

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 272

In this issue:

This is Phan Rang

Aussie Boss Arrives

71st SOS Shadow gunship crew (photo)

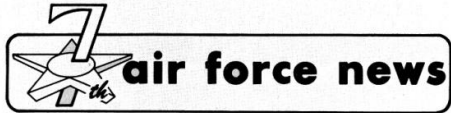
Two honored - Capt. Rooney & A1C Danyow

Lifesaving Feat Earns Fuentes Airman's Medal

Connecting Past to Present

Fallen Hero - Reginald James Aked

Doug's Comments



THIS IS PHAN RANG



Produced by the
35th Tactical Fighter Wing
Information Office

Photos by
Det 5, 600th Photo Squadron

Special Supplement

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 **"...keeping the memories alive"**

The missions of Phan Rang AB can be described in one word — **diverse.**

The flags of four nations fly from the base flagpoles, three separate combat wings are headquartered here and eight types of aircraft grace the sprawling flightline.

Phan Rang aircraft carry deathdealing bombs and blazing minigun bullets to enemy sanctuaries, they carry leaflets urging the enemy to rally to the side of the government of the Republic of Vietnam, they carry life-supporting food and supplies to Allied forces throughout the Republic and they carry hoists and medical equipment to rescue downed aviators.

Phan Rang is many things to many people. To some it's the ancient Cham temple outside of the main gate, or the sight of a graceful Australian Canberra bomber soaring overhead before coming in on final approach, or the sound of a powerful F-100 Super Sabre roaring into the sky with a full load of bombs under its wings.

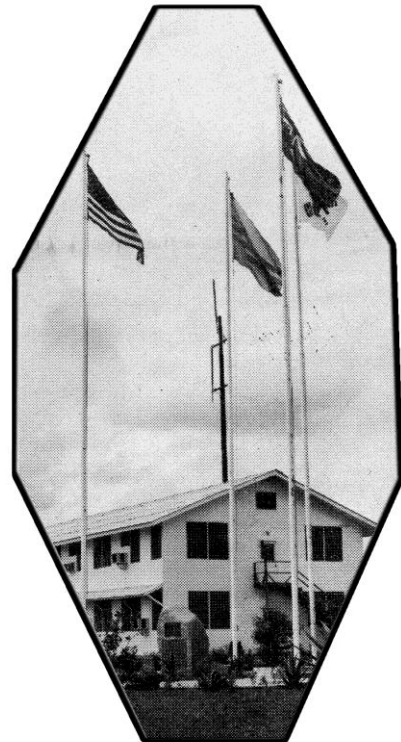
Phan Rang is pilots, loadmasters, truck drivers, cooks, mechanics of every description, security policemen, communications, supply and administrative people. But to these men, and all the others who work here, day in and day out, rain or shine, 24 hours a day, Phan Rang will always be known as "Happy Valley."



An Aussie crew prepares a sun-shaded Canberra bomber for a combat mission

Phan Rang at a glance

Phan Rang AB is located in a semiarid valley 165 miles northeast of Saigon and seven miles from the South China



The flags of four nations

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

Sea. The 10.4-square-mile base is three miles from the village of Thap Cham and seven miles from the city of Phan Rang.

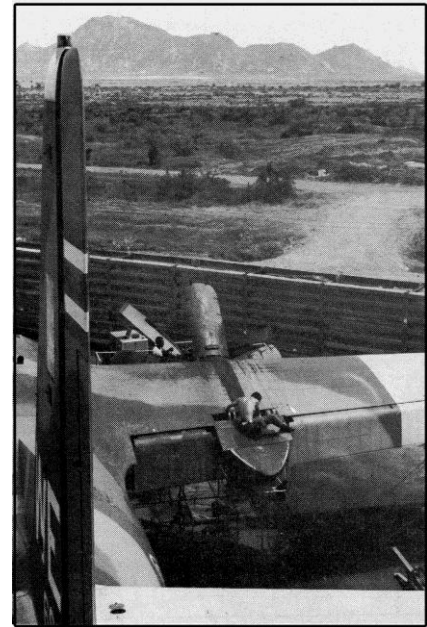
Its location puts any target in Southeast Asia within striking range of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing's F-100 Super Sabres and Australian Canberra bombers and the 14th Special Operations Wing's AC-119 Shadow and Stinger gunships, and psychological operations planes. Centrally located, the C-123 Provider transports of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing can haul men and supplies to more than 100 landing fields from just south of the DMZ to the Delta. Its natural advantages include the most favorable year-round flying weather in the Republic of Vietnam.

During the northeast monsoon season from November to April, when extensive cloudiness with occasional drizzle and rainshowers persist along the Northeast coast, local weather is generally shielded by the mountains to the north although light rainshowers occasionally occur. Temperatures range from a pleasant 85 degrees in the daytime to a mild 70 at night.

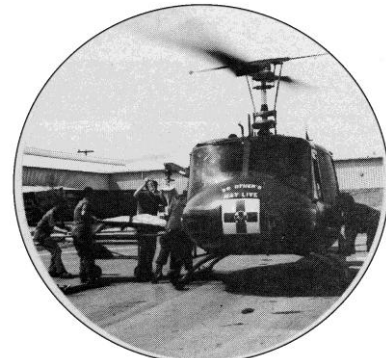
During the southwest monsoon from May to September, warm, moist air is common over most of South Vietnam. Thunderstorms sometime develop by early afternoon but usually dissipate during the evening. Temperatures here range from the mid 90s in daytime to the mid 70s at night.

To sum up the weather here, a base weather official stated, "There is little doubt the best weather conditions in South Vietnam exist at Phan Rang AB."

Phan Rang is also a base of many uniforms. Besides its large



Maintenance men work on a C-123 Provider behind protective steel revetments



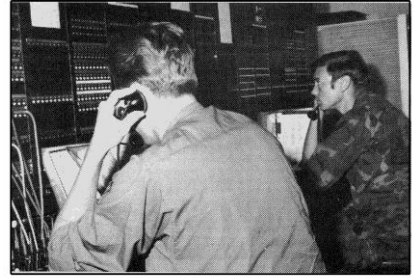
U.S. Army dustoff MEDEVAC helicopters provide fast service to and from the 35th USAF Dispensary

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 272 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

U.S. Air Force contingent, Phan Rang is host to a number of U.S. Army construction, artillery, helicopter and signal units; a Royal Australian Air Force Canberra bomber squadron, the only one of its kind in South Vietnam; a Republic of Korea Army artillery battalion; and members of the Vietnamese Air Force undergoing training in the C-123 Provider transport and the AC-119 Shadow gunship as part of the Vietnamese Improvement and Modernization program.



The 1882nd Communications Squadron keeps vital lines of communications open



C-123 Provider lands after another airlift mission with the 800-year-old Cham temple landmark in the background

The host unit

Swooping through the early morning sky, the Super Sabres rushed headlong at the enemy position hidden beneath the protective jungle covering. At precisely the right moment the deadly cargo hanging beneath their wings dived down into the enemy's midst while the jet fighters pulled up from the screaming dive.

Again and again the Super Sabres returned to the encampment with a variety of weapons including explosive 20mm cannon fire. The camp is destroyed, the mission complete, and the Super Sabres head for home base, Happy Valley.

"Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 272 **"...keeping the memories alive"**

The host unit on Phan Rang is the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing. Pilots fly four squadrons of the venerable F-100 Super Sabre and one Royal Australian Air Force squadron of Canberra bombers. Throughout Southeast Asia, these aircraft are unique to the 35th TFW and Phan Rang.

Operating in support of almost every major ground operation conducted by Allied forces, the 35th mission runs the gamut from interdiction to close air support, hitting enemy base camps, storage areas, supply lines, bunkers, fortified fighting positions and assisting Allied troops in mortal contact with the enemy.



Super Sabres get de-armed after a strike while another takes off on a combat mission

"Fighting Conglomerate"

Known as the "Fighting Conglomerate" and spread throughout the Republic of Vietnam, the 14th Special Operations Wing headquartered here handles a number of missions and uses a vast array of aircraft, from the oldest in the Air Force inventory, the C-47 Skytrain, to one of the newest and smallest, the O-2 Super Skymaster.

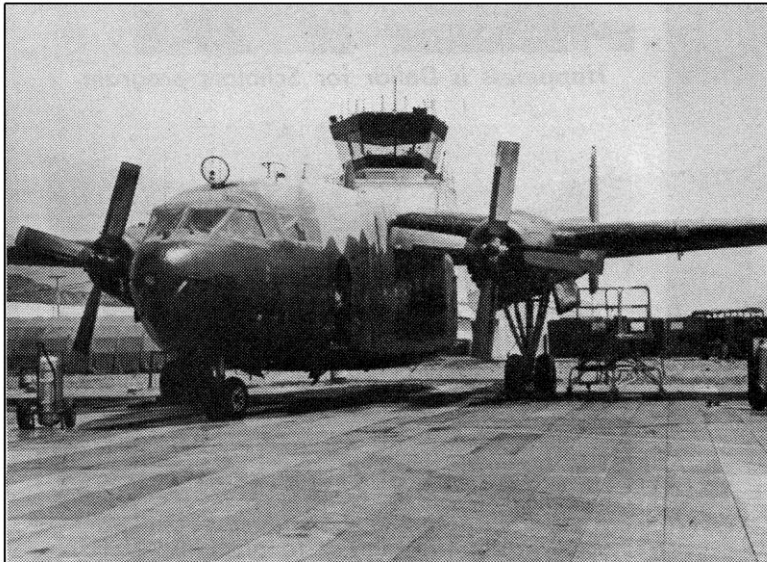
“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

Having operational control over all AC-119 gunship and psychological warfare operations in the Republic, the 14th SOW blasts the enemy with everything from blazing minigun bullets to blaring tape recorded psywar messages.

Phan Rang hosts two AC-119 gunship squadrons and one O-2 and C-47 psychological operations squadron of the 14th SOW and the extensive maintenance facilities of the 14th Field Maintenance Squadron. One of the AC-119 gunship squadron, the 17th SOS, is deeply involved in the Vietnamese Improvement and Modernization Program training VNAF aircrews who are scheduled to form their own Shadow gunship squadron in the near future.



AC-119 Shadow gunship waits for another mission



VNAF aircrew member and his Air Force instructor go over checklists on the operation of the AC-119 Shadow gunship



Super Sabres wait in the alert facility for a night scramble

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

Civic Action and Community Relations

The goal of the Phan Rang AB Military Civic Action Office is to help the people of Ninh Thuan Province develop their resources and capabilities to become self sufficient.

To achieve this goal the office participates in a wide range of programs throughout the 1,000-square-mile province, based upon the needs and capabilities of the local Vietnamese people. The main project currently underway is the development of youth clubs. Local teenagers organize into clubs and are given land, implements and training on how to run a farm. They then go about growing their own crops or raising poultry and soon become a selfsufficient part of the province and are able to teach their skills to other villagers.

Last year an average of 20 projects a month were handled by the Military Civic Action Office. These included furnishing lumber, plywood and paint to help rebuild 20 houses following a Viet Cong attack, and furnishing pipe for a village water system so the local Vietnamese would not have to walk a mile and a half to the nearest well.

Other projects included helping furnish materials for a school under construction, a new marketplace and the renovation of the Phan Rang hospital.

Military Civic Action projects are strictly self-help. The local Vietnamese develop the projects, draw up the plans, submit them to the Province Council for approval and then furnish the labor. The base helps by furnishing the raw materials such as lumber, concrete and roofing materials. Also involving the local Vietnamese, but not a part of Military Civic Action, are the many community relations programs underway here. These programs range from local tours of the province by base airmen, to tours of the base by local villagers. The programs also include donations of sewing materials and clothes to orphanages.

The major community relations project is the Dollars for Scholars program. For \$6.50 per month an airman can provide a student with tuition fee and book and clothing allowances. The men of 21 squadrons support 477 students in nine local high schools through' the Dollars for Scholars program.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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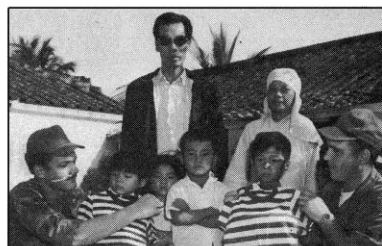
Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”



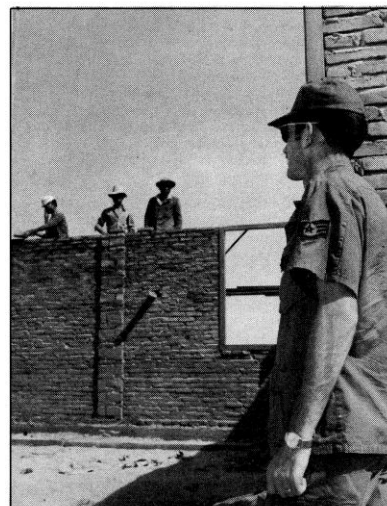
Children look at F-100 during tour



Happiness is Dollar for Scholars program



*U.S. Air Force Photos by A1C Wayne A. Chapman
Donating clothes to orphans*



Building goes up with donated material

Off-Duty Recreational Opportunities

Many activities and services await the off-duty airmen at Phan Rang. For personal advancement the base provides a fine extension of the University of Maryland and an air-conditioned 18,000-volume library. For spiritual advancement the base chapel offers a program for everyone.

The extensive sports program here offers all the usual activities: football, baseball, basketball, volleyball and tennis along with a quarter-mile jogging track, an indoor handball court, a weight room and a skeet range.

For swimmers there is an on-base swimming pool and an off-base beach nine miles from the base on the South China Sea, often used by the base scuba club. And for non-energetic athletes a miniature golf course is open to challenge the steadiest hands.

For entertainment the base provides a 400-seat indoor air-conditioned movie theater and a 4,500-seat free outdoor theater which also hosts frequent live USO shows. The American Red Cross Du Drop Inn is open to all and is equipped with American Donut Dollies, and separate clubs are offered for officers and NCOs, and there is also an active All Stripes Club.

For unit activities and large get togethers the White Rock Picnic Area offers a spot away from it all, picnic tables and a large bar-b-que pit.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

The hobbyist is not forgotten because Phan Rang boasts an extensive hobby center. There is a large tape center housing 14,000 albums, a slot car track, a photo hobby shop, an electronics shop, a lapidary shop and a hobby sales store. For model airplane enthusiasts there is a radio-controlled model airplane club which builds and flies exact replicas of historic aircraft along with some exotic home-made jobs.

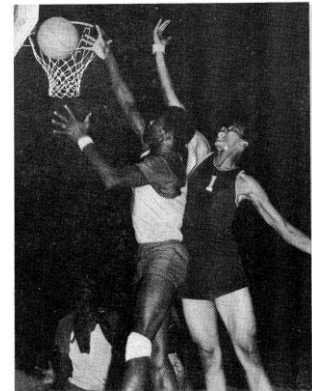
Keeping busy is a sure way to make a Vietnam tour go faster and Phan Rang has enough activities going to satisfy almost any interest.



USO shows are always hits



Base swimming pool is popular spot



Basketball is enjoyed day and night

(7th Air Force News, May 5, 1971)



Aussie Boss Arrives

(Phan Fare, April 18, 1971)



NEW CANBERRA COMMANDER - - Wg. Cdr. **Thomas Thorpe**, new commander for the Royal Australian Air Force's Number 2 Squadron here, is greeted at planeside on his arrival April 7 by Col Cregg P. Nolen Jr., host 35th Tactical Fighter Wing Commander. Wing Commander Thorpe, from Perth, Western Australia flew from Saigon to coastal Phan Rang AB in the RAAF 2 Squadron Canberra Bomber. **(Tom Thorpe from a group picture from pilot course, 1955)**

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

Spring 1969. 71st SOS Shadow gunship crew in front of AC-119G #52-5925



Back row, L to R.

Lt. Col Frank J. Rostkowski (Pilot); Capt. Melvin B. Hayes (Nav/Nos); Maj. Robert N. Millhaem (Co-Pilot); Lt. William C. Dawson (Nav/Nos)

Front Row, L to R.

SSgt. Keith D. Roberts (Gunner); MSgt. Robert L. Xanders (I.O.); Sgt. Wade Dunn (gunner); TSgt. Ronald Penrose (Flight Engineer).

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

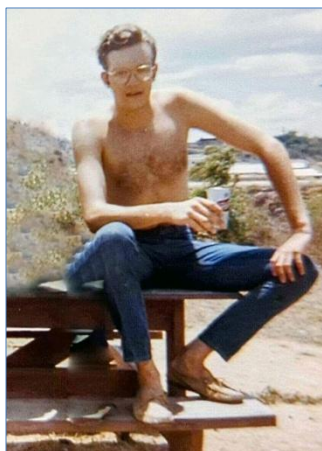
Two honored

(7th Air Force News, May 5, 1971)

Two men of the 1882d Communications Squadron here have received honors in 1964th Communications Group competition. The 1964th, parent organization of the 1882d, provides all communications service for the USAF throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

Capt. **James F. Rooney** was named Outstanding Junior Officer for the Group while A1C **Rupert F. Danyow** was selected as Group Airman of the Quarter. Both competed with candidates from all USAF installations in Vietnam.

Captain Rooney is the communications electronics maintenance officer for the 1882d. He was cited for his leadership and management abilities which led to an outstanding rating on a recent Maintenance Standardization Evaluation Program inspection. The 1882d was the only squadron in Vietnam to receive such a rating.



Airman Danyow, a telecommunications switchboard operator, was selected over keen competition for his "professionalism, personal endeavors, and exemplary leadership abilities." Not only was his job knowledge and duty performance put to the test, but his over-all knowledge of the Air Force's world-wide 'mission and traditions were carefully judged in his selection. **(Picture left is Rupert Danyow enjoying a Schlitz beer. Photo by Rupert Danyow)**

Lifesaving Feat Earns Fuentes Airman's Medal

(Phan Fare, April 18, 1971)

Air Force Sgt. Donald A. Fuentes of New York City, honored earlier this year by the American Red Cross for rescuing a swimming companion has been awarded the airman's Medal for heroism involving the same act.

The coveted decoration was presented to Sergeant Fuentes, an aircrew survival life support

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

specialist of the 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron here during an awards ceremony recently that included the presentation of the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious' Service Medal and eight Air Force Commendation Medals. Col. Cregg P. Nolen Jr., 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) Commander from Port Arthur, Tex., made the presentations.

The citation accompanying Sergeant Fuentes' Airman's Medal stated he “...distinguished himself by heriosm involving Voluntary risk of life at Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, on Aug. 11, 1970...by rescuing a swimming companion from drowning at the Phan Rang beach. Despite being submerged three times by the struggling victim, Sergeant Fuentes swam, carrying him over 100 yards to safety. The exemplary courage and heroism displayed by Sergeant Fuentes reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.”

The Bronze Star Medal was presented to MSgt. **Richard Baschiera Jr.**, 35th Combat Support Group (CSG), from Bunker Hill, Ind. Sergeant Baschiera was cited for meritorious service while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in military operations against an opposing armed force in Southeast Asia from July 25, 1969 to July 24, 1970 while assigned to the 31st Combat Support Group, Tuy Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam.

Maj. **Russell A. Young**, commander of the 35th Avionics Maintenance Squadron, from Falmouth, Mass., earned two of the awards, including the Meritorious Service Medal and the first oak leaf cluster to the Commendation Medal. The Meritorious Service Medal was awarded for his performance of outstanding service as chief of Maintenance, 4784th Materiel Squadron, Otis AFB, Mass., from Jan. 1 to Oct. 15, 1970. He was presented the Commendation Medal for service as Maintenance supervisor for the 551st Avionics Maintenance Squadron, also at Otis AFB from Oct. 4, 1967 to Nov. 30, 1969.

Other airmen receiving the Commendation Medal were:

Capt. **David R. Samson**, chief of Phan Rang AB Personal Affairs, from Columbus; Ohio, for meritorious service at the USAF Marksmanship School and the 3257th Technical School at Lackland AFB, Tex., From Mar. 14, 1968 to Dec. 4, 1970.

TSgt. **Donnie E. Vessels**, NCO in charge of base reenlistments and separations office, from

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

Rhodelia, Ky., earned the award as NCO in charge of the In and Out Processing, Airmen's Records and Special Actions Units while assigned to the 92nd Combat Support Group, Fairchild AFB, Wash., from Aug. 18, 1967 to Oct. 12, 1970.

Sgt. **David D. Dodds**, 35th Security Police Squadron (SPS), from Point Pleasant, N.J., was cited for his services at Phan Rang AB from Apr. 22, 1970 to Apr. 22, 1971. He is currently serving on an extension of his Vietnam tour.

Sgt. **Thomas J. Kerrigan** from Washington, D.C., administrative NCO for the 35th TFW Deputy Commander for Materiel Office; was recognized for his performance from June 15, 1970 to Apr 22, 1971.

Sgt. **Raymond C. Lisauckis**, Harlingen, Tex., also from the 35th SPS, earned his recognition while stationed here as a Security Alert Team leader from Apr. 29, 1970 to Apr. 28, 1971.

Sgt. **Michael T. Pitts**, Red Level, Ala., jet aircraft mechanic with the 612th Tactical Fighter Squadron here was cited for meritorious service from Apr. 29, 1970 to Apr. 29, 1971.

Another security policeman, Airman 1st Class **Calvin E. Hood**, Moultrie, Ga., was presented the award for his service as an armorer with the 35th SPS here from Apr. 30, 1970 to Apr. 30, 1971.

CONNECTING PAST TO PRESENT



MEET ONE OF THE BUILDERS
OF THIS ICONIC STRUCTURE

Bob Cogan

Phan Rang Newsletter 102 told the story of how No 2 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) personnel boldly expressed their Australian identity by building one of Australia's

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

famous landmarks, the Sydney Harbour Bridge to remind them of home.

The object was a miniature replica of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, lovingly constructed in their spare time by No. 2 Squadron workshops’ crew – Corporal **Bert Grossel** and Leading Aircraftsmen **Bob Cogan**, **Mal Cryer** and **Steve Gainsford**.

Recently Bob Cogan’s (69-70 general fitter) son **Anthony Cogan** contacted me after he had seen his father’s name in a newsletter and sent me this picture of his dad, shown below. Anthony also served 20 years as a RAAF Armourer, 1977-1998, mostly on Mirages, Hornets and Orions. **It’s wonderful to put a face to a name.**



(To see the entire story about the building and location of this historical Icon, see Phan Rang Newsletter 102 “Historical Aussie Icon At Phan Rang”.)

The miniature replica of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.



“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 272 “...keeping the memories alive”

ALLEN HERO - PILOT OFFICER REGINALD JAMES AKED



Mission Vietnam

Tom Grieves reported the passing of Pilot officer **Reginald James Aked**, of Murwillimbah NSW, July 2023. Jim had been with No. 2 RAAF Canberra jet bomber squadron in Vietnam for only one week when he flew his seventh bombing mission against suspected Viet Cong strongholds at that time. Pilot Officer Aked was a navigator with the squadron which was based at Phan Rang in South Vietnam in 1968.



Jim Aked from the Navigators Course group picture, February 1966.



Doug's Comments: I do hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter. Once again I would like to thank Ken Garrett for providing the historical publications for this issue. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, dougsevert@gmail.com and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.