

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 260

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They cannot be everywhere - but they can be anywhere and the enemy is never sure where

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A time to remember



Recollections by
Jerry W. Berry



A Time to Remember

This is simply the record of some of the significant events I encountered during my one year tour of duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, 1968 thru 1969.

Oh, oh...An Assignment to Vietnam!

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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I was an E5 Air Force Staff Sergeant (SSgt) when I received notification that I was to report for duty on or about 20 December 1968. My family was devastated when I finally garnered the nerve to tell them of my assignment. Vietnam was a dangerous place and my wife knew it making it very difficult to tell her. We were a close family and the obvious fear we both felt... would I come home alive but we never said it. Leaving them at the airport in Philadelphia was the hardest thing I ever had to do.

My assignment would take me to serve in the 554 Red Horse Squadron, a heavy construction unit. As you know, all military units love acronyms and REDHORSE stands for Rapid Engineers Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer (US Air Force). We built anything from runways, wonder aircraft shelters, living quarters, a chapel and even a base theater. We were tasked to quickly repair runways and aircraft operational facilities in the event of enemy attack. We did our job well.

Our unit had completed combat construction training at Cannon AFB, NM. I was given this assignment to replace someone who couldn't make the Cannon training with the squadron, so I traveled separately. I departed the US leaving my family in a temporary home in Langhorne, PA.

Trouble Even Before I Got There

I had elected to fly to SETAC space-A, which turned out to be a near disaster. When I left Philadelphia, the flight stopped in Atlanta and unfortunately for me, the flight was full and I got bumped. Without that flight, I thought I had no chance of arriving at Seattle Tacoma as directed...I would be AWOL (away without leave, a court martial offense). When I got off the plane I rushed to the ticket counter hoping to find another flight. My heart dropped when the agent told me there was nothing until the following morning, did he not understand that's when I was supposed to be there? I have never felt so abandoned and desperate in all my life and it seemed nothing could help. I laid my head on the counter and nearly cried and for the first time in my life, I thought God might be the only person who could help. So I prayed harder than ever before, if ever before. Just then, the ticket agent tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Wait a minute, there is one possibility, but you'll have to run to catch this flight back to Philadelphia and it leaves in a few minutes”. He got me the ticket and I ran as fast as I could and caught the attendant closing the door to the tarmac. **I made it!**

Finally, I'm in Theater

I got to SEATAC (Seattle Tacoma) having had no sleep the entire night so I got a really sleazy hotel room close to the base and instantly fell asleep for a couple hours. I caught a cab in the early morning to the base and walked in the muster point just as the Army sergeant was calling

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my name for the second time. He chewed me out with fairly vulgar expletives which I expected. Unfortunately, I couldn't board the flight to leave since my luggage hadn't arrived and wouldn't show up at SEATAC until later. The Army guy chewed me out again...I felt like Adrian Cronaur, in the movie “Good Morning Vietnam”. I finally flew to Vietnam, landing at Cam Ranh Bay on a civilian contracted flight a couple days later. God had been good to me even though I didn't deserve it.

A Little Fun

At the USO at Cam Ranh Bay waiting for my flight to Phan Rang, I had a funny thing happen. There was a young Vietnamese lady playing checkers with the military guys for a buck a game and if anyone could beat her, they won an ice cream cone and their dollar back. There was little chance of any of those guys beating her. The game of checkers is *the* Vietnamese national board game and the lady soundly whipped the GIs. Well, I just happened to have learned to play checkers in Tennessee where checker boards were everywhere during lunch and I learned to play from the best. As I watched the young lady beat one GI after another with lots of hoots and hollers from the gallery, I was certain I could beat her. When it was my turn, I paid my buck and she started the game moving in the classic manner and I sacrificed one checker then gave her another, all the guys watching laughed when she jumped my checkers, neither they nor she saw the trap. I gave her the third checker and I proceeded to jump four of hers. The gallery said, “Whoa...Dude!” I cornered her final checker and she conceded. She said, “Another!” Ok, different moves, but the results were the same...I killed her. She was so mad and embarrassed, she got up and headed for the door as the GIs booed her or me, I don't know which. Before she closed the door, she turned around and glared at me and made a vulgar finger gesture and left. I just smiled. I never got my ice cream cone. Even before my first day in Vietnam was over, I had won my first battle! We flew on from there aboard a C-47 WWII era military aircraft the next day after sleeping on the floor of the USO. We landed at Phan Rang on 24 Dec 1968, yes, Christmas Eve. It's only 30 or so miles between the bases, but I learned later the road from Cam Ranh Bay to Phan Rang was very dangerous and subject to ambush by the VC/NVA.

First Night and the Trouble Begins...Incoming!

On that first night in the hooch as tired as I was, we were jolted awake by the sound of an explosion. Dazed from lack of sleep, I thought we were under attack and it was an incoming mortar round. I later found it was the outgoing report from an artillery piece (105 mm howitzers) accidentally fired by the South Korean White Horse Division. That was quite an introduction to Phan Rang. We quickly learned what to do when we heard the explosion of a mortar or rocket round, it soon became routine. Everyone in the hooch would jump out of bed and try to cram through the exit door and dive into the bunker all at the same time, six of us. After a time, the commotion included the voices of six men shouting, “INCOMING”!

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He Is Tough!

TSgt Deak Deakle was our defense NCOIC because of his many years of Army service during WW II and the Korean conflict. He was crazy and drank way too much, but he knew a lot about combat and always told us he was the toughest so and so in the outfit. He was drunk one evening leaving Thap Cham, a village just outside the back gate, and tried to mount a moving Mack truck towing a low boy loaded with a bull dozer. In his drunkenness, he fell off the running board and under the wheels of the trailer. As far as anyone knows, all the wheels ran over his legs. Unbelievable, it didn't break a bone...it did remove a couple pounds of leg skin though and he was out of action for a while. After that, we conceded, Deakle *was* tough!

Shooting the Big Gun

Because I had significant shooting experience, I was appointed the NCOIC (non-commissioned officer in charge) of two 50 caliber machine guns. I had never seen one up close. The 50 caliber wasn't even on our official weapons inventory but our commander liked plenty of fire power. One of the guns was mounted in the bed of “deuce and a half” or 6X6 military truck with the base of the gun welded to a large steel plate. The other was a ground mount. We frequently practiced firing in a free fire zone a couple miles from our compound. Of all my shooting experiences, shooting the 50 was best. To fire it, you had to squeeze off no more than 6 rounds in a burst or the barrel would overheat and “cook off” rounds in the cartridge chamber. If that happened, you had to break the ammo belt to stop it from auto firing, change out the barrel, head space it, feed a new ammo belt in and commence firing. It was amazingly accurate out to any range you could see, and I was able to easily hit a 50 gallon barrel repeatedly at least 300 yards away. Its max range was 2 miles.

Here are some photos of my crew and the 50 (can you imagine standing up behind this gun with the enemy firing at you?)



Me and Sgt Roberts



Sgt Roberts



Sgt Via

During one of our practices, we fired hundreds of rounds into a wooded area with the 50 trying unsuccessfully to chop down a 24 inch diameter tree. Someone began shouting, “Cease fire, cease fire!” Of course we stopped and were amazed to see a herd of water buffalo emerge

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from the brush we had been firing into. We were sorely afraid that we had killed some of them, but upon searching, we found no bodies, no blood, nothing! Unbelievable, since we fired thousands of rounds of ammo from the 50, our M16s, the S&W Combat Masterpiece 38 revolver and my model 97 Winchester shotgun. We couldn't believe the power and recoil of the 50 but it was significant. After firing all of that ammo, we later found that we had moved our 5 ton vehicle at least 10 inches sideways with the gun's recoil, about one sixteenth of an inch per shot.

My New Job and Colonel Lund

I was an electrician by trade, but SSgt Roland was much better qualified than I at electrical construction. Because I out ranked him, I was moved to the 554th Red Horse Command Post (CP). The commander was Lt Col Neals Lund who was later promoted to full colonel. He was tough but fair and I liked him. He learned that I had raced professionally on dirt and asphalt tracks and I became his “driver” since driving fast was maybe the only way to survive on the Vietnamese roads. This was a first, I was ordered by a Colonel to SPEED! One day, in the middle of summer, our base was hit by a rocket attack. Lt Col Lund had been promoted to full colonel and pinned on his eagles that day. He told me to get the Jeep; we were going to assess the damage. When we got to the rocket's impact area, a base 35th A1C Security Policeman stopped us at an entry control point. Col Lund told him we're going through. The airman saluted and told us he was ordered not to let anyone through and we couldn't pass. Col Lund told him why we were there and that he was a colonel and the commander of Red Horse. The airman said he had his orders and wouldn't allow us to enter. Col Lund said, “Drive around him, Sgt Berry!” I did so and drove about 50 feet when we heard the report of gun fire from behind us. Shocked, Col Lund turned around in the Jeep to see the airman pointing his M16 directly at us. Disgusted, he said, “Sgt Berry, turn around and go back!” Well, yeah! That was a wise decision since I feel certain the SP would have shot at least one of us. Col Lund never mentioned the incident again.

The Boss Ain't Always Right, But He's always the Boss! The New Theater

We were an attachment to the base at Phan Rang and were technically not subordinate to the installation commander. We built the base facilities but the base command had no control over the construction of the new facilities until we gave them the keys. The SPTG/CC (was his name Gallagher?) was a Lt Col and subordinate in rank to Col Lund, but he tried hard to dictate how and what to build on base. Col Lund mostly ignored him. We had been working for some time on a base theater and near the end of construction the SPTG/CC who was Irish told Col Lund to name the facility the “Shamrock Theater” with a picture of a four leaf clover. Col **Neals** Lund was of Swedish ancestry with family dating back to the Vikings and of course secretly wanted to name it something “Nordic”. Not much was said as we finished construction. On the day of the

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grand opening, the name of the theater bill board was covered with a sheet and at the official unveiling ceremony, the sheet was pulled aside. There were many whispers and chatter when they saw the name “Viking Theater”. It was clear that the SPTG/CC was POed, and I heard him speak to Col Lund in heated terms. Col Lund replied, “I did name a part of the theater Shamrock, come on, I’ll show you!” He led him to the men’s room and opened the first stall door and there over the toilet, was a small sign proudly displaying the name Shamrock with a four leaf clover. Col Lund smirked and needless to say, sparks flew! There was no love loss between these two.

My Buds

I got along well with everyone in our squadron. We always worked at least 12 hours a day but many would go back to work after dinner since there was little else to do. My best friend and hooch mate was SSgt Bob Darby, a heavy equipment mechanic who was very good at his job. He could make anything run. He would play an important role in my life which I will detail later. In our hooch, our M16s were always at the ready with a number of loaded magazines on our ammo belts. We were required to wear our flak jackets anytime we were outside. They were heavy, very hot and uncomfortable. Temperatures would often exceed 100 degrees during the day and cool off to the high 70s at night and then it felt cold. We often wore our field jackets after dark while we watched outdoor theater movies. It was there that I saw the movie Bullitt with Steve McQueen for the first time and it’s still my favorite movie mostly because of the 68 Dodge Charger and 1968 Mustang chase scene. The 68 Mustang in reality couldn’t hold a candle to a Charger...I know, I had one.

Happy Valley and Our Planes

Phan Rang was nicknamed “Happy Valley” since it had never been seriously attacked prior to our arrival. The base had F100Ds, DK-20 Canberras (Australian AF), C7A Caribou, AC47 Spooky and AC119 Shadow gunships, Hughie helicopters, 01-A reconnaissance aircraft, C123 cargo planes and a number of other aircraft. Interestingly, since I worked nights, I often watched a dark plane fly in and land very quietly on the runway with no lights on. It seemed to spend only minutes on the ground before turning around and taking off again. The plane was black and I later learned it was a U2 dropping off reconnaissance film to the 315 Special Ops. Since it had narrow landing gear, a special team of fast chase vehicles (Chevys of course) followed it until it gained takeoff speed (140 mph) and dropped its outrigger wheels. The trucks ran without lights as well.

Tasked to Defend the Perimeter

Our Red Horse Squadron was assigned the Bravo area of the base perimeter to defend augmenting the Security Police Super Cops. We had the same weaponry training as they and

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generally the same arsenal of weapons. Since the base had never experienced an attack, we weren't too concerned that we would ever fire a shot. We had M-60 machine guns, M-16 assault rifles, S&W 38 revolver side-arms and there were these two 50 caliber machine guns. I carried a model 97 Winchester pump trench gun loaded with double aught buck shot which probably wasn't authorized either. It came in handy when we rode in convoy. The only way to survive an off base convoy run was to drive as fast as a Jeep would go minimizing the chance of a VC/NVA attack. While traveling, we often heard the crack of rifle fire as we travelled and it actually sounded like the shots came from just off the road. They were probably fired from 100 yards or more away.

I Wouldn't Want to Be In His Shoes!

Col Lund had a very unique and beautiful Thompson sub-machine gun that fired 45 caliber ammunition. It was an older gun but in pristine condition. It hung on his office wall most of the time and I often admired it wishing I had one. TSgt Deakle sometimes borrowed it when we rode in convoy to various towns near Phan Rang and Cam Ranh Bay. There were places along the route that were designated “free fire zones” and you could pop off any number of rounds that you cared to. One day, Deakle took the Thompson and let 30 rounds fly in one such zone and almost immediately, we were overtaken by an MP Jeep and a sergeant told me to pull over. I did. They went immediately to Deakle and said, “Give me the Thompson” which he did without resistance thinking they wanted to admire it. He couldn't believe it when they said, “We're confiscating this weapon and it's not authorized under the Geneva Convention rules”. As much as Deakle argued, he could not get the gun back. I would hate to have been around when he had to explain to Col Lund why his gun was no longer hanging on the wall! Whew!

Trouble on the Road

We took a GI prisoner from Phan Rang to Cam Ranh Bay one day on his way to Lang Binh Jail (nicknamed LBJ). On the way back, one of our Jeeps quit running and wouldn't start again. It was late and I was ordered to stay with the broke down Jeep along with the other team of men while someone else went to the base to get a tow truck. It was getting late and it was a very daunting set of circumstances. Darkness was setting in and we stayed low and on alert. All of a sudden, I heard something go splat just off the road beside me. When I looked, I spotted the tail fins of a mortar round that impacted in the rice paddy beside the road. It didn't go off!!! If it had, I don't think I would be here today. For some reason *someone* was looking out for me. Eventually, the tow truck returned and we made it safely back to the base, but this was one of the scariest times in my life.

On another trip, while leaving the base gate, a “momma san” casually walked from the side of the road and tossed a hand grenade into a Jeep just in front of us killing a Navy lieutenant and

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his driver. That was an awful scene...the first time I witnessed a battle death. Immediately, friendly gunfire killed the mama san and maybe others. She was obviously a VC sympathizer. I didn't fire a shot but my Winchester 97 was at the ready.

Another day, we traveled off base very early in the morning and, not far from the base, we were stopped at a road block since curfew hadn't been lifted yet. It was a tense situation and we were easy targets if we were sitting still. I was driving and my trusty model 97 Winchester was right there beside me. We were wide awake and alert. There was a yellow Vietnamese civilian bus in front of us waiting too and when the Vietnamese soldier saw our American convoy, he was going to swing the barbed wire blockade aside and let only us through. Instead the bus driver ahead of us threw it in gear and took off with the Vietnamese soldier yelling at him. When the bus didn't stop, the soldier opened fire with his M16 and I could hear the rounds hitting the bus with passengers inside screaming. The bus never stopped. We watched carefully since the South Vietnamese soldiers weren't always trustworthy but we got through ok.

Red Horse Had Everything

Red Horse was pretty much self-sustaining. We had cooks, medics, and our own facilities which were normally off limits to the rest of the base. We certainly ate well, with steak regularly on the menu and plenty of fresh fruit. We often had Army troops visit our compound and most came directly from the bush. They looked totally bombed out and were glad to get some rest without having to be on guard 24/7. We would bring them to our chow hall for a good meal whenever we had the chance and they thought they were in heaven as they ate huge meals. They told us of their unsavory battle tactics. I felt sorry for them when they had to leave again. It was a great outfit with plenty of gung ho engineer troops who thought they were invincible. That is, until they decided to go down to the Australian compound “to teach the Aussies a thing or two”. I don't remember how many of our tough guys were sent to the hospital that night, but they found out the hard way and never challenged the Aussies again. One of our guys had his jaw broken and ate through a straw for months.

Typical Night in the Command Post

I was close to the people I worked with at night especially Sgt Roberts who was one of my 50 caliber gun crew and my sergeant at arms. He was a big guy with black belt credentials standing about 6'2" weighing 220 or so. His job was to check the compound every hour and report in regularly with me on status. I was trying hard to teach him the 10 series radio codes to report in...like 10-4, etc. When he didn't use the right code, I would remind him what he should have said instead. It was something to do during the boring evenings. One night he called in and said

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he needed to take a latrine break. I told him unh, unh, what’s the number? He responded, "I gotta do a number 2"! Oops, TMI, I wasn’t asking that question!

Good Mornin’, Vietnam

In early January, Hanoi Hanna, a communist North Vietnam radio propagandist, had been telling us two battalions of North Vietnamese regulars were moving toward Phan Rang. That was a credible threat since we had been given intelligence reports that something was stirring. She told us that it was futile to resist and we should simply surrender and we would be treated fairly...yeah, right! If not, the base would be taken by force. One night she said she felt sorry for the Air Force men at Phan Rang since she predicted that everyone with two sevens in their serial number would die soon...I have three in mine. We paid her no attention, but she did play all of the best and most popular music, so we listened. On our AFN news radio station, we awoke every morning to the sound of a rooster crowing and someone trying to act like Adrian Cronauer shouting out, “Good mornin, Vietnam!”

A Battle Ship in Vietnam???

On or about the 21st of March 1969 in the dark of night, we were on alert and deployed to our defense positions...me and my machine gun crew and the rest of the squadron. When we got to



The battle ship USS New Jersey firing her 16 inch guns off the shores of Vietnam.

our trenches and battle positions it was deathly quiet. The only sounds were our whispered conversations and the infrequent lighting off of slap flares or the boom of a mortar firing parachute flairs high in the air to light up the sky like daylight. It was neat to watch them float gently to the ground leaving a trail of smoke. All of a sudden, we began hearing huge explosions that rocked ground. It was too loud to have been incoming rocket or mortar rounds. Everyone looked at each other in the dark and all we could see was the whites of each other’s eyes...and they were big eyes. Someone called

the command post who said they had heard and felt it too and would check on it. They came back some time later explaining, the explosions were caused by the 16 inch artillery shells fired from the battleship USS New Jersey sitting 20

miles out to sea. We later found they fired 10 rounds at “Charlie’s Mountain” only a few miles from Phan Rang.

The tactic was to drop leaflets on the mountain from reconnaissance planes telling the VC/NVA (Viet Cong) to surrender or else. The VC/NVA had been launching attacks on our base from that

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area with impunity and would run back and hide in the mountain's caves and tunnels. The rounds from the New Jersey were so severe that it would collapse the tunnels and caves killing or trapping hundreds. After that, we believe, many VC/NVA simply went away or were buried in the collapsed tunnels inside the mountain, but we heard very little from Charlie's Mountain after that.

Eavesdropping

My duties in the command post were to take all incoming calls and to notify the commander of anything urgent and to sound the alarm in the event of an attack/alert. I worked every day from about 4:30 pm to 7:00 am. I also operated the command radio which I could listen in to many conversations sometimes thousands of miles away. I could also eaves drop on personal calls to home the Navy guys were allowed to make on the ship to shore radio. It was very interesting at times, I feel guilty about that now.

Where's Puff, the Magic Dragon

One night I heard the radio conversations of a squad of Army guys in the field somewhere who had spotted a small number of VC/NVA during their patrol. They were asking command to call in a “Spooky or Puff, the Magic Dragon” gun ship to come “hose down” the area. After several failed attempts to get Spooky support, someone in the command post said, “What's the matter with you, sergeant??? You have 20 men in your unit to their eight or ten! Now, get your butt over there and take them out!!!” I heard no more about Spooky that evening. However, I could often see Spooky hose down an area miles away in the dark of night. It was an awesome display of firepower, I took many photos of the mini-guns firing and the sound was like that of a machine running...brrrrrrrrrrp, brrrrrrrrp. Most of my photos were lost. They say a Spooky puts down a round every inch in an area the size of a football field with short 3-6 second burst....devastating indeed.

The VC Hard at Work

We had a fuel pipeline that ran from the bay area to Phan Rang supplying jet fuel for our aircraft from supply ships that sat in the bay at anchor. Often the VC/NVA would sabotage the line by blowing it up and set it on fire. When that happened we just shut the fuel line off and let it burn out. We would organize a convoy and go out with plenty of firepower to fix it. If we hadn't gone out prepared, they would wait until we came out and ambush the repair team.

A Tiger in the Compound??? Yeah, Sure!

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One morning at daybreak, my Sgt of arms burst through the door of the command post, dressed only with a towel around him, his eyes were as big as silver dollars, screaming, “There’s a tiger in the compound...a tiger in the compound!” I said, “What?” He said, “Yes, I saw a huge tiger up near the showers” By his facial expressions and screaming, I thought it best to investigate. I grabbed my M16 and ran out toward the shower and sure enough, there was a small group of men excitedly pointing off in the distance. They told me the same thing as my guard had said, they had seen the tiger too! They took me to where it had been, and sure enough there were huge paw prints in the dirt around the shower building.

Not long after that, the Stars and Stripes printed the story of an Army perimeter guard unit who were half asleep at night when they heard one of their men screaming for help. They popped a slap flair and saw a tiger dragging one of the troops off screaming and fighting for his life. Realizing they had only a few seconds to do something, one of the men took aim at the tiger with his M16 and squeezed off a round. The shot was perfect killing the tiger and saving the life of his comrade. There was a photo of the tiger strung up by its feet that measured well over 15 feet. My guys were lucky the day the tiger came through the Red Horse compound.

A Joy Ride on a C-123

We were tasked to travel to Buon Ma Thuot to look at an outpost station under our control at that base. We had several of our troops there at all times guarding the water supply station and the facilities there. The distance was too far to drive to the base, of course, so the commander asked the 315th Special Ops to see if they might schedule a sortie to the base and give us a ride on a C-123. They agreed. I rode in the cargo area with the side doors open. This C-123 had the engine upgrade with a jet engine hanging from each wing and it was super loud. I still hadn’t recovered my hearing from an incident I will mention later, and was a little glad I couldn’t hear. When we arrived, we drove the distance to the small base in a borrowed Jeep. I was the shotgun guard once again and was briefed to shoot anyone that tried to approach the vehicle. Remembering what had happened to the Navy lieutenant at our gate, I cocked and locked my trusty model 97 and was prepared to do just that. That area was experiencing heavy VC/NVA attacks almost nightly, so we had to be very careful. We made it back ok, but it was almost night when we began our flight back and I about froze to death in the cargo area of that plane.

A Very Dangerous 10 Miles

We had a detail roster to take the KPs (kitchen help or Kitchen Patrol) back to Phan Rang Village after the midnight meal. We used a covered 6X. When it was my turn, I loaded up with myself and another military guy and of course, my shotgun. We gathered up 10 or 15 Vietnamese civilians and took off for town. Once we were there, the workers started yelling, VC!, VC! We

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immediately heard gunfire and saw all of these little guys dressed in their black pajamas running around firing AK47s into the buildings. It was happening in my headlights, it was that close. I took a quick turn down the next road to avoid getting in the middle of the shooting. I let the workers out and high tailed it back to base. I never knew a 6X truck could go so fast! Why they didn't attack our truck is a mystery even to this day. Somebody was still watching over me!

Thap Cham, By Night

Bob Darby asked me one evening to take a Jeep for a ride and see if the clutch was still acting up after he adjusted it. The on base perimeter road passes close by the town of Thap Cham (pronounced top chom). There were several two to three story tall boulders at the edge of town and as I passed that location, I was stunned when I heard an enemy launching mortar rounds toward the base, right over my head. I could hear the rounds impacting close to the runway. I will never forget that sound. It appeared they were firing from amongst the boulders only a couple hundred yards from where I was. I immediately shut the Jeep down and dove into a ditch alongside the road. I had my M16 with me as usual and was wearing my flak vest, but I was scared they might have seen the lights of the Jeep and would try to shoot the driver...me! I watched for some time until I heard the unmistakable sound of a chopper coming closer. When it was in sight, I was pretty sure it was a Cobra/Huey gunship and it began pounding the rock area with rockets, machine guns and mortars of some kind and put on quite a show for the one lonely sergeant lying in a ditch...lol. It was awesome to watch and I still remember that it looked like a honey bee taking sap from flowers. It twisted and turned going forward and then backward firing tracer rounds and other ammo from its arsenal. That continued for several minutes and the chopper headed back to the flight line. I wish I had had a movie camera.

Tell Me About Jesus!

During my tour at Phan Rang, there were four or five airmen who continually tried to witness to me about Jesus Christ, encouraging me to become a Christian. I hadn't been a very churched person in my life thus far, but wasn't totally without God in my life. My sister Janie and I took catechism classes together when we were teenagers and were confirmed and baptized in the Lutheran church in Levittown, PA, but I paid very little attention to religion. On a few occasions, I joined the little group of witnesses in prayer sessions but didn't feel at all spiritual about it. I feel certain from my clumsy attempts at praying they knew I was not a Christian. After a while, I avoided them by heading in another direction when I saw them coming my way. On one occasion, one of them gave me a little yellow booklet called the Four Spiritual Laws. On my way up to the latrine (GI for toilet) I noticed the booklet on my bedside table and took it to read while I used the facilities. It's only a few pages and I was able to read it in total before I left. God sure works in mysterious ways as you will see.

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Hanoi Hannah Was Right, Tet Offensive 26 January 1969

Late in the evening of January 25, 1968, I was working in the command post on the terraced hill of our compound. The command post was a Quonset hut where I spent most evenings bored firing my rubber band/wooden ruler gun at Chameleons hanging on the ceiling. All of a sudden, there was a lot of commotion going on outside and I grabbed my portable radio and went out to see what was happening. From our compound we had an excellent view of the entire base below our position. There was a lot of activity on the far side of the flight line; I’m guessing it was the Kilo or Juliet defense area. Slap flairs at first lit up the night and I could hear occasional small arms fire. That had been happening more and more frequently in the previous days, but this night it persisted. Soon, the mortar fired flairs were lighting up that entire side of the base. It wasn’t long before we saw tracer rounds bouncing off the runway aimed pretty much in our direction. We could hear some rounds slap the side of our hooches and it was time to get back inside...it was getting serious!

By this time, Lt Col Lund arrived at the CP seemingly none too concerned. We monitored the radio traffic hearing that the Super Cops and their K9 units were alerting on possible enemy infiltration along the base perimeter. Things were getting real serious! Then, I heard the first incoming mortar rounds impacting within 15 or 20 yards from our CP and you could hear the shrapnel hit the side of the building...the take cover sirens were blaring. Lt Col Lund and others dropped to the floor and I turned around to see one of the officers lying on the floor curled up in the fetal position crying like a baby. Lt Col Lund told me to grab the portable radio and my gear, we were going down to the bunker.



Left and right
Two F100Ds
destroyed by
NVA during Tet
offensive at
Phan Rang AB



I found this picture on the web describing the Tet Offensive at Phan Rang. I would bet this is a pic of the F100 that was destroyed...it looks exactly as I remember it.



There were steps going down each section of the terraces leading to the bunkers. As we ran with our vests, weapons and radios, a round of something exploded very close to Lt Col Lund and me. I’m not sure if the concussion of the

explosion knocked us down or that we jumped, but both of us ended up falling among the rocks

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on the side of the steps. We were both scratched and cut up, but we ignored the pain and jumped up quickly to get to the bunker. Before we could get there, a huge explosion occurred in the direction of the aircraft parking ramp. The sound deafened me, but I could faintly hear large pieces of shrapnel or metal hitting the side of the bunker. I quickly glanced in the direction of the blast to see flames and smoke rising from the aircraft revetments. I jumped in the bunker after the commander and I immediately went to the floor.

The sound of incoming rocket and mortar rounds came fast and furious. We learned later there were 76 rounds that impacted the base...the first 13 in the Red Horse compound. In my mind's eye, I could see one penetrating the roof of the bunker blowing me to smithereens. It was at this moment and for the first time in my life, I seriously considered that I might really die and, most importantly, where would I go if I did. Somehow, the mental vision of hell scared me and instantly, the words of the little yellow pamphlet came brilliantly to my mind. It said, admit you're a sinner, confess your sins, ask for forgiveness and repent of them and ask Jesus to come into your life and save you. I did that, and at that very moment I became a born again believer in Jesus Christ. I prayed further that He would keep me from dying that evening and if He would, I promised to serve Him the rest of my life. He did and I did, at least 'til now, and I can't see that changing for the rest of my life.

The evening wasn't over yet. In the midst of all of this, Col Lund ordered us immediately to our defense positions and to prepare to stop the VC/NVA from overrunning the base. I ran to the armory, where Sergeants Vi and Roberts were already loading up our 50 cal and tons of ammo. As we loaded our gear, the base was still under furious attack. We drove quickly to our defense positions and set up and loaded our weapons. Soon after, we began taking small arms fire. We returned fire by the dim light of the flares and fired mostly at the flashes from the enemy's weapons. If the flare light was just right, we sometimes saw figures moving. I have no clue if I ever hit anyone or not. On the radio net we were advised that the VC/NVA were using sapper type tactics throwing satchel charges. By then, I was mysteriously calm and I think it was mostly because I couldn't hear. First the huge explosion seemed to have burst my eardrums and secondly, I had no ear protection for the report of the 50 cal. It was in a lull that I noticed I was bleeding from several places on my knees and arms but couldn't see well enough to determine how badly I was hurt. I later learned that Col Lund received the Purple Heart for similar wounds, but that was kept secret until near the end of our tour. He never told me, but the next day I saw him with his left arm in a sling. Our medic just bandaged my wounds and I didn't need stitches.

After some time, the firing dwindled to nothing but we stayed in our defense positions until daylight. We were still on high alert since the VC reportedly penetrated the base. We were so tired after a sleepless night but there was no time to sleep. The base sustained a good bit of damage and we saw much of it as the commander and I drove around the base. There was minor damage to a few of our facilities and we sustained only one wounded Red Horse airman

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in our unit, A1C Toups. This would not be his only injury as he received minor wounds later from shrapnel. We called him, “mortar magnet” and avoided being around him after that. I saw from a distance that the VC/NVA had hit and probably destroyed two F100s. We heard later that a C7A Caribou and one of the Hughie helicopters were damaged. One of the F100s was loaded with 500lb bombs which went off causing the explosion that deafened me. I still couldn't hear, but I was indeed happy to be alive.

The Damage

There was facility damage throughout the base and fires smoldered at several places. Satchel charges had been tossed into several buildings about the base, I heard. We were told that we had a body count of 12 VC/NVA and later 2 more were added for a total of 14 KIAs. On some of the web pages they say 17 KIAs. There were most likely more since the VC/NVA were known to take their dead with them when they left so the Americans couldn't brag on the number KIA. Miraculously we sustained no deaths of on-base personnel. Later in the day we were asked to go to the 35th SP squadron area to view the bodies of the VC/NVA to see if we recognized any of them. We could. One of them was a barber in the base barber shop and another was one of our carpenters. They were enemy spies of course. There might have been others, but I hadn't seen any other than the barber that I recognized. I have to tell you that was the most gruesome thing I've ever seen in my life. I had seen minor injuries from car crashes, but nothing like this until later when I witnessed the killing of the Navy lieutenant. One of the bodies had much of his head blown off and I wondered if any were found at our defense area. I will never know if I inflicted any of the injuries.

The VC Never Gave Up

After the Tet Offensive, Phan Rang was attacked 86 times into June 1969. More than 550 rounds of incoming impacted on the base in my year there. Let me describe what it was like to be the target of a mortar attack: Sometimes you would simply hear the mortar round as it whistled overhead, and then you hear the WHUMP of the round exploding. If the sound is getting louder, take deep cover. The mortar firing team estimates the distance to target and fires the first round short. Then they alter the distance of the mortar impact by one click elevation and fire a round, increase distance by another click and fire a round. In that mode they walk the round toward their intended target. Ironically, one of our South Vietnam civilian employees was taking a nap in the bucket of one of the front end loaders during an attack...he thought that was as safe a place as you could get. As BAD luck would have it, an enemy mortar made a direct hit in the bucket killing the worker. It was very nerve wracking to be in the path of a mortar attack and hear the rounds coming closer and closer and closer. You would hope it would stop before it got to you or would pass over without killing you.

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Bring On the Army Traveling Guns

When we were hit so frequently following the Tet attack, the installation called in the US Army Travelling Guns who operated 155mm Howitzers. These guns had computerized firing mechanisms with radar devices that somehow detected the launch location of incoming rounds by tracing the path of the round back to its source. It would then automatically aim and return fire to that point. It was very effective. When I saw the first 155 firing into Phan Rang village at



night, the impact sent flames 150 feet into the air and shrapnel flew everywhere. Needless to say, the number of manned mortar attacks reduced significantly thereafter. Then the VC/NVA set up 107mm rocket launching sites and timed the launches to automatically fire. That gave the enemy time to evacuate before anyone could spot them. In some ways the rockets were more dangerous than mortar attacks since the rockets could be timed to fire off at any time they wanted. The 107mm rockets

whistled overhead and were very destructive weapons. With mortars, they usually launched them in the dark of night.

White Horse Displays Captured VC - Gruesome

Col Lund said, “Get the Jeep, Sgt Berry. I want to take a ride.” We ended up at the Korean White Horse Division headquarters. The commander there was a good friend of my boss who wanted to show us something. When we exited the jeep, we saw three or four Korean soldiers practically dragging a Vietnamese person across the courtyard. When the prisoner looked up and saw the Americans coming toward him, he broke loose and ran headlong into a large rock nearby apparently trying to commit suicide. Before the Korean soldiers could get to him, he had banged his head hard against the rock several times trying to kill himself. When they finally stopped him, he was bleeding profusely an exceptionally disgusting sight. His wrists were tied behind his back with communications wire and blood oozed from his wounds as he tried to break loose. It was one of the most traumatic scenes I’ve ever seen in my life and it still haunts me today. They told us this was the lone survivor from the White Horse’s attack on the mortar school after their part in the attack on Phan Rang during Tet. The VC and NVA were told that if they were captured by Americans, they would be horribly tortured to death and any death was preferable to that. I was ashamed of mankind at that moment, no one enemy or not, should be forced by any circumstances to endure something like that.

Aftermath of the Attack

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After I became a Christian, I really didn't know what Christians were supposed to be or do. I never told the little group of Christian witnesses what had happened to me in the bunker and what part they played in my salvation experience. Someday we'll see each other in heaven and boy will they be surprised to see that I made it! One thing I knew Christians did was to pray and I began praying on a regular basis. With the increase in mortar and rocket attacks, one of my routine prayers was that God would get me safely out of Vietnam. I did leave Vietnam a little early but it was under terrible circumstances.

Terrible News from Home

On 17 November, about a month before we were due to rotate back home, I got a call from Red Cross. Every military member knows it's never a good thing when the Red Cross wants to talk to you. While I made my way to their office, my heart was pounding and I was agonizing over what they would tell me. I was concerned that something terrible had happened to one of my daughters or my wife. When I got there, the counselor asked me if I had a sister named Janie and at the mention of her name, I knew in my heart what was coming. He told me Janie was involved in a car accident and my immediate response was, “Is she ok?” He told me, as compassionately as he could, “No, she died of severe injuries.” I turned away from him quickly because I didn't want him to see me cry. He said she was traveling on an icy road in a Volkswagen beetle when the car slid on a bridge and crashed into an oncoming car. She survived for a short time and died in a hospital soon after. I was absolutely devastated! I was very close to Janie and she was the sweetest person you'd ever want to meet. I didn't know how to react...I was glad it wasn't my wife or one of my girls, but on the other hand, I was extremely distraught with the loss of my dear sister. I loved Janie and her kids, Cathy, Greg and Sherry and her husband Kenny, who later committed suicide. He told me they were holding the funeral until I got home and they were making arrangements to get me out on the next flight. I left Phan Rang the next day leaving most of my personal belongings for a friend to ship home to me. It was a long flight and I dreaded facing my family, especially my Mom and sister Nadine. So, what had I been praying for almost daily? That God would get me out of Vietnam. I had no clue that I would be leaving so soon and under such sad and tragic circumstances. My question was, had God caused or even allowed Janie's death to answer **my** prayer? Surely, God wouldn't do such a thing. I would soon find a clue, however as to how God may have used the circumstances in a miraculous way.

During the trip home, I found that the rumors I had heard were true...the general public hated GIs who were or had been serving in Vietnam. While traveling on military aircraft you were required to wear a uniform and, to the public, it was clear where I was coming from. No one spit on me but it's certainly a good thing looks and words can't kill. My daughters Marilyn and

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Martha and my wife Jeanne were glad I was home and also sad at the loss of my sister. We attended the funeral and I took leave while waiting for my next duty assignment.

My New Duty Station and Surprising News

I was very pleased to be going to Malmstrom AFB, MT. I arrived there on 2 January 1970. We arrived in the midst of one of the coldest winters they had experienced in many years but my kids loved the snow. A 440 cubic inch 375 horsepower Dodge Charger doesn't handle well on ice, but we made it. I loved the fresh air and the beauty of the mountains and the ability to see real live wild game. Deer, elk, antelope, moose, wolves, and bear were everywhere. We camped and fished regularly. Montana is known as Big Sky country and it is.

Shortly after my arrival at Malmstrom (Great Falls, MT), some of the guys I had been stationed with at Phan Rang began to return back to new duty stations and two of them came to Malmstrom. My hooch buddy Bob Darby was again stationed with me and we had fun reminiscing about the good and bad times we'd spent together. During a coffee break, we were enjoying the reunion and suddenly, Bob said, “Jerry! I forgot to tell you what happened! On 6 December, a 107mm rocket round came through the roof of our hooch and made a bullseye hit on your vacant bunk. It blew your bed, the wall, the sand bags around the outside wall and most of that side of the hooch onto the driveway outside. It happened at about 10:00 am and you would have been at work, so you wouldn't have been there, I'm sure!” I said, “Bob, have you forgotten that I was working nights and got off duty at 0730 every morning and I slept from about 0800 until about 1500 *every* day!” I would have been in bed and would have died had I not left before that date for Janie's funeral.

So, now the question did God have something to do with me leaving early? I can tell you, I kept my side of the bargain I made with God...remember? You save me from dying in this battle and I will serve you the rest of my life. I have honestly tried to serve Him. I witness to others as often as possible, I became an ordained deacon in the Baptist church, and I have taught Sunday school since Vietnam. You be the judge.

And Now, an Attack on American Soil 9/1/1

My days of being in the sites of the enemy weren't over. I retired from active duty and eventually got into Civil Service. I went from a meager GS-9 to a GS-15 at the Pentagon. Our Pentagon offices were being renovated and we were working out of Crystal City, but we could see the Pentagon building from our windows.

On the day before 911, I was told by a 2 star to get in a car and make it to Langley AFB, VA to ensure General Myers' move from his home to the Pentagon went perfectly. The Myers had

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just been selected the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All of the services worked for him. So on 911 I headed to Langley.

I was in his home when the towers were hit, he had already departed for the Pentagon but his wife was still at Langley. It was gut wrenching for her to see the Pentagon in flames and not know her husband’s status. It was a very sad day in American history.

How close was it for me? I had an appointment on the 3rd floor West wing of the E ring at 0900. I would have been in the midst of the devastation had I not been directed to go to Langley. Someone **WAS** watching over me!

I Still Miss Being a Part of the Military

I am now remarried and retired after 45 years of service with the Air Force, 20 years and 3 days active duty and 25 years civil service. We live in our retirement home in Paris, TN. I still wear my Air Force uniform on special occasions. Two of my grandchildren enlisted in the AF and I attended their basic training graduations wearing my uniform. I often think of my experiences in Vietnam and I enjoy being around other Veterans of that era. Last year our community held a “welcome home” event for Vietnam veterans. What an unexpected and pleasant surprise for several hundred of my fellow service men and women.

I still have vivid nightmares of the bad times in Vietnam. Strange enough, I feel the same adrenaline rush I felt in Vietnam on occasion. It could be triggered by the sound of a siren, or explosions such as firework displays. I almost instinctively want to holler, “Incoming and dive through the hooch door!!!”

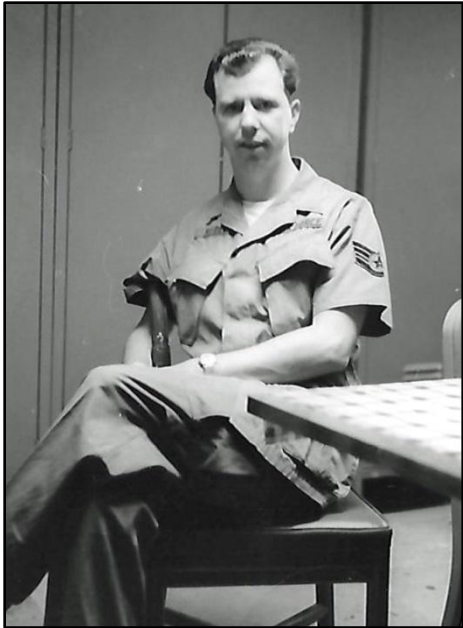


Me and a pretty sharp Marine riding a float in the annual Fish Fry Parade. Paris, TN is the home of the world’s biggest fish fry each year in April.

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Me in my hooch, Phan Rang AB, Vietnam 1969.
All photos for this article by Jerry Berry.



A picture of me at the front door of my hooch. The date must have been early since those hats were outlawed shortly after my arrival.

PHAN RANG SPOOKY RIPS ATTACKING VC

(Date unknown, S&S article provided by Dan Brownell)

PHAN RANG - A U.S. Air Force AC-47 Dragonship from Phan Rang AB, recently helped beat back an early morning Viet Cong mortar and ground assault on an ARVN outpost in Ninh Thuan Province.

Lt. Col. **Rodney J. Wood**, Las Vegas, was piloting the "Spooky" on night alert when a call came from the beleaguered camp.

"It was 2:30 in the morning when the VC mortars started hitting," Colonel Wood said, "We were called in to flare and fire for the ARVNs.

"At first the ARVNs wanted us to fire up in the hills where the VC were," Wood continued. "After we hammered away, cloud cover prevented us from firing more."

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The ARVN forces then hit the enemy with artillery and small arms; however, the VC continued moving down a road towards the camp. Then the weather cleared enough for the gunship to resume its attack.

“As the fighting got worse,” Colonel Wood said, “the ARVNs asked us to fire around the perimeter fence. The camp was in imminent danger of being overrun. The ARVNs went down into their bunkers and radioed us to strike across the top of the outpost.”

With SSgt **Benny L. Wigley**, 24, San Diego, kicking out flares, Spooky, with its mini-guns blazing, swooped down and circled the camp.

“We spotted the VC and drove them back 50 yards outside the camp,” Colonel Wood said.

In addition to Colonel Wood and Sergeant Wigley, the crew consisted of 1st Lt. **John H. Lamb**, Ohatchee, Ala., co-pilot; Maj. **Arthur L. Dugs**, Lake Charles, La., navigator; MSgt **James G. Arnold**, Highland, Calif., flight engineer; Sergeants **Raymond W. Evans Jr.**, Cherry Hill, N.J.; and **John M. Perry**, Tucson, Ariz., aerial gunners. The men are assigned to the 3rd Special Operations Squadron.

State Flag Flies in Combat



The Wyoming State Flag was flown on a combat mission in the skies over the Republic of S. Vietnam on Sat., 2 November 1968. Damage assessment was 3 enemy bunkers destroyed, 4 bunkers damaged, 2 military structures damaged and 1 enemy sampan sunk in air action 15 miles east of Can Tho in the Mekong Delta.

Piloting the F-100 Supersabre which carried the flag was Captain **Robert M. Staples**, Big Springs, Texas, a pilot with the 352nd (Yellow Jackets) Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, RVN.

The flag was given to Capt. Staples to be flown on the mission by Sgt **Clifford D. Brownell**, Lysite, Wyo, an administrative specialist assigned to the Operations Section of the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron.

Sgt Brownell received the flag from Mr. **Richard G. Hodgson**, Superintendent of Glendo Public Schools where Sgt Brownell graduated from high school in 1964. The flag is to be sent back to Glendo High School for display.

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They cannot be everywhere- — but they can be anywhere and the enemy is never sure where...Aussie Airfield Defence



There have been many articles and stories in previous newsletters about the Airfield Defence Guard (ADG's) which are noted at the end of this article, about these brave young men that helped keep us safe so that we could accomplish our mission.



Ian Fraser, No. 2 Squadron on duty outside the perimeter of Phan Rang AB.

Every day they put their life's on the line just to perform their duties. Like the aircrew members who always flew into danger, the security forces were likely to meet the enemy head-on. That is why **Ian Fraser** who is singled out in this photograph of a group of ADG's who put their life's on the line every day to keep the base safe.

Their duty was to sweep the outside perimeter of the base, mainly at night, but periodically by day to seek any trace of enemy activity, to familiarize themselves with the ever changing pattern of the countryside, and to let

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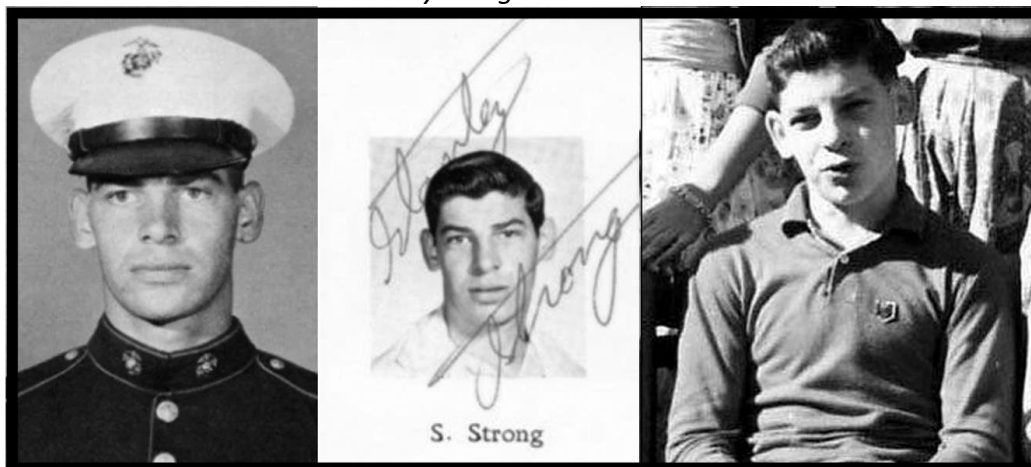
it be known that there is no "*no-man's-land*" in the vicinity of their base.

The responsibility is a large one for a small group to accept. They cannot be everywhere- — but they can be anywhere and the enemy is never sure where. Because they, played in integral part in the security of the base along with the U.S. Air Force Security and Army forces as well as being aided by Republic of Korean troops. They were invisible protectors, but we knew they were there because we were safe and because of these brave men, thousands of base personnel could carry on their daily activities relatively free from fear.

(Additional information on Air Defense Guards please see Phan Rang Newsletters 124 "RAAF Air Defence Guards (ADGs) at Phan Rang", Phan Rang Newsletter 133 "Joint Effort Foils Sapper Attack - 35th SPS, Aussie Patrol", Phan Rang Newsletter 157 "Airfield Defence - The Aussie's Mission", Phan Rang Newsletter 221 "Aussie Airfield Defence Guards (ADG's)" and a picture in Phan Rang Newsletter 246 of a group of ADG's.)

Stanley Strong, Not Just a Number

by Douglas Severt



Stanley Grant Strong
October 26, 1946
March 6, 1968

41 passengers killed...Stanley and like all the rest of the passengers and crew members on this ill fated aircraft are not just numbers, they are real people with real hopes and dreams. They are all sons, brothers, husbands, fathers and friends of real people who have grieved for their loss.

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It becomes more personal when you know more about an individual, rather than just looking at a number. **Donald Luke**, a Phan Rang AC-47 “Spooky Gunships” veteran remembers Stanley very well.

Donald said “After moving from Massachusetts in 1961 to Southern California, I started my second year of high school. I was shy and socially awkward and was teased (a lot) because of my Yankee accent. I eventually ended up with a small circle of friends, mostly male, who all met for lunch each day. One of those was Stanley Strong.” He went on to say that he lost track of everyone, like most of us, when high school ended. “On my leave prior to leaving for Vietnam, I ran into a couple of high school friends. They told me that two of our group had joined the U. S. Marines and both had been killed in Vietnam. One of those was Stan.”

Donald said “The story I got was Stan had been wounded and after spending time on a hospital ship, was on his way back to his unit at Khe Sahn on 3/6/68. The C-123K they were on was on approach when a Vietnamese aircraft got in their way so the C-123K had to pull up and circle around to try landing again. Supposedly, that is when the aircraft was shot down. I think that is when the war going on "over there" became much more real for me.”

From the Virtual Wall, **Marcia Farr Amber**, a classmate of Stan wrote: “Stanley Strong went to Charter Oak High School, along with his wife, Dolly Dunn Strong, and our other friends. I was a bridesmaid to his wife at their beautiful wedding, and I remember that they honeymooned at Yosemite. A year later, the unthinkable happened ... Stanley was killed in Nam. I went to his funeral at the same church where he and Dolly had been married. It was one of the saddest days I could imagine.

Stanley had actually known he would die in active service in the Marines and he had drawn a beautiful, touching picture commemorating his own death, which was on his funeral announcement. He had drawn this picture several years before he gave his life for his country. He was spiritual, prophetic, and so dedicated to his country ... and a truly loving husband ... he wrote Dolly so many loving letters while he was in the Marines, and she used to read them to me. No one who really knew Stanley will ever forget this young, vibrant, purehearted, spiritual man among men.”

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Gary Koupal, who when to boot camp with Stan wrote on the Virtual Wall: We went to Marine boot camp at MCRD San Diego as part of the San Gabriel Valley "Desert Valley Platoon". Out of a platoon of 82 Marines that graduated from boot camp in September 1965, 80 Marines went to Vietnam after completing advanced infantry training and MOS training; Stan and I were assigned duty stations on the East Coast as 0141's. I remember Stan came down from Quantico and visited me at Marine Barracks, Norfolk, Virginia, before I went to Vietnam. That was the last time I saw Stan. He was a happy funny guy. I served in Vietnam from July 1966 until August 1967. Stan was sent to Vietnam with less than a year remaining on his enlistment. I had heard that he was wounded at Khe Sanh from earlier action and was flown to the hospital ship USS REPOSE , in Da Nang Harbor for medical treatment. Stan was returning to Khe Sanh when the C-123 he was on was hit by enemy fire and crashed.” **Semper Fi Stan! You are not forgotten.**

Tragedy at Khe Sanh

On 06 March 1968, a C-123K PROVIDER, tail number 54-0590, was conducting a personnel transport mission from Da Nang to the besieged combat base at Khe Sanh. The aircraft carried a crew of four and a number of passengers.

On arrival, the C-123 was forced into a go-around situation when a small plane landed in front of it. During the go-around the C-123 was hit in the right turbine by enemy ground fire and crashed in flames outside the defensive perimeter.

Due to enemy action, the crash site could not be reached until 25 March 1968, when Echo Company 2/3 Marines located the wreckage. Search parties went back on 26 April, 24 June, and 3 July, and on each occasion recovered human remains, dog tags and other identification. The remaining wreckage was demolished prior to the departure of the last search party.

The number of servicemen aboard the aircraft still is an open question, but there is no need to discuss that at this time except to state that Stanley Grant Strong was positively on this aircraft.

Only 19 of the men aboard could be individually identified, and no evidence of two men known to be aboard could be found amongst the recovered material. The remains of the individually unidentified men were buried at Jefferson Barracks near Saint Louis.

(Additional information pertaining to this incident can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 227,

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“Aircraft of Phan Rang AB, RVN”; “Casualty List for Ninh Thuan Province” in Phan Rang Newsletter 155 and Phan Rang Newsletter 197, “Chronological Order of Phan Rang AB Air Losses”.)



LOG OF THE LEPER - The awesome firepower of an AC-47

Roger Lambert commented on the “LOG OF THE LEPER - The awesome firepower of an AC-47”.

“The "Spooky" article reminded me of a contact in 1969 in which my colleague, Lieutenant **Ian Hosie**, Platoon Commander 7 Platoon, C Company, 5 RAR, and his platoon were saved by a "Spooky" gunship when an unknown sized enemy force attempted to overrun his night position. It was the first occasion within the Company that strobe lights were used at night. Ian had the strobes placed strategically around his position and "Spooky" did the rest.”

Roger went on to say, “My 9 Platoon was some kilometers away from Ian's position, but we could still see the tracers and hear the roar of the miniguns. One of my diggers likened the noise to "one, long extraneous fart" ... Needless to say that the enemy force was dispersed by the intense minigun fire and Ian's platoon was relieved of the onslaught.”

Doug’s Comments:



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