

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 257

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Doug's Comments



Unraveling the Mystery of the crash of C-47A 43-15583

by Douglas Severt and Walter Brooks

It all began when Walter Brooks contacted me about Edward Johnson who died when the C-47 he was on crashed. The other information he gave me was that the accident probably occurred at Phu Cat AB. He said that both he and Edward were Flight Engineers. Walter did not provide a date.



**Maj. Lloyd Arthur
McGrew**

I immediately started researching and started with Vietnam Air Losses by Chris Hobson and I found a C-47 that crashed on 17 July 1970 with only one loss and that was Maj. Lloyd Arthur McGrew who was listed as killed while flying and there were three crew members that survived with no names given. Information also stated that the transport crashed during a training flight when it suffered an engine failure. It is not know for sure which unit owed the aircraft as it erroneously recorded as belongs to 14 TRW in one official document. The eventual fate of the aircraft is in doubt as at least one source claims that 43-15583 later flew with Air Laos as XW-PFY.

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Then I started researching the incident from other sources. I started with the Coffelt Database of Vietnam Casualties and found out his death date was July 25, 1970. The event that caused his death occurred on 17 July 1970 and the cause of the crash was engine failure during a training flight and the aircraft crashed during landing. Coffelt listed it as a non-hostile event, but his DD Form 1300, Report of Casualty has it written in that it was combat related. It also stated that he died in Binh Dinh Province RVN which I found out later was not true. His unit of assignment was listed as 17th Special Ops Squadron, 14th Special Ops Wing, 7th AF. APO San Francisco 96321 (APO from Report of Casualty).



I then wrote another message to Walter telling him what I had found. I told him the only guy I could find that matches his description is MSgt Edward Dewey Johnson (He received a posthumous promotion in rank to Master Sergeant after his death) who died on 7/25/1970 as a crew member on C47A 43-15583 while on a training mission they had engine failure and crashed during landing. His organization was the 17th SOS, 14th SOW and he died in the Binh Dinh Province which I suspected the base was Phu Cat. He responded “that’s it; he passed away about 8 days after the crash due to smoke and fire inhalation. The aircraft and crew was assigned to 14th SOW, for the purpose of training, at Phan Rang. We lived with the 17th SOS crews.”

Walter was a C-47 Flight Engineer and his boss was TSgt Edward Dewey Johnson. At the time of the incident Walter was TDY attending Jungle Survival School at Clark AB, Philippines. Upon his return to Phan Rang he visited with Sgt Johnson in the base hospital where he was transferred to after the crash and where he eventually died and that is why I originally stated that his ‘Report of Casualty’ should have stated Ninh Thuan Province as place of death. Walter actually remembers him seemingly doing very well in his recovery but



TSgt Edward Johnson

the damage to his lungs must have been greater than he realized. The mission of the organization at the time was for training and re-qualifying other crews to the C-47 and Maj. McCrew was an instructor pilot (IP).

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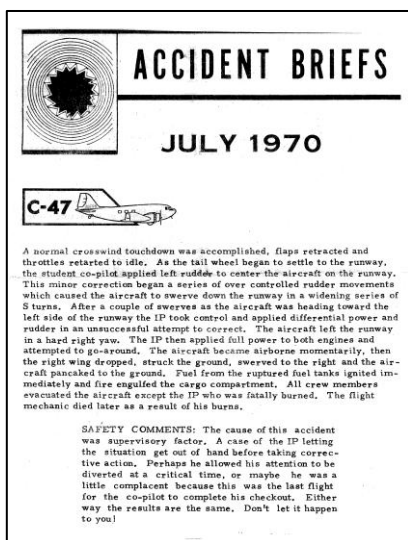
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HISTORY OF FLIGHT: After touchdown approximately 2000 feet from the end of the runway just right of center line. The student co-pilot applied slight left rudder correction to center the aircraft on the runway as the tail wheel began to settle. This minor correction began a series of over controlled rudder movements which caused the aircraft to swerve down the runway in a widening series of S turns. The IP in this case Maj. Lloyd McGrew) took control of the aircraft and applied power to the left engine to return the aircraft to the center of the runway. The aircraft left the runway in a hard yaw to the right. The direction of travel was in line with a revetted GCA installation approximately 850 feet from where the aircraft had departed the runway. The IP applied full power to both engines and attempted a go-around. The aircraft’s right wing dropped, struck the ground, swerved the aircraft to the right, and the aircraft “pancaked” to the ground. Fire engulfed the cargo compartment and the cockpit filled with smoke. All crew members evacuated the aircraft immediately except the IP who was fatally burned in the aircraft. The Flight Mechanic, wearing fatigues without a shirt, died later as a result of his burns.

CAUSE: Supervisory in that the IP allowed his student to get too deep into the problem before he took control. Contributing in that the IP attempted to make a go around rather than brake the aircraft to a stop.

LESSONS LEARNED: Don’t Become Complacent. Stay ahead of the student.

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The “Accident Brief” shown on the left says essentially the same thing that the “History of Flight” stated except to say that the fuel from the ruptured fuel tanks ignited and fire engulfed the cargo compartment. Information from Walter Brooks and which was not stated in either of the reports is that Maj. Lloyd McGee’s foot or leg was wedged between his seat and the fuselage and they were unable to free him. Walter Brooks also stated that after this accident the aircrews were ordered to only wear nomex flight suits.

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Summary

There were many inconsistencies surrounding this event. The most glaring one being the report that the aircraft crashed because of power failure. They never say at what stage of the flight did the power failure occur. Several reputable sources, such as “Vietnam Air Losses” web site and Chris Dobson’s “Vietnam Air Losses” mentions a power loss. Being a layman, my first thought was that the aircraft experienced a power loss during landing, but then continued to glide in, but crashed upon contact with the runway, but we know that never happened because the *History of Flight* says that they were already on the runway with the aircraft swerving and then the IP took over the controls from the student and applied full power to get the aircraft back on the runway. The Coffelt Data Base states, “Engine failure during training flight, crashed during landing”, but in my opinion the aircraft had actually landed safely but by over controlled rudder movements actually started the chain of events that led to the aircraft being destroyed. **In my opinion the myth of power failure has been perpetuated to protect the reputation of the instructor pilot and that myth is repeated over and over again in tributes to him.**

Another myth that I saw repeated was that the aircraft was repaired and went on to fly with Air Laos. The above picture should dispel that myth.

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Obituary for Maj. Lloyd A. McGrew (*Flora Hoosier Democrat, July 23, 1970, Flora, Indiana*)

Major Lloyd A. McGrew, 40, of 315 E. Franklin St., Delphi, was killed July 17 while on a training mission in Phan Rang, South Vietnam. His plane crashed and burned in a landing attempt.

In the Air Force since 1952, he was a pilot for the C-47 and was attached to the Ninth S.O.S. Squadron at Tuy Hoa.

Maj. McGrew was born in Mitchell, S. D. on March 4, 1930, the son of F. O. and Mildred J. Hintze McGrew. He was graduated from high school at Terre Haute. He received a B. S. degree from Rose Poly Technic Institute in Terre Haute and a master's degree in civil engineering from Purdue University.

His marriage August 17, 1954, in San Angelo, Texas, was to Ina Von Kannon of Terre Haute. He was a member of the United Methodist Church and Sigma Nu social fraternity.

Surviving with the widow- are three sons, Jeffery Scott, and twins Matthew and Christopher; one daughter, Lisa, all at home; his parents who live in Delphi; a brother, George of Nashville, Tenn., and two sisters, Miss Mildred McGrew of Madison, Wis., and Mrs. Jane Myers of- Rt. 2, Logansport.

Databases for casualties and aircraft losses in Phan Rang Newsletters 155 "Casualty List for Phan Rang AB Assigned Personnel", 197 "Chronological Order of Phan Rang AB Air Losses" and 227 "Aircraft of Phan Rang AB, RVN" have been updated and reposted to reflect this newly discovered information.

If you've been there,

You know this well.

The stare of a man who's been through Hell. In search of a friend who can't be found. Only to be told he's Homeward bound. Ain't nuthin to it. It don't mean a thing. Another brother flyin' upon silver wing. Push it back, try not to care.

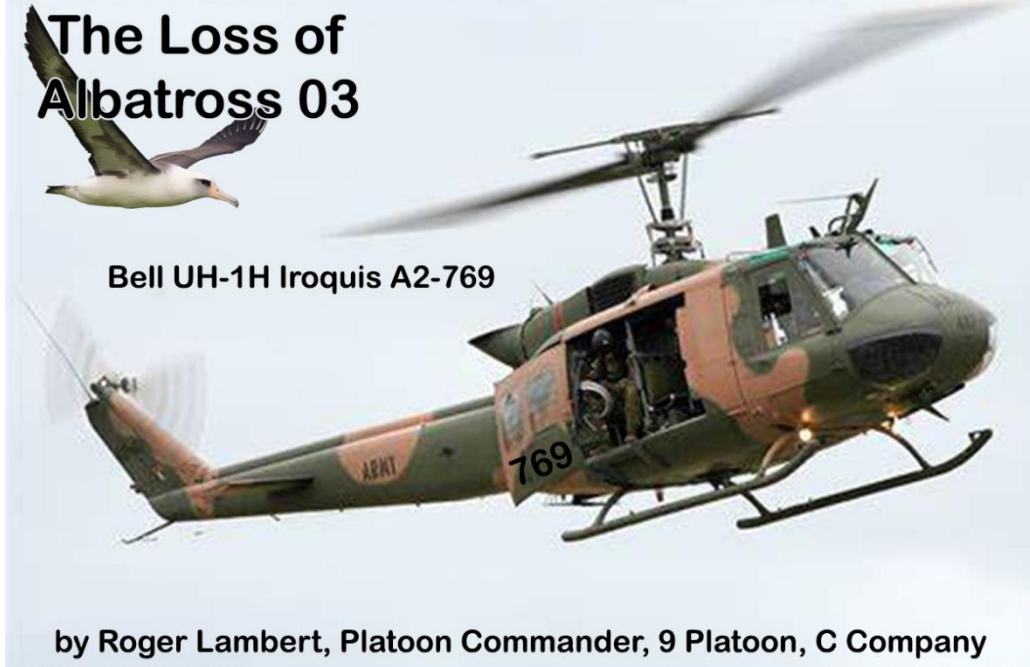
Bury the emotion with One Thousand Yard stare.

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The Loss of Albatross 03



Bell UH-1H Iroquois A2-769

by Roger Lambert, Platoon Commander, 9 Platoon, C Company

The Loss of Albatross 03 – Bell UH-1H Iroquois A2-769 - 26 October 1969

FORWARD

It was way back in Phan Rang Newsletter 186 that we first met Lt. Col. Roger Lambert, a battalion commander in the Royal Australian Regiment, but that part one of Magpie 31 and Blondes, Bombs and Bunkers only gave a hint of what was to come. It wasn't until Part 3 where Roger was actually connected to the very crew of Magpie 31 that provided him air support so many years ago. I've often wondered how often something like this actually occurs, but I'm sure it's a rarity, but I'm also sure that if it wasn't for Bob Howe's (No. 2 Sqn RAAF) meticulous record keeping that it would never have been possible. Since Roger's introduction he has provided us with at least 16 adventures that has given us a whole new prospective on the Vietnam War experience. Every story may not have a Phan Rang connection but Roger and his troops and all allied forces were the very reason for our existence at Phan Rang. I for one am eternally grateful that Roger connected with Magpie 31 and has shared his memories with us. - Douglas Severt

One of my 9 Platoon diggers, PTE Terry “Fitzzy” Fitzgerald, recently sent me a copy of a photograph he had taken of a destroyed Iroquois helicopter. The tail fin of the aircraft was still intact and the RAAF red, white and blue fin flash and serial number, A2-769, were clearly visible. The memories came flooding back to that time some 50 years ago that we came across the wreckage while patrolling during an operation in the last quarter of 1969.

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Remains of Bell UH-1H Iroquois A2-769 (Image by Terry Fitzgerald)

By way of background, at the time of A2-769's loss, we (5 RAR) were conducting Operation 'Kings Cross' (October to November 1969) in an area known to the VC as the Hat Dich Secret Zone. This was an area that had been an enemy haven since the days of the Viet Minh war. It was an important logistic support area for the enemy as it was situated between Route 15 (Saigon to Vung Tau), Route 2 (Baria to Xuyen Moc and Route 1 (of 'Street Without Joy' fame.

These roads were vital to the VC as it was along these routes that their supplies were transported to the villages of Thai Tien, Tham Tien, Phu My and Tham Phu on Route 15 and Binh Ba, Ngai Giao and Xa Bang on Route 2.

Terry's image got me thinking about what caused the loss of the Iroquois and what was the fate of the crew.

A little delving on the Internet soon produced the information that I was looking for, not only in relation to the loss of the helicopter but also the fate of the aircrew.

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Somewhat eerily, in almost a foreboding of what was to come, A2-769 was involved in a forced landing in October 1968. The engine failure was the cause of the forced landing six kilometres West of Ap Suoi Nghe.



This Australian War Memorial image, taken October 1968, shows the purple smoke thrown by the aircrew of A2-769 to indicate to the recovery aircraft, a Boeing-Vertol CH-47 Chinook of the United States Army, that the downed aircraft was still in allied hands.

The 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) base at Nui Dat can be seen, to the south east, in the background of the photograph.

The US Army Chinook successfully transported the stricken Iroquois as a slung load back to Vung Tau where 9 Squadron was based. The Iroquois was initially assessed as having sustained Category 4 damage. In layman’s terms, that assessment was that the Iroquois was a write-off.

However, following negotiations that commenced on 5 December 1968, rather than being written off as a result of that initial assessment, A2-769 was given a reprieve. Following approval from Australia, the airframe was passed to the local US Army aircraft maintenance facility at Vung Tau. Here, the airframe underwent repairs to bring it back to airworthiness.

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These repairs were subsequently successfully undertaken and the helicopter was returned to 9 Squadron on 20 January 1969 to continue its operational career in theatre.



This AWM image shows A2-769 at Vung Tau undergoing inspection following its recovery to the 9 Squadron maintenance area.

One only needs to look at the skids of the helicopter to gain an understanding of the force of what must have been quite a heavy landing. Those airmen in the vicinity are probably air frame fitters noting the repairs that would be required to make the Iroquois airworthy again.

Fast forward to 26 October 1969 and A2-769 was again forced to make an emergency landing. However, this time the cause was the result of enemy fire.

As may be seen from the following extract, the helicopter was flying in support of 9 RAR. A2-769, operating with the Callsign “Albatross 03”, flew some twenty-six sorties on 26 October 1969. The Iroquois had the usual crew of two pilots and two crewmen acting as door gunners.

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But who were the crew and what was their fate? The National Archives of Australia (NAA) provided the names of the aircrew which were recorded in the 9 Squadron Operations Log. The crew comprised of **Woolf, Knights, Parker and Price**. So, at this stage, I had names but not what caused the loss of the helicopter nor the fate of these men. Further delving into the NAA records finally provided the answers I was seeking some 50 years after the event.

SECRET									
DETAILS OF OPERATIONS									
MONTH OCTOBER		UNIT NO 9 SQUADRON				SHEET NO 21			
DATE	AIRCRAFT NO	CREW	SORTIES	TIME	RDS FIRED	AREA OF OPERATION AND TYPE OF OPERATION	PAX	MED	FREIGHT (lbs)
24	A2-378	WOOLF, PETTITT, MAY, PANNOWITZ	10	3.05		NUI DAT ADM	22		
	770	ROBINSON, SATRAPA, HENDY, HOWELL	12	3.45		FE, VR, LS	44		1050
	383	THOMPSON, ROBERTSON, MOLES, WALTERS	5	2.35		GUN			
25	773	DRIVER, LEA, SHEEHAN, SHIPP	6	2.35		GUN	2		
	383	HAZELWOOD, TRELOAR, MAY, SHIPP	5	3.40		GUN			
26	376	ANDREWS, PETERSON, SCOBIE, HOWELL	6	1.10		ADM	18		
	767	ROBINSON, BEATTY, SHEEHAN, GABLE	2	.30		ADM	3		
	769	SATRAPA, MAIN, MOLES, GIBSON	23	3.55		LS, FE	53		11600
	770	KNIGHT, ELLIS, BURTEENSHAW, WALLER	24	5.15		ADM, FE, MED, LS,	44		1000
	379	WALKER, BACH, PINKERTON, CARRIER	22	4.20		LS, FE	48		
	773	BROWN, THOMPSON, SMITH, REALE	5	3.40		GUN			
	769	WOOLF, KNIGHTS, PARKER, PRICE	26	4.30		LS			
	767	PETERSON, LYNCH, HENDY, GIBSON	16	4.35		MED, TP, ADM	55	2	
	379	BACH, HOBSON, MAXWELL, MAHONY	26	4.30		TP, LS, SPEC	47		8900
	770	BUDD, ANDREWS, ROBINSON, GABLE	14	3.15		LS, TP,	25		5600
771	KNIGHT, BEATTY, MOLES, McIVER	6	2.30		TRG, VR	17			

Extract from the 9 Squadron RAAF Operations Log for 26 October 1968 (NAA).

The Unit History Sheet for 9 Squadron not only revealed the ranks of the aircrew but also their responsibilities aboard “Albatross 03”.

Pilot: Flight Lieutenant **M. K. Woolf** – Aircraft Captain

Co-Pilot: Flying Officer **D. V. Knights**

Crewman: Sergeant Parker **F. J. Parker**

Gunner: Aircraftsman **A. J. Price**

The following extract from the Unit History Sheet succinctly records what happened that fateful day on 26 October 1969. Although not recorded as such, A2-769 was very obviously hit by enemy ground fire and crash landed as a result.

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What was pleasing to read was that the aircrew were successfully winched out of the crash site and taken to Vampire Pad at 2 Field Hospital, Vung Tau. Although injured to varying degrees, I finally had my answer as to their fate.

I also learnt that what we came across during our patrol were the remains of the helicopter after it had been assessed as Category 5 by the 9 Squadron Engineering Officer and destroyed in situ by explosives. Apparently, the demolition team came from our SASR and it was Standing Operational Procedure to destroy any aircraft assessed as Category 5 so that nothing useful could fall into enemy hands.

**The following ‘Unit History Sheet’ of No. 9 Squadron details
the events that took place on 26 October 1969.**

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<small>SECRET</small> ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE			
UNIT HISTORY SHEET (AFO 18/F/5) of (Unit or Formation) NO 9 SQUADRON			Form A. 50 (Revised May, 1951) No. of Sheet <u>8/1650</u>
Place	Date	Summary of Events	References to Appendices
VUNG TAU	22 OCT	Two dust offs today, Alb Ø3, Flg Off C.R. Ellis (0314909) GDPLT lifted 1 ARVN malaria case from YS 242897 to Van Kiep barracks for attention and Alb Ø2, Wg Cdr R.W. Hibben (037568) GDPLT dusted off 1 Aust WIA with gunshot wounds from YS246787 to Vampire.	
	23 OCT	A 9 RAR move of B Coy from YS382729 to Y3668588.	
	25 OCT	In two separate incidents Australians were killed by mines today, Alb Ø1, Flt Lt L.D. Knight (037573) GDPLT lifted out both bodies from YS508549.	
	26 OCT	Bushrangers covered a US dust off aircraft D058 who was called forward by C/S 12 of 9 RAR. The American aircraft received groundfire and returned to base. A second US dust off, D056, arrived at the same time as Alb Ø3 and D056 was directed into a secure winch point. Whilst Alb Ø3 was holding high as a spare. BR72, Flt Off J.H. Driver (045529) GDPLT was flying top cover and BR 71, Flt Off B.A. Brown (045400) GDPLT went down and circled the winching aircraft D056. Almost at the completion of the winch ground fire hit BR 71 and a strong smell of fuel and a crewman report of fire persuaded Flt Off Brown to leave the area and head for the nearest clearing. The aircraft flew normally however and another call from the crewman to say the smoke was streaming fuel made Flt Off Brown change his mind about landing in the bush and he continued about another three clicks and landed safely at FSB Diggers Rest. The American aircraft completed his winch in the meantime and Alb Ø3, Flt Lt M.K. Woolf (055160) GDPLT went in to do a lift out of 1 Aust KIA from the same winch point, BR 72 came to support Alb Ø3 if required. Alb Ø3 had just come to the hover when tracer was directed at Alb Ø3 and BR 72. BR 72 turned to roll in on the fire position and Alb Ø3 disappeared, no radio calls were heard. Dragon 33, a US Army Cobra, and Alb Ø4 eventually found Alb Ø3 as the light was failing. Crew of Alb Ø3 was winched out and taken to Vampire where the injuries to the crew were found to be as follows. Flt Lt M.K. Woolf (055160) GDPLT, captain of aircraft, broken bone in right thumb, cuts and contusions to legs and face; Flt Off D.V. Knights (0317786) GDPLT Co-pilot, broken jaw. A18779 Sgt Parker F.J. CLKA (Crewman) cuts to face, and A223690 AC Price R.J. ADGI (Gunner) crushed 1st lumbar vertebrae. The aircraft was examined the next day by the Engineering Officer, pronounced Cat 5 and destroyed in situ by explosive charges.	
	27 OCT	ND01 Flt Lt J.F. Hazelwood (0219888) GDPLT dusted off 1 Aust KIA from YS265846. Soldier was flown from 9 RAR and had been killed on the previous afternoon.	
	28 OCT	Today C Coy of 6 RAR were moved from YS572691 to YS617882 and an ARVN patrol lifted to Nui Dat from YS373705. A fatal casualty in D Coy 9 RAR today. A soldier was carrying a claymore mine into position on the Company perimeter when he was struck by lightning and blown up. The body was lifted out by Flt Off J.M. Main (057697) GDPLT, Alb Ø4, and taken to Vampire.	

Extract from the 9 Squadron Unit History Sheet of 26 October 1969 (NAA)

After some 50 years, it was very pleasing to learn that the crew of A2-769 were safely winched out after the helicopter was brought down and that the aircrew, although injured to varying degrees, survived the incident.

However, there is a sad corollary to the story of the loss of A2-769 involving one of the crew. Tragically, **Derek Knights** would lose his life in the crash of Bell UH-1B Iroquois A2-1023 near RAAF Williamtown, NSW on 19 August 1981.

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A2-1023 was on a test flight because several days earlier it had pitched violently forward during a normal sortie. Many eyewitnesses observed the aircraft approaching the airfield in straight and level flight at 1500 feet altitude when, without warning, it broke up in the air. Both the main rotor and tail rotor were observed to separate from the aircraft and the consensus among eyewitness opinions was that tail rotor separation preceded main rotor separation. The main body of the aircraft fell inverted into a swamp which effectively prevented any outbreak of fire. There were no survivors from the three crew aboard.



Bell UH-1B Iroquois A2-1023 (RAAF Image)

The cause of the crash was attributed to tail rotor drive failure. One of the tail rotor pitch control cables fouled the tail rotor drive shaft. This caused the failure of the tail rotor drive then the main rotor blades separated.

Those killed were:

Pilot: Squadron Leader **Derek John Knights**

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Co- Pilot: Flight Lieutenant **Adrian Bryant**

Observer: Sergeant Brian Wilson.



This article is dedicated to all the 9 Squadron air and ground crew that supported us so well during our tour of duty in 1969/70.

Yellow Jacket Pilots Have A Good Day For Strikes

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



F-100 Supersabre Pilots from the 352nd TFS “Yellow Jackets” recently had a number of good combat sorties over South Vietnam all in one day. Three of the missions were flown in support of Free World forces near Binh Tuy in IV Corps, in the southern part of the republic.

Commenting on his own mission, Capt. **Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.**, said “We had several structures in the open and the forward air controller (FAC) saw ground fire on every pass we make.” The end result of the Supersabre Jockey’s mission was seven enemy structures destroyed, six damaged, four sampans destroyed, four bunkers destroyed and an estimated eight enemy soldiers killed by air (KBA).

Maj. **Donald W. Houghton** described what happened on the mission that he flew with Lt. Col. **Robert D. Hook** like this, “There were numerous structures visible through the trees. Our bombs were all on target and one hit a structure and yielded a large secondary explosion.”

Still another strike was made against a suspected company sized VC supply area only eight miles from the end of the runway at Phan Rang. The pilot destroyed a bunker and uncovered

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several trails leading into the area, as well as starting a sustained fire in the area.

“Our FAC had quite a number of targets for us, “said Capt. **Rowland D. Stanley** of the mission he flew with Capt. **Winston J. Barr**.

“Poor visibility and heavy overgrowth of the target area obscured much of the detail from us, “he continued”, and when the FAC started giving us the bomb damage assessment (BDA) and more DBA, we were really overwhelmed and pleased.”

The final mission was flown by Capt. **Colin A. Clarke**, 33. Bothell, Washington, and First Lieutenant **Wendell L. Cook**.

Captain Clarke commented, “The FAC spotted a bunch of VC run into some bunkers. The first ‘750’ was right on it, destroying it completely.”

The final BDA for the five sorties was 20 enemy structures destroyed, 11 damaged, 17 bunkers destroyed, 2 damaged, and 6 sampans destroyed. The high flying “Yellow Jackets” also were credited with one KBA (body count) and 13 KBA estimated. Add to that two secondary fires and two secondary explosions and 200 meters of trench destroyed, and indeed **it’s obvious that the pilots of the 252nd did have a good day, in fact, a very good day.**

Additions stories of these Phan Rang Legends can be found in the following Phan Rang Newsletters:

Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.: 7, 65, 66, 215 and 216

Robert D. Hook: 2, 69, 130, 137 and 228

Rowland D. Stanley: 69, 75, 79, 131, 228 and 250

Colin A. Clarke: 127, 136, 138, 236, 254 and 255

Wendell L. Cook: 1, 75, 106 and 197

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Two Pilots End Tours

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



Two F-100 fighter pilots have wrapped up their tours at Phan Rang and are rotating. They are Capt. **Joseph F. Cassidy**, 615th TFS, and Capt. **Alexander (Sandy) Stymiest**, officer controller to the 35th TFW Chief, Operations/Plans Division but attached to the 615th for flying.

Captain Cassidy flew 301 combat missions, the majority in support of ARVN-US ground forces in South Vietnam. He also served the 615th as instructor, flight lead and functional check pilot. For his outstanding performance of duty on combat missions during his tour, Captain Cassidy has been awarded the Air Medal with 17 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Two of the clusters and the DFC were earned during the 1968 Tet Offensive, the largest offensive waged by the enemy in Vietnam. He will voluntary separate from Air Force active duty on return to the U.S. and plans to continue flying career with the Massachusetts Air National Guard.

Captain Stymiest flew 206 combat missions during his tour here and was first attached to the 352nd TFS for flying.

He is being reassigned to fly the F-106 with the Air Defense Command. He recently completed the F-102 indoctrination program at Perrin AFB, Texas, and the F-106 transition phase at Tyndall AFB, Fla., he will report for duty at Loring AFB, Limestone, Maine.

Here's an additional story about Capt. Alexander (Sandy) Stymiest

Local Pilot Responds To Cease Fire Break

(Walla Walla Union Bulletin, February 11, 1968, Walla Walla, Washington)

The following account of a Walla Walla man's participation in Vietnam was taken from the Phan Rang Weekly of Jan. 25. 1968.

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All was quiet in the command post of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at 1:30 a.m. on New Year's Day. The New Year's Day cease fire was in effect — or was it?

The phone rang Captain Alexander L. Stymiest, 36. of Bangor, Maine, a duty controller, answered it. On the line was the Tactical Air Control Center at Tan Son Nhut AB. The cease fire had been violated said the voice on the phone, a 23th Infantry Division unit 175 miles West of Phan Rang was under heavy attack.

The alert Super Sabres rose to the attack throughout the night and were joined by combat aircraft of other units. The Tactical Air Control Center called back the next day." Capt. Stymiest said, "to report a total count of 350 enemy soldiers killed in the action. I know that the 35th TFW played an important role in the defense of the base."

The first two pilots off of the ground at Phan Rang were Capt. Lester G. Frazier. 31. from Walla Walla, and Capt. Charles A. Shaheen Jr., 27, from Orange Grove, Calif. Both are assigned to the "Lucky Devils" of the 614th TFS. The two fliers notched the first air strikes to be carried out by the 35th TFW in 1968. Shortly after they returned to the base, they took off again to carry out two more air strikes in support of the Special Forces Camp.

Two pilots who took part in the wing F-100 strikes were Lt. Col. Kenneth P. Miles, from Largo, Fla., former commander of the 824th and his long time friend Lt. Col. Julian D. Sawyer, 38, Aurora Colo., 615th TFS commander.

Captain Lester G. Frazier will be returning to the states and is family in Phoenix, Ariz. Feb. 15, 1968, and will then leave on a new assignment for three years in Germany.



- [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.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 257 “...keeping the memories alive”

- [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:



I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. This newsletter was composed by Douglas Severt and all graphics by Douglas Severt unless otherwise noted, however, without your stories, this newsletter would not be possible. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, dougsevert@cox.net and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.



Original art work by Debra Ridenour