

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 277

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Flightline 'Turtles' Shuttle Unbaked Pilots Airmen

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Two turtles have been touring the Phan Rang AB flightline for the benefit of all the foot-weary flightline trudgers.



Sara Porter christens "Turtle Two" with a bottle of bubbly before the new flightline shuttle bus starts out on its Phan Rang route picking up maintenance troops, pilots and other flightline workers. Also participating in the ceremony are, from left, SMSgt. Ernest M. Sanchez, Turtle project NCO, Janet Wilson, an American Red Cross (ARC) "Donut Dollie," Maria Mes, a visiting ARC "Donut Dollie" from Da Nang AB, Miss Porter and SSgt. Thomas J. Shelton, NCOIC of the 35th Field Maintenance Sq. Corrosion Control Branch. (USAF)

The "turtles" aren't the reptilian species, but rather sunshaded tractor shuttles called Turtle One and Turtle Two that wind their way from one end of the sun-baked flightline to the

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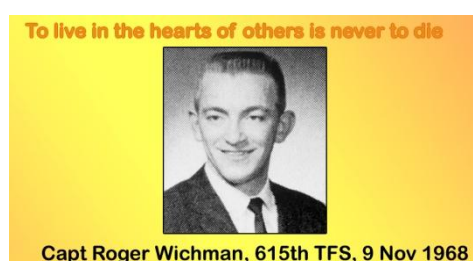
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other carrying pilots, mechanics and other flightline workers to their destinations.

Project NCO for the construction of the two shuttle buses was SMSgt. Ernest M. Sanchez, metalworking superintendent with the U.S. Air Force's 35th Field Maintenance Sq. (FMS) here. He said that the two 10-man shuttles went from the idea stage to actual completion in less than a week.

Credit also goes to SSgt. Dennis R. Copenhaver, a 35th FMS welder, and SSgt. Thomas J. Shelton, NCO in charge of the 35th FMS Corrosion Control Branch, for building the shuttles.



A veteran remembers



**A photo of the Author, Lieutenant Myron Koets
at Cam Ranh Bay, 1968**

The first thing that Myron Koets noticed when he landed in Vietnam was the smell. "It was a greasy, oily odor," he said. "I soon learned that it was the stink of fuel oil being used to incinerate the contents of a latrine barrel."

Myron and some fellow servicemen were loaded onto a bus. That's when he noticed the second memorable thing about Vietnam.

"The heat was tropical, and the bus had no air conditioning," Myron said. "Chain link fence had

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been welded over the bus's open windows to prevent grenades from being lobbed into it."

Myron, who grew up on a dairy farm at Pipestone, Minnesota, was drafted into the Army at age 18 in January of 1966. After completing basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, he was sent to officer training school.

"I was commissioned as a second lieutenant and put in charge of a squad, but I wasn't old enough to drink," Myron said.

After a couple of intense interviews with the FBI, Myron was granted Top Secret clearance. He was given advanced training that included such things as how to deploy chemical weaponry and fire tactical nuclear artillery shells. In January of 1968, Myron was ordered to ship out to Vietnam.

"Our flight arrived in Vietnam at night," Myron recalled. "As we flew over the country, I looked out the window and saw a bunch of fireworks and thought, 'Holy cow!' The guy across the aisle from me had done a tour, so I asked him about the fireworks. He looked out my window and exclaimed, 'Holy cow!'"

Myron's plane was about to land in the midst of the Tet Offensive.

The military base at Cam Ranh Bay became Myron's duty station.

"I was assigned to manage the distribution of construction materials to the central third of Vietnam," Myron said. "I worked with the Korean military, USAID, and Special Forces."

Myron was on an inspection tour at Phan Rang Air Base when mortars began to rain down from the sky.

"Their bomb shelters were steel shipping containers that had been buried and covered with sandbags," he recalled. "I dove into the nearest container and stayed there until the explosions stopped. Then I learned that I was in a container that was being used to store ammunition. I would have been vaporized if it took a direct hit."

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Living in a war zone changes the way a person thinks about time.

"You don't think about what you're going to do at Thanksgiving or Christmas," Myron said. "You only think about how to make it through the next second and the second after that."

After more than a year in Vietnam, Myron was sent to Turkey where he served as chief procurement officer for NATO.

"Everyone in the aircraft cheered when our plane lifted off the Saigon runway. I looked around and noticed that the plane was only two-thirds full. That illustrated the price we had paid in the form of lives lost."

While in Turkey, Myron met a fetching young lowan named Nancy.

"I had signed up for a program to teach at overseas military bases," Nancy said. "I didn't even know where Turkey was when I was told where I would be going. I had to look it up in a book."

Nancy and Myron soon became engaged. They flew back to Nancy's hometown to get married.

"Just before the wedding, I went to the lobby of our hotel to get something," Myron said. "I was wearing my dress blues, and a guy mistook me for a bellhop and asked me to bring him a newspaper."

After serving for two years in Turkey, Myron was sent to a military base in Thailand where he was put in charge of requisitioning supplies for U.S. forces in Southeast Asia.

"One of my most interesting experiences in Thailand was escorting 1972 Miss America Laurel Schaefer for a week while she did a USO tour for our troops," Myron said. "Laurel is writing a book about her time as Miss America. She got in touch with me recently to ask about my recollections. It was fun to reconnect with her after all these years."

Myron was on the receiving end of some vitriol after he returned home from his service in

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Southeast Asia.

"Our nation was deeply divided over the Vietnam War," he said. "I was called some very nasty things. It ended friendships with people whom I had known my entire life.

"I appreciate it when people thank me for my service. But what I'd prefer is that they vote for someone who favors diplomacy over the use of force. The best war is the one that is never fought."



A Frank Discussion About What Vietnam Did To Us

By Jim Kucipeck

(A speech James Kucipeck gave at his local 2023 Veterans Day ceremonies)

After reading “A Good War” by Studs Terkel, a book about the experiences of people during WWII I thought about the experiences of my generation during the Vietnam War. Our experiences are reflected here, before, during and the aftermath of that war. This is not only my story but a collection of experiences and stories of my buddies, friends and coworkers who served in Vietnam.

The book “A Good War” is based on the premise that WW II united people around the world against Germany and Japan. Certainly, no war is good! Congress declared war on December 11, 1941. Our mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles met the call. And we know the result, victory in the spring and summer of 1945.

Congress never declared war in Vietnam. I have heard it said that “Vietnam was not a real war.” I beg to differ, there were 58,220 men and women who came home in coffins, with 150,000 wounded, 1600 MIA, and all the rest of us mentally and emotionally scarred. The Vietnam War was so controversial that we were disrespected after we came home.

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What I am about to tell you are not “war stories”, but who we were before, during and coming home. It is time for a frank discussion about what Vietnam did to us, **but first a few facts.**

- The 1st US involvement in Vietnam and SEA started in the 50’s. The average VIETNAM vet was 10 yrs. old then.
- The 1st US troops were Marines that landed at Danang, March 8 th , 1965, most VIETNAM vets were still in HS.
- 2,700,000 men and women served in VIETNAM
- 850,00 are still alive today
- Average age is seventy-seven
- We are dying at the rate of 390 a day
- The 1st American was killed in VIETNAM was in 1961, I was a sophomore in HS
- Last Americans killed, April 29, 1975
- There were 58,220 killed
- 150,000 wounded
- 1600 Missing in Action
- Oldest man killed 62 yrs. old
- Youngest man killed 15 yrs. old (lied about his age) (Take a look at the band over there.)
- 5 men killed were 16 yrs. old (lied about their age)

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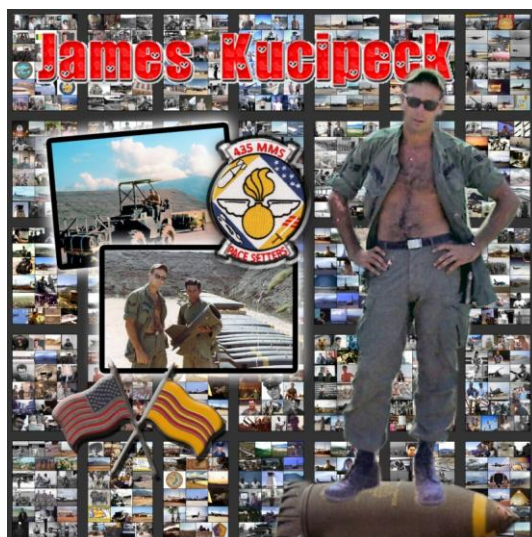
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- Average age of those who died, 23
- In 1967 and in 1968, when I was there, there were 549,000 men and women who served in VIETNAM, the largest number during the war
- 76% of those who were there were from lower middle class and working-class backgrounds
- 66% were volunteers
- 70% of those killed were volunteers
- 59 women were killed in VIETNAM
- 997 were killed on their 1st day in VIETNAM
- 1448 were killed on their last day in VIETNAM
- The last combat troops left VIETNAM on March 29 th, 1973
- Saigon fell on April 30th, 1975, approximately 10 yrs. after the first troops landed

I know that statistics are boring, but you must know the facts to understand that it was a real war.

I arrived in VIETNAM June of 1967 coming directly from a 13-month tour in Korea and landed at Tan Sanh Nhut AB in Saigon. It was 90+ degrees and 80%+ humidity. That was typical of all of Vietnam from the Mekong Delta in the south to the Demilitarized Zone in the north. I spent the night listening to incoming rockets and mortars and



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watching our aircraft rain down fire on the Viet Cong. The next morning, we moved out around the country to places with mysterious sounding names, Long Binh, Cu Chi, Phu Cat, Phan Rang, Kontum, the Central Highlands, Can Tho, Ca Mau, and to the countless and nameless fire bases around the country. The Marines typically went up country to Danang, Phu Bai, Chu Lai, Hue' and Quang Tri. I caught a flight down to Phan Rang, my duty station for the next 12 months.

Of the following, I am only going to use the 1st name of my buddies, school chums and co-workers and where they were located. I am sure that I will miss some but that was not intended as there are 184 names on the memorial (behind me). Most of these guys I grew up with, lived here, and/or worked with.

Mike, Leon, Wayne, Craig, Johnny, Terry, Rudi, and Pierre were with the Marines up around the DMZ, Phu Bai, Chu Lai and Khe Sanh

- George was down in the Mekong Delta
- Art and Eddy were up country flying choppers
- Phil was at Long Binh
- We lost Steve Valliere in '66, up country with the Marines south of the DMZ
- Danny was shot down while flying in a chopper
- Mike was with the Wolfhounds around Cu Chi
- Bobby and Jeff were with the 101st Airborne around Phu Bai
- Barry got hit while on patrol around Cu Chi
- Craig and Pierre were wounded while on patrol with the Marines up North around the
- DMZ

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- Glen was with the Navy was out in the Gulf of Tonkin with the 7th Fleet
- Neil and Charlie were with me in Phan Rang and Phu Cat
- One of my buddies, and I won't even mention his 1st name, was on missions outside of the borders of VIETNAM, I think Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam
- I was located at 2 separate places, Phan Rang and Phu Cat.
- Wayne Soucy, a high school friend, and I were in the same place for a period of time at Phan Rang. Incidentally, Wayne was in Vietnam twice.

I think by now that you realize that the entire country of Vietnam was at war, a guerrilla war, and it was all around us!

But who are these Vietnam vets, really?

We are “boomers”, Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1960, the children of WW II vets who won the “Good War”! We came of age during the 60's. It was a heady and exciting time to grow up. Tupper Lake was a thriving and bustling community. It was all about part time jobs, playing sports, going to the beach, it was babes, the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Muscle cars, going to the movies, hanging out at the “A” (the Altamont Dairy Bar), hanging out on the school wall, dances, and the best damn music ever!

All of that changed for us in August of 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, a clash between the North Vietnamese and the U S Navy. The discussion of which I will leave to the historians to debate.

Under President Johnson, Marines landed combat troops at Danang on March 8th, 1965. Most of my generation was still in HS. I graduated in June of 1965.

After HS, some were drafted into military service, some of us enlisted in the military, some got medical deferments to avoid the draft, some got married to avoid the draft, some protested

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and burned their Draft Cards, some went to Canada, and others by the “luck of the draw” never did anything and stayed home. One close friend, who on the day he graduated from high school, left for the Marine Corp. One year later, to the day, he was in Vietnam. You might say it was his Senior Class Trip. SAD!

I know at this point you would like to know what it was like during our time in VIETNAM. Everyone had a different experience. I said early on that there would be no “blood and guts” war stories. Combat vets have their own stories and probably will not share them with you. Support personnel like me will share a story or two.

Vietnam is a small country that was totally at war from the DMZ to the Mekong Delta and included Laos and Cambodia in which a secret war took place unbeknownst to the American public. Of course, we bombed North Vietnam from Thailand, and Guam and from the Gulf of Tonkin by the 7th Fleet. We bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail which ran from North Vietnam, into Laos, Cambodia and finally into South Vietnam. We bombed the Sihanouk Trail out of Cambodia. Battles took place in the Central Highlands, along the borders with Laos and Cambodia, down in the MeKong Delta, in the jungles, in cities and small villages across the country. There are 1000’s of heart-breaking stories that are shared between vets and not shared with you. Countless books have been written about the Vietnam War, for and against, and about that war.

I must tell you that I was a non-combatant. I worked with explosives, rockets, and napalm. It took 10 to 15 personnel to support every single pilot and combat soldier in Vietnam. As far as my part in the war, I was stationed at Phan Rang Air Base and Phu Cat. I supported Air Force missions that flew ground support for our combat troops, interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We bombed Vietnam and surrounding countries 24/7. I was a “buck sergeant”, Crew Chief, in charge of 5 GI’s and 10 Vietnamese Nationals. We assembled explosives, 500 lb. bombs, napalm, rockets, and everything else that exploded. We worked 12+ hours a day and longer if necessary, and during TET, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, around the clock, to support our missions. We assembled and flew hundreds of tons of munitions a day and we were only one of 10 air bases in South Vietnam.

I have tried to convey this to you and help you understand what it was like to be there, but that

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was only my experience and everyone who was there has their own story to tell.

After a year in VIETNAM, we were finally going home. The 1st Shirt (1st Sergeant) or “Top” called you in and told you to “stand down”, “turn in your gear”, “pack your bag”, you are going home! At that point you had to catch a ride via a truck, chopper, or plane to Danang, or to Saigon or to Cam Ranh Bay for the “Freedom Bird” and home.

One day in VIETNAM and the next moment on a flight back to the “World”. No time to decompress! Our spirits were so high that we did not need jet engines to lift off. Once airborne the pilot announced that we had cleared Vietnamese airspace. You cannot believe the range of emotions expressed after twelve long months, hooting, hollering, tears, and dead silence by some about going home and buddies left behind and those who would never make it home alive. Some of us landed at Travis AFB near San Francisco or McChord AFB near Seattle. We did not expect a parade, nor did we get one!

What we got instead was unexpected, met by protesters carrying signs and heckled with “baby killer”, spit upon, urine thrown, as well feces! Some of us were even told not to wear our uniforms while traveling home to protect us from being harassed. For me it was quite different, it was June 4th, 1968, and no one paid any attention to us as Robert Kennedy had just been murdered and all eyes were glued to the TVs in the airports. I flew from Seattle, to Chicago, to New York, finally to Albany and to catch a bus to Saranac Lake. The trip home was in stark contrast to the landscape of VIETNAM. We traveled up Route 9 hitting every little small town along that rural route. I was mesmerized at our beautiful Adirondack Mountains landscape.

I was in a world of my own as I was overseas for 25 months in Korea and Vietnam hoping nothing had changed at home. Reality soon set in as the bus driver let me off in Saranac Lake at the main intersection. I grabbed my bag and stepped off the bus to 50-degree temperatures after leaving Cam Ranh Bay at one hundred degrees the day before. What followed is still vividly clear to me to this very day. I was standing on the bridge in Saranac Lake hitch hiking home when a driver stopped, and I opened the door. He asked me where I was coming from and I of course replied, VIETNAM. At that point he asked me “how many babies did you kill” and uttered an expletive at me and drove off. I was dumfounded and thought “Welcome home Jim!”

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Another car approached and I was reluctant to open the door, but it was getting late, and I was freezing. The driver did see what just occurred seconds earlier and I recounted my story. He was an off-duty state police officer, he told me to get in and took me right to the door of my home.

My parents greeted me, but it was not what I expected, I am not sure what I expected though to be honest. I felt as if they thought I had gone out of town for the day, I had been gone for 25 months.

Home was not the same anymore and never would be. No one, family and friends included, wanted to talk about VIETNAM and what it was like. There was little or no emotional support from my community! Only returning VIETNAM vets' home at the same time congregated at the local bars would talk about Vietnam and all that happened to us. People felt uncomfortable around us as we spoke of VIETNAM.

They did not understand, they weren't there! Our Vietnam experiences, for some brought on PTSD, (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Some of which can be expressed as anger, anxiety, depression, rage, crying, night terrors, survivors' guilt, startle response, panic, irritability, just to name a few. If you want to know more of the manifestations of PTSD, research it!

VIETNAM vets have a saying *“you can leave Vietnam, but Vietnam never leaves you!”* We have “triggers” that evoke emotions and memories, sights, and sounds that take us back to a time and place in VIETNAM. The sound of a “chopper”, a helicopter to you, loud explosions heard during 4th of July celebrations, 60's music, (incidentally, the iconic anthem of the Vietnam War is the song “We gotta' get outa' this place” by the Animals) takes me back to Vietnam in a heartbeat. A label in my clothing, “Made in Vietnam”, how ironic!

As 70 yr. olds, all we are left with our memories, and whether we admit it or not, PTSD, and the effects of Agent Orange. VIETNAM was a traumatic experience in our lives and left an indelible mark on our psyche. I have PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I did not know that I had it until a friend of ours pointed it out. Once diagnosed, I spent 18 months in therapy, twice per

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month, with a VA therapist. I am better now; I know how to manage it! My “shrink” told me that I had to talk about it, and this is part of the reason that I am doing this presentation. I must thank my wife of 54 yrs., Betsy, and my daughters Ann, Julie and Mary Kay for putting up with Vietnam. I love you!

PTSD is not the only thing that Vietnam gave us, it exposed us to Agent Orange! The military called it Operation Ranch Hand! It is a defoliant sprayed by planes, choppers, trucks and by hand to deny the enemy of their hiding places. We were all exposed to it, some more than others. We wallowed in it, it was in the air, it was in the mud and dirt, it was in the dust, it was where we slept, and in our food.

Eleven million gallons were sprayed over twenty million acres. 2.7 million VIETNAM vets were exposed and genetically our children. The irony of it is the gov’t knew early on that AO was potent and dangerous.

There is a lengthy list of medical issues associated with AO.

- Heart issues
- Cancers (we lost Wayne Soucy a number of years ago to cancer from AO)
- Diabetes
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Birth defects
- Hypertension
- Parkinsons disease
- Thyroid issues
- And many medical terms I cannot even pronounce.
- And some medical issues they are just discovering.

For me, my medical condition from AO is Peripheral Neuropathy, it is in my lower legs and feet. I have spoken to you about Vietnam from my own perspective and that of my brother Vietnam vets. I hope that you understand a little bit more about us and what we went through, about coming home and how we were treated and what Vietnam did to us. These are my own experiences and recollections and experiences of my brother vets who were willing to share some of their own stories with me.

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In closing I want to share with you the lyrics of a song recorded by Charlie Daniels, “Still in Saigon” and written by Dan Daley that sums up the Vietnam experience for some veterans. I have taken a few liberties with the lyrics of this song, and I read it as a poem.

**Got on a plane in “Frisco”
And got off in Vietnam
I walked into a different world
The past forever gone
I could have gone to Canada
Or I could have stayed in school
But I was brought up differently
I couldn’t break the rules**

**Thirteen months and fifteen days
The last ones were the worst
One minute I’d kneel down and pray
And the next I’d stand and curse**

**No place to run to
Where I did not feel that war
When I got home I stayed alone
And checked behind each door
Cuz I’m still in Vietnam
I am still in Vietnam
In my mind
The ground at home was covered in snow
And I was covered in sweat
My younger brother calls me a killer
And my daddy calls me a vet
Everybody says I’m someone else
And I’m sick and there is no cure
Damned if I know who I am
There was only one place I was sure**

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**When I was still in Vietnam
I am still in Vietnam
In my mind
Every summer when it rains
I smell the jungle, I hear the planes
I can't tell no one, I feel ashamed
Afraid someday I'll go insane
That's been fifty long years ago
And time has gone on by
Now and then I catch myself
Eyes searching through the sky
All the sounds of long ago
Will be forever in my head
Mingled with the wounded cries
And the silence of the dead
'Cuz I'm still in Vietnam**

**I am still in Vietnam
In my mind
I am still in Vietnam
Yes, I'm still in Vietnam
In my mind
(RIP Craig)**

To all of my Vietnam brothers and sisters, something that you never heard when you came home, **WELCOME HOME!**

Thank you for listening!

To live in the hearts of others is never to die



Amn. John Harper Evans, Jr., 35 SPS, 7 Aug. 1970

LOVE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

By Max Egener

“Standing on the side of a road at the Rang Rang Air Base in Vietnam on Aug. 6, 1969, Jim Morris asked his wife, Diane, to marry him.”

After meeting during the Vietnam War, Jim and Diane Morris' love lasts 50 years later.

Standing on the side of a road at the Rang Rang Air Base in Vietnam on Aug. 6, 1969, Jim Morris asked his wife, Diane, to marry him.

They had only known each other for three days, but Jim said, "I don't think she waited five seconds. She said, 'I think that's a good idea.'"

Jim was a U.S. Air Force maintenance officer and Diane was part of the Red Cross' Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas program. Women in the program, who were better known to soldiers as "doughnut dollies," organized activities at military bases and worked to comfort soldiers.

The couple, who live in Forest Grove and recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, said both soldiers and doughnut dollies were instructed not to have intimate relationships with each other. But out of the horror of the war and an instant connection, their love evolved in a few days, they said.

"What you realize if you live long enough is that life is about 90% luck," Jim said. It was luck that they were both transferred to Phan Phan from elsewhere in Southeast Asia — Diane from a base near Danang, Vietnam, and Jim from a base in Thailand — but they met through a mutual friend, Sgt. Clarence Edgeworth.

"Clarence Edgeworth was our angel," Diane said. Edgeworth had a feeling they would get along and he arranged their first date. "It took all the nerve I had," Jim said.

After the first attempt at a date failed when Jim parked the 2½-ton maintenance truck outside the Red Cross center where Diane couldn't see him, the couple got pizza from the mess hall and

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sat in the truck together the next day. They agreed to meet each of the next three days.

"Those conversations we had, you're in a war zone, you're talking about the most important things to you," Diane said.

She said three days seems like nothing to an average person, but in a war zone, witnessing people coming back to the base with serious injuries, both physical and mental, time is warped, and the shock of the war forced out "the core of who we were."

"You can tell when you're talking to somebody, it's not code words, it's code feelings, you can really tell down two or three layers into them what they're really like," Jim said.

Jim said when they agreed to get married, they knew there would be consequences for Diane, who had a couple more months in Vietnam. Jim's tour was coming to an end, and even though Diane's position was voluntary, it was a one-year commitment.

Diane's Red Cross supervisors urged her to change her mind about Jim. When she refused, they sent her home early.

Diane and Jim moved to Oregon 20 years ago after running a photography business in North Carolina for years after the war — they wanted to be closer to their two children who lived in Oregon.

The war cultivated their passion for photography and they still occasionally look through an album of the photos they took in Vietnam.

They said they've resisted telling the story of how they met publicly because they felt uneasy talking about such a positive thing in their lives in the context of a war that took so many lives and divided the country. "We've told a few friends and really only here, some people back in North Carolina knew, because it was almost like it wasn't right for us to feel so great about something that everybody else felt so terrible about," Jim said. "Either by losing family and friends out of the 55,000 that were killed or by protesting and having all the stress and strife that went with that."

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Although Diane is sure she would have had a successful life if she had never met Jim, she said she would never trade it for a different life as she evoked her children. "It was a terrible, horrible time for our country, and I'm not sure still, it's going to be 100 years before they figure out what all the ramifications were," Diane said. "But of all that negative, awful, terrible stuff that happened, was this wonderful, wonderful experience for us. And it was the best thing that ever happened to us."

(Forest Grove couple found love on the battlefield - Forest Grove News Times (OR) - November 9, 2019)

Once upon, a Far East time, in nineteen sixty eight

... or scrounging was the name of the game

(September 6, 2019 | The Forest City Daily Courier, NC)

The GEEIA (Ground Electronics Engineering Installation Agency) squad made history on a non-remembered date. The plan had come together to build a new club house.

When it was completed, it was named, ***“The Bandits Rendezvous”***.

All the parts, to build it, were scrounged from miles around. Taxpayers did not pay a dime to raise it from the ground. The name not given lightly when it opened on that day at the south end of the squadron on a base called Cam Ranh Bay.

Our scrounger, whom I will not name, got a jeep, for quarts of rum from a needy alcoholic; there were a few where we were from. He had it flown down to us, in a Hercules when space was available on the aircraft.

Then drove it down to Phan Rang where another trade took place. The jeep was traded, for a truck, with wood to build the core. Some was traded to the Navy, who poured the concrete floor. Soon the walls were standing and the roof was on the top, but the inside of it was barren, and, for sure, we could not stop.

“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. 277 **“...keeping the memories alive”**

The middle was an open bay. The ends were spacious rooms. We made them into places that were far from storage tombs. The south room had a large teak bar, flown from the Philippines.

The north a full blown kitchen, a place to cook our steaks and beans.

Parachutes adorned the middle bay, to provide some ambience.

When we had our first unveiling, brass was invited to the dance. General McConnel came, he was the Air Force, Chief of Staff. Along came other Generals, not the lowly riff and raff.

Don't remember any congressmen, no congress ladies at the time. The drinks were flowing copiously for opening this crime.

The General gave a rally speech that made us all so proud. It was in the early evening, we were a drunken, rowdy crowd. When the night was over, and I staggered to my rack.

I marveled at the place we'd built, from our scrounger's useful sack. He was right there with us, he was a pirate, having fun. In the club house, “Bandits Rendezvous”, when all was built and done.

That's my story, I have told it. That was fifty years ago. The statute of limitations has run out, for all I know. It was all for entertainment, yes, was all this glitz and glam. It helped to be creative in that place called Viet Nam. *By Franklin Price Spindale*

AN EXPLOSION IN VIETNAM

In 1967, Pryor was sent to Vietnam, where he was stationed at Phan Rang Air Base to help install storage tanks and fuel lines.

"In my first enlistment, I did a lot of stuff that got me into trouble, before I learned to keep my mouth shut," he said. "So when I got orders for Vietnam, I thought, well, God's going to get me now. We were under fire as soon as we arrived in Saigon, and I thought, I guess I'm going to get blown up on this airplane. We had to spend the night on the plane.

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That was my introduction to Vietnam."

Pryor said his group of men had to make do with limited equipment and resorted to "borrowing" tools and even forklifts from the Army, while avoiding enemy snipers. They called themselves Pryor's Pirates.

Pryor earned a Purple Heart during that tour when he was blasted out of a cot in his barracks by a rocket attack. "My mattress and I got blown eight feet out of bed and I landed on my head and shoulder," he said. "The mattress saved my life, actually. When I woke up (in an inflatable makeshift hospital ward), all I could see was bright light, and I thought I was in heaven."

A second stint in Vietnam in 1973 had him stationed at Cam Rahn Bay Air Force Base as it was being dismantled as part of the drawdown of U.S. forces and the turnover of the base to South Vietnam. A year later, Cam Rahn was overrun by the North Vietnamese.

After retiring from the military in 1982, Pryor joined the postal service in St. Louis and worked another 20 years there.



"Joining the Air Force was a good decision," he said. "Authority and I would butt heads, but in the military, I grew up. I missed being in the military after 25 years."

ROGER PRYOR, MISSOURI NATIONAL GUARD, U.S. AIR FORCE

Roger Pryor, Photo by Lori Rose.

Remembering two lost airmen

(The Port Stephens Examiner, (Australia) - November 12, 2020)

Two crewmen from a Canberra Bomber aircraft (Magpie 91) who were killed in action during

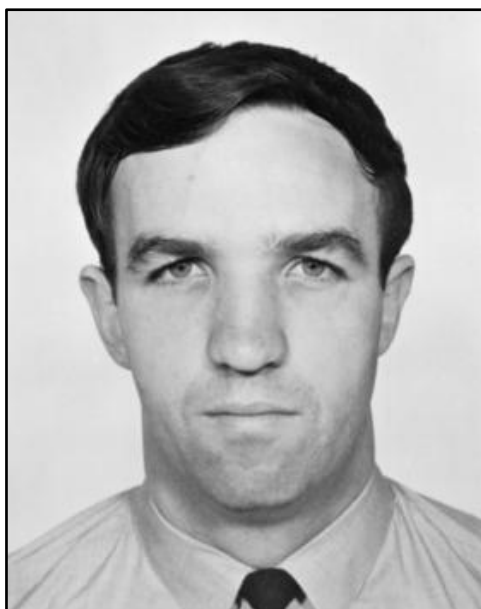
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the Vietnam War have been remembered at Williamtown Air Base on the 50th anniversary of their ill-fated flight.

On November 3, 1970, the RAAF No. 2 Squadron bomber went down near the Laotian-Vietnamese border after completing a successful bombing mission in support of United States ground forces. On board were Flying Officer Michael Herbert (pilot) and Pilot Officer Robert Carver (navigator).



Flying Officer Michael Herbert (pilot)



Pilot Officer Robert Carver (navigator).

Joining with squadron association members and veterans, RAAF personnel from No 2 Squadron held a commemorative event at RAAF Base Williamtown on November 3, 2020, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the two Australian airmen who lost their lives during the conflict and to honour all ADF members who fought in the Vietnam War.

The cause of the crash which killed the airmen remains unknown, and following the incident, 2SQN and the United States Air Force searched for the pair for three days, eventually declaring Herbert and Carver as missing in action.

Their remains were eventually found and repatriated by a Defence historical unit on August 31, 2009 arriving back in Australia on September 1.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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The Magpie 91 event program held at RAAF Williamtown, conducted 50 years to the day of the aircraft's downing, included a memorial service and colours parade held in the squadron's Williamtown hangar, acknowledging the service and sacrifice of the airmen lost. This was followed by a 2SQN E-7A Wedgetail flypast over the Williamtown base, performed in the airmen's honour.

Commanding Officer No. 2 Squadron, Wing Commander Jason Brown, said that the aircraft participating in the flypast held great historical significance as it was adorned with commemorative nose-art completed by personnel deployed on Operation OKRA in 2020. "The nose-art combines the 2SQN lightning bolt emblem with the unit's World War II and Vietnam War decorations that include a United States Presidential Unit Citation, a Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and a United States Air Force Outstanding Unit Commendation," he said.

As 2SQN has recently returned from operations in the Middle East - we remember those who have come before us and we honor their memory through our service contributions today." Delivering the memorial speech, Commander Surveillance and Response Group, Air Commodore Barbara Courtney, acknowledged the significance of the commemorative event: "Today we pay tribute to Flying Officer Herbert and Pilot Officer Carver and their families as we remember their courage, bravery, service and sacrifice," she said.

"We come together as one Air Force family with personnel from Number 2 Squadron past and present and honour these airmen and all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the name of peace.

"It is the spirit of camaraderie and mateship that bonds all generations of Air Force serving members and reminds us of the importance of our service and mission in the present. For those who have been lost, they will not be forgotten and their memory will endure forever in our service history."

Pilot Officer Carver joined the RAAF in 1969 and despite being a qualified radiographer, was passionate about aviation and was looking for a new challenge with his Air Force service. Flying Officer Herbert joined in 1964 and the night Magpie 91 went missing was his 199th mission.

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

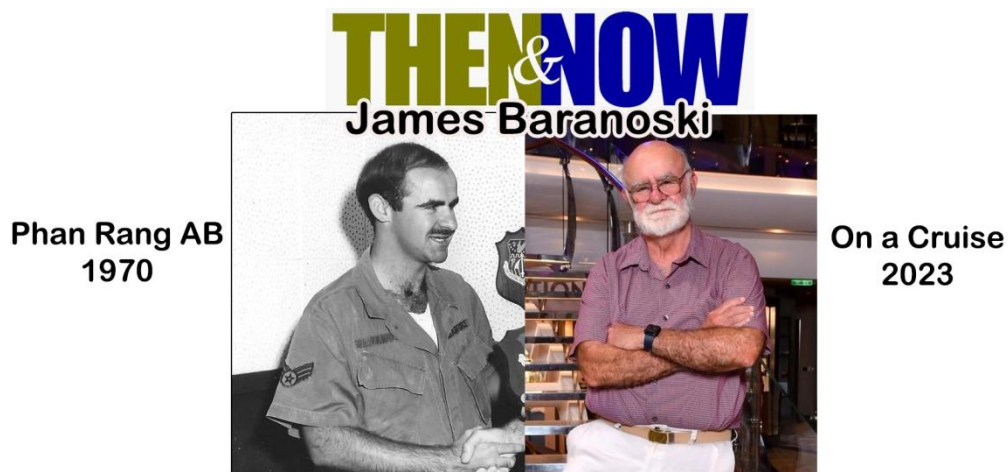
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No. 2 Squadron returned to Australia from Vietnam on June 4, 1971, after four years and two months of operations. The squadron flew more than 11,900 combat missions during the conflict. Before 2SQN deployed to Vietnam and was based out of Phan Rang Air Base, it was based out of RAAF Butterworth during the Malayan Emergency. Post the Malayan Emergency in the early 1960s, the squadron remained at Butterworth until deploying 8 Canberras to Vietnam in 1967.

2SQN is now based at Williamstown.

(The story of “Magpie 91” and the “Hunt for Magpie 91 can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 147.)



Doug’s Comments: I’m pleased to announce that our 2024 Phan Rang Vietnam Veterans Reunion will be held in Dayton, Ohio, 5-7 September, so please mark your calendar. I’ve dubbed this reunion the “nostalgic Tour” because this is where we had our first reunion and in the same hotel, but negotiations are still ongoing. I hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter. 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.