

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 279

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Pirates of the Caribbean connection to Phan Rang AB and No. 2 Squadron

Let me start with Roy Baden Rush.



Roy Rush was proud of his service in Vietnam and the RAAF.

He was born on February 9, 1928, in Toowoomba, the eldest of three children to Baden and May Rush. When Roy was only a few months old, his parents sold the store they owned at Newtown, Toowoomba, and bought a farm in the Kingsthorpe district. In 1930-31, Baden and May exchanged the farm for the Kingsthorpe General Store with a further payment of 500 pounds.

Roy did his early primary schooling at Kingsthorpe and went to the Toowoomba East Primary for his Grade 8 scholarship year. He passed the scholarship exam and attended the Toowoomba Technical College (later the Toowoomba State High School) for two years.

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Roy learned the piano and did well in both theory and practical exams, but was not keen enough to keep it up. He also had a fine singing voice tutored by Mr. Thomas Slatyer, and sang solo or accompanied by his mother singing at weddings and parties. He won the under 14 boy soprano section at the Queensland Eisteddfod singing Like a Golden Dream.

He was a keen soccer player and, at 17, he was selected to play for Queensland in the under 21 side against the New South Wales side in Sydney. He was also an excellent cricketer and was still a teenager when he played for the Diggers A grade team in Toowoomba with men much older than himself.

After leaving school, Roy worked for McPhee and Co, Toowoomba stock and station agents. He worked long hours “walking the plank” for the auctioneer at cattle sales in and around Toowoomba. At least one day a week, he would catch the rail motor at Oakey in the early hours of the morning for pig and calf sales. He moved on to work for Australian Estates in Pittsworth. His wages were not good and eventually he went back to Kingsthorpe to work in the store. Around this time, Baden bought another general store and garage at Cambooya so mostly he would drive there each day and leave May and Roy to run the Kingsthorpe shop.

In 1948, Roy married and had two children — Rosanne and **Geoffrey**.

Roy’s mother and father were hard task masters, particularly as they lived through the harsh conditions of the Great Depression.

The complete destruction by fire of the Cambooya store in 1946 also added to their troubles. Roy found working in the stores was not an easy job.

In 1952, Baden bought a 400-hectare property at Leyburn and Roy and his young family moved onto “Wilga” and managed the sheep and cattle property.

The farm life was difficult and the family moved back to Toowoomba, where Roy worked for Chandlers as a successful salesman in their music department. Pa Rush then took over the running of “Wilga”.

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Roy’s marriage had broken down and, in 1956, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force as an aircraftsman, quickly working his way to the rank of sergeant.

Soon afterwards, he decided to do accountancy by correspondence. He completed the course in two years and, after six months at officer training school, he was commissioned as a flying officer. He was posted to Amberley (1961), Glenbrook (1964-66) and Laverton (1967). During this time, Roy had married for the second time and had a son who now lives in Darwin. In November, 1967, Roy, now a flight lieutenant, was posted aged 40 to Phan Rang Air Base, South Vietnam as the executive officer of the famous **No. 2 Squadron** of Canberra Bombers at the large United States Air Force Base.

After only a few weeks in Vietnam, he and the Catholic padre, Father Pat McCormick, MBE, visited an orphanage and on the way back the jeep rolled on the tarmac with both officers and their sergeant driver thrown out. Roy suffered severe injuries. His back was broken at the lumbar level, his shoulder blade fractured together with several rib fractures. The other two were unhurt. He was medivaced to Ambon in Thailand for immediate treatment and later transferred to the British Army Hospital at Butterworth in Malaysia, when he spent six weeks healing and recuperating.

Afterwards, Roy returned to Phan Rang where he fulfilled his one-year tour of duty. In 1968, the base was seriously attacked during the Tet offensive, but Roy didn’t talk much about these experiences.

Roy arrived home in November, 1968, and after a month’s rest and recuperation was posted to the audit staff, which meant he had to travel to every RAAF Base in Australia during a two-year period.

In 1972, he was posted to Fairbairn in Canberra for a year and then to Darwin. He was at the base on the night Cyclone Tracy hit in 1974. Most of the RAAF homes were demolished. Roy retired from the RAAF in 1976 after 20 years service. He had been awarded six campaign medals — the Australian Active Service Medal, the Viet Nam Medal, the Australian Defence Medal 1945 to 1975, two presidential unit citations for members of the No 2 Squadron (USA

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and Viet Nam) and the Returned from Active Service Badge.

In 1978, Roy and Maureen were married in Cairns and Roy became the senior accountant for the Cairns City Council.

In 1981, Roy decided he would like to move to Redcliffe. He wanted to be in driving distance of his parents who had retired to Toowoomba.

Roy was also thinking of daughter Debra who was doing so well at school and he wanted her to go to university.

He obtained a position with a company at Lawnton then, after some part-time work for Robertson O’Gorman Solicitors, at age 56, he became accountant office manager for Flower and Hart Solicitors, responsible for more than 70 staff.

This was one of Queensland’s most eminent law firms.

He stayed in this full-time position until age 65 and then worked two days a week as accountant manager for three years. Roy and Maureen retired to the Sunshine Coast until 2000 when they decided to move to Gympie.

GEOFFREY ROY RUSH

---SON OF ROY AND MERLE RUSH

Geoffrey Roy Rush was born on July 6, 1951, in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, to Merle (Bischof), a department store sales assistant, and Roy Baden Rush, an accountant for the Royal Australian Air Force. His mother was of German descent and his father had English, Irish, and Scottish ancestry. He was raised in Brisbane, Queensland, after his parents split up.

Rush attended Everton Park State High School during his formative years. His early interest in the theatre led to his 1971 stage debut at age 20 in "Wrong Side of the Moon" with the Queensland Theatre Company.

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Known for his classical repertory work over the years, he scored an unexpected hit with his Queensland role as Snoopy in the musical "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown". A few years later he moved to France to study but subsequently returned to his homeland within a short time and continued work as both actor and director with the Queensland company ("June and the Paycock," "Aladdin," "Godspell," "Present Laughter," "The Rivals"). In the 1980s Rush became a vital member of the State Theatre Company of South Australia and showed an equally strong range there in such productions as "Revenger's Tragedy," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Mother Courage...and Her Children," "Blood Wedding," "Pal Joey," "Twelfth Night" and as The Fool in "King Lear".

Rush made an inauspicious debut in films with the feature Hoodwink (1981), having little more than a bit part, and didn't carry off his first major role until playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek in a movie production of Twelfth Night (1986). Yet, he remained a durable presence on stage with acclaimed productions in "The Diary of a Madman" in 1989 and "The Government Inspector" in 1991.

Rush suffered a temporary nervous breakdown in 1992 due to overwork and anguish over his lack of career advancement. Resting for a time, he eventually returned to the stage. Within a few years film-goers finally began taking notice of Geoffrey after his performance in Children of the Revolution (1996). This led to THE role of a lifetime as the highly dysfunctional piano prodigy David Helfgott in Shine (1996). Rush's astonishing tour-de-force performance won him every conceivable award imaginable, including the Oscar, Golden Globe, British Film Award and Australian Film Institute Award.

"Shine" not only put Rush on the international film map, but atypically on the Hollywood "A" list as well. His rather homely mug was made fascinating by a completely charming, confident and captivating demeanor; better yet, it allowed him to more easily dissolve into a number of transfixing historical portrayals, notably his Walsingham in Elizabeth (1998) and Leon Trotsky in Frida (2002). He's also allowed himself to have a bit of hammy fun in such box office escapism as Mystery Men (1999), House on Haunted Hill (1999), The Banger Sisters (2002), Finding Nemo (2003) and Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003). More than validating his early film success, two more Oscar nominations came his way in the same year for Quills (2000) (best actor) and Shakespeare in Love (1998) (support actor) in 2000. Geoffrey's amazing

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versatility continued into the millennium with his portrayal of the manic, volatile comedy genius Peter Sellers in the biopic *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers* (2004). He also merited attention as Lionel Logue in *The King's Speech* (2010), Basil Hunter in *The Eye of the Storm* (2011), Hans Hubermann in *The Book Thief* (2013), artist/sculptor Alberto Giacometti in *Final Portrait* (2017) and Michael Kingley in *Storm Boy* (2019).

Rush's intermittent returns to the stage have included productions of "Marat-Sade," "Uncle Vanya," "Oleanna," "Hamlet" and "The Small Poppies". In 2009 he made his Broadway debut in "Exit the King" co-starring Susan Sarandon. His marriage (since 1988) to Aussie classical actress Jane Menelaus produced daughter Angelica (1992) and son James (1995). Menelaus, who has also performed with the State Theatre of South Australia, has co-starred on stage with Rush in "The Winter's Tale" (1987), "Troilus and Cressida" (1989) and "The Importance of Being Earnest" (as Gwendolyn to his Jack Worthing). She also had featured roles in a few of his films, including *Quills* (2000) and *The Eye of the Storm* (2011).



Goeffrey Rush



Johnny Depp and Goeffrey Rush as Hector Barbossa (Same role in all the ‘Pirate’ movies) in the film “Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides” who rises above his buccaneer career to become an admiral in the British navy.

Some of the other notable films he stared in: *The King’s Speech*, *Shakespeare in Love*,

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Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales, Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides, Legend of the Guardians (voice role): The Owls of Ga’Hoole, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest, Finding Nemo and Storm Boy.



Thank you Ken Garrett - “The Recovery of Thunder Chicken” that follows was made possible by Ken Garrett. Other stories in Newsletters 273, 274, 276 and 277 were also from his contributions. We appreciate him saving all of these pictures and press releases for so many years that made the following story possible.

The Recovery of **THUNDER CHICKEN**

A cartoon illustration of a chicken character with a red comb and wattle, wearing a white shirt and tie. The chicken is standing next to the title 'THUNDER CHICKEN', which is written in large, bold, orange letters with a black outline. A yellow lightning bolt is positioned to the left of the word 'THUNDER'.

An F-100 was returning from a strike mission when it crashed short of Phan Rang’s runway and was destroyed. The pilot (Fred Tomlins) survived the accident.

MSgt Jon Alexander, Tower Chief adds these comments: I had relieved one of my supervisors so he could go on R&R and was working his night shift. Landing aircraft were taking ground fire on short final, so “Thunder Chicken” was landing with no lights. I noted flashing runway lights which meant he had landed, proceeding about 1,000 feet before there was no more flashing runway lights. I immediately activated the Crash Alarm that Thunder Chicken was on the ground in the infield. The Rescue Helicopter Pedro, located the aircraft and directed the response team accordingly. The pilot was reported as unconscious upon extract.

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The following is an excerpt from “Exonerated” by Ron Deyhle from Phan Rang Newsletter 239: October 1970. Major Joe Banks and Fred Tomlins were launched at night as Devil 61 Flight with flares and MK-82s. Weather was dicey, but they had a successful mission. On return to Phan Rang they flew a TACAN2 instrument approach from the Swordfish IAF at Phan Rang. Joe Banks broke out at 3,000 degree for spacing and started down the approach. Landing configuration was set as 6.5 miles DME and he intercepted the glide slope at 5 miles, 175

knots. 1.75 miles from touchdown he noted that he was descending below the glide path. He aggressively advanced the throttle. As he got to the approach lights the abnormal sink rate increased dramatically and he advanced the throttle to military power. I am not sure, but I don't think Fred was a religious man. I never heard him use the Lord's name, except in vain, but I bet at that moment he wished he had gone to church more. He continued to sink. He did not feel any thrust or hear the engine whine. He hit the approach lights stanchion 1,400 feet from the threshold. He took out all the light stanchions. VASI lights, Air Base fence, concertina wire, went through the mine field and skidded 100 feet onto the runway. The airplane was destroyed from the nose to the rudder pedals. Over 10 Gs on impact with the earth.



“Thunder Chicken”

The downed F-100 Super Sabre awaits the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron recovery team
(U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)

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“BIG BERTHA” VITAL PART OF CRASH RECOVERY TEAM

(Office of Information, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, Release #PR 10-70-9, by Sgt. K. Garrett)

PHAN RANG AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF) -- A crash on an Air Force flightline brings a large quantity of emergency and rescue equipment into action. At Phan Rang Air Base, the largest such piece of equipment is the MB-1A salvage crane, nicknamed “Big Bertha.”

Bertha is a big lady. She weighs in at 100,000 pounds, is 60 feet long and supports herself on seven and one-half foot-tall tires. She is capable of lifting 50 tons.

“Big Bertha” was asked to “do her thing” recently here after an F-100 Super Sabre of the 35th Tactical fighter Wing had crashed on approach to the Phan Rang runway after returning from a night combat mission on October 25.

The 35th Field Maintenance Squadron’s Crash Recover Crew, who operates “Big Bertha”, were called out to the scene on the end of the main runway at 9:30 p.m. The pilot was out and already at the dispensary.

The 35th Civil Engineering Squadron Crash-Rescue Crews and the 435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team were making the aircraft safe for removal. There was not fire.

Since they could not begin work immediately, the recovery team surveyed the crash for placement of “Big Berths: next to the aircraft which had come to rest at a right angle to a taxiway.

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IS IT SAFE?

Crash-Rescue Firement and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel make the place safe for removal. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)



SLING AND MOUNT

Recovery crew members attach the sling and mounting brackets to the F-100 fuselage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)

At 10:15 p.m. the aircraft was safe and ready to move, the recovery team went to work. They quickly moved the monstrous crane to the aircraft and attached the hoist sling to the plane with mounting brackets along the plane’s fuselage.

Firemen were standing by and when the aircraft was lifted, fuel spilled out of the wreckage as it was raised and was immediately foamed down by the alert firefighters. “Big Bertha” then moved the 24,000 pound fighter to the taxiway and onto a

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waiting 40-foot flatbed trailer truck.

However, her job was not yet through. The next day “Big Bertha” crew removed the F-100 from the trailer and set it into a revetment on the flightline. The damaged aircraft was propped up on jacks awaiting a detailed analysis by the appointed accident investigation team.

In praising the response of the 35th FM Sq. Crash Recovery Crew, Col Gerald F. Auger, 35th TFW deputy commander for materiel, stated, “within 23 minutes after the fire and munitions disposal people turned the aircraft over to us (materiel and maintenance), the “Big Bertha” team had the bird on a flatbed truck and on its way. They did a tremendous job, especially when you consider they were working under the handicap of darkness.”

Though “Bertha” is big, boisterous and ugly, she received tender loving care from her crew of crash recovery specialists. She’s an indispensable part of the 35th Field Maintenance family.



FIREMEN MOVE IN - Firemen move in to foam down leaking jet fuel as “Big Bertha” lifts the 24,000 pound F-100 wreckage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)

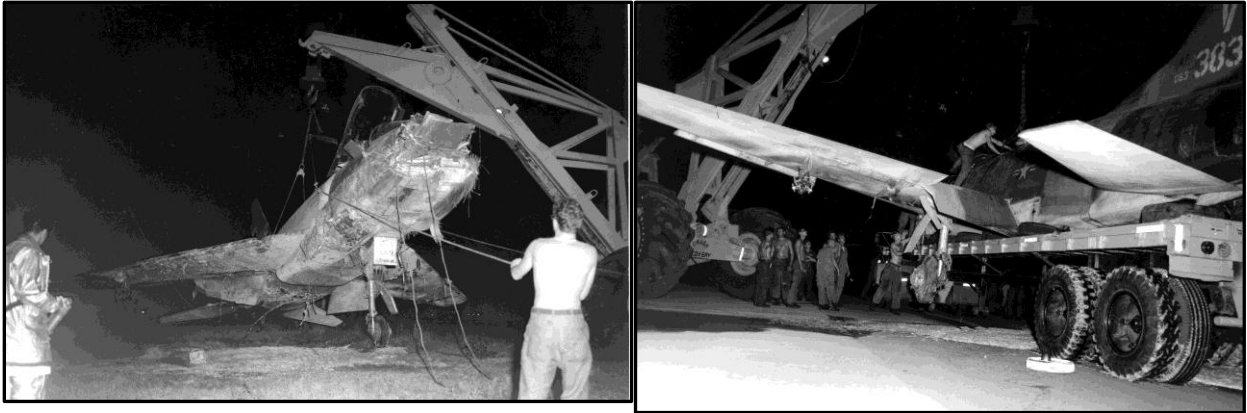


SUPERVISING THE LIFT - The Aero Repair Branch chief supervises the lift and recovery operation. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)

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STEADY THE BIRD - Airmen steadies the Super Sabre as “Big Bertha” moves it to a waiting flatbed trailer. . (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)



TIRE DWARFS CREW - “Big Berths’s tire dwarfs the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron’s recovery crew as they last down the F-100 wreckage for removal from the taxiway. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Pete Pittas)

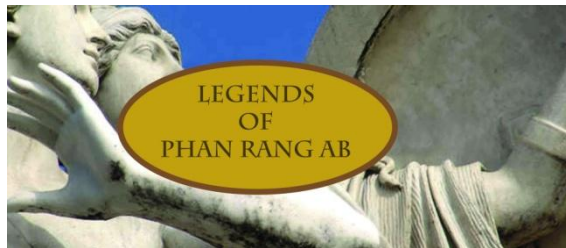
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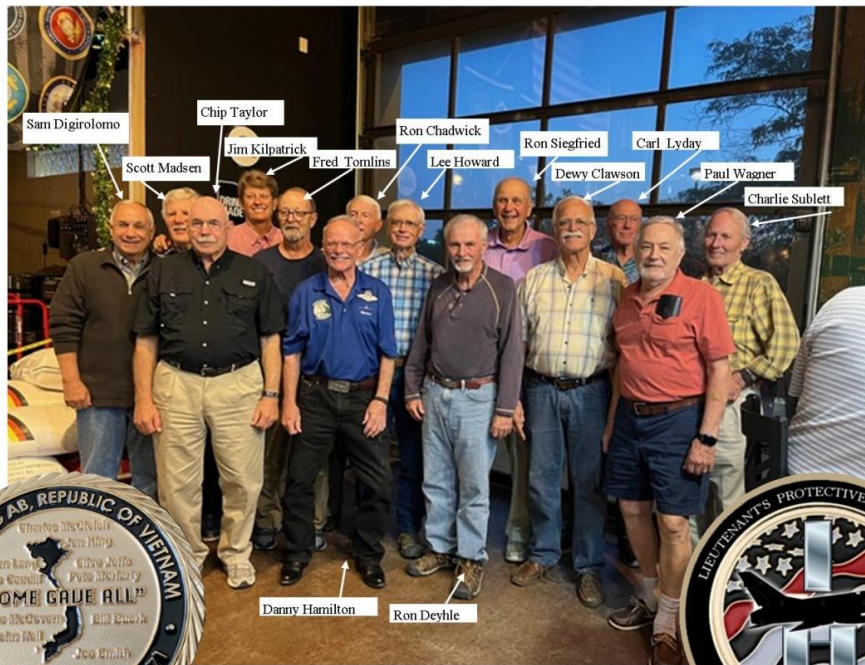
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**Phan Rang AB
2023 Fishermen
giving a farewell
salute to
Joe Kaupa &
Bob “Birdman” Hoffman**



These Phan Rang Legends gathered together in Dayton, Ohio for a “Lieutenants Protective Association” reunion, September 2023. They spent two days visiting the U.S. Air Force Museum, and three great nights with beer, as pilots do, and along with dinner of course. They also visited various Wright brothers’ sites and saw the second Wright flyer ever built.



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Chip Taylor, Ron Deyhle and Scott Madsen display the poster that Green County made for their event.



The wives

The Sydney Morning Herald

March 27, 2012

Decorated airman was a natural leader

LYNTON WINN, 1941-2012.



Lynton Winn went to Vietnam with the Royal Australian Air Force in the most difficult phase of the war, in September 1970, well after the Tet Offensive, when the US forces were striving to win the war from the air. His unit, the No.2 Squadron RAAF, was assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing of the United States Air Force (USAF) and operated from Phan Rang airbase, 250 kilometres north-east of Saigon.

The squadron's Canberra bomber aircraft were very effective in low-level precision bombing but they were also vulnerable to gunfire from the ground. One aircraft was shot down; another one

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was unaccountably lost. Winn, a graduate of the RAAF's Point Cook academy in Victoria, served with distinction in Vietnam. He was mentioned in dispatches for the conscientious and selfless efforts he made as officer-in-charge of the administrative flights, to ensure that No.2 Squadron always received the best possible assistance from its supporting elements". He went on to serve in Australia and overseas and became the youngest peacetime group captain in the RAAF.

Lynton Thomas Winn was born in Edgware, London, on September 25, 1941, the son of a World War I aircraft mechanic, Thomas Winn, and Elizabeth (nee Childs). The family migrated to Australia in 1948 and settled in the Wyong-Toukley area on the central coast of NSW, where he completed school.

He enrolled at the RAAF academy in 1959 and was commissioned in 1962. His first posting was to Townsville, Queensland where he flew Neptune maritime aircraft. In 1963, Winn met a secretary, Beverley Eddy, while swimming at Terrigal beach, and he married her in 1966. In 1967, he was sent to Canada as an exchange Air Force officer. Their first son, Jeremy, was born there in 1968.

In July 1970, Winn was posted to Vietnam. His service lasted until July 1971 when the squadron completed its deployment, having lost two aircraft and five men. He was posted to Edinburgh RAAF Base in Elizabeth, South Australia, where his younger son, Michael, was born in 1972.

While posted to the United States for 16 months, he did a thesis for a Master of Science in logistic management. Co-written by a USAF officer, it was titled "Foreign military sales legislation: impact on the achievement of United States foreign policy objectives and implication for the Department of Defence."

In July 1977, Winn received the National Medal for 15 years' diligent service in the Defence Force. In October that year, now a wing commander, he became commanding officer of No.11 Squadron, Maritime Surveillance, based in Elizabeth, a position he held for three years. In June, 1981 Winn was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to the RAAF, particularly as commanding officer of number 11 squadron". In July 1981, at the age of 39, he became a group captain.

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Winn retired from the RAAF in January 1982 and became director of studies at the Australian Administrative Staff College (later known as the Graduate School of Management) in Mt Eliza, Victoria, where he worked for seven years. He then joined Lincolne Scott, the international consulting engineers, to which he brought new ideas and ideals.

He was often my sounding board through what was a very difficult time in the company," a former colleague said. In 1998, Winn bought Window Warehouse, a seller of windows, doors and security screens, at Mt Gravatt in Brisbane, and put in new systems and adopted a new approach. The business flourished.

He and his wife then took to travelling, touring Europe in a campervan for two years.

WHY WE REMEMBER

(The Denver Post, May 27, 2012)

It was 30 miles from the base in Phan Rang to the airport in Cam Ranh Bay, the place where soldiers could hop on a Pan Am flight from Vietnam to the U.S. Forty-three servicemen barely needed a hop, skip and a jump to catch a ride home; Just 30 miles away.

They never made it. Their transport flight¹ was shot down before it reached Cam Ranh Bay, and in one furious and hideous moment, **Eric Tyler** of Breckenridge lost 42² friends.

"We went to Vietnam as individuals, not as a unit. I had been with these guys for 10 months. In that time, we got to know each other pretty well."

Eric was terribly angry and vengeful. He cracked. In his madness, he grabbed his M-16 and some grenades, intending to head out into the jungle and search for his fallen comrades.

¹ I suspect that the writer is referring to Bookie 540 that crashed about 15 miles southwest of Cam Ranh Bay, November 29, 1970, while carrying troops from Phan Rang AB to Cam Ranh Bay. The aircraft was not shot down but was flying through a valley with high ridges on both sides. The aircraft crashed into high ground at 2,700 feet while in thick clouds. The individual may have thought at the time that the aircraft was shot down, because it took 5 days or more to find out the facts and being shot down was the popular thought at the time.

² The writer mentions losing 42 friends, but there were only 39 U.S. and ARVN troops aboard the aircraft. There was no other Provider loss with that number of passengers aboard flying that route.

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As an Air Force mechanic, he worked on planes. Just before he left the base, Charlie, a buddy from Australia who was a member of the company's bush patrol, reminded Eric that he needed to stay put. Eric could fix airplanes and he couldn't.

Charlie put on his armor, shouldered his weapons and took Eric's passion with him and his bush patrol, the men assigned for this type of work, and went out in search of survivors. They found one. He ended up in the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay, spared for some reason unknown, outside of heaven.

Eric still has nightmares about that day. He told me about his quality control sergeant, who was on his way to retirement. He would speak with anticipation and excitement about getting to know his children. He was killed in the crash.

This weekend, Eric will carry his wounds from Breckenridge to Angel Fire, N.M., to spend time with friends who truly understand. There, they will gather at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park.

Eric is like a brother to me, but I can barely begin to comprehend what he and so many others, including my father, have been through. But Memorial Day has to mean something to those of us who do not share the memories of Eric Tyler. Every day we can choose to celebrate the life that we enjoy and remember all that living in the U.S. affords us. "Freedom ain't free" is the saying here. But how many of us ask ourselves what we can do for the country in return. Let's celebrate what Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., called a "national act of enthusiasm and faith." For acting with enthusiasm and faith, even a dove like me can deduce, is the one condition of acting great.

Yellow ribbons, cracked and faded from being out in the weather for these last 10 months, are wrapped as reminders around the oak trees at my parents' place. Cousin Hannah waits on her husband, Dillon Webster, to return from Afghanistan. We are all waiting.

Even if we do forget from time to time that we still have soldiers in harm's way and fail to pause when we hear that we have lost young men or women overseas. This weekend, we can remember the fallen. It is enough that for today, we can remember the children who will never

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know their father, or someone in our own family who holds their breath waiting for someone special to return. **Because they are prepared to fight, and they are prepared to die, but no one is prepared to be forgotten.**



Doug’s Comments: Additional stories about the “*Legends of Phan Rang*” can be found in the [Index of Phan Rang Personnel](#). Also new with this issue is the [Australian Roll of Honor](#). 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. If you are reading this newsletter that a friend shared with you, you can request to be put on the Phan Rang mailing list to receive your very own copy, by sending a message to me at the email address above.