

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 263

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Terror on the Salt Flats of Phan Rang

By Raymond N. Judycki

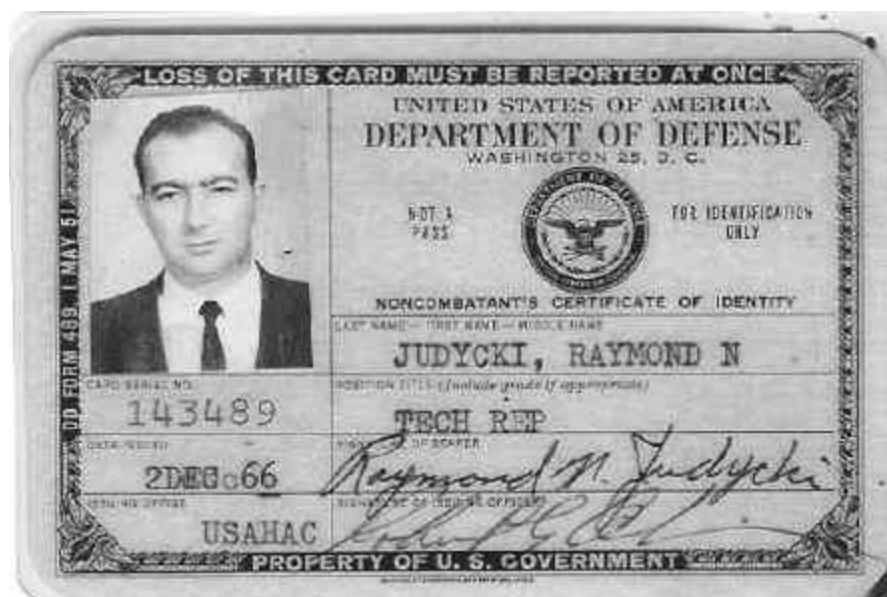
On October 6, 1967, the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company was ferrying one of its sixteen Chinook CH-47A models—serial number 65-7967—from Pleiku in the Central Highlands to Saigon, where it would be turned over to Air Vietnam, Inc. for major overhaul. LT. **Jesse Hamilton**, 179th maintenance officer, was the aircraft commander and pilot on this mission. In addition to the co-pilot, crew chief and flight engineer, there were three passengers on board: a 4th Infantry Division major, Bell Helicopter tech rep **Coalby Brown**, and me. Awaiting our arrival in Saigon was Chinook CH-47A serial number 66-19075. This particular aircraft had

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recently been on display at the 1967 Paris Air Show.



I was a civilian technical service representative, or “tech rep,” employed by the Hamilton Standard Division of United Aircraft Corporation. The basis for my “tour” in Vietnam was a one-year contract between my employer and the U.S. Army Aviation Materiel Command out of St. Louis, Missouri. The contract assigned a “GS-12 equivalent” grade to my position and specified that I was to “advise and instruct on the maintenance and operation of the Hamilton Standard fuel control on the T-55 engine utilized on the CH-47 helicopter.”

After a very steep descent to avoid enemy ground fire, a standard manouvre I was told, the C-141 that I boarded at McGuire AFB in Wrightstown, New Jersey, landed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. The date was December 1, 1966.

I reported to the Customer Assistance Office at Headquarters, U.S. Army, Vietnam (USARV), and from there I was stepped through “in-processing” that included getting an extension on my travel visa, my identification and non-combatant cards, and my ration card. Next, I reported to the 34th General Support Group, which wasted no time scheduling my indoctrination and training. The next nine days were spent in Vung Tau, where I received general briefings followed by detailed “in-country” briefings on the procedures and problems related to Hamilton Standard jet fuel controls. While in Vung Tau, the 34th GSG sent word that

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I would be assigned to the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company at Camp Holloway in Pleiku, but I would also support the Chinooks and Sikorsky Sky Cranes of the 1st Air Cavalry in An Khe. For the next 10 months I supported primarily the 179th, but also the 228th Aviation Battalion and the 15th Transportation Battalion at An Khe.

“...I volunteered to sit in the right door gunner position.”

On October 6, 1967, the date of the ill-fated flight, I was itching to get a decent haircut, and I wanted to talk with Major Briscoe at the 34th about procedures for "booking out" upon termination of my contract late the following month. Major Martin of the 604th Transportation Company at Camp Holloway issued orders authorizing me to travel to Saigon and back using military transportation. I usually flew on Air Force fixed-wing aircraft when I travelled in-country, but the timing of LT. Hamilton's flight was perfect. He agreed to take me along and I volunteered to sit in the right door gunner position. They were short-handed and there wouldn't be a right door gunner on this maintenance flight.

“We were flying close enough to the ground that I could see what looked like smiling faces on the locals below.”

The weather was good when we departed Camp Holloway in Pleiku. This led the pilots to choose an overland route. When we got to Ban Me Thuot, however, there was a weather front in our way. We landed and waited a few hours for it to clear, but it did not clear. The pilots considered continuing the overland route using instrument flight rules, with a promise of visual flight rules between layers, but ultimately, they decided against it. We backtracked to Tuy Hoa, but the same front at Ban Me Thuot extended all the way to the coast. So, the pilots decided to fly low-level over Nha Trang and Phan Rang. From my side of the aircraft, I watched the water buffalo, cows and goats running away from the whipping sound of our rotor blades. We were flying close enough to the ground that I could see what looked like smiling faces on the locals below. I waved to them, and they waved back.

“In a heartbeat, calm was replaced by chaos and fear.”

It was a typical day in Vietnam—typical for a tech rep anyway—until we were about 12 miles

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south of Phan Rang, in an area known as the Salt Flats. While flying along the railroad, our aircraft was struck by enemy ground fire. In a heartbeat, calm was replaced by chaos and fear. Our Chinook jerked violently, and the sky felt (ceiling upholstery) in the cabin fell down, thrusting the three passengers into total darkness. From the ground our wallowing aircraft must have looked like a huge bucking bronco in the sky. Through my headset I heard the co-pilot, Jake, yell, "JESSE'S BEEN HIT," and a split second later he was hollering desperately about a map that was spread across his lap and hindering his ability to regain control. Coalby and the major and I quickly re-secured the sky felt, and I looked out the window to get a sense of how bad the situation was. Hydraulic fluid was squirting in all directions. With two long steps I bounded into the cockpit and found Jesse slumped in his seat with blood streaming down his face. Jake was maneuvering frantically to stabilize our out-of-control aircraft. We were, without a doubt, going down in a hostile area.

From the moment we were hit, Jake began issuing MAYDAY calls to any aircraft in the area. He also called out ditching instructions on the intercom. Jake managed to land safely about a mile and a half from where we took rounds, roughly 50 yards from a village. Coalby and I hustled Jesse out of the cockpit and onto the webbed seats mounted alongside the fuselage. Jake shut down the aircraft and came back into the cabin to check on Jesse and take an arms-and-ammo inventory. We had two 7.62-millimeter machine guns on door mounts, two M-16 rifles, one M-2 carbine rifle, and two 45-caliber pistols. He told us to expect the worst.

I manned the right door gun, but our aircraft position relative to the village was such that the front of the aircraft was unprotected. The right-most traversing 30 degrees of the left gun covered the left flank of the village, and the left-most traversing 30 degrees of the right gun covered the right flank of the village, but the two fields of fire did not meet, hence our frontal vulnerability. I yanked at the mounting pinion to remove the gun from its mount, but it was jammed. I looked over at the other gunner and saw that he, too, was struggling unsuccessfully with his gun and mount. Locals from the village swarmed to the edge of its fenced-in perimeter. We waited in silence for the first shots to be fired.

I asked Coalby, who was holding his towel as a compress over Jesse's head, if the bleeding had slowed. When he momentarily lifted the towel, I observed a graze that was two and one-half inches long and about a quarter-inch deep. For a split second I saw a white groove in Jesse's head before it filled up with blood. Within three or four minutes from issuing the first

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MAYDAY, a Huey UH-1B approached from the rear and landed. Coalby and I carried Jesse with his arms over our shoulders to the waiting Huey. It only had space for two and Jesse asked Coalby to accompany him. Within seconds they took off and disappeared from view.

When I returned to the Chinook, I found Coalby's briefcase. I knew he was planning to purchase airline tickets for his wife, so she could meet him in Bangkok during his upcoming R&R. I also knew that the money he set aside for the tickets was in his briefcase. My attention quickly turned to three armed men that were approaching the aircraft from the village. Since they could have been Viet Cong, and we were scared, it was very difficult not to fire upon them before they fired upon us. As they came closer, we saw that they were ARVN soldiers—two officers and one enlisted. The enlisted soldier spoke English, and he told us that they were among 100 ARVN troops that were tasked with protecting the village from the Viet Cong. They promised to protect us and our aircraft, but they warned that the night would bring out many Viet Cong positioned only a mile and a half away. They said we could plan on our position being mortared during the night. It would be dark in two hours and we agreed that if we had to spend the night, we would not sleep near the aircraft. We surveyed our surroundings and found some gravestones and ground depressions, and an old foundation that would provide some shelter.

While helping to survey the Chinook's damage, I found a wire bundle above and behind the pilot's seat that had been severed by the bullet that grazed Jesse's head. The wire bundle served the SAS (Stabilization Augmentation System), whose purpose was to sense changes in the attitude of the aircraft and make slight inputs into the flight controls to keep the aircraft stable. This would explain the wallowing that occurred when we were hit. Looking down at the floor, I was amazed to find the bullet. I decided that I would find Jesse when this ordeal was over, and give him the bullet and his helmet, which had a small entrance hole in the front and a two-inch exit hole in the rear.

In the aft section of the Chinook, two bullet holes were found in the aircraft's skin. They were probably from the same bullet that severed the hydraulic line. The crew chief began matching up the color-coded SAS wires, while the other crewman removed a non-critical piece of drain tubing, with which he would try to repair the damaged hydraulic line.

About 45 minutes after we ditched, a second Huey arrived. Jake informed me that he and his

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two crewmen would remain behind in an effort to repair the Chinook and fly it out before dark. Spotting us, the Huey descended quickly. With the craft hovering about a foot off the ground, the door gunner braced himself and pulled the Army officer aboard first, and then he pulled me up. As soon as we were seated, the pilot took off at full throttle. Within a minute the door gunner began firing bursts toward some high cliffs that bordered the South China Sea. I tried to ask him what was going on, but he couldn't hear me over the sound of the rotor blades and jet engine. Later it was explained that on the way in, and on other occasions, they had received ground fire from the cliffs.

I was dropped off at a small Army Intelligence unit located about five miles from Phan Rang Air Base. A Sergeant, who was awaiting my arrival, escorted me to an underground area that housed a Teletype and some radio equipment. It was here that I was "de-briefed" on what had occurred. I was then transported to the air base.

I arrived at Phan Rang Hospital only to be informed that Jesse had departed 30 minutes earlier. They told me they had patched up his head and medevac'd him to Cam Ranh Bay. I noticed a field ambulance backed up to the loading platform of a C-123 transport plane, so I walked across the field toward the plane. I found Jesse sitting in the rear of the plane, his head looked like he was wearing a large white turban. He thanked me for bringing his helmet, but when I retrieved the armour-piercing bullet from my pocket and handed it to him, he was flabbergasted. All he could say was, "Wait till my son sees this! Wow!"

Jesse told me that I had just missed Coalby, who left on a flight to Saigon a few minutes earlier. Jesse complained that he had lost some control in his right arm and added that he was worried the graze may have caused some brain damage. The C-123's crew chief interrupted, "Sorry fellas. You'll have to cut it short—this bird is about to fly." Jesse thanked me again and asked me to get someone to forward his mail to him at the hospital in Cam Ranh Bay. I assured him that I would.

“I was beginning to think that I would have been better off staying with the Chinook in the Salt Flats of Phan Rang!”

After several agonizing hours of waiting at Phan Rang, I caught a hop on a Saigon-bound C-

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123. Shortly after becoming airborne, we encountered a horrifying storm. Every time the aircraft banked; water poured in from somewhere overhead. It felt like it was 110 degrees and I was soaking wet. I thought we were hit by lightning several times, and it sounded like one of the engines was cutting out. I was beginning to think that I would have been better off staying with the Chinook in the Salt Flats of Phan Rang!

Finally, it was over. The C-123 landed at Tan Son Nhut Airbase at about 9:00 pm. By this time, it was too late to try to find Coalby, so I hitched a ride into Saigon and promptly checked into the Astor Hotel. At \$25 per night, the Astor was second in quality and price only to the Caravelle Hotel located down the street. I rang for room service to bring me a few highballs and a snack. After toning down, I conked out without a worry in the world. While I slept in the relative comfort of the Astor, Jesse spent the night in a hospital in Cam Ranh Bay, where the doctors and nurses kept shining flashlights into his eyes every time he fell asleep.

The next morning, I met Coalby at the Bell Helicopter villa on the outskirts of Saigon. He was really happy that I brought his briefcase. He poured coffee and we swapped stories about our experiences from the time we parted company. His excitement didn't end in the Salt Flats either. The Huey that picked up Coalby and Jesse promptly took hits on the way to Phan Rang—another MAYDAY! The smell of JP-4 was very strong, indicating that the fuel cell had been hit. The Huey pilot wanted to land, but Jesse told him to keep going, because they probably wouldn't blow up if they hadn't already. They made it to Phan Rang.

That morning, probably while Coalby and I were catching up on the previous day, Jesse was transported by helicopter—one without doors as he recalled—to a hospital in Nha Trang, where they poured “cold as hell saline solution” onto his wound and sutured his scalp. Later that day, Jesse received a visit from his good friend, CWO-3 Donald Joyce from the 179th. Don, a Chinook pilot who was also fixed-wing rated, flew the 52nd Aviation Battalion's Beaver U-6A up to Nha Trang to see Jesse. As if being shot down in his own helicopter and then being shot at in his medevac chopper wasn't enough, Jesse's hospital stay at Nha Trang included a mortar attack along with its other services. Jesse would stay at Nha Trang for several days before being transported by C-118 to a hospital in Japan.

Coalby and I went into downtown Saigon, and each went our separate ways for a few hours with the understanding that we would rendezvous at the USO Club. Coalby headed for the Air

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France office to purchase plane tickets and I headed for the barbershop. Getting a haircut and visiting with the 34th weren't my only reasons for wanting to fly the 219 air miles to Saigon. I also wanted to call my wife from the USO Club, and just get away from dirty-old Pleiku for a couple of days.

After making our phone calls at the USO Club, Coalby and I set out for Tu Doa Street—the main shopping district in Saigon. Tu Doa was also known for its many bars, and we celebrated surviving our ordeal by having a drink in at least twenty of them. That night I stayed at the Bell Helicopter villa as the guest of Coalby's boss—the chief Bell rep at Tan Son Nhut.

The following morning, we overslept and missed our scheduled ride to the airfield. After much hustling we got out onto the main road and hitched rides to the airbase on the back of a couple of motorcycles—a sort of two-wheeled taxi service. Fifteen minutes later Coalby and I arrived at the gates of Tan Son Nhut Airbase. We paid our "Vietnamese Cowboys" 100 piastres each, and then caught a Lambretta to the edge of the airfield.

It was easy to spot the giant Chinooks on the field. As we approached them, our crew recognized us and called out to us. They had been successful in flying 65-7967 out before it got mortared. We raised our arms in acknowledgement. I looked over at Coalby and said, "You know, it's not too late to back out. With any luck we can get out of here on a C-123!" He replied that if I was crazy enough, so was he. "Besides," he said, "this is what I call flying weather."

I saw CWO Gessel from the 179th near aircraft 66-19075. Forgetting that they were short a pilot, I asked him what he was doing in Saigon. He explained that the CO sent him down to co-pilot the new Chinook back to Pleiku. "Sure, hope it's not a lemon," he said. He informed me that word had just been received from Nha Trang that Jesse was going to be evacuated to Japan for further treatment of his injury. I knew he was very close to Jesse, and I expressed my sympathy.

Soon we were off and circling Tan Son Nhut. It felt good to be out of the sweltering heat below, made worse by the choking exhaust from thousands of motorcycles. A few minutes later we were flying over Bien Hoa. I glanced into the cockpit to look at the gauges—the altimeter read 4,000 feet above sea level and the air speed indicator read 110 knots. We

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were out of range of small arms fire, but I still had an uneasy feeling because of our recent ordeal.

Our first refueling stop was Nha Trang Air Base. Nha Trang's coastline looked like it was right out of the pages of National Geographic—lush green palm trees, white sandy beaches, and hundreds of sampans. After Nha Trang was Quinhon Air Base. We refuelled and took a little extra time to visit and shop at the Post Exchange. I stopped in to see a Hamilton Standard rep named **Donald Ballard**. I was reminded that I could never convince Don to fly over to Pleiku for meetings. He used to tell me, "There's a war going on over there!" I would no longer argue with him about where the war was or was not.

When we arrived back at Camp Holloway, quite a crowd had gathered to hear what had happened to us at Phan Rang. Within a week the crew chief wrote a full report of the Phan Rang incident and had each of us who were on board sign it. The report cited the heroic efforts of our co-pilot who not only saved our lives, but also saved an aircraft worth \$1,000,000. Three weeks later, Coalby and I were invited to a commemorating ceremony on the airfield. The two-star commander of the 1st Aviation Brigade and others had flown in from Saigon for this special event. After the speeches were made and hands were shaken, Jake was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In November 1967, **Jesse Hamilton** was transferred from Japan to the Naval Hospital at Portsmouth, Virginia. He recovered from his injury and returned to duty in March 1968. He made Captain and returned to Vietnam in June 1970 for a second tour. He was assigned to the 34th General Support Group at Tan Son Nhut, and later commanded the 166th Maintenance Detachment there. Jesse retired from the Army in 1980, after 26 years of service, and then worked as a federal civil service employee. He retired in 2001 after 19 years of service.

In 2001, Coalby Brown was still working for Bell Helicopter as their Customer Support Development Manager for Latin America and the Middle East.

I worked in the aircraft industry until 1970. With layoffs pending, I sat for and passed the Massachusetts Civil Service police exam and was appointed to the Springfield Police Department. I retired from the Department in 1998 after 28 years of service. My wife and I

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now enjoy traveling and spending quality time with our grandchildren. I don't know what ever became of Jake. I am distressed by the fact that I cannot remember his last name, no matter how hard I try. I am sure that I thanked him properly back in Vietnam, but it would have been nice to tell him again, all these years later, how very much I appreciated his flying skills on that fateful day in October 1967.

Chinook CH-47A serial number 65-7967 (See note below) is still flying, according to sources at Fort Rucker, Alabama. The 139th CH-47 built by Boeing has been upgraded and modernized and is now CH-47D serial number 86-01667. In 2001, students at the U.S. Army Flight School at Fort Rucker were learning to fly in the same cockpit that figured so prominently in Jesse Hamilton's life. 86-01667 has flown in excess of 4,000 hours as a D-model, and will probably be upgraded to an F-model, enabling it to provide service beyond 2015.

Chinook CH-47A serial number 66-19075, the 333rd CH-47 built by Boeing, was flown by an unqualified individual and crashed in Vietnam on April 4, 1971. It had accumulated 2,149 hours at the time it was lost.

(Bob Browne, No. 2 Sq. RAAF contributed this story)



The history of 65-07967

- 65-07967, Boeing build number B-139, was a CH-47A helicopter. The U.S. Army acceptance date was 24 November 1965. 65-07967 accumulated 3,962.5 aircraft hours.
- At some point, 65-07967 was assigned to the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC) - "Shrimp Boats", located at Pleiku, in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam).
- At some point, (approximately 1968) 65-07967 was assigned to the 154th Aviation

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Company, located at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

- In June 1969, 65-07967 was assigned to Korea.
- At some point 65-07967 was assigned to the 19th Aviation Company located at Camp Humphreys.
- On 17 December 1969, 65-07967 experienced a flight into inadvertent Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC). With the aircrew disoriented, the aircraft descended approximately 2700 feet before recovering.
- During the procedure, 65-07967 suffered from a rotor overspeed, airframe over-stress, and an engine over-torque condition resulting in the conduct of 120 days of maintenance before becoming flyable once again.
- On 9 July 1986, 65-07967 was inducted into the D model program and converted to 86-01667.
- The last known location of 65-07967 was at Boeing during the conversion.
- Aircraft status: Converted to D model.

Reenlists in Army While On the Road in Vietnam

La Marque Times, May 29, 1969, La Marque, Texas

PHAN RANG - The 589th Engineer Battalion's latest re-enlistment could well have reflected the "avant-grade" in the U. S. Army recruiting.

It was an on-the-road affair involving inter-company cooperation. The occasion was the re-enlistment of SP4-**Samuel Sparks** of the 589th's C Company.

A convoy headed by Battalion Sergeant Major **C. E. Moore** and Sergeant First Class **Rudy Smith**, the 589th's career counselor, departed Battalion headquarters to meet a convoy carrying C Company Commander, Captain **Richard Comiso** and SP4 Sparks at a point along QL-11 midway between Phan Rang and Song Pha.

On their way to the meeting point SGM Moore and SFC Smith were delayed along QL-11 at a B Company bridge site because they did not have anyone to escort them to their destination for security purposes.

ILt **Nick Lapoevic**, a B Company platoon leader then offered to escort them to complete the re-

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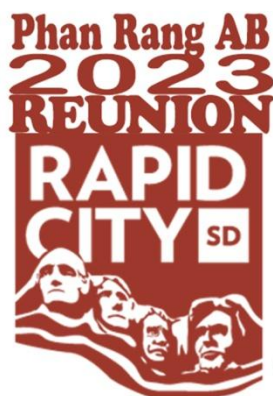
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enlistment. As turned out, representatives of three companies were present to see SP 4 Sparks re-enlist for six years.

SP 4 Sparks, a heavy vehicle driver, will have spent almost 20 months in country when he returns to the states in September. A native of Dickinson, Texas, he is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sparks of the same town.

A 1967 graduate of Dickinson, Texas, High School SP4 Sparks previously worked as clerk/checker before joining the Army.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

REUNION DATES ARE
SEPTEMBER 21-23

HOTEL

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT, BOX ELDER, SD

What is a Hero? Heroes are role models and they're people that we look up too. They all have unique and special qualities that make one another different from each other. For example policemen battle crime everyday and when they're overcoming a conflict they have determination, courage and other traits that people admire them for and that make them as a hero. Typically a hero is admired for their achievement/actions and qualities. Sometimes I think we overuse that term by calling everyone a hero, but maybe not, because we are surrounded by them. Not long ago a complete stranger, upon seeing a vehicle driving on ice when it crashes through the ice and this stranger jumps in the freezing water to rescue the occupants. That person was truly a hero. Our military comrades who never caught the freedom bird are a special kind of hero to me and their names **must** be remembered because I don't want them to know that they died in vain. They were heroes because they pledged to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that they will

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bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that they will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. They certainly didn't want to be heroes, they were just performing their duties; they might have been piloting a multimillion dollar aircraft, passengers and crew aboard an ill fated aircraft, or any other activity either in leisure or while engaged in their military duties, **they were all heroes and they have carved their place in history.**

Charles William Burkart, Jr. is one of those Heroes



"The Long Black Hole" - Will Laos give up it's secrets?



Rank/Branch: O3/US Air Force

Unit: 13th Bomber Squadron

Date of Birth: 17 May 1931

Home City of Record: Selkirk NY

Date of Loss: 13 June 1966

Country of Loss: Laos

Loss Coordinates: 171500N 1054500E (WE778137)

Status (in 1973): Missing in Action

Category: 2

Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: B57

**Other Personnel in Incident: Everett O. Kerr
(Missing)**

SYNOPSIS: When North Vietnam began to increase their military strength in South Vietnam, NVA and Viet Cong troops again intruded on neutral Laos for sanctuary, as the Viet Minh had done during the war with the French some years before. The border road, termed the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" was used for transporting weapons, supplies and troops. Hundreds of American pilots were shot down trying to stop this communist traffic to South Vietnam. Fortunately, search and rescue teams in Vietnam were extremely successful and the recovery rate was high.

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Still there were nearly 600 who were not rescued. Many of them went down along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the passes through the border mountains between Laos and Vietnam. Many were alive on the ground and in radio contact with search and rescue and other planes; some were known to have been captured. Hanoi's communist allies in Laos, the Pathet Lao, publicly spoke of American prisoners they held, but when peace agreements were negotiated, Laos was not included, and not a single American was released that had been held in Laos.

The B57 Canberra was one of the aircraft used by the U.S. Air Force to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Canberra first came to the Vietnam theater at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964. It proved to be vulnerable and difficult to repair for working targets over North Vietnam, but proved effective in the armed reconnaissance Trail operations of Operation Steel Tiger. The Canberra was sometimes used in conjunction with other, more sophisticated aircraft, such as the C130, and was especially effective on night missions.

Capt. Charles W. Burkart Jr. was the pilot and Capt. **Everett O. Kerr** the navigator of a B57 Canberra (tail number 55-4268, call sign “Opal 57”) assigned a night strike mission over Laos on June 13, 1966. Capt. Burkart's aircraft was flying in a flight of three planes.

Prior to reaching the target area, the flight became separated due to bad weather. The last known radio contact from Burkart and Kerr was approximately 50 minutes after takeoff at Da Nang. Their approximate location was about 8 miles southeast of the city of Ban Som Peng in the Ban Karai Pass region of Khammouane Province, Laos.



Despite search efforts, no aircraft wreckage was located, and no emergency beeper signals were detected. Burkart and Kerr were classified **Missing in Action**.

When 591 Americans were released from prisoner of war camps at the end of American involvement in the war, Kerr and Burkart were not among them. **Not one American held in Laos had been released.**

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In early 1979, thirteen years after their disappearance, Kerr and Burkart were administratively declared dead based on no specific information that they were alive.

Were it not for the thousands of reports concerning Americans still held captive in Southeast Asia, the Kerr and Burkart families might be able to close this tragic chapter of their lives. But as long as Americans are alive, being held captive, Kerr and Burkart could be among them. It's time we brought these men home.

Captain Charles William Burkart Jr., who joined the U.S. Air Force from New York, was a member of the 13th Bombardment Squadron. He was the pilot of "Opal 57" and was lost with the aircraft on June 13, 1966. His remains have not been recovered. While carried in the status of missing in action, the Air Force promoted Capt Burkart to the rank of Colonel (Col). Today, Colonel Burkart is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.



Captain **Richard E. Weizenegger Jr.**, son of Mrs. Patricia S. Weizenegger, 1821 Valmont Ave., Eau Claire, Wisconsin, is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. (Eau Claire Leader Telegram, June 1, 1971, Eau Claire, Wisconsin)

Technical Sergeant **William R. Krach**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Mike J. Krach, Owen, Wisconsin, is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Sergeant Krach is an aircraft maintenance technician. (Eau Claire Leader Telegram, June 1, 1971, Eau Claire, Wisconsin)

Major **Jack W. Graf**, son of Mr. and Mrs. George R. Graf, Rt. 1, Barronet, Wisconsin, is a member

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of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. He is a maintenance staff officer. (Eau Claire Leader Telegram, June 1, 1971, Eau Claire, Wisconsin)

Staff Sergeant **William A. Perrine**, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Perrine, 2204 Black River Road, Neillsville, Wisconsin, is a member the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. Sergeant Perrine is an aircraft maintenance technician. (Eau Claire Leader Telegram, June 1, 1971, Eau Claire, Wisconsin)

DECORATED — Staff Sergeant **Robert E. Small**, son of Mrs. Irene Small of Washington, has been decorated with the U.S. Air Force commendation medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sergeant Small distinguished himself by meritorious service as an aircraft maintenance technician at Phan Rang. He serves with a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. The 15-year veteran has also served in the Republic of Korea. He is a 1954 graduate of P.S. Jones High School. Sergeant Small and his wife, the former Norma T. Willis, have one son, Gerald, 14. (*Washington Daily News*, December 16, 1970, Washington, North Carolina)

With U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES, Vietnam — Transferring an abandoned building from Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, to the Ngoc Ninh Orphanage in Phan Rang City proved to be a rewarding experience for Air Force Sgt. **Jackie L. Cooper**, formerly of Bernie, Mo.

Sergeant Cooper and 15 other volunteers from the 315th special operations wing at Phan Rang reassembled the building at the orphanage where it now houses 40 formerly homeless Vietnamese children.

The consensus among the air force volunteers is that participating in this effort benefitting the homeless children was a gratifying experience, so much so that they again volunteered and now are busy in off-duty hours helping to build a school in another Vietnamese village.

Sergeant Cooper, whose wife, JoAnn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Moore of Bloomfield, Mo., is an administrative specialist. He previously served at Offutt AFB, Neb.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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The sergeant, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Cooper, is a 1962 graduate of Bernie high school and studied at Arkansas State College. (*Sikeston Daily Standard, October 30, 1969, Sikeston, Missouri*)

In the Armed Forces - First Lt. **Dee D. Brecheisen**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond C. Brecheisen of Eudora is on duty at Phan Rang Air Force Base, Vietnam. Lt. Brecheisen an F-100 Super Sabre pilot, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces, America’s overseas air arm in Southeast Asia, the Far East and Pacific. A graduate of Edgerton High School, he received his commission in 1964 upon completion of the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Kansas University. (*Lawrence Journal World, June 17, 1967, Lawrence, Kansas*)

Sgt. Enriquez On Duty At Phan Rang AB - With U. S. Combat AIR FORCES, Vietnam - Staff Sergeant **Adolph Enriquez Jr.**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Enriquez Sr. of Rt. 1, Comfort, Tex., is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sergeant Enriquez, a packaging technician, is a member the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to the 3415th Maintenance and Supply Group, Lowry AFB, Colo. The sergeant is a graduate of Comfort High School. His wife, Janiece, is the daughter of Mrs. Nathalie Archer Brewer, Maine. Mrs. Enriquez’ father, Ora Richardson, resides at 243 15th St., Bangor, Maine. (*Kerrville Daily Times, September 5, 1967, Kerrville, Texas*)

Airman 1.C **John J. Kovach**, Son of Helen Kovach Of 315 Inwood Blvd. Avon Lake, is a member of the 14th Special Operations Wing in Southeast Asia that has earned the Presidential Unit Citation. Airman Kovach, assigned at Phan Rang AB. Vietnam, is an aircraft maintenance specialist with the wing which has received the highest U S organizational award for its performance as the only USAF Unit of Its kind in the Combat theater. The 14th is headquartered at Phan Rang and operated from nine major locations in Southeast Asia. Airman Kovach will wear a Distinctive Service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the wing. He attended Avon Lake High School. (*Elyria Chronicle Telegram, June 7, 1971, Elyria, Ohio*)

Sgt **Chfton E. Oskins**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Marsh of 222 Denison Ave., is member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces. The 35th has received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for its contribution to the military forces and local citizenry of the country. Sgt Oskins, a jet

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engine mechanic, will wear a Distinctive Service ribbon mark his affiliation with the unit.

The sergeant is a 1968 graduate of Elyria High School. (*Elyria Chronicle Telegram, June 7, 1971, Elyria, Ohio*)



The Canberra Heritage Trust is an educational and research facility to record, preserve and educate on the role of the Canberra in Royal Air Force (RAF) service from 1951 to 2006. The Trust will also document and make available records relating to non-RAF Canberra operations.

[Canberra Heritage Trust Newsletter 1](#)

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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. With this issue, I've added a B-57 to the masthead to honor Charles William Burkart Jr. 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.