Force fit in:**

The Air Force did the basic training for all Military Dogs at Lackland AFB (with some exceptions). In 1960 the Air Force deployed to Vietnam on an R & D project for discovery. Then in 1961 the Air Force sent two K9 instructors and ten Sentry Dogs to Vietnam as an advisory team to assist the Vietnamese. The ARVN were already doing Scout and Sentry work assisted by an Army advisory team; however, it was not a success and point blank it was a disaster (not because of the Army). At this point the military was disinterested in using Sentry Dogs in Vietnam. On July 1st, 1965, Da Nang was penetrated by VC Sappers (Vietcong Combat Engineers). They got by security and did significant damage. This changed everything! The Air Force sent 40 handlers and their dogs to Vietnam on a mission called “Project Top Dog.” They were sent to Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa. This operation proved that the German Shepherd dogs would be valuable in Vietnam and handle the climate change without adverse effects. The other Branches followed

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shortly thereafter.

Air Base defense would be critical and Sentry Dog teams were the ideal first line of defense, combined with Security in Towers and Strike Teams. The basics of perimeter defense was to establish a perimeter fence line as far away from the interior workings of the base as possible without angering the local population and close enough to get resupplied if needed.

One thing that all dogs have in common is detection. It doesn't matter which job you are doing with the dog or which branch of service; detection is the route to survival. Sometimes you also had to stop the threat, we were trained for both.

### **How I got involved:**

I went to Basic Training in January 1967. At the end of Basic in February I received my orders. No Tech School, after one week leave do not pass go and proceed directly to SAC 305th Bomb Wing, Bunker Hill, Indiana, assignment Air Police Squadron. Do not watch the National Weather on TV because you are not going to like it.

Ok, off to SAC I go, with my Basic Training buddy, Ray. We arrived on a DC-3, in a light snow in Kokomo, Indiana. The AF blue bus soon arrived, and we were deposited at the AP barracks and then checked in with our orders the next day.

There were lots of things that were going to happen to Ray and I in the first few weeks. After we checked in, we had to begin training as we were totally unqualified for everything. SAC had shipped most of the M-16s to Vietnam so we had to requalify with the M-2 Carbine on a field trip to Camp Atterbury because they had a range we could use.

Finally, we are trained enough so that we could begin working in the KC-135 area. We weren't yet qualified to work security guard duty on the B-58s. One thing we learned is that the Air Force found a way to put some eager kids into the most unthankful, boring jobs on the planet, “humping” airplanes for 8 or more hours in crummy weather is not a stimulus. Maybe boring was a good thing.

One night by some form of intervention I was working a boundary where a taxiway and runway intersected. It was an isolated post and very difficult to stay awake. I was now qualified to work

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the B-58s, but I drew this post, and it was the best night I had at Bunker Hill. I heard someone or something coming, and I challenged it! It turned out to be my friend Bob Dragich from K9 and his dog Bear. The dog’s real name was Herbie-Turbojet. The dog was the most beautiful black smooth coated German Shepherd I had ever seen. I chatted with Bob for a minute and realized then and there this is what I wanted to do. He let me handle Herbie for a few minutes and I was hooked. I asked how I could get into K9, and he explained that there had to be an opening and it would be hard and that I should ask the First Sergeant. I made an appointment, and the First Shirt told me the same thing. He went on to explain that there were K9 openings just not at Bunker Hill and SAC would not let me go.

Several months go by and winter was about to descend on us again and all I could hope for was another ORI so I could feel like I was contributing. Then I saw Bob in late December on that same Post and he said he had orders to go to Phan Rang in February after AZR school (SP combat preparedness school) at Lackland. Now I was really bummed.

But not to worry, Vietnam was a hot ticket item, and you could volunteer. In early February someone came through the barracks and said there was a “shipment” open for Phan Rang and go see the First Shirt if you want it. I never even touched the door before I was at the office and putting in my request. The First Sergeant asked me why I wanted to do this. I simply told him I knew they were short handed over there in K9 and my chances were good of getting what I wanted. Besides, I needed out of real winter.

Off to AZR and then on to Phan Rang and catch up with Dragich. I wasn’t going to let them say no this time.

We departed McChord AFB, Washington on Northwest in the early morning with the first stop at Yokota AB, Japan. The aircraft would be refueled, and a crew change would take place. In the meantime, we got off the plane to stretch. When we stepped off the plane it was 32 degrees and I thought, you are following me aren’t you. However, another chance encounter happened. I was talking to another AF guy named Jesus Parra Jr. I asked him where he was from and where he was going, a very typical greeting when getting a conversation going. He was going to Phan Rang! I asked him what he did, and he said K9. I couldn’t believe I was having such good luck. I told him my situation and he agreed to help if he could, and of course I would introduce him to

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Dragich. We then left for Okinawa and Cam Rahn Bay. We picked up a ride on a C-123 to Phan Rang, and the adventure began.

I looked up Dragich right away and told him of my plan. He and Jesus went to work right away on getting the Flight Chief to approve a cross over because there was an opening. It finally happened! They had to agree to do my training before and after their shifts, and they did so willingly. We thus began a condensed two week mini course that normally would have been 14 weeks.

There was a lot to learn in a very short period, and I had to learn the characteristics of my dog Winston. I had to learn proper care, what the kennel duties were, attack training, tracking, alerts, how to deal with the obstacle course, and how to properly take the dog to the Vet. A trip to the firing range to teach me how to handle Winston when firing was an experience I didn't expect. We took the dogs to the range routinely to keep them family with the noise and firing. Little did I know that many dogs go after the muzzle while firing, sort of like going after a water hose. Winston was one of those. There is much more but too much to list in this story.

At the end of the training Dragich and Parra separately spent 3 nights on post with me to get me familiar with night ops. On the last night at about 01:00 Dragich just looked at me and said, “ok it's yours, I'll see you and Winston in the morning when the sun comes up”. Suddenly, some anxiety came over me because I was now alone and had to perform. It took about three nights of this to calm down. It was not a problem for Winston, he knew how to lead his team. Believe me, this was a very strange feeling as I didn't know where the backup was and the other handlers next to me would be quite a distance away. Morning came, and I was picked up by the posting truck, and the guys gave me a hand. They knew what I had gone through as we all went through that first experience. It was time to settle in and continue to learn.

### **Behind the Scenes and Things:**

In early 1966 a group of the 366th APS/SPS K9 came from Danang to establish the K9 presence at Phan Rang. They helped establish the perimeter by helping install the wire, helped with building the tents and build the kennel for the dogs which was outside and used the traveling crates for the dogs' shelters. All of this in addition to working at night and in some cases flight line duty during the day and at night. That went away later.

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One of the things that some of the handlers did on their day off was ride the Army Huey gunships as extra gunners out to fire bases. The Army made them prove that they could handle an M-60 machine gun before they could get the ride and of course they proved it right away. While all of this was going on the handlers still made time for training to keep the dogs and themselves sharp. This happened late in the afternoons every other week.

In October of 1966 the 366th was replaced by the 35th K9. Most of the 366th handlers stayed in place; the orders just changed them to 35th. Some deployed to Phu Cat and Tuy Hoa to start those bases. Things changed when the 35th arrived. The kennels became modernized, shifts were standardized, barracks were built, and the helicopter rides stopped.

We now had two flights, A and B. We had 72 dogs and worked 66 a night. One week we would go out to training at 5 pm in the afternoon for about 2 hours for 6 days and then work our post from sundown until 03:00 am (if nothing happened). The second shift came on board at 9:00 pm and worked until sunrise. This system meant that early in the evening the dog teams would work two posts instead of one and then the same drill after 03:00 am. Most of the posts were 250 to 300 meters and some were 450 meters. So, if you were on two side by side 450 meter posts you were covering about 3,000 feet.

Some nights for the early shift could get very long if we received incoming or had probes. That was an automatic stay on post until sunrise.

We also fit in necessary time for the Vet to do routine checks on the dogs. We became dental hygienist about every 4 months and cleaned the dog's teeth. Not like your home pet. The Vet would give the dog a shot that would partially knock him down and we would use a dental tool and go to work cleaning. On other occasions we dipped the dogs in a tank full of sheep dip. If you don't know what that is, it is a very powerful chemical mixed with water that will kill ticks, flees and who knows what else. It was a great battle to get the dog in the tank, and we had to use the muzzle. Yes, the handler pretty much got dipped too by the time it was all over. Nothing like a bath of Malathion and Arsenic.

### **Taking a Stroll on Post:**

Imagine if you will that you and your dog started on the early shift. You have done the training,

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received the intel report at Guard mount and are now on post. Take a moment and close your eyes and visualize for a moment. It is a new moon, Southeast Asian darkness like you have never experienced. You can barely see beyond your partner. It is now 01:00 am and you have been into the shift for 8 hours, and a bit drowsy. You are depending on the dog to warn you and guide you. Suddenly you feel a slight vibration in the leash. The vibration increases and the dog begins to pull harder. Your adrenaline level begins to rise, and your heart is racing. The leash is now tight, he is swaying back and forth with his nose in the air. He is pulling so hard that you have the heels of your boots dug into the ground to slow him down. I call in the alert on my radio and ask for illumination. No dice tonight, and I hope for back up soon. The handler next to me is proceeding my way. You watch for further signals and now his ears are straight up, his tail is vertical, which for Winston means a human alert. The hairs on his back are standing erect and your adrenaline is giving you a total rush, your heart is pounding and suddenly his head points directly at his alert. You can hear him breathing with power. You still can't see what he has. Your weapon has been off safety since this started and you have now stopped the advance, so that you don't walk into an ambush. As fast as this started it is starting to slowly subside. Whomever was in the fence line has started backing away. Winston's alert is slowly winding down. He did a remarkable job of alerting and taking you to the threat, silently in the night, without fear he neutralized some unknowns in the fence line. After a few minutes and no more alerts, we walk to the area he was alerting on and with our flashlight we find some flattened brush and a trail.

This type of alert happened many times and is probably the worst case scenario. Other alerts might be a simple hearing or scent alert off the fence line maybe a mortar crew setting up. If they were close enough to the fence the dogs could hear the set up and pick up a scent. This is a good time to segue into some stories from the perimeter.

### **November 22, 1968, Juliet Area:**

We had been getting alerts for a couple of months and nothing was found inside the perimeter fence, and we weren't getting any credit for what we were reporting. Some did not believe in the dogs. On November 22, 1968, Winston and I were on patrol along the fence line in the Juliet area. It was a New Moon and the conditions for an alert paralleling the fence in one direction was terrible. The handler next to me was coming the opposite direction and had a chance to pick something up. His dog was Rex Jr. AKA Mouse.



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Suddenly with no warning, no radio call with an alert BANG, BANG, BANG and zing a couple of rounds went right by Winston and I. Rex and Dave had somebody in the fence, and they had taken a shot, so he opened fire on them with his CAR-15. I yelled at him and asked if he was ok and he said yeah, fire towards the fence left. I did but doubt if I ever hit anything.

Then the unthinkable happened, they guy in the perimeter tower forgot we were there and fired on us with the M-60. All of this happened in less than 2 minutes, and it seemed like hours. In the morning we did a sweep with a couple of other guys and found some blood on the ground in the wire. We also had some rather unpleasant things to say to the guy in the tower. Apparently, Dave got one of them. That was verified later in January. Nothing was put in the SP quarterly report about this.

This was the first time I had experienced anything like this, and I found out what fear was like. I didn't know my leg could shake like that. Eat your heart out Elvis, I got you beat.

### **Snake Fight as told by Carl Adams:**

One of the other types of alerts was an animal alert and that included snakes. We were loaded with snakes on the perimeter, some locations more than others. Usually, the snakes would go away when they sensed us coming. For those of you who don't know, we had Cobras, Banded Kraits, Pit Vipers, Malaysian Pythons, and several other nasty buggers.

Carl was working the Hotel area which was out by the trash and bomb dump and extended around to the 101st airborne compound. This was one of the few locations that had trees and vegetation on both sides of the fence line. Ripe place for snakes, good place for snakes to hide and a food source at the dump (mostly rats). As he tells it he was walking along, and his dog Andy alerted. Apparently, a Banded Krait got out of sorts on the perimeter road and he and Andy were having a bit of a standoff. Normally the snake would have left but it was provoked. Carl thought, “can't have this, I'll ask to shoot a snake”. It went like this: Watchdog Control Kilo 22 request one round to shoot a snake. Watchdog Control Standby Kilo 22. Perimeter towers Hotel 4,5,6,7 Kilo 22 is going to fire one round to shoot a snake acknowledge. Everybody says 10-4. Watchdog Control, Kilo 22 you are cleared to shoot one round to kill a snake. 10-4 Kilo 22. Andy and the snake are still having a good old time, snake is coiled, and Andy is snarly. So, Carl

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comes off safety and fires one round, darn, missed! Try again, missed again. Snake is frozen trying to play dead. This is becoming interesting. At ROUND 10 one of the guys started counting over the radio. That's 10, That's 11. Finally at round 20, the last round in the magazine Carl announced “GOT HIM! A cheer and round of applause went up.

Not everyone hated snakes. We had one handler of the 1967 era, Ken Eggleston that started a serpentarium with permission of the VET. On quite nights Ken would go hunting and bag all sorts of snakes, including the poisonous ones. When the posting truck came by to pick Ken up in the morning the guys would see the bag and get as far away as they could on the deuce and a half. By the time I got there Ken was gone and so were the snakes. So much for our little zoo.

### **The Other Critters:**

We learned to become in tune with our surroundings. Anything out of place would be suspicious. We had some help with the lizards. These were Tokay Lizards a form of Gecko and sounded like they were saying F-U. These helpful little guys would hum their song most of the night when we were around, I think they were looking for a girlfriend. I called them my back up dog. We quickly learned that when the lizards were silent, we may not have a good night. It was a very accurate warning.

We also had the birds we called re-up birds. These birds sounded like they are saying re-up, re-up. I always thought there was a retention NCO with a speaker phone on the perimeter doing this, but the birds did exist. There were also large cats that would come through the fence and hunt for small game at night. This is when you must know how your dog alerts. Usually, they alerted differently for an animal, in Winston's case it was tail down. One night a large cat came through the fence and Winston went straight to the end of the leash. I thought he dislocated my left shoulder he hit it so hard. Then he just stopped in his tracks and quit pulling and sat. He looked around at me as if to say, “What the hell was that?” I just looked at him and said, “Don't know Dude, but it was big.” We turned and went the opposite direction.

### **Some Days Chickens, Somedays Feathers:**

I was selected to help mentor one of the new guys at the end of 1968. His name was Eddie Mathews, and we became lifelong friends. I explained to Eddie that the only way he was going to learn an animal alert was to have one on post. I don't recall when this happened, but it went

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like this: Eddie called in an alert, but he didn't know what kind of an alert it was. His dog Mountain, a big strong German Shepherd was being very aggressive. Eddie now picked up movement in the fence line but still didn't know what it was and called in that he had movement and it was coming in. Starlight Control gave him permission to fire. BAM BAM BAM, then on Automatic. In the morning we did the sweep and found a couple of beaks, some feet and a bunch of feathers. There wasn't even enough to make a chicken salad. You wonder how we get nicknames, here is a classic case. Eddie became “Chicken Killer” for the rest of his life.

### **The Scare Post:**

Everyone one of us had a post we hated. It turns out that most of us hated this one post the most and we thought if we were going to get killed in Vietnam this was it.

There was a post near and to the left of the strip gate. This post did not have good conditions for detection most of the time. This post had a TACAN Station that was very important to our aircrews. The TACAN was surrounded by an earthen wall about three quarters around. It was also loud. The flight line was at our back and the prevailing winds were also. We were silhouetted by the flight line lights and close enough to have the distracting noise of the aircraft. A road went in front of the TACAN and a small POL refueling location was across the street. The road went to the main gate. There was a water filtration pool near the strip gate at the end of the post.

This post was a smaller post. Outside and inside the fence line was tall elephant grass and just on the other side of that was a dirt road and then houses for the hamlet next to a canal near the strip. Getting an alert on this post was going to be difficult and there was no escape route and no bunkers as a safety net.

One night as I was walking in front of the TACAN station next to the fence, Winston went on a full blown alert towards the road. Not normal for him as he was used to the normal traffic. He was really going at it hard, and I thought, “did we let someone get by? Jeeze, I'm going to die tonight. I didn't even call this in and I'm on semi-auto ready for anything. Winston is starting to growl as we went around the corner of the revetment and bingo, we are on it! He is barking like crazy and going around in circles 42 teeth and an attitude. Low and behold we have captured 3 Green Berets in a jeep. IT'S PARTY TIME FOR K9!”. I let Winston have a good time and had a Sgt

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First Class on the hood of the jeep yelling at me to call off the dog, we're friendlies. I got Winston OUT praised him and quizzed the guys on what they were doing. The Panther Flight guy at the POL is across the street laughing. Well, the Green Beret snake eaters wanted to steal some gas for their Gerry Cans. I told them “Bad idea” you will kill your jeep.

We then chatted for a bit and found out where we were from Stateside, had a good laugh and they went across the street and the attendant fixed them up with some gas. I pray every night that those guys made it home. After all, as far as I know I'm the only Air Force K9 to have captured 3 Green Berets.

### **January 26th, 1969:**

For those of us who were there for the Attack of January 25th and 26th 1969 we each had different experiences and a different story to tell. I can only tell my story of that night and my small part in the event.

Jimmy Thornton, Joe Mollica, C.V. Skirvin, Tom Caputo, and I were all off that night. Tom was relieved of duty as he was going home to be discharged. Thornton and I had gone up to the NCO club for our first visit and get a good meal. We walked back down the hill at a reasonable time as we wanted to get a good night's sleep.

Not to long after we hit the rack a little after 23:00 the Kennel Master came in and said let's go. We didn't hear any sirens and asked what was up? He simply said, “not that kind of attack”. That was a sobering comment. We grabbed our gear and headed to the Kennel, including Caputo who didn't have to go. By now the mortars started hitting, and then the rockets began impacting. Cap never missed a fight, and he wasn't going to miss this one.

It is said that when combat begins chaos starts and all plans are laid aside. This was a truth we learned that night. Caputo, Thornton, Mollica, and myself and our dogs were headed for the Juliet area where the initial penetration happened. Skirvin was going to the Bravo area to take over for 'Buzzy' Bizet who was wounded by small arms fire and was on his way to the clinic. Security was holding down the area until Skirvin arrived. Oh Yes, this happened on the “Scare Post”. Tim Hunstiger had been wounded on the initial attack in the Juliet area. Unfortunately, it was not so friendly fire, but he survived and so did his dog.

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We deployed and were advised we were to do sweeps into the canal and flush out any VC. We decided to do a wedge formation so we could instantly flank if we needed to. The noise was incredible with Sgt Larry Kirk firing the mini gun off his jeep on the fence line. We could not hear the radios, so we gave each other hand signals. Captain Wright, Hatton, and Lampe were on the other side of the canal and blocked by the hedge row so we couldn't see them.

On our way into the sweep, we heard the crackle of AK-47s that were aimed at us. Caputo's dog Fritzie jumped up and took a round and was killed instantly. I was a little over a leash length away when that happened. Almost in an instant a B-40 hit the APC that was next to us, and the shrapnel went everywhere. Caputo was hit and down, the shrapnel had gone across my boots, yet I didn't get a scratch. We knew we couldn't do anything about Cap's dog Fritzie, so we checked on Cap. He stood up and then went back down. Captain America (Mollica) asked, "is he dead?" I simply replied, "I don't know". I don't remember who picked up Cap and got him to the Clinic but I'm thankful he did. I think it was our Flight Chief Glen Redmond.

The gunner in the APC still manned his post and was firing. Thank goodness the 822nd Combat SPs were there and thank goodness for Panther Flight and the augmentees.

The chaos was still going on and we continued our sweeps and there was still sporadic gun fire. I didn't fire very many rounds, as the importance of what we were doing was detection. Oddly enough Winston never tried to bite the barrel of my CAR-15 that night. As things quieted down, we were given a couple of cases of POP flares and instructed to use them every few minutes and then do more sweeps.

What we saw when the flares went up was unbelievable. Without being too graphic I'll just say it was much worse than what you see in the movies. We stayed on the perimeter until close to 10:00 that morning and finally had to get the dogs to the kennel. The dogs were remarkable that night and so was everyone else. Cap and Hunstiger were Air Evac'd to Cam Ranh Bay. Things changed radically that night for us. We ended up going into yellow alert for 69 straight days. That meant K9 worked 7 days a week including the training shift. Fortunately, our VET, Dr. Blaine went up the chain of command and got this practice stopped after what seemed like a crazy amount of time as the dogs were exhausted and not at their best.

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Everyone was wondering which post they would draw the next night. Yeah, for me! I got the “Scare Post.” Then the night after that I got the Post in the area the VC came in. One good thing is one of the VC was captured and I have the interrogation report. These sappers were from the 121st NVA Sapper division. He stated they thought K9 was stupid. Well Pilgrim you thought wrong. Even though multiple handlers were wounded everyone went to work the next night apart from CAP and Hunstiger.

As the days and nights went on the mortar and rocket attacks increased and could happen at any time. The K9 alerts decreased for a bit as the NVA/VC mortar crews moved farther out. The probes continued off and on, but nothing seemed to come of it, until February 22, '69.

### **Moving Forward:**

The nights grew very long for all of us, and I think we got a bit jumpy. If we didn't have an alert for several days or a week, we started to think something was wrong even though that was only in our minds. Back to the “Scare Post”. Our flight Sgt, SSGT Glen Redmond would come around every night when possible and bring an urn of coffee and call us to the jeep to give us a quick break. Per policy the dogs were to be muzzled when going to the jeep. Only one dog team at a time was to go to the jeep for coffee. This night I was working the “Scare Post” and I was oddly enough walking on the path that was around the water treatment pool. Winston and I had heard something at the strip, and we were up there to get a better look. Sgt Redmond had called the handler nearest the Strip Gate to come to the jeep. For some reason he did not muzzle his dog. This was a good dog, but not this night. Major decided to bite and blow out the jeep's tire. With the loud bang and everyone being jumpy the other K9s, and the towers did a one way fire fight into the Strip. Sgt. Redmond was yelling seize fire on the radio and all quitted down. As far as I know they only fired at the road as that is where anything would be.

After Major's handler got a stern talking to by Sgt. Redmond he called me to the jeep. Even though I wanted a coffee I just couldn't. Why? When the first pop of the tire went it sounded like incoming rounds so I hit the dirt and got Winston down ready to fire. At least I thought I hit the dirt until I realized that I slipped knee deep on one side in the water treatment pool. Now I know where the term deep doo doo came from. I declined and just went back to work. By the time the sun came up I was dried off but still smelled. Winston didn't even want to be close. He just thought I was clumsy. There were a couple of comments on the posting truck, and I just kept my mouth shut because no one knew who it was.

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### **February 22, 1969:**

I was CQ at the kennel on the night of February 22nd, 1969. We had a tremendous standoff attack. We had received more rounds that night than on January 26th. However, there was nothing documented in the quarterly report as to what happened in the Juliet area. On the same post that we experienced the firefight on November 22nd, 1968, and with the same handler and dog we lost REX JR aka MOUSE to small arms fire. We were all devastated including his handler. Oh yeah! “Buzzy” Bizet was wounded for a second time on the “Scare Post”.

### **Tradition:**

The pilots weren't the only ones with a tradition of being hosed down after their last mission. We had ours also, just a bit different. If you remember early in the program, we dipped the dogs in the sheep dip tank. Yep! That was our tradition. When we got off post for the last time someone had already filled the tank full of water, less the sheep dip. You couldn't escape as it was you against at least 15 handlers. Like a sack of potatoes, you were tossed in forever to be cleansed of ticks and flees.

### **Dream Sheets, and near disaster:**

For those of us who still had time left on our enlistment we had to fill out a “Dream Sheet” of where we wanted to go next. If you were in K9 you usually filled out to stay in PACAF because you had no choice on a CONUS base that might be cold. PACAF would keep you some place in their territory. I filled out Thailand, Okinawa, and Hickam in Hawaii.

My last day at Phan Rang April 19th, 1969, I went out to the kennel to say good by to Winston and Doc Blaine. Winston and I went out to the training area and just played for about 2 hours. I finally had to put him back in his run give him a hug and leave. Believe me, I had tears in my eyes. That was one of the hardest things I ever had to do.

A couple of friends of mine in Law Enforcement picked me up in a jeep about 2 in the afternoon to take me to the aerial port. I was sitting on the well of the jeep in the back when they made a sharp left turn, busted the stop sign and out I went. I hit on my tailbone and rolled up into the stop sign like a pill bug blowing in the wind. I was cut up and bruised a bit from the gravel. The agents at the aerial port almost didn't let me on the C-130 to Tan Son Nhut. I got cleaned up, they said OK, and I was off to Vung Tao and Tan San Nhut.

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I wasn't leaving until noon on the 20th and ran into a couple of handlers I knew, and we decided to visit one of the clubs. Around 23:30 before the club closed, we heard that tell tail sound of incoming mortars. Fump, thud thud! Everyone but us took off for a nearby bunker. We just looked at each other and saw an opportunity. We poured a few more pitchers of beer and then called it a night. Those guys had to report at 06:00, but I'm sure they were on their game.

As I departed on my Continental flight, I was looking at the coastline and just thinking of Winston and the guys and their dogs. All of us had a bond like no other, we were one with the dogs and each other. As we slipped away from Vietnam I was praying that they would get to see one more morning.

We stopped at Clark, and I ran into my friend Ray from Bunker Hill. He was doing Law Enforcement/Customs work and explained he left Indiana shortly after I did. Well, it was time to board again and it was off to my next base before going home.

We arrived in Honolulu and I reported to Hickam to get my leave. Yes, that Dream Sheet does come true.

END





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**Pictured from left to right top row: Jack Anderson, Rex Close, Rodger Burchett and David McGaughey Bottom Row: Joe Kaupa, Mike Maleski and Charles Simmons.**



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I want to thank each and every one of the attendees; they are what make the reunion great. Kudos to Bob Tucker, Dana Anthony and Cindy Weber to accept board positions and hit the road running. Thanks to everyone who so generously contribute to the silent auction and especially Carla Reed for organizing it and Marlene Anthony for stepping in and helping out. Proceeds from the silent auction are used to fund or subsidize events for the next reunion. It's an honor to have Ed Downey and Barbara Brandt as honor guards and for their yearly performances that make our hearts swell with pride and at the same time making us teary eyed. Barbara couldn't make it this year, but she was there in spirit and once again thanks to Dana Anthony for stepping up to take her place. We are also honored to have some of the best presenters. Maj. Bruce Gordon and BGen Jim Martin really took us back to Vietnam with their stories and especially the video that put us right in the seat of an F100. We applaud them for their bravery and service just as we do for everyone that severed at Phan Rang Air Base. Craig Lord gave us a dog handler's perspective of what it took to protect the air base. For many of us,

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and that includes me, I never thought of those guys out there protecting us and the fears that they faced because for me the scariest thing was walking down the hill late at night from the NCO club. I haven't singled everyone out for their contributions, but I will just say that volunteerism is alive and well in our group and everyone wants to help out in some way and many did and I thank you.

### **PRESENTER BIO'S**

**Bruce Gordon** flew the F-86, F-100, F-102, and F-106. He flew more than 3,800 hours, with 132 combat sorties in the F-100, most of those in the 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron from Phan Rang between 1970 and 1971. He returned from Phan Rang and worked in aircraft maintenance on test aircraft, then on Electronic Warfare at Wright-Patterson AFB. After retiring from the USAF, he managed aircraft for a company in Saudi Arabia, returning to the USA to work on computer scheduling of depot level maintenance.

At last year's Phan Rang reunion, he told of two missions flown from Phan Rang. They were missions into Cambodia in close support of Cambodian troops in contact with the North Vietnamese regular army.

Bruce is the author of “*The Spirit of Attack*” and if you wish to buy his book, click [here](#).

**Jim Martin** earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the U. S. Air Force Academy and an MBA from the University of Dayton. While on active duty in the Air Force, he flew worldwide routes for the Military Airlift Command in the C-135B and C-141A/B aircraft. Later he was assigned to the F-100D aircraft and flew 289 combat missions in Vietnam. Following his combat tour, he attended the Air Force Aerospace Research Pilot School at Edwards and later flew developmental flight tests at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. In 1973, he joined NASA's Ames Research Center where for 25 years he flew experimental and developmental flight test programs primarily involving powered lift STOL aircraft. He served in various units in the Air Force Reserve for 27 years, retiring as a Brigadier General. Following retirement from NASA and the Air Force Reserve, he flew corporate for an additional 22 years. He has flown more than 25,000 flight hours in 170 different types.

Now retired, he lives in Reno, NV, and enjoys golfing and sport flying in his Van's RV-7.

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**Craig Lord** was born and raised in Southern California. After graduating from Lynwood High School in 1966 he traveled to Wichita, KS and went to work for Beech Aircraft to learn about building airplanes. He soon learned that production was not for him and returned to California to join the Air Force on the delayed enlisted program.

After leaving the Air Force in 1971 he hooked on with a K9 business in Southern California and after a few months found himself and another Vietnam handler working security with the dogs for John and Michelle Phillips of the Mommas and Poppas group at their house in Belair for 3 months. Later in 1971 he went to work for the Flying Tiger Line at LAX as a ramp employee and worked his way up to Senior Supervisor in operations. During this time he attended Golden West College and earned his Commercial, Multi-engine and Instrument ratings at the Long Beach Airport. He was hired on as a part time delivery pilot for Cessna. On his days off he went to Wichita and picked up an airplane and returned it to Long Beach

In 1982 he and his family moved to Dallas/DFW with Flying Tigers. During this time he became part of a new group at Flying Tigers that traveled extensively handling service issues and teaching Boeing 747 and Douglas DC-8 weight and balance. In 1989 FedEx bought Flying Tigers and he was assigned to the Merger Integration Team and moved to Memphis. For the next 10 years he traveled to Asia, Japan, Europe, Canada, and Puerto Rico. He then transferred to FedEx aircraft Maintenance Scheduling and Routing Control as a project administrator for the computer system and operations.

In 1993 he was one of 6 Veteran Dog Handlers that founded the Vietnam Dog Handler Association which is now 29 years old and going strong. After nearly 33 years of a great career he decided to retire at age 55 with a buyout and to do new things. He went to work in Security at the Memphis Zoo so he could learn about large exotic animals.

When his wife Patty retired he left the Zoo and they traveled the U.S., South Pacific, French Polynesia, and the Caribbean. In between time they have enjoyed their family and 6 grandchildren. Currently he has been the Commander of American Legion Post 284 in Arlington, TN for the past 5 years.

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### THESE ARE THE PEOPLE THAT ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE PHAN RANG COMMUNITY



This collage only contains the images of the reunion attendees that choose to have their couple-individual photos taken.

## The Reunion

Autumn leaves, rustling together to the appointed place, the old warriors come.

Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.  
Where they meet is not so important anymore...They meet and that's enough for now.

Greetings echo across a lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close. Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.

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But deep, within these Indian Summer days they have reached a greater understanding of life and love.

The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous remembering.

On a table someone spreads old photographs; a test of recollection. And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, or merely gone. The rugged, slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength. Some are now sustained by one of "medicines miracles," And even in this fact they manage to find humor.

The women, all those who waited, all those who love them, have watched the changes take place. Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other; as glad to be together as the men.

Talk turns to war and planes and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again, reweaving the threadbare fabric of the past. Mending one more time the banner of their youth.

They hear the vibrations, feel the shudder of metal as propellers whine and whirl, and planes come to life.

These birds with fractured wings can see beyond the mist of clouds, and they are in the air again, chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of flight, close to the heavens; the wild and blue yonder of their anthem.

Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.

Each, in his own way, may wonder who will be absent another year.

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The room grows quiet for a time.

Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns. The talk may run to other wars and other men, and of futility. So, this is how it goes.

### **The past is so much the present.**

In their ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches, and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the deep eternal love of country they will forever share.

Finally, it is time to leave. Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday, but the past cannot be held too long for it is fragile.

They say, "Farewell...See you next year, God willing," breathing silent prayers for one another.

### **Each keeping a little of the others with him forever.**

*(My apologies. This originally appeared in Phan Rang Newsletter 235 and I don't like to repeat things in the newsletters, but this is an exception because it describes our reunions to a tee.*

Michael Mulcahey poses the question

## **“What is the meaning of the Phan Rang ‘Brotherhood’?”**

My first experience with the Phan Rang "Brotherhood" actually happened before I went overseas. While I was stationed at Hill AFB Utah in the classified weapons section a Sgt James Chaffin transferred in from Phan Rang. I only knew Jim for about two months, he was married and was an easy man to like. My orders came in to PCS to Phan Rang. As you all know a two striper did not bring in too much money and as most 19 year olds I wasn't a thrifty person. Transfer money was available to get from Hill AFB to McCord AFB but not nearly enough to go home to Ohio and back to McCord,



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too proud to ask parents for money and I was too young to get a loan on my own. I do not know how Jim found out about my situation but he came to me and took me to the credit union and co-signed a loan for me, \$200. I know some of you knew Jim from Phan Rang such as Jim Kucipeck. I have kept that loan application that "Brother Jim" signed right next to my discharge because they both mean so much to me.

**James McDonough commented:** Interesting I was also a broke E3 and had just been promoted and after paying my \$5 tab at the Airmen's club and having \$18 deducted for a savings bond I lived paycheck to paycheck, but I was allowed a draw on my pay (1966) So thankfully didn't need a loan. And that credit union should have lent you the \$\$ without a co sign as you were enlisted and they could have taken the money from your pay I think.

**Michael Mulcahey responded:** Oh they did take the money from my pay and I kept that deduction up until my discharge, it became an easy way to save. For someone that hardly knew me to take that chance truly impressed me, it would have become his debt if I didn't pay.

**Doug Severt commented:** Michael Mulcahey it's funny that you should mention the Brotherhood or Camaraderie that we Vietnam Veterans share because I visited with a retired USAF CMSgt (not a Vietnam Vet) this afternoon and when I told him about our group he said he's never experienced anything like it. He said he was lucky if he could even remember any names of those he was stationed with and is only in touch with just a few from the service. He mentioned that one problem of trying to connect with others, is in the Air Force we might just have used last names or even nick names. Now, with all of that said, what is the common thread that connects all of us? Was it just being in Vietnam or something more like sharing a common experience? Whatever it is, it must be pretty strong, because so many that attended that very first reunion continue to come to each one and when we get together it brings so much joy just seeing each other. Kenneth Simons mentioned in another post that he missed serving with his comrades, and he isn't the first one to utter that sentiment. I also told him my commander from Phan Rang actually called a couple of weeks ago and we had a wonderful conversation and he just couldn't believe it. I wonder if anyone could explain it?

**Donald Poirier commented:** Doug Severt well, the one thing that separates us from other military reunions is the time that your team and you (and spouses) put in to organize and keep

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us informed. It doesn't go unnoticed, and Deb and I thank you. Sorry we missed this past reunion, we were so looking forward to being there.

**Michael Mulcahey commented:** I believe that it is a combination of all that you said, not necessarily the Vietnam connection; I believe that it starts with who we are, the way we were raised. Certainly the common situations, especially extreme ones, must be a factor. We share the same values, look to the spouses or significant others, they are the strongest signs of our values. At our reunions I look to reconnect with ones that I have known for years, but at each one I meet people that have attended other reunions but for whatever reason didn't make that connection, this year's reunion I spent a lot of time with four couples that I am truly glad we made a connection. A possible factor may be, if you lived as I have I think of that time at Phan Rang everyday and yet never spoke of it for years until this group was formed. In other words I have no idea of an explanation; **I only hope that it never ends.**

**Doug Severt commented:** I saw this post by **Howard Taylor** and I thought it was very appropriate for this discussion. This is about the Bumpers, but the same thing could be said for all Phan Rangers. Here it is: As I sit here this morning drinking my coffee in the comfort of my own home I am reflecting on this past weeks reunion. How we came from all over the country and sent to a faraway place to fight a war. Not knowing we would build friendships that would last a lifetime as we set about doing a dangerous daily job of handling, fusing, and loading bombs and guns on aircraft. We have been getting together since 1998 and those friendships seem to grow stronger with each passing year. To each and every B-57 Bumper I salute you for having the dedication and courage to wear the uniform during a time when it wasn't cool to do so.

**Howard Taylor commented:** Doug Severt, thanks so much for sharing with the Happy Valley family as we gave it our best to Country and built life long lasting friendships!



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### THE EVOLUTION OF THE PHAN RANG REUNION T-SHIRTS



### LETTERS



#### COMMENTS ON “VIETNAM CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS” BY TOM CLARK

Comments from Dong Dao on YouTube “**Vietnam Christmas Thoughts**” by Tom Clark and Doug Severt

Bài nhạc Noel rất tuyệt và cảm ơn những người Mỹ đã đến Việt Nam để tham gia bảo vệ dân miền nam Việt Nam khỏi bọn cộng sản miền bắc Việt Nam. (The Christmas song is great and thanks to the Americans who came to Vietnam to help protect the people of South Vietnam from the communists of North Vietnam.)

**Comments from Del Henry:** 1967-68 Weapons 46250 Pylon/Gun Shop. Christmas 1967 after Tet was a life experience, but I didn't have to worry about getting shot down. Thanks Tom

**Comments from Johnny Phan:** I watched this video I can't hold my tear We are the same situation far away from home, thanks for very valuable videos. God bless you Sir.

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### **COMMENTS ON VIDEO TITLED “PHAN RANG: BY DOUGLAS SEVERT**

**Comments from Dong Dao on YouTube slideshow titled “Phan Rang” by Doug Severt**

Rất tuyệt, đây là quê tôi. (Great, this is my hometown.)

**Comments from Del Henry:** 1967-68 Weapons 46250, Gun/Pylon Shop. It was a very long year!

**Comments from Bill Utterback:** I saw the video posted by Doug Severt (who I remembered) and thought it might have some video of the ALCE building. No such luck, I see now that the video was made by Richard Tappin. I was at Phan Rang AB from mid December 1967 through the first week of February 1970, with a 'vacation' at Hue-Phu Bai for a month during Tet 68. I was an ALCE (Airlift Control Element) airlift controller. The ALCE building was on the flightline and the control room was on the second floor with windows all the way across on the flightline side. Aerial Port occupied the first floor. I had two stripes when I got there and four stripes for about a year before I left to be discharged after four years. I might be remembered for having a Honda 90 motorcycle and living in Thap Cham (unofficially). We had an Aerial Port Coordinator working in the ALCE control room and I think Doug Severt worked that position. I don't want to leave my email address here but my mailing address is 247 Cloud Top, Canyon Lake, TX 78133.

**Comments from Johnny Phan:** So exciting to see the F105 Thunderchief take off and landing among with the C-123 C-130 UH-1 Cobra I never forget about this time I work in Phan Rang air base seen (1970\_1972) after that I transferred to Bien Hoa air base in 1975 to say goodbye to my Vietnam country. Right now I live in California.

**Comments from Frank Wilder:** I was a 366th TAC Fighter Wing 22351 (Air Force Illustrator). I was assigned to design a banner of some sort for the chow hall in his honor and we did...thus WEIGHTMAN HALL. The loss was felt sadly across the entire base.

**Comments from Frank Wilder:** I was pulling KP at the chow hall the afternoon the daily rain and lightning storms would hit the base approximately the same time daily, anyway, lightning flashed and hit just outside the hall...traces of the lightning danced throughout the hall floors

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amazing all and myself as well. An Air force airman who's last name was Weightman, was hit and later died. We played cards with this airman, a real nice guy, I think he was a rank above me at the time. The lighting hit his mess kit and killed him while cleaning and rinsing the kit as we all did. No lie, the very next day all personnel was eating off paper plates from then on, at least the rest of my tour, (1966-67.

**Comments from Walt Snow:** 8th and 13th TBS, B-57's , 66-67, 462 weapons loader, 20mm and .50 cal, gun plumber.....a lot of ordnance left our base!!

**Comments from Gene Loscowski:** I was assigned to Phan Rang AB from Nov 69 to Nov 70, 714th Tactical Control Flight, Combat Controller. I was detached to the 2nd of the 1st Air Cav, US Army. It was a fun assignment.

**Comments from John Leleux:** I was in Tuy Hoa from the end of 68 to the end of 69. Came back to the states for a year and then back to Phan Rang. I was assigned to Civil Engineering design section and also volunteered to fly as a technician flying in an O-2 and volunteered to work at the base pool as a life guard. It was a good tour.

**Comments from Jose Garza:** I was at Phan Rang September 70 to 71.

**Comments from Davie Biggions:** Great film, thanks for posting it. I was at Phan Rang 67 68. Not much changed in 1970. Have you looked at what it looks like now? You can find it on Google Earth. I was a 43250, jet engine mechanic.

### **COMMENTS ON PHAN RANG NEWSLETTER 254**

**Correction notice.** In the follow-up story on the “Traveling Tea cup or the Great Tea Cup Heist” I mistakenly wrote that this was a follow-up story from Phan Rang News 254. It should have been Phan Rang Newsletter 248. Sorry for the confusion. DS



**Roger Lambet wrote:** Another good read, Doug, but very sad to read about the loss of the nurses. I salute them for their service and sacrifice ...

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Jimmy Smith's article solicited all the right responses - everyone's role is important!

Best Wishes, Roger

**Carol Clarke wrote:** Thanks, Doug, for your article on the women of Vietnam. I appreciate your recognition and research on all the women who served, and especially those who served at Phan Rang. You have performed such a great service over these years of helping us all remember. THANK YOU!

Carol

**Jim Lombard wrote:** Afternoon Doug

As usual, a great newsletter - the piece on the nurses was both informative and sad. I read an article recently about a book one of the nurses wrote and one of the sobering “facts” in it was the percentage of “sweet young things” that lost their lives joyriding in helicopters. Many bases had standing orders prohibiting joyrides, but people being people, and this was especially true of young nurses and pilots who flew the wounded into staging bases it was not unusual for “relationships” to develop and the temptation to “come along” when the chopper was going to be going someplace worthwhile to visit (beaches were especially popular) was hard to resist. The nurses was invited to hop aboard, and usually one inducement was that they could bring along a friend. As a result, when the chopper crashed two female lives were lost and in many cases, there was hell to pay back at their unit.

There was one small error in the write-up. I would not want to bet my life on it, but would be willing to wager a substantial amount of money, that the statement that women served as “air traffic controllers” in Vietnam is incorrect. ATC was not only a male dominated group during the Vietnam era, but there were only a handful of female controllers anywhere in the military! Even when I was fired in 81 for participation in the PATCO strike there were less than 1% of the controller workforce that were female and most of those had been “recruited” by the FAA beginning in the late 60s in response to EEOC standards. There were no such standards in the military.

Cheers, Jim

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### **COMMENTS ON PHAN RANG NEWSLETTER 252**

**Roger Lambert wrote:** Many thanks, Doug. Another good read. The gunship article reminded me of watching an AC-47 provide support to my mate's 7 Platoon one evening in SVN (South Vietnam). The Spooky saved their bacon that night as they were under a real threat by an unknown size enemy force. Those tracer from the miniguns provided a spectacular light show albeit a life-saving one.

Cheers, Roger

### **COMMENTS ON PHAN RANG NEWSLETTER 253**

**Bruce Gordon wrote:** Wow, Doug— that story of the Sydney Harbor Bridge is great! I didn't know that!

**Ken Swickard wrote:** Great issue, Doug. Just a few memories. When I left Vietnam (Dec, 68 as a Medic from the Dispensary), I had orders to the 78th Civil Engineering Squadron at Hamilton AFB, CA. I just knew that I was being assigned to a Redhorse sq. of some sort and would be back in Nam in a jiffy. When I tried to sign in at the CE squadron, the first shirt told me that he didn't have any need, whatsoever, for a medic and for me to go talk to the Hospital Squadron. The Hospital Squadron, not expecting me, really did not want me either. However, the Hospital Sq. relented and took me in.

The second quick story was last year. I drove up to an auto parts store and the car just ahead of me, parking himself, had the license plate "554 LT". I followed him in the store and by chance was behind him at check out. I asked him if he was with a Lt. with a Redhorse Squadron and he said yes he was, how did I know that. I explained the connection of the 554 to Phan Rang, etc. He was on leave from his Japan based unit and enlightened me to the history of the 554 after it left Nam. Small world after all.

Ken Swickard

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**Roger Lambert wrote:** Many thanks as always, Doug. I really enjoyed Bob Howe's 'Harbour Bridge' article; something that I never knew about ...

It's always sad to read the obituaries. Regrettably, the ranks are thinning as time and age take their toll.

Cheers, Roger



**Michael Drzyzga wrote:** Another great newsletter - Thank You.

Re: AC-119 Training the VNAF. The picture is me in 1971 with my Student Gunner. He was with AC-47 Spookys, spoke almost No English. He learned my training method: Monkey see, monkey do! (NO disrespect intended)

Stay well, Mike

**Chuck Revoir wrote:** Hi brothers, i was stationed at Phan Rang from July 1971 to April 1972 when we turned the base over to the ARVN. I was with the 35th Security Police, and was one of the last bunch of guys to leave

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the base. I spent the last couple months of my tour stationed at Korat AB Thailand.

### **Doug’s Comments:**



Wow, the 2022 reunion is now in the history books and we will start planning and looking forward to 2023. To aid us in our search for a reunion destination, we are asking for your input. Please go [here](#) to express your opinion, the site will list all of our previous destination, but here is a list of where we’ve been: **2012**, Dayton, OH.; **2013**, San Antonio, TX.; **2014**, Tucson, AZ.; **2015**, Charleston, SC.; **2016**, Oklahoma City, OK.; **2017**, Seattle, WA.; **2018**, Nashville, TN., **2019**, Savannah, GA.; 2020, no reunion; **2021**, Branson, MO. and **2022**, Mobile, AL. I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. This newsletter was composed by Douglas Severt and all graphics by Douglas Severt unless otherwise noted. 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.