

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 265

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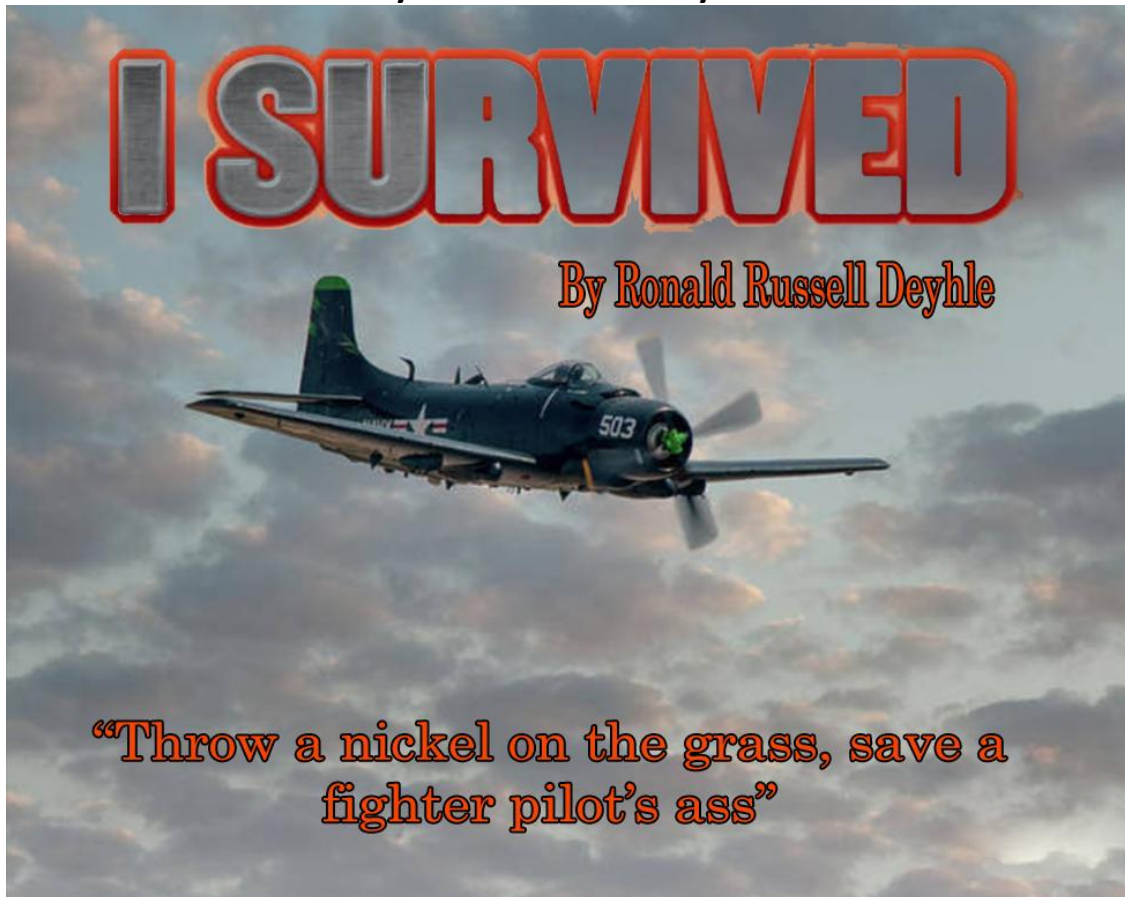
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I SURVIVED

by Ronald Russell Deyhle



I survived!! On 19 July, 1971, I took off from Phan Rang (RVN) in an F-100 bound for my across-the-Pacific journey to the USA. My Vietnam tour started on 3 June, 1970. Almost 14 months in Southeast Asia (SEA). A total of 303 combat

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missions, 43 at Tuy Hoa and the next 260 at Phan Rang AB. I closed both bases down. Tuy Hoa closed in September 1970. All pilots at Tuy Hoa and Phan Rang with 181 days in SEA went home. The rest of us were stationed to Phan Rang Air Base.

President Nixon was employing “Vietnamization”. The Vietnamese had to take over the war. Nixon was slowly pulling out troops and closing bases. Those of us at Phan Rang had to stay until the base was closed. I headed home to Reese AFB to be a T-38 instructor pilot. I loved it. No one was trying to kill me (except some students), and Texas Tech was nearby with 10,000 coeds. I roomed with Pete Reynolds. He was a Vietnam veteran from FAC O-2s. After leaving the military he became the Chief Test Pilot for Lear Jet and he was the holder of many world flying records, one with Neil Armstrong. I was first in my class at Pilot Instructor Training (PIT) and I was awarded the Silver Star for a mission I had flown with **Scott Madsen** at Fire Base 6 in RVN. (Scott would later be president of the Dr. Phil Show on television. His wife was Dr. Phil’s sister).

My usual approach to life is to lay low in the weeds to avoid attention. But my PIT first place, and my Vietnam awards caught the eye of the Reese AFB Wing Commander, Colonel **Walter H. “Buzz” Baxter III**. He flew P-51s in Korea and flew F-4s in Vietnam with 125 combat missions. He was in SEA the same time I was. He was a fighter pilot’s pilot. We all admired and respected him. He later rose to the rank of Major General. Despite our differences in age and rank we became fast compatriots. Many war stories were exchanged in the stag bar. Col. Baxter one day said to me that everyone has a combat tour and in order to achieve rank in the Air Force you needed to stand out. I had been at Reese about a year now, and he said I should go back for a second tour in SEA. The war was heating up again as the U.S. was pressuring North and South Vietnam for a peace agreement. Col. Baxter encouraged me to get a second tour, and when I came back he would look out for me. My record was good. I was a regular Officer, and my Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) were 9.4 (the highest rating). I said I would consider it. A week later he told me that he had arranged a tour in A-1s based out of Nakhon Phanom (NKP), Thailand, but flying for Air America in Barrel Roll, Laos (the northern campaign in Laos). **Wow, this sounded dangerous.**

After 1954, Diem Bien Phu and the Peace Accords gave Laos independent and neutral status.

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The introduction into Laos of foreign or regular troops, irregular troops, foreign paramilitaries or foreign military personnel was prohibited. Also prohibited was introduction into Laos of armaments, munitions and war material except for conventional items necessary for the Royal Lao Government to defend itself. Pathet Lao aligned with the Viet Minh. Hmong aligned with Royal Laos troops, USA and Air America.



“Maybe I had not used up all my nine lives yet.”

The Douglas A-1 was a propeller airplane also used by our Navy as an attack plane. It was developed for WWII, but was operational after the war and saw combat in Korea. The Air Force A-1 took over the Vietnam combat role in a variety of uses. This was not an easy combat tour. The loss rates of A-1s in Laos were the highest of any U.S. aircraft. Over 100 A-1 air force pilots were killed in SEA, and 40 Navy pilots. It could take lot of battle damage and still fly. Its main mission was Search and Rescue (SAR) of downed pilots. The A-1’s engine was a Wright RD-3350 with a thirteen foot propeller. In late 1972 combat losses had reduced flyable A-1s to a skeleton number. A-7s were sent in to bolster covering the mission, but these fast movers had difficulty with the job. My tour would be outside the Air Force purview. No help from them. We would be helping Air America (CIA) in their support of Hmong troops in northern Laos. I wasn’t too sure about this tour. It sounded like Steve Canyon and Earthquake Magoon. Then with my wisdom (at least in my mind), I had an idea. A flickering light illuminated between my ears. “Maybe I had not used up all my nine lives yet.” So I started counting:

#1. Tuy Hoa. On return to base (RTB) my trim button stuck nose down. I did everything, pulled the circuit breaker, recycled the trim, but to no avail. My flight lead pointed out that I should consider a bail out. I declined (a dumb lieutenant judgment) and so I landed. A close one, but I survived.

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#2. Phan Rang. Night mission in IV Corp. Bombs and flare canisters. Bad weather, rain, clouds. Miserable! A flare hung up on my canister and caught the wing on fire. I jettisoned the canister and the fire went out. We aborted the mission and I flew the wing home in the clouds, rain, pitch dark and lightening. I was so disoriented due to spatial disorientation, I literally couldn't tell up from down. This kills many pilots when they cannot ignore the information they are receiving from the inner ear, and fly by the instruments. I just hung on the wing formation until we broke out of the weather at Phan Rang. Finally my brain could recognize my orientation, and I landed. Lead said he wasn't sure I would make it.

#3. Phan Rang. I had battle damage and lost the main hydraulic system. When I slowed down the stick got mushy and I felt I would lose control of the airplane. The backup system could not supply control at slow airspeed. Lead recommended I bail. I declined (another dumb lieutenant decision). I landed at Phu Cat. I hit the run way at 225 knots. Usual touchdown speed is 160-165. I jumped onto the brakes, deployed the drag chute at 165 knots. This was a 10,500 foot runway. I was still going over 100 knots when I reached the end. I dropped the tail hook and took the barrier. I stopped in the overrun and had ripped the tail hook off. That one puckered me a little bit.

#4. Phan Rang. (Another dumb Lieutenant mistake). I was lead heading to Cambodia, full of fuel and bombs. Suddenly we were contacted by an excited Covey FAC. He had spotted NVA pulling a 37 mm anti-aircraft gun down the road in Cambodia. We, not using our frontal lobes, offered to help. I rolled in from 5000 feet, totally heavy with gas and bombs. I strafed the NVA and started to pull up. But due to the weight, I just kept sinking. I remembered an old F-100 Head told me that if you are about to smack into the ground, let up on the stick pressure for a second, and then reapply. As I bottomed out going down the road I could see the trees lining the road go by in my peripheral vision. I don't know how close to the ground I was, but the trees were 100 foot tall rubber trees and my G meter was pegged. But I survived! I wrote up the airplane as being overstressed. But until now I never told anyone what I did. I was embarrassed. Whew, a close one.

#5. Phan Rang. Fire Base 6 with 350 troops was being overrun by the NVA. **Bill Buerk** was killed the previous day on a bomb run. Another F-100 was hit and the pilot bailed out and

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survived. There were thousands of bad guys down there and the ground fire was withering. I was on a run in to drop napalm. I could see intense ground fire directed at us and felt a thump. The upper third of my vertical stabilizer was shot off. I was unaware until I landed. I survived again.

#6. Phan Rang. I was alone one night sky spot (like a B-52, you are vectored in at 20,000 feet by radar from Navy Ships, and drop bombs on their command). We called these puke missions. After drop, I was heavy with gas so I lit minimum afterburner on the way home to decrease weight. Suddenly there was a loud boom and the airplane shook. I came out of afterburner, slowed down, gear and flaps down, and did a control check. It seemed o.k. (dumb lieutenant mistake), so ignored it and landed. The next morning the maintenance chief called me to show me my airplane. A gear door had ripped off when I was in afterburner. It had hit the airplane and made a huge hole in the side. God looks out for dogs and idiots.

#7. Another dumb lieutenant stunt. Bad weather, night mission, troops in contact (TIC). I was launched off the alert pad with napalm. The ceiling was low and I let the FAC talk us into getting below the deck and coming in level at about 100 feet. It was pitch black, but many fires due to battle. The FAC marked the target and I started down the run. I could see the fires in the battle area and the mark by the FAC. All of a sudden, the fires were gone! Jesus, something was in front of me! I pulled back on the stick and barely missed a hill in front of the target. Also, in my panic I hit the pickle button and launched the napalm canister several miles from the target. The FAC said, “looks like a dry run ‘Blade’ (flight call sign). All he had to do was look five miles from the target. I never told anyone what I had done. We saved fifty Army Green Berets that night, so it was all worth it.

That’s it, only seven lives. Hell, I still have two lives left. I told Buzz Baxter that I would go. He said this would be exciting!! A cold sweat came over me as from the deep recesses of my brain I remember one of my girl friends saying the same thing, “this will be exciting”! My latest girlfriend had just given me the brown helmet, so there was nothing to keep me here, so I went.

Nakhon Phenom, Thailand

November 1972, Nakhon Phenom, Thailand, on the Mekong River. East of the river was Laos,

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Hmong, loyalist troops and Pathet Lao (communist soldiers). Laos was an independent and neutral nation in the current theater. After the war in 1975 they were not involved in the Peace Agreement and to this day they have not signed it. Out of the hundreds of aviators that went down, lost in Laos, only six were returned at the very end. It was rural, jungles, primitive and dangerous, a real blood bath. Air America was trying to keep it from going communist and to stop the NVA from bringing supplies through Laos to South Vietnam. But Air America had no official government backing. We were on our own. We had 6 A-1s, four E models and two Hs. We flew up to three missions a day mainly supporting Hmong troops and General Veng Pao. I loved the F-100, it was fast, glamorous and exciting. But you were sitting in a rocket which you guided. Don't get me wrong, it took skill to fly it. But flying the A-1 took a real different set of aviation skills. Remember if you can see the enemy, they can see you. We flew low and slow. Because of so much engine torque, on take off the airplane acted like a errant billiard ball. You had to have strong legs on the rudder to keep it on the runway. It leaked and burned 40 gallons of oil a flight! Really! But it carried a huge array of ordinance and could stay aloft all day.

Raven FACs provided covert support for CIA from Laotian bases. Declassified military records do not include losses, combat sorties and other covert programs, and did not include Raven FACS, O-1, L-19, T-28 and some A-1 losses. We were truly on our own. Most of our flights were in the Plaine des Jarres in Northern Laos. We often went into North Vietnam across the northern frontier of Laos. It was not easy to tell where the border was and the China border was close as well. We usually worked central Barrel Roll. Average mission was 3-4 hours and ground fire was almost all small arms. Take off roll was 3,000 - 4,000 feet, and we cruised at 8,000-10,00 feet into target areas. Max gross weight was approximately 22,000 pounds and cruise speed 120 knots. The A-1 had the second highest loss rate per 1,000 sorties. The only higher was the F-105. But the A-1 had the greatest flyable rate after taking a hit. If you had to bail out the A-1 had a unique evacuation system. After 1967 all A-1s had the Stanley Aviation Yankee Extraction System. This was not an ejection seat, but a rocket that would pull the pilot and the parachute up out of the cockpit and then an explosive charge would deploy the chute. This was a zero/zero system. You could survive with no altitude and zero airspeed (so long as your vector was not downward). It took 1.7 seconds for full deployment. We often flew escort of C-47s for Air America. Also flew support for their extensive helicopter fleet. I was involved in Nixon's Christmas bombing of Hanoi in December 1972. We flew rescue support for downed crews, mainly B-52s trying to get to Thailand after taking battle damage.

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"I felt an explosion, which knocked my feet off the rudder pedals."

Blast!! My number came up at the end of December 1972. I was flying support for the Hmong troops in a running battle with Pathet Lao troops. It was late in the afternoon, I was east of Muang/Khoa near the North Vietnamese border and Diem Bien Phu. I was on my 4th run pulling off the target. I felt an explosion, which knocked my feet off the rudder pedals. We usually only saw small arms fire, so this was a surprise. It was probably an RPG B-40 (rocket propelled grenade), a very lethal weapon. I climbed for altitude and wanted to get over a ridge line to the northeast, suddenly the engine just quit. Shit!! I knew I was in deep Kimchi. I was not wearing military rank, I was almost in North Vietnam, I was sure the government would disavow knowledge of me. I wished I had gone to church more. When I was 16 my best friend, Dick Wright and I, during church services, would climb up in the belfry and smoke cigarettes. I had 210 knots and 4,000 feet elevation. I cleaned ordinance off the wings and glided as far away as I could. Unfortunately it was toward North Vietnam. I passed the Ma River in Houaphan Province and the small village of Ban Sot. There were mountains to my right and open land ahead. I felt I had a better chance in the mountains. I turned right and remembered an old A-1 head had told me the Yankee Extraction System only worked 9 out of 10 times. Great, but I still had 3 lives left so I should be OK. The rocket pulled the pilot out of the cockpit and deployed the parachute. The system worked better at low airspeeds. I looked out and saw nothing but trees. I glided toward the jungle mountains and pulled up at 200 feet level and bled my airspeed to 140 knots. I pulled up the D ring. Off went the canopy and then up I went. It reminded me of my grandfather yanking me and my cousin up when he caught us stealing watermelons. I did not have time to be afraid. I swung twice in the chute and then hit the trees. What a jolt!! I felt like I had tried to tackle Jim Brown. After a few moments of shock I started to assess my situation. What does a fighter pilot check for first after an ejection? Check for the family jewels? No! Check for your wallet? No! I grabbed my wrist to check on my 1968 Rolex GMT. Thank God it was still there. Now to keep it out of Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese hands.

With 3,000 pilots ejecting during the Vietnam War, I wonder how many Rolex's ended up on the arm of some lucky Vietnamese or Laotian. Also my side arm was still there. I thought I was Errol Flynn so I bought a Smith and Wesson 9 mm M-39 revolver. I still have it! I got on my radio right away and made contact with the Raven FAC. He pinpointed my location and said hang on, they would be back at morning's first light. Back in the morning? This was sounding

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bad. It was getting dark now. Shit this doesn't look good. I had one small bottle of water and two Hershey bars. My helmet was long gone, The longer I sat there in the tree, about 100 feet in the air, the more I felt the stiffness and soreness of the injuries from my arrival in this mess. I saw no one below but my chute was like a billboard saying, “here he is”. So I got out of the parachute harness, gathered up the chute and headed down to the ground. The chute was bulky and it took awhile. There was a small stream nearby. I went to the bank and quickly dug a hole in the mud and buried my chute and harness.

My helmet was nowhere to be found. It was getting dark and I felt really exposed so I checked out the trees around me and chose the tallest and fullest with leaf coverage. Up I climbed. I was happy for my youth tree-climbing history. Although I think this was more dire than hiding in trees from my angry grandfather. Also I was starting to ache all over. I was having trouble with my vision. I got as high as I could go and hunkered down. The sounds of the night jungle were like a Tarzan movie. I couldn't help but think that I was probably very near where Earthquake Magoon had bought the farm in a C-119 in 1954. I did not sleep one second. This was the longest night of my life. I could hear people walking the jungle floor below me. I hate to admit it, but I could never tell the difference between Hmong troops and Pathet Lao. So I was never sure who was down there. My cousins and I used to sneak out at night and raft across the Chattahoochee River to a game preserve and hunt possum. So I had a history of night time adventures. But this one really took the cake. Thirteen hours later it started to get light. I had my two Hershey bars and the rest of my water for breakfast. Not quite eggs Benedict, but it was the best breakfast I have ever had. An hour later I heard that beautiful sound of a Wright 18 cylinder engine. It was better sound than even a Johnny Cash record. I made contact on my radio with the Raven FAC. He had a comforting southern drawl, like Slim Pickens, and said, “no sweat, we will get you out”. The flight was two A-1s and an old T-28. He pinpointed approximately where I was. He then told me they would orbit 10 miles away and sanitize the area with strafe and bombs. This would draw attention away from me. I have never liked much attention, except from the ladies. He said an Air America Sikorsky H-34 was inbound. I naively thought all Sikorskys were in museums. Two A-1s started raising hell dropping everything they had except the kitchen sink. Better than 4th of July fireworks! Raven said the chopper was 15 minutes out so I got ready. I started to climb down and every muscle in my body resisted. But there is no second place in this show. I ignored the pain and got down quickly and headed for a bare hilltop 100 meters away. Once there, I hid in the buffalo grass

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and relayed to the Raven where I was. I could hear the whop whop of the Sikorsky. What a wonderful sound. I still break out in sweat when I hear a helicopter.

The FAC was fantastic, working the air attacks, pinpointing where I was and directing the Sikorsky in. I am forever in debt to the Sikorsky. I have a photo of one as wallpaper on my computer. They told me to pop smoke, but only the designated color. Often bad guys would pop smoke too. When I saw the Sikorsky H-34, I thought, “what a weird and beautiful bird”. It had a flat nose and looks like a large locust. They hovered and I set a 50 yard dash world record reaching the chopper. They pulled me in and off we went. Better than The Accelerator at Knott’s Berry Farm. They gave me a drink of whisky, I.W. Harper. I thanked them all. The pilot looked like Mickey Rooney in The Bridges at Tokyo Ri. He had on shorts and a Hawaiian shirt. Go figure! Nothing like American coverage and chutzpah. I was a little banged up, so they flew me to Long Cheng (Tieng), an Air America Base. From there a C-47 took me to NKP. My right eye had a hyphema, blood filling the inside of the eye. I could not see out of the eye. They took hourly eye pressures all night. I still have a phalanx of floaters in that eye. I had a flak hole in the middle of my back near the spine. It was already infected. They removed the sliver of metal and re-packed it often. Took 60 days to heal. My right knee was the size of a soft ball. With time it sort of healed. It would sometimes lock on me when I bent down. In 1993 I finally had it surgically repaired. The meniscus was folded over. They trimmed it off and now I am good as Hussain Bolt. My orthopedic surgeon (whom I love), was a water polo olympian. A great guy. He had some real tragedy in his life, and afterwards he became very serious and religious. He asked me how I hurt my knee. I said that I bailed out of an airplane. He said, “the angels saved you”. Without thinking, I said, “no Frank, the parachute saved me.” Quickly I recovered. This guy was going to operate on me. I said, “you are right, Frank. It was the angels”. I have always been the master at recovery from my faux pas, but maybe he was right.

There were 201 A-1’s lost in SEA. I don’t know if I was that number 201 or was I the secret 202. The war was over in January, however Laos did not sign the Peace Accord (SEAPO). So there was still a lot of rancor in Laos. Not for me. I headed home, but now I only have one more life to use.

One in seven A-1 pilots were killed in SEA. 2,700 American Airmen were shot down in the Vietnam conflict. 50.5% survived. In North Vietnam 60% survived and half of these were

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rescued. In the F-100 the loss rate was 15%. And those brave helicopter pilots. 11,846 were shot down and 4,500 chopper pilots and crewmen were killed. Their memorial is at the Helicopter museum at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Now, fifty years later looking back, I think of my last mission a lot. I have never believed in coincidence or luck. I have always believed that chance favors the prepared mind. But with so many moving parts that day, maybe I did have some luck. That was a close one. Remember “throw a nickel on the grass, save a fighter pilot’s ass”.

LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT THE AUTHOR

or the making of a hero and patriot

Ronald Russell Deyhle

(What follows are just snippets of information and my notes that I’ve collected through the years on Ron and Scott Madsen whose early careers are intertwined.)

Ron Deyhle is a 1964 graduate of Albuquerque’s Highland High School, he earned a B.S. degree in biology at the University of New Mexico. He was commissioned in 1968 upon completion of the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at the university. *(Albuquerque Journal, Albuquerque, New Mexico, December 6, 1971 and Avalanche Journal, Lubbock, Texas, October 21, 1971)*

1968 JUNE - University ROTC Students To Be Commissioned Today - Nearly forty Navy and Air Force ROTC students at the University of New Mexico will be commissioned into the United States Armed Forces in a ceremony at 10 a.m. today. Scheduled at the UNM College of Education Kiva Bldg., the ceremonies will feature addresses by ROTC officers. Ronald Russell Deyhle was one of the 14 Air Force candidates for second lieutenants. *(Albuquerque Journal, Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 19, 1968)*

1971 March - On 22 March 1971 Pete Morarity I flew two missions in there that day and remember seeing his airplane burning with 20 Mike Mike firing off. *(Email correspondence)*

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1971 April - The mission that led to him being awarded the Silver Star was on April 7 1971. I was lead, Scott Madsen was wing. Our target was a fire base in the central highlands. The fire base was under vicious attack by NVA. The base was almost over run, a broken arrow. It was socked in with weather so no air support was possible, only artillery. I knew the area well Scott and I flew a TACAN approach at Pleiku and got below the weather. “We then flew at near ground level up the valleys till we got to the fire base. It worked and we blunted the attack. A poor outcome though as the fire base was over run a few days later and over 300 ARVNs were killed. I read a book later about it, a few Americans and some ARVN escaped and turned up a few days later on another fire base. It was a rough bloody war.” *(source: Email correspondence)*

1971, December - Capt. Ronald R. Deyhle Receives the Silver Star - Lubbock, Texas - Air Force Capt. Ronald R. Deyhle, son of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Robert E. Deyhle, 2532 25th Loop, Kirkland AFB, has received the Silver Star Medal for gallantry as an F-100 Super Sabre Pilot in Vietnam. Lt. Gen. **George B. Simler** awarded the metals.

Capt. Deyhle was cited for his close air support of a South Vietnamese Ranger camp under heavy attack on April 7, 1971.

Despite intense anti-aircraft fire, mountainous terrain and poor visibility, the captain made repeated, low-level attacks against hostile positions enabling the allies to hold their strategic forward location.

Capt Deyhle also received his second through 14th awards of the Air Medal for missions he flew while assigned with the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang Air Base from July 1970 to July 1971.

He was presented the decorations recently at Reese AFB, Tex., where he now serves as an instructor pilot with the 3500th Pilot Training Wing.

1972 APRIL - Capt. Deyhle wins cluster for DFC - Capt. Ronald Russell Deyhle, son of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Roger E. Deyhle, 8523 Osuna NW, has been awarded the first oak leaf cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

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Capt. Deyhle, stationed at Reese Air Base, Tex., received the award for aerial achievement in Southeast Asia.

He also holds the Silver Star Medal and the Air Medal with 14 oak leaf clusters.

Deyhle is a graduate of Highland High School and the University of New Mexico. (*Albuquerque Tribune, Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 19, 1972*)

1977 JULY Medical Students Selected - Thirty-six Bemahilo County residents are among the 73 freshman students selected to enter the University of New Mexico School of Medicine this fall. Ronald Russell Deyhle was one of the thirty six people selected. (*Albuquerque Tribune, Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 29, 1977*)

1981 and beyond: Dr. Ronald Deyhle, MD, is an Obstetrics/Gynecology specialist in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He attended and graduated from University Of New Mexico School Of Medicine in 1981, having over 39 years of diverse experience, especially in Obstetrics/Gynecology. He is affiliated with many hospitals including Lovelace Women's Hospital.

Even though Ron was a Doctor almost 10 times longer than he was an F-100 award winning fighter jock, for a lot of people, mainly those that served with him, his legacy will be that of an Air Force fighter pilot. He probably had the most dangerous job as a close-air-support fighter pilot in the history of the modern Air Force. I remember him saying that medicine wasn't really his forte, but his first love was being a fighter pilot.

Ron flew the F-100 Super Sabre, an aircraft that suffered the greatest number of losses in Vietnam at 189 versus the F-4 Phantom wasn't even a close second at 97 losses. Besides being a young cocky jock that probably walked with a swagger and him thinking he was invincible, his own mortality had to be foremost in his mind every time he took off on a mission. When the Super Sabre was in attack mode and dropping its ordinance it swoops down low to the target which makes it venerable to attack by ground fire and even the terrain posed a hazard because the target area could be in the highlands on one mission and plains on the next. The Forward

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Air Controllers (FAC) were always the first to be on the scene, assessing the situation and marking the targets for the fighters, but they certainly couldn't predict everything that might happen, like is ground fire likely or something like that.

Scott Madsen (William Scott Madsen) and Ron received the Silver Star (The Silver Star is the third highest U.S. combat-only award) for a mission that they participated in. It has been 50 years and that was the best part of my life and I am still closest to those guys. He (First Lieutenant Ronald Russell Deyhle) was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force as an F-100n Tactical Fighter Pilot of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron, in Southeast Asia on 7 April 1971.

On 7 April 1971, Lieutenant Madsen scrambled in his F-100 from the Phan Rang alert facility to provide close air support for a South Vietnamese Ranger camp in immediate danger of complete annihilation by a hostile force. Lieutenant Madsen made repeated low level attacks under hazardous conditions of low weather, mountainous terrain, heavy anti-aircraft fire, less than one mile visibility, and flying through allied artillery. His devastating attacks prevented overrun of the friendly position and allowed the allied troops to hold their strategic camp on the hostile frontier. Both Madsen and Deyhle also earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for the same event.

22 November 1970 flew repeated attacks in his F-100 that saved numerous probable friendly casualties. Deyhle earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-100 Tactical Fighter Pilot near Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam on 22 November 1970. On that date, he scrambled from the Phan Rang Air Base alert facility in support of friendly forces in danger of being overrun by a hostile company. At great personal risk in the face of accurate, intense ground fire, with friendly forces in close proximity, he made repeated low level attacks. His precise ordnance deliveries were instrumental in the successful defense of a strategic base command and saved numerous probable friendly casualties.

20 March 1971 First Lieutenant Ronald Russell Deyhle (AFSN: 0-3233132), United States Air Force, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-100 Tactical Fighter Pilot six miles east of Tchepone, in the Laotian panhandle, on 20 March 1971. On that date, he was scrambled from the alert facility at Phan Rang Air Base to provide close air support

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for friendly forces under siege by hostile tanks and a battalion-size hostile force. At great personal risk in the face of intense automatic weapons fire and extremely hazardous weather conditions, he delivered his ordnance precisely on target with friendly forces in close proximity. His devastating attacks broke the hostile stronghold and saved numerous friendly casualties and probable annihilation of the friendly camp.

5 April 1971 First Lieutenant Ronald Russell Deyhle (AFSN: 0-3233132), United States Air Force, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-100 Tactical Fighter Pilot at Binh Dinh Province, in the Republic of Vietnam, on 5 April 1971. On that date, Lieutenant Deyhle was scrambled from the alert facility at Phan Rang Air Base to support friendly troops in contact with a hostile force. Courageously ignoring both adverse weather and intense ground fire, Lieutenant Deyhle repeatedly placed his ordnance on target and succeeded in driving off the hostile force.

I flew A-1H out of NKP. Also O-1 and Sikorski H-34. My area of operation was in the Plain De Jars area of Laos. This was near the China border and close to where the Dien Bien Phu was fought. A wild time. I was there only 6 months and flew in the Christmas bombing of Hanoi in December of 1972.

After Ron’s retirement as a practicing physician he has had the time to immerse himself in the lives and legends of some of his fellow pilots, some that didn’t make it back home and some that did. He wrote about their lives and accomplishments spinning tales based on extensive research that were truly authentic pictures of the person and places that he wrote about. One thing that is missing is he’s never written about his own experiences in Vietnam and according to his mates, he has some very important stories that should be told, but with “I Survived”, he has now accomplished that. Ron has developed a style that tells the story through his own unconventional lens and what a better story to tell than his own. Only he could put you in the pilot’s seat on a combat mission, giving the reader what are his thoughts, strategy and fears and there was one mission that he found himself spending the night on the ground in North Vietnam, not something you would expect from an F-100 pilot that has NEVER been told.

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What follows are notes on William Scott Madsen, a fellow pilot and squadron mate.

1961 Dec. Mentor Recreation Park holds first semi-formal dance. Some 125 senior high and college students turned out for the Mentor Recreation Park’s first semi-formal dance that will become an annual event. Scott Madsen of Mentor was among them. *(Source: Willoughby News Herald, December 28, 1961)*

19 Septemeber 1962 - Football stars are named On Monday morning the pictures of the football stars of the week were posted on a bulletin board in the main lobby. They are: on defense. Tom Casgar, Joe Novak. Dave Jones, Dennis Fletcher, and Scott Madsen. *(Willoughby News Herald, September 19, 1962)*

23 May 1962 Bos Chosen Council prexy Wini Bos is the newly elected president of Mentor Highs Student Council for the coming school year. Assisting her will be Arnalee Benda, vice president; Sue Harrison, secretary; and Scott Madsen, treasurer.

Scott Madsen is a homeroom leader, a member of Key Club, Concert Band, Junior class play cast, and track squad. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Madsen. *(Mentor High School Hi-Lites Willoughby News Herald, May 23, 1962)*

14 May 1962 - Eleven MHS band students win honors at Lorain March 10th, eleven students from Mentor High School traveled to Lorain High School for the district instrumental music contest. Each student hoped for high rating giving them a better chance toward working for a music scholarship.

The ratings were superior, excellent, Very good, good, and fair. If the students were rated superior then they go to Columbus for the state contest. The brass sextet was composed of Brent Gardner, Terry Gardner, Scott Madsen (tuba). Bill Myers, Buss Wiseman, and Mark Woodruff. They played “Prelude and Choral ’ and were rated superior. *(Source: Willoughby News Herald, March 14, 1962)*

Awards, Letters, and Flower presented at football Banquet 5 Dec 1962 The 1962 Football

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banquet honoring the 1962 Fighting Cardinals. Receiving first year letters were Senior Scott Madsen. *(Source: Mentor High School Hi-Lites Dec. 5, 1962)*

28 Aug 1962 Football Forecast Dennis Fletcher, a 6-3, 200 pound senior, will ply his trade. On other side is Scott Madsen, a six-foot, 180-pounder. *(Source: Willoughby News Herald, August 28, 1962)*

MADSEN-McGRAW MARRIAGE VOWS ARE EXCHANGED Lt. William Scott Madsen and his bride, the former Miss Donna Jo McGraw, are living in Burkburnett after returning from a wedding trip to San Antonio.

They were married in Chapel 3, Sheppard AFB Nov. 8 by Chaplain (Maj.) Shurai G. Knippers. The bride is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph J. McGraw, 4616 Cypress. The bridegroom's parents are Mr. and Mrs. William H. Madsen, Sun City, Ariz.

Dr. McGraw gave his daughter in marriage. Miss Catherine Clemmons was maid of honor and bridesmaids were Miss Debbie Higgins, Kansas City, Kan.; Miss Brenda McGraw, the bride's sister; and Mrs. Tom Heard, Oklahoma City. Lorie Heard, Oklahoma City, was flower girl. Lt. John Sharek was best man. Lt. Wayne Jones, Phillip McGraw and Lt. Sam Burns were groomsmen. McGraw and Burns served as ushers with Lt. David Schovill and Lt. Reed Galbreath.

The bride is a sophomore at Midwestern University and employed by Sears. Lt. Madsen was graduated from Ohio State University and is a pilot at Sheppard AFB. *(Wichita Falls Times, November 21, 1969)*

In Vietnam - HUSBAND OF WICHITAN DISCUSSES AIR STRIKE

WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES. Vietnam — U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. William S. Madsen whose wife and children reside in Wichita Falls, recently provided air support for units of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in the canal-laced Mekong Delta.

Madsen's wife, Donna, is daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph J. McGraw, 4616 Cypress. The Madsen children are Tony and Scott. Lieutenant Madsen and his wingman on the mission are F-100 Super Sabre pilots with the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

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Their recent strike aided troops of the ARVN 33rd Infantry Regiment who were in contact with a Viet Cong force 17 miles north of Quang Long in Kien Giang Province. Vietnam.

“By the time we arrived in the target area the sun was low on the horizon, getting in our eyes, and the haze was starting to obscure things. There was a pretty good fire fight going on between the ARVN and the Viet Cong.” recalled the lieutenant.

“The forward air controller, who was flying an O-1 Bird Dog marked the targets for us and we started our runs. We made eight bomb and four strafing passes, he concluded.

The two pilots destroyed several enemy bunkers and an enemy sampan and inflicted enemy casualties.

Lieutenant Madsen is nearing the midway point of a 12-month Southeast Asia tour of duty. He regularly flies pre-planned strikes and close support missions in the supersonic F-100. Before beginning his assignment at Phan Rang, he was with a tactical fighter unit at Luke AFB, Ariz.

A 1963 graduate of Mentor (Ohio) High School, the lieutenant was commissioned in 1968 upon completion of the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at Ohio State University where he earned a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering. (*Wichita Falls Times, February 17, 1971*)

Wichitan Cited For Cong Kill

A bomber pilot from Wichita Falls — along with two other Air Force pilots — has been credited with killing 11 Viet Cong soldiers in the Mekong Delta 120 miles southwest of Saigon.

An Associated Press dispatch from Saigon lists the Wichitan as 1st Lt. William S. Madsen, an F-100 Super Sabre pilot.

Madsen’s wife and two sons, Tommy, 4, and William Scott, five months, reside in Wichita Falls. She is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph McGraw.

Madsen, a career officer who has been in Vietnam since September, was quoted by the AP as saying, “ We Were Scrambled from the alert pad about 4 p.m. We had just joined the forward air controller when the tactical center diverted us to this more important target,” which was about 70 miles away.

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“On the strike we were working with a Vietnamese air force forward observer and made five bomb passes,” Madsen related. “There were quite a few clouds in the area which slightly hampered our run-in and delivery pattern. But it didn’t significantly affect the accuracy of our bombs.”

Flying with Madsen were two pilots of A37 Dragonfly fighter-bombers 1st Lt. Cort L. Durocher of Miami, Fla., and 1st Lt. Kencil J. Heaton of Lathrup Village, Mich. (*Wichita Falls Times*, November 11, 1970)

(Ron’s stories and or reports of him are in Phan Rang Newsletters 194, 206, 207, 214, 215, 217, 221, 249 and 240. Scott Madsen’s stories and reports are in Phan Rang Newsletters 46, 152, 194, 206, 225, 235 and 236.)



Communists Win Vast Air Fleet

Approximately 1,000 U. S.-built military aircraft abandoned in South Vietnam; only about 110 manage to leave country

By Clarence A. Robinson, Jr.

Washington—Final evacuation of over 7,000 U. S. citizens and Vietnamese refugees from Saigon last week was successfully carried out by Marine and USAF helicopters under Communist surface-to-air missile and ground fire, but about 1,000 military aircraft worth millions of dollars were abandoned intact to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces.

U. S.-built aircraft were abandoned in South Vietnam, many at the Tan Son Nhut air base near Saigon. Aircraft lost included Northrop F-5E fighters, some of which had been shipped to South Vietnam within the past two months.

Only about 110 aircraft from what had been the world's third largest air force made it out of the country, carrying refugees and airmen. Before the final evacuation began, more than 1,100

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aircraft had remained in Vietnam. Aircraft losses include:

- Northrop F-5s--87. That number includes 27 of the newer F-5Es. Twenty-two F-5Es flew to Thailand. The South Vietnamese operated three squadrons with a total strength of 49 F-5Es. One RF-5A reconnaissance version of the fighter was landed at Utapao air base in southern Thailand along with four older models of the fighter.
- Cessna A-37 attack aircraft-95. Eight A-37s flew to Thailand.
- McDonnell Douglas A-1 Skyraiders-26. Eleven were evacuated to Utapao.
- McDonnell Douglas C-47s-38. Among those abandoned were AC-47 gunships with early-model forward looking infrared radar equipment. South Vietnamese pilots landed 13 C-47s crammed with refugees in Thailand.
- Lockheed C-130s--23. Only six C-130s were flown out, but none of the C130s lost was a gunship, because none was provided to the South Vietnamese.
- Fairchild AC-119 gunships-37. Additionally, eight C-119 transport aircraft were lost in South Vietnam and three were flown to Thailand.
- De Havilland of Canada C-7 STOL transports-33. Five reached Thailand.
- Cessna O-1 observation aircraft 114. • Bell UH-1 helicopters-434. Twelve were recovered on board U. S. Navy ships of the Seventh Fleet, and 18 others were purposely crashed into the sea alongside Navy ships or tossed overboard after landing.
- Boeing Vertol CH-47s-32.

According to the Pentagon, approximately 72 other aircraft were left behind in Vietnam including Cessna U-17s, Cessna O-2s, Cessna T-41s and de Havilland of Canada U-6s.

The F-5Es lost as South Vietnam surrendered to the Communists contained no equipment that was considered sensitive by the U. S. The fighters were being operated with a simple, track-only radar with a 10-15-mi. range—an Emerson Electric APQ-153. A radar bombing beacon was in the F-5Es, but that is not considered critical.

The South Vietnamese operated 10 RF-5A reconnaissance aircraft and nine fell into Communist hands. One of the two-place F-5Bs was among the F-5s flown to Thailand.

The F-5s were armed with the earlier models of the Philco-Ford and Raytheon AIM-9 infrared-guided Sidewinder air-to-air-missiles.

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A large supply of the weapons was left behind, but, according to U. S. officials, no accurate count is available at this time.

The massive airlift from Saigon of Americans and Vietnamese refugees was carried out by 28 Marine Boeing-Venol CH-46 helicopters and 40 Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions. The Air Force operated with 12 HH-53C helicopters, with USAF pilots flying for the first time ever from carrier decks.

Flying in darkness and under small arms fire, the helicopters carried out about 640 sorties to evacuate 7,150 persons from small landing zones. One landing zone was in the parking lot beside the U. S. embassy in downtown Saigon. Another was atop the embassy roof, and three small landing zones were located in the compound of the defense attache at Tan Son Nhut air base. The field was under rocket, missile and small arms fire during most of the evacuation.

Two U. S. marines in the compound were killed.

Two Marine helicopter pilots were presumed dead after their CH-46 crashed in the sea while they were flying a night search and rescue mission from the aircraft carrier USS Hancock.

During evacuation from the U. S. embassy, at least three Soviet-made SA-7 Strela heat-seeking missiles were fired at one helicopter, but none struck the aircraft.

Both Communist and South Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun positions opened fire on U. S. helicopters and fixed-wing fighters, but no hits were reported. The F-4s returned the fire and silenced several gun positions.

The helicopter evacuation was ordered by President Ford after Tan Son Nhut airfield came under attack late on Apr. 28, at the time previously scheduled for C- 130s to begin the evacuation.

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Destroyed on Ground

A U. S. C-130 on the ground at Tan Son Nhut was hit and destroyed by fire but the crew escaped unhurt. As a force of other C-130s circled overhead at the airfield, Army Maj. Gen. Homer Smith, the defense attache, decided that because of the ground attack, the aircraft should not land.

The helicopters for the evacuation operated from the helicopter carrier USS Okinawa, the older carrier USS Hancock, and the USS Midway, which carried USAF helicopters. A Marine force of about 850 men was landed to provide security for the evacuation at the various landing zones.

The operation was confused in the early hours as the first flight of helicopters left the USS Hancock at about 1 a. m. Apr: 29. The flight was to land at Tan Son Nhut about 2 a. m., but the flight received a false command over the radio to turn back and delay the landing until 3 am. Source of the command is not yet known.

The lead helicopter was carrying the ground force commander, Marine Brig. Gen. Richard E. Carey. That helicopter continued on to the airfield to land and came under ground fire. The other helicopters circled the airfield for almost an hour before the Pacific commander ordered the evacuation to begin.

Original Plan

The operation initially was scheduled to last only about 3-4 hr. to evacuate about 1,000 Americans still in Saigon. But before the final lift of the last 30 Marines from the security force at the embassy, almost 20 hr. had elapsed.

Defense Dept. officials blame the length of the operation on evacuation of Vietnamese refugees by U. S. Ambassador Graham Martin. Toward the end, Martin received orders from Washington to speed up the exit of Americans and get the Marine security force out of Saigon.

Other reasons account for the delay in the operation. Flying in darkness and at low altitudes over unfamiliar terrain into small landing zones capable of supporting only a single aircraft

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added to the delay.

About 5,300 Vietnamese were evacuated from the Saigon area and about 1,000 Americans-838 of whom were with the U. S. mission in Saigon, 154 military and 115 contractor employees.

Even before the President decided on the helicopter airlift, Vietnamese began a wild scramble to get to the fleet of U. S. ships lying off the coast opposite Saigon. Crammed with refugees, some of the Vietnamese helicopters flew toward the 40-ship fleet.

One of the Vietnamese leaped from a helicopter just before it crashed into the side of the command ship, the USS Blue Ridge.

The pilot was recovered from the water unhurt, and there was no damage to the vessel.

A number of Vietnamese and Air America helicopters descended on the Blue Ridge. Approximately 14 helicopters are estimated to have landed on the ship's helicopter platform. Some of the aircraft were pushed over the side of the ship in the first hour to make room on the small deck for others trying to land.

The first two helicopters piloted by Vietnamese collided on the deck of the Blue Ridge. The first aircraft to land was about to take off after unloading wives and children of Vietnamese officers and American officials. The second helicopter flew into the rotor blades of the first, sending fragments of metal across the Blue Ridge's deck, but no one was hurt. The second helicopter carried a load of women and children.

The sailors on the ship opened the doors on the helicopters to make ditching easier, and after getting the passengers off, the Vietnamese pilots of some helicopters took off and ditched in the sea. Some jumped from the aircraft before impact with the water. Some pilots leaped from their helicopters at heights of 100 ft. or more but, according to the Pentagon, there were no fatalities.

Former vice president and air vice marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, who earlier called those leaving Vietnam cowards, landed by helicopter on the USS Denver, and was later flown to the USS Blue

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Ridge.

Other Landing Sites

U.S. officials reported that other South Vietnamese pilots landed their aircraft in the Philippines, Taiwan and at other airfields in Thailand. No official count of the aircraft at these other locations has been made. One aircraft carrying four persons crashed while trying to land at Chantaburi, Thailand, killing the passengers. Another crashed in Saigon's Cholen district, taking the lives of about 10 persons.

An estimated 2,000 Vietnamese refugees landed in aircraft flown into Thailand. The Thais are considering turning the aircraft that landed in their country over to the new Communist regime in Saigon. The aircraft landed there have an estimated value of \$300 million.

With the fall of Vietnam and Cambodia to the Communists, the Thais now are being cautious. They have demanded that the pilots and passengers of the aircraft that landed in Thailand leave the country immediately.



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Tom Williams

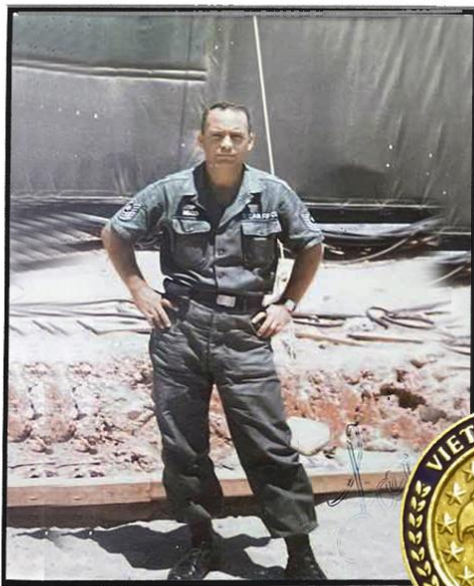
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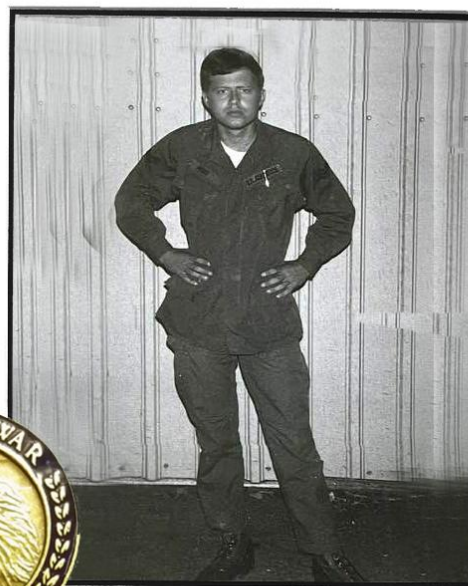
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Like Father, Like Son *(Father and Son serving in Vietnam)*

Father and Son
serving in Vietnam



M/SGT EDWIN R. HOOD
HON-TRE SOUTH VIETNAM
67-68



A1C MIKE HOOD
PHAN-RANG SOUTH VIETNAM
71-72

There have been only two other similar Father and Son stories in the annals of the Phan Rang Newsletters, but the Hoods' are the first Air Force father and son duo. In one case the father and son actually met at Phan Rang AB and had the opportunity to spend a few days together before the father had to report to his next assignment.

In this case, MSgt. **Edwin Hood** was with the 619th TAC on Hon Tre Island off the coast of Nha Trang, 1967 and 1968, and his son A1C **Mike Hood** was with Det. 8, 14th Aerial Port at Phan Rang 71-72.

For additional stories about father and sons serving in the same war zone see Phan Rang Newsletter 43 “Son Follows Father To Same War Zone” and Phan Rang Newsletter 247 “Father’s, Son’s Paths Cross In War Zone”.

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My 30 minutes with Raquel Welch

On 15 Feb, 2023 Raquel Welch the voluptuous movie actress who became the 1960s' first major American sex symbol died at age 82.

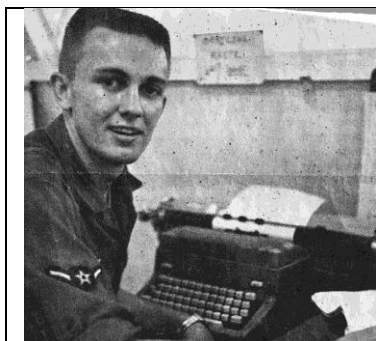


While being stationed at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam in December 1967, Bob Hope and his USO tour came to Phan Rang and put on an outstanding show for the troops. Included in the cast was Miss World Madeleine Bel from Peru, (the only one alive today at 76) Barbara McNair, Gary Crosby, bandleader Les Brown and Raquel Welch. Raquel was a 27 year old stunning beautiful actress who rose to great fame in the 1966 movie “One Million Years B.C.” The movie established her reputation as a pin-up girl, a unique non-blonde bombshell thanks to a best-selling poster of her in a revealing doe-skin bikini.

Following the show, Bob Hope and his cast was invited to visit the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron (Lucky Devils) operations building for an after show party.

Fortunately, I was the operations clerk for the 614th and had the honor to greet Bob Hope and Raquel Welch as they toured our operations. Everybody in my office was excited to meet one of the great comedians of all time, but Raquel being the hottest sex symbol alive at the time, was exhilarating, breathtaking and electrifying.

She was a class act and greeted everyone with grace, charm and sexiness. Sadly she never called when I got back to the States, but I remember her fondly. Gone way too early.



Airman Third Class, Terry Brodt, administrative specialist, has been in the fight against Communist aggression since September, 1966. He is a graduate of Thousand Oaks High School and also attended Ventura Junior College.

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Doug’s Comments:



I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. I’m truly honored that I was able to bring you what Ron considers his last story. Previously he has told the stories of other American Hero’s so that their legacy would be persevered for future generations to understand that they served proudly even knowing that their life was on the line every time they got in that cockpit. They were the best America had to offer and they proved their mettle when faced with demanding situations. We shall forever be grateful for their service. Tom Williams recently wrote to me about these heroes and here is what he said, “I take a more personal approach as I read the articles in the Phan Rang Newsletters. Much of the history of those pilots was unknown to me, and now, so many years later, I have been educated. I do remember Pilots Madsen, Moriarty, Deyhle, Howard and Jeffs. I spent plenty of time upon my return to the states thinking about those that we lost and that there was, at the time, no significant information available other than the dreaded acronym MIA. My thanks to you for seeing that we, here, in this Happy Valley group were presented this data.” Tom was a “Lucky Devil” from Jun 1970 to Jun 1971. As with any massive endeavor there will always be some screwups, but in order to achieve any manner of success, thousands of people had and did perform their duties in an exemplary fashion and with the help of the Phan Rang community many of those achievements have been documented in the pages of this newsletter. And, just as important, to me, are those that didn’t make the Freedom Bird home, that they are remembered and memorialized in these pages as much as possible.

I’m pleased to announce that I was selected for the *Oklahoma Warriors Honor Flight* to Washington D.C. on April 18, 2023. It’s going to be extra special for me, because my son is serving as my guardian.

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

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Phan Rang Vietnam Veterans 2023 Reunion,

September 21-23, Rapid City S.D. Our reunion hotel is Courtyard by Marriott. Click [here](#) to make your reservations at the reunion rate. You may also call 605.791.0945 to reserve your room and be sure to mention the group name. To register for the reunion go to <http://phanrang.bmtuck.com/> which will guide you

through the registration process. (Note: If you get a message after clicking on the hotel reservation link, just select “Follow Link”.)

Tour - This year we are going to offer a tour on Friday, 22 September that will be an ALL day trip to Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse Mountain and Memorial, Custer State Park, State Game Lodge, Needles Highway and Fort Hays Dances with wolves Film Set which will include breakfast, lunch and a Chuckwagon Dinner and Music show, a Branson type variety show after dinner. For information on the tour, click [here](#).

Costs - There are two levels; The first is just for the basic reunion, which includes the reunion fee and Saturday evening banquet \$85 per person; the second is the all inclusive, which includes the reunion fee, Saturday evening banquet and tour, \$210 per person.

