

# Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.  
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 256

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F-100 Crash Near Phan Rang...Capt. Hornbarger Rescued

## **THE AFTERMATH**

*by Christopher Boles*

*F-100 Crash Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, September 1969*

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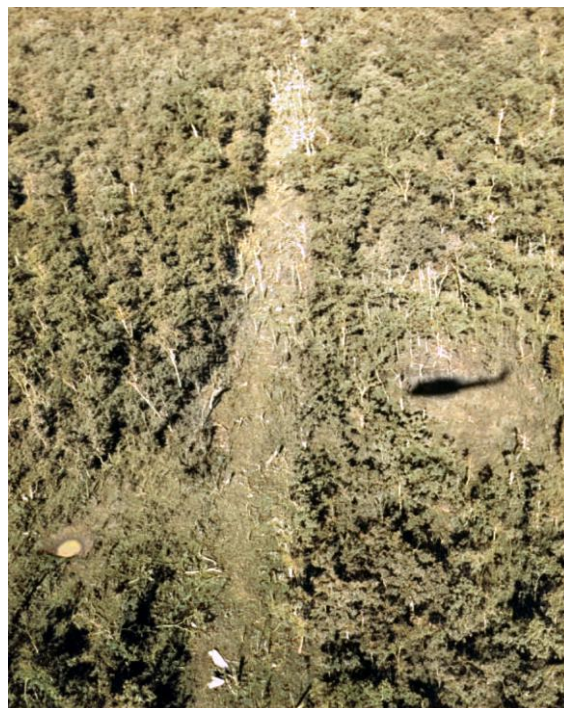
*“The pilot was unable to shut off the afterburner normally after takeoff. AB was mechanically shut down by retarding the throttle below 87 percent and the mission was continued. Two AB climbs and reduced power descents were made enroute to the target area. All ordinances were delivered on the first pass with the accident aircraft having 3500 lbs fuel remaining coming off the target. Decision was made to return to home base due to weather reported at the nearest field. Two AB climbs and shallow descents were made during return. During final descent at 8500 ft with 500-600 lbs fuel indicated, the engine flamed out. An air start was accomplished at 6000 ft and a slight climb begun. At 7500 ft with 100-200 lbs of fuel remaining, the engine flamed out again. The pilot successfully ejected at 2500 ft. 10 miles from destination.*

*Safety comments: Another case of pressing on with a bent bird. There is absolutely no need to compromise the aircraft or the life of a pilot by accepting an aircraft with a known malfunction that jeopardizes successful mission completion.”*

**(Doug’s comments: On 24 September 1969, Capt H. J. Hornbarger, 614<sup>th</sup> TFS, flying a Super Sabre crashed near Phan Rang through pilot error while on an attack mission. Capt. Hornbarger was picked up by a HH-43 Huskie from Phan Rang’s Detachment 1 of the 38<sup>th</sup> ARRS. This particular F-100 had been flown by the Thunderbirds aerobatic team in the mid-1960s before the aircraft was transferred to Southeast Asia. Cover photo by David McGaughey, which is a composite of two photos by David. Source: Phan Rang Newsletter 197)**

That was the official report of what happened. I was asked to take photographs on site of the crash for part of the documentation for the accident report. We were airlifted into the site on a UH-1H helicopter. I sat on the left side and was watching everything. I photographed the crash site on the approach noticing the bomb crater. As we made the approach to the bomb crater landing zone, there was not anyone there, or so I thought. Just as we are about 50 feet off the ground, soldiers come rushing out of the jungle. My first thought was it is the VC! As we landed we were told it was the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army that had been brought in to protect the site since there was hot ammo scattered all over the area.

We exited the helicopter and were told it would return for us later in the day when we call in for it.



**Bomb crater crash landing zone.**

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I started to document the crash site and the remains of the aircraft by the officer(s) that were part of the investigation team.

At one point I accidentally brushed my left elbow against some of the aluminum skin from the wreckage that was sticking out, causing a large gash that was really bleeding. One of the ROK medics came over and put a butter-fly bandage on the gash to stop the bleeding. I was half-heartedly kidding with them about how I get my purple heart for serving in Vietnam.

I was photographing the ROKs and the US people interacting for the “information office,” as there would definitely be some good PR images for the papers. This is one of those that got published.



**Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF)—YES CAPTAIN—U.S. Air Force Airman First Class Richard M. Monahan, Framingham, Mass., center, chats with a Republic of Korea Army Officer. A1C Monahan is a liaison agent between local elements of the Korean “White Horse” Division and the 35<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron here, to which he is assigned.**

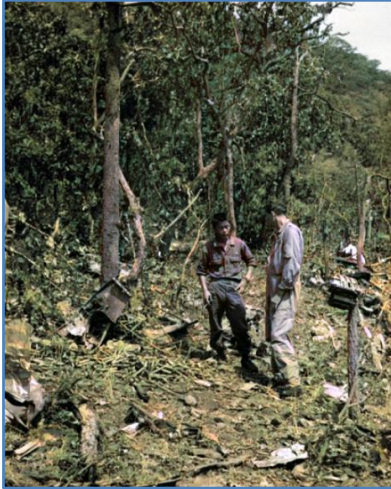
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**Following are several photos of our team along with the ROK troops in the jungle surrounding the crash site and along the perimeter of the site.**



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After lunch, we would be told that a helicopter would be coming back to pick us up. The radio man got a message that the helicopter we were assigned had left to go pick up a casualty and that they were working to get us another one. After some time, it was determined that it wasn't possible, and the alternative was to walk out several miles to the road where a truck would pick us up. We gathered our stuff and some ROK's were going to escort us to the road and be the guard in case we encountered some VC.



**Air Rescue HH43 Pedro helicopter is sent to pick us up from our location before the heavy rain sets in.**

As we started to walk out, the afternoon weather started to close in and rain looked to be forthcoming. After more conversations on the radio, they said that they would be coming to pick up the officers and myself in a helicopter. Shortly we heard a helicopter coming in our direction. One of the officers was trying to give the pilot directions to our location and kept messing up confusing the pilot as to where we were. Finally someone else got on the radio and got the helicopter to our location.

**Figure 1 Air Rescue HH43 Pedro helicopter is sent to pick us up from our location before the heavy rain sets in.**

As the helicopter lands it is determined that the officers and I would be coming back in the helicopter. The rains had started; my camera, as well as the flash unit, were getting wet, which would render them useless from the water.

We flew back to Phan Rang AB (my first and last ride in Pedro), landed and exited the helicopter. As the helicopter was getting shut down, as the blades came to a stop, some airman climbed up and started to inspect the rotor blades. I asked someone what they were doing. The response I got back was that the HH-43 was

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not supposed to fly in rain as the water droplets would be like knives cutting the fabric covering on the blades making them susceptible to coming apart. I thought to myself, "*dang, we are really lucky!*"

**The following is from the Valley Morning Star, September 28, 1969 from Harlingen, Texas:**

Major **Harold J. Hornbarger**, 36, of Raymondville recently took part in an F-100 Super Sabre raid of Communist fortified positions in Vietnam.

Hornbarger and his fellow pilot, Major **Thomas F. Byrnes**, 32 of Cambridge, Mass., were credited with destroying 14 enemy bunkers and damaging four others.

A graduate of Harlingen High School, the major is married to the former Miss Betty John Scogin, daughter of Mrs. W. J. Scogin of Lyford.

Mrs. Hornbarger and their two children, Melissa, 10, and Bill, 8 are living in Glendale, Calif.

Maj. Hornbarger is stationed at Phan Rang Air Base in South Vietnam. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Hornbarger, live in San Marcus, Tex.

## **35<sup>th</sup> TFW Pilots get ARMY thanks**

*(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, November 14, 1968)*

Three 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing F-100 Super Sabre pilots were commended recently by U.S. Army Col. **Frederick C. Krause**, commander officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division.

The "thanks" was for "the superb air support received by one of my battalions during the battle of Loc Binh, 24, August 1968," Colonel Krause said in a letter of commendation.

"On that date" the letter continued, "elements of the Division became heavily engaged with a battalion-size NVA unit. Despite the extreme close contact, the ground commander requested immediate employment of tactical air.

"This strike resulted in significant losses of enemy personnel and equipment and unquestionably assisted ground elements in gaining an upper hand on the battlefield."

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. **Keith L. Ware**, commanding officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, indorsed the letter of commendation with "Your professionalism while supporting the Big Red One was a significant factor in the successful operations during the battle of Loc Binh..."

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The three pilots are Capt. **Robert C. Konopka** and 1st Lt. **Richard W. Buickerood**, both of the 615<sup>th</sup> TFS and Capt. **Charles A. Shaheen Jr.**, then assigned to the 614<sup>th</sup> TFS but recently returned to the U.S. and released from active duty.

**More information on Richard Buickerood:** 100 MISSIONS: U. S. Air Force First Lieutenant Richard W. Buickerood, son of Mr. and Mrs. Waller A. Buickerood, 173 Rowland Pl., Woodbridge, recently compelled his 100<sup>th</sup> combat mission in Vietnam. Lieutenant Buickerood, an F-100 Super Sabre pilot, flies with the 615<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Just two days before his 100th mission, the lieutenant was called upon to fly a mission in support of friendly forces in contact with a large enemy force which netted him 25 kills by air. Lieutenant Buickerood received a B. A. degree in business administration from Rutgers University, and was commissioned there in 1965 upon completion of the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program. He is a member of Zeta Psi. The lieutenant's wife, Josephine, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ira D. Gallaway of R.R. 1, Bidwell, Ohio. (Source: *Woodbridge Leader Press*, July 3, 1969, Woodbridge, New Jersey)

## Thanks For Your Service!

*by Jimmy Smith from Facebook*



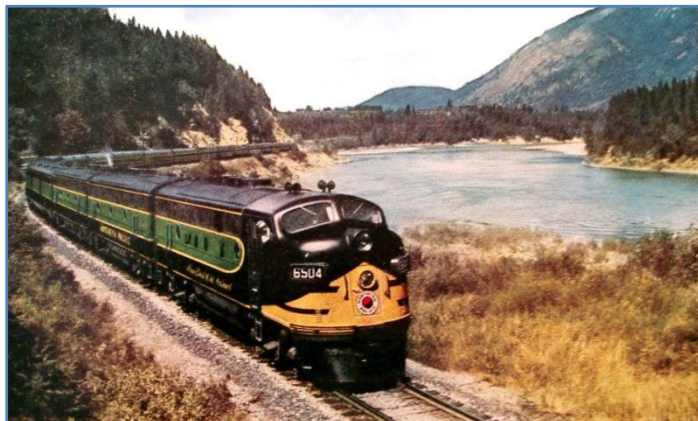
In March 1968, I traveled to Hamilton Air Force Base near San Rafael CA for small arms training prior to going to Vietnam. Upon completion of training, I was given five days of travel time from California to Seattle, Washington, the place of departure to Vietnam. Since I had extra time, I decided to take a train to Seattle rather than fly so that I could see the beautiful countryside of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington. I boarded the Southern Pacific Railway in Richmond, CA on a journey that would take nearly 24 hours. It was everything I had hoped for as the train passed along beautiful farmland, lush vineyards, breathtaking mountain views, and thru small towns and hamlets.

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Upon arrival in Portland, OR, I had to switch trains and travel the remainder of the journey on the Northern Pacific Railway. When the time to board was announced, I made my way to the train. I noticed there were many more passengers boarding than I remembered being on the train from CA. I was wearing my military dress

uniform, carrying my duffle bag. As I entered one of the train cars, I stood at the front and looked for a place to sit since the car was filling fast. As I stood looking for a seat, an elderly lady sitting a few feet in front of me, stood, and said, “Young man, you can have my seat and I’ll find another.”

I thought, “...this little old lady wanted to give me her seat” ...it was a moment I will never forget. I thanked her for her kindness and said I’ll find a seat and I moved on to the next car and sat down.

The 1960s was a time of great turmoil and unrest in our country. There was a lot of resentment and disrespect for Veterans because of the unpopularity of the Vietnam War. But, we did what we felt was right for our country even though there were many who refused to serve or wanted to blame the soldiers for the atrocities of a war half a world away.

I was one of the fortunate ones to return to "The World" from the experience of Vietnam, safe and in relatively good health, both mind, and body. But I, like all Vietnam Vets, felt our country had turned its back on us. We returned to a country filled with animosity and clamor, without acknowledgment of what we hoped to accomplish. We learned to accept it, however and leaned upon our fellow soldiers for support.

But in the midst of all those negative attitudes, I remembered a little old lady who cared enough to let a soldier have her seat. She represented a generation where respect and admiration for the American soldier were important. She represented what made this country great...one who loved her country and those who defended her freedom. It is a lesson that we



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could all learn as we encounter our military men and women today. **The vast majority perform their duty with honor and courage and all they ask of us is just a word of acknowledgment for a job well done.**

### **35th SPS Sentry, Dog Foil VC Sapper Penetration Try**

*(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, 28 November 1968)*

“I feel lucky to be alive,” said a 35<sup>th</sup> SPS sentry who foiled a recent (Nov. 18) Viet Cong Sapper attempt at Phan Rang AB.

The sentry, A1C **David L. Pierce** was requested to make a sweep of the base perimeter fence are with his sentry dog after guard tower Juliet 8 saw movement in the 1 a.m. darkness.

“Rex, and I had gone about 75 yards down the road bordering the concertina wire fence when he stopped and started sniffing. There was no breeze so it was hard for Rex to pick up a scent,” Airman Pierce said.

“The dog was reluctant to move so I flipped out my flashlight and -- lying there, naked except for a black breechcloth, staring up at me was this VC. For a half-second I thought he was dead-- and then I realized he was very much alive. He immediately attempted to run away.

“I dropped the light and gave the challenge ‘Halt, Dung Lai’, he said, “and that’s when two more VC opened fire with automatic rifles a few yards behind me. They were between the outer and inner fences.”

“The fire set off a trip flare and I could see them well and emptied three M16 clips at them. I believe I hit one of them, but have you ever tried to fire an M-16 with one hand and control 75 pounds of excited dog with the other?”

The VC fled into the darkness outside the perimeter while Pierce was joined by other K-9 teams and security policemen who swept the area to assure that no other members of the sapper team had escaped detection.

**(Note: Craig Lord talked about this very incident in his presentation at the 2022 Phan Rang AB Reunion and the entire text of his presentation is contained in Phan Rang Newsletter 255.)**

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### **Firemen Tops In Vietnam**

*(Phan Fare, The Happy Valley Weekly, 28 November 1968)*

**“Most Improved Fire Department in Vietnam”** is the honor awarded the Phan Rang Air Base Fire Department by Seventh Air Force Officials.

The honor, a quarterly award, was for the period from July 1 to Sept. 30 of this year.

Selection criteria is based on effort expended toward fire prevention, extended and effectiveness of training, management procedures and facilities and equipment improvement

Lt. Col. James B. Robers, commander, 35<sup>th</sup> CES and Base Fire Marshal, credited the fire departments’s “very comprehensive training program’ with being a strong factor in taking the award.



### **History of the Donut Dollies:**

"They had the guts to brave incoming mortars, sniper and ground- to-air fire, and other wartime hardships and dangers to visit the firebases earned them the unarguable respect and

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admiration of the troops!"

During World War II numerous teams of three female Red Cross volunteers operated clubmobiles equipped with a kitchen area with a stove for heating water for coffee and a built-in donut-making machine. These Clubmobiles traveled with the rear echelon units, but each day their teams ventured out to different operating areas to visit Soldiers, play Victrola records, pass out sundry items, and serve hot coffee and fresh-made donuts to the troops.

Female Red Cross workers answered the call to duty again during the Korean War. In its early stages, they earned the endearing nickname, “Donut Dollies,” turning out up to 20,000 donuts a day for American Soldiers disembarking troop ships in Pusan.

The Donut Dollies were most visible to troops serving in Vietnam. Between February 1962 and March 1973, they logged over 2,000,000 miles by jeep, deuce-and-a-half, and helicopter, visiting combat troops at remote fire bases from An Khe to Yen Giang (there’s no “Z” in Vietnamese). And they didn’t pass out a single donut during this war.

Instead, usually traveling at least in pairs and dressed in their signature pale blue outfits, this time they brought smiles, songs, games, and a touch of back home to the guys who were in the bush counting the days down from 365.

Over 600 Donut Dollies responded to the somewhat opaque Red Cross’s ads seeking “qualified young women who were willing to serve one year overseas.” They had to be at least 21, have a college education, and have that “girl next door” look. Among the understated requirements: “the job requires a capacity for hard work under less than ideal conditions.”

After only two weeks of training in Washington, D.C. as Red Cross recreation workers, the women packed off for Vietnam where they set up recreation centers before the USO and Special Services arrived and wrote up and conducted recreation programs in the field for troops who couldn’t visit the centers.

They also visited hospitals to hand out activity books and spent time in evac hospitals with the wounded. As one Donut Dolly put it, “Our job was to smile and be bubbly for an entire year—no matter what the situation.”

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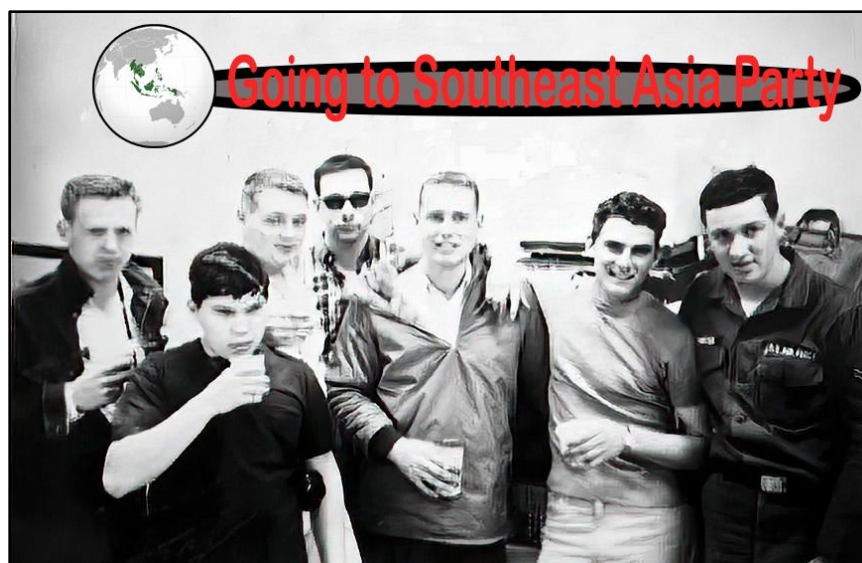
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No one appreciated the presence of the Donut Dollies more than the troops on the remote firebases. Minutes spent talking about home or sports or music or wives and girlfriends with a fresh-faced American girl with a pony tail wearing a tinge of lipstick and a splash of perfume was a terrific morale boost.

And the fact that these young women had the guts to brave incoming mortars, sniper and ground- to-air fire, and other wartime hardships and dangers to visit the firebases earned them the unarguable respect and admiration of the troops. And that’s exactly how Vietnam veterans remember the Red Cross Donut Dollies nearly forty years later— with unarguable appreciation, respect, and admiration.



This photo was taken at their going away party at Kunsan AB, Korea. These guys were all headed to Vietnam and Thailand. Left to right **Dave Watson**, **Bob Barker** (sipping beer), **Neil Pillar**, **Jim Kucipeck** (in dark glasses), **Charles Hudgens**, **Jesse McKenna** and **Jim MacEntee**, and not in the picture, **John Asher**, (pictured to the left). Only Barker went to Thailand, the rest went to Vietnam.

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It was May of 1967 at Kunsan Air Base, Korea. Elvis and Pricilla tied the knot in Vegas on May 1, Muhammed Ali was inducted for draft evasion on 8 May, The National Guard in Mississippi was called in to quell Negro student riots on 11 May, U.S. jets bombed downtown Hanoi for the first time on the 19<sup>th</sup> and these eight airmen, all buddies, were facing reassignment that would probably alter their lives forever and make them a Band of Brothers.

This picture is very unique as it tells an interesting story about a **“Band of Brothers”** in that we all went to Technical school together to become Air Force Munitions Specialist at Lowry AFB, Denver, CO. We were all in the same class, graduated together, and went PCS to Kunsan, Korea together.

At the end of our tour in Kunsan, the war in Vietnam was getting more intense and we knew that if we went back to the “States” we would be sent back overseas immediately to Southeast Asia because munitions specialist were in demand, therefore we volunteered to go then.

However, most of us got orders for Phan Rang Air Base, but some got a change of orders and went to other bases in SEA. Here’s a breakdown of assignments: Bob Barker, Utapao, Thailand; Jesse McKenna, Da Nang AB, Vietnam; Jim Kucipeck, Neil Pillar, Charles Hudgens, Jim MacEntee and John Asher all went to Phan Rang AB, Vietnam and Dave Watson, Unknown.

Of those of us that went to Phan Rang, we worked day shift together, became crew chiefs on various crews, lived in the same barracks, bunked together and partied together. Some of us even went TDY together. When it came time to rotate back to the “States” we left at approximately the same time, within days of each other. Most of us went to the same stateside base: Bob Barker and Jesse McKenna went PCS to Myrtle Beach, SC; Neil Pillar went PCS to Tyndall, FL.; Jim Kucipeck, Charles Hudgens, John Asher, and Jim MacEntee went PCS to Hill AFB, Utah and Dave Watson, unknown.

Most of us took an “early out” in Feb. ’69 except for Neil Pillar who stayed for his full 4 year enlistment.

Jim Kucipeck, reflects, **“We were just kids then, several of us just turned 21 there and grew up pretty quickly. Vietnam changed me forever and left an indelible mark on my psyche and as I**

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am sure it did on the rest of the guys pictured. Perhaps we don't talk as often as we should but we are still brothers.”



- [Phan Rang 'Roll-Call'](#)\*, a spreadsheet of personnel assigned to Phan Rang AB along with their grade, organization, AFS/Shop/Job and dates served on the base.
- [Index of Phan Rang AB Personnel](#) from the Phan Rang Newsletter along with the issue/s their name was mentioned for any reason.
- [Index to Phan Rang Newsletter stories](#).
- [In Memoriam](#)\* a list of all deaths of Phan Rang AB assigned personnel -
- [Phan Rang site](#) for reunion information, surveys, etc.
- [Phan Rang web page](#) for links to all Phan Rang Newsletters.

**Note:** \* If data base isn't available immediately, it soon will be, so check back soon. All data bases that we maintain also include RAAF No. 2SQN personnel as well as those of U.S. Forces.

### Doug's Comments:



The 'Going to Southeast Asia' story is very unique at least for the modern Air Force. During WWII I had relatives from the same city that stayed together through training and into combat, but the only time I experienced something similar was when an entire class of transporters were transferred together to shore up the workforce at the Tinker Aerial Port of Embarkation (APOE). I've had the opportunity to talk to many senior military veterans and asked them if they had any emotional attachment to a place or a group of people that they once served with and no one ever said that they did. Some said they were lucky if they could even remember many names of those they served with, but the exception was for those that served in Vietnam. Then I would tell them about the Phan Rang Brotherhood which Michael Mulcahey talked about in Phan Rang News 255, and they seemed envious that they didn't have anything like that organized for where they served. I've always

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known about the close relationship that Jim Kucipeck had with Neil Pillar, but little did I know that there were six others making up this unique ‘Band of Brothers’. 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.



Original art work by Debra Ridenour