

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 284

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The Amazing “Happy Valley” Facebook member with the moniker of “PRABVET”

PRABVET is not your ordinary “Happy Valley” member, but for me and probably you as well he is extraordinary. He has awed us and left us full of wonder for approximately 14 years with his artistry. When I see one of his “before-and-after” photos I wonder how could one person do this. He has to have a vast knowledge of Phan Rang Air Base, along with a fantastic memory that he can see a war era photo and then search out and find a ‘today’ shot of that same area, often photographed from the very same angle. Over the years, I’m sure he has acquired a vast library of source material for ‘now’ picture that he can call upon and of course he probably is inspired by the great number of “then” pictures that are posted by members.

Here’s is one of his iconic “Before and After” pictures of Phan Rang Air Base



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PRABVET is real. This is in his own words “I was a Sgt at Phan Rang with the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron as a flight engineer, from 1971 and leaving in February of 1972. I retired after 20 years in the Air Force as a SMSgt. All the aircraft had gone to Saigon, but I was short and they left me and a few other short timers at Phan Rang until our time to go. The Vietnamese had already arrived on base and were eating in the chow hall before I left.”

He posted a few years ago that Google Earth is a great tool and he uses it frequently, but he has a strong desire to see it at ground level. He said “I use to have recurring dreams about going back and being completely disoriented and unable to recognize anything. The dreams stopped when I first used Google Earth and was able to see it again. So, when I started to find current images of the base, the first thing that I wanted to do was to share with the Happy Valley Group.”

Unbelievable as it may sound, when he started sharing his creations, they were met with some skepticism by some, but the reasons were never forthcoming and PRABVET speculated, but he didn't know if they objected to the people, aircraft and military equipment, the current base or all of those. Many of his posts were actually removed by an administrator, allegedly because people were complaining, but no specific complaints were ever expressed to him and all of the comments from members were positive.

I figured some of the members might like to see what I had found on other Facebook sites. I explained this in the album that I posted and asked if anyone objected or were offended by the pictures to let me know and I would remove them. A group administrator said he was forced to remove some of the pictures. I told him that was okay with me, but I would like to know what pictures they objected to so that I would know not post any pictures of that type. I didn't know if they objected to the people, aircraft and military equipment, the current base or all of those.

“Since I didn't know what the offensive images were, the only choice I thought I had was to delete all post that I made of current images. I did look through the pictures to try to figure out which images were delete. It turned out to be the static display on the base and the little lake and pagoda beside the theater location. Strangely as it may sound, most of the comments to my posts were positive. After this I thought I would “test the waters” by only posting a link with no preview picture. I had found a video and 4 images of the new construction in the

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chapel/snack bar area. It didn't appear there was any interest on that.”

He continues to add to his personal collection by doing “Before and After” images by combining one of the groups images with one of theirs shot in the same location or pointed in the same direction. All the imagines he has posted over the years would fill up a good sized book. When he posts pictures he always credits who originally posted the before-picture or where he obtained the photograph. And, not only that, he always credits his source where he obtained the ‘after’ picture and many times an external link to that site so the reader can see additional photos.

PRABVET said he only joined Facebook for the Phan Rang group. I found it by doing a Google image search for Phan Rang. They wanted a first and last name, so **Prab Vet** was it and that was the origin of the moniker. The “Happy Valley” group is very fortunate to have a member like PRABVET who provides a different perspective to the base that would never be possible without his “before and after” creations.

As previously noted, the number of before and after pictures posted by PRABVET would fill a good sized book, but I've chosen a few to be featured here. The featured photos only give you a broad perspective, in a panoramic view, of the overall landscape of the base, but in his library you will see in detail specific sites how you remembered them and what they look like now.



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Most of these photos are self explanatory, however I thought the ‘then and now’ picture on the left was interesting. PRABVET wrote, “the top photo is the early days of the base. You can see they are starting to build the wooden barracks at the upper end of the barracks area. The hill

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above is where the 3 large water tanks were located and the drop down area to the right is where the MARS stations were located. The photo is from Donald Dinubilo's collection in the group media section. Last month shows some sort of holiday with an album of photos of sports events all over the base. The bottom photo is by Le Van Ba."

When I asked him for a picture of himself, preferably a Vietnam era photo, naturally he would have to provide me with a "before and After" photo, as a crewmember on a C-123 and on the flight deck of a DC-10 as a crewmember however he has been retired since 2003.



PEOPLE MOVING

- A photographers perspective

**Christopher P.
Boles**



As a photographer with the 600th Photo squadron Detachment 5, I had heard that if you were on flying status (which I was qualified for) you could get on a plane as part of the crew. I thought that would be a fun thing to do and not just hang around the base looking for something to do. It would be more like, since you are here we have a job for you to do. I called the 315th Op's and they said they could get me on a plane, all I had to do was show up and I would be directed which plane I was assigned to for that day.

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I usually had in tow my Singer Graflex SL 120 roll film camera, and a 35mm camera (either a Nikon FT or a Leica 3F) with color film. My pockets bulging with film I was set for whatever came that day. I just told the NCOIC in charge where I was going and that I would most likely be back by dark.

So, off we go to where ever. I never tired of looking at the scenery as we flew over the brown rivers cutting through the verdant green rice paddies and the lush mountains of forest. We landed and taxied up and opened the ramp. As I look out there is a line of adults and kids waiting for us. There were also another couple of planes to ferry the villagers as well. It was then that the crew chief said that we were going to move a village of Montagnards to another location so they would not be bothered by the Viet Cong (VC). I thought to myself, “Oh, this should be interesting for photographs.”

Mind you now, these people only brought what they could carry or put on a pole between two people. If you were to be moved like that today, what would you take with you? They didn't have a whole lot. They all stood around talking and waiting. Here were older sisters carrying their brother or sister on their arms, some with suitcases, or a tie wrapped bag. In amongst the mix was their dogs, and chickens making noise of not wanting to be cooped up. Everyone was clean, decently dressed for the occasion and ready to start a new life somewhere else.

Soon the crew chief with the help of an interpreter started to load people onto the plane. They moved them in as far up to the fire wall as they could, people in the fold-down-seats and their stuff piled in around them. Then the people just piled in to the cargo hold as many as we could cram in there. I was the last one on, and I had to stand because it was that crowded.

I honestly to this day remember that there could not have been a square inch of free space. The ramp closed, the engines fired up and we taxied out. The jet engines fired up and the plane went full throttle. Some of the babies cried, and the kids were wide eyed at the experience as the plane lifted up. I would say that this was their first time in a plane and most likely their last time they would ever fly.

I don't remember how long of a flight it was, but the drone of the engines put some of the

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adults to sleep as I am sure it was up at the crack of dawn to get down to the airport. Soon we let down, taxied to the parking and everyone got off. We did this rotation I think three more times. One of the flights was a load of soldiers.

At the end of the day we moved the village. As we flew home I reflected on what I had seen, and was seeing as I looked out the open window. The sun was setting on the day after a mission well done by the crew of the 315th SOW at Phan Rang Air Base.

Jet Age Provider Provides Vital Lift

(7th Air Force News, October 1, 1969)

PHAN RANG - The men who named the Air Force's C-123 transport aircraft the “Provider” could not have known how successfully it would uphold its name.

Since the introduction to the Vietnam War in 1962, the C-123 has been providing a continuous flow of troops and supplies to every part of the Republic.

Offshoot of a World War II glider experiment, the C-123 still carries the towing hook beneath its nose cowling. But like the human appendix, the hood has little meaning.

Equipped with two J-85 jet engines in addition to its two standard reciprocal powerplants, the modern “K” model Provider can operate from more than 300 airstrips in the Republic. These strips range from new hard-surface full-length runways to short steel-plate ribbons less than 2,000 feet long.

On a “typical” day 1st Lt. **John A. T. Petruzzelli**, a C-123 aircraft commander assigned to the 310 Special Operations squadron, leaves Phan Rang AB with five tons of ice destined for hospital use at Ban Me Thuot.

Finding the field at Ban Me Thuot fogged in Lieutenant Petruzzelli and his copilot 1st Lt. **Wayne M. Martin** are rescheduled by the airlift control center (834th ALC) to carry the ice on to Nha Trang Air Base.

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At Nha Trang, Sgt. **Williams L. Paine**, aircraft loadmaster, off-loads the ice and prepares the plane for a shipment of water buffalo, pigs, chickens and vegetables to a remote Vietnamese Special Forces Camp. Another Provider will deliver the ice to the hospital when the weather at Ban Me Thuot clears.

While the animals are being coaxed aboard the plane, TSgt. **Lyle L. Starks**, flight engineer, climbs a ladder to the wing and refuels the craft with a hose from a truck parked nearby. This is the first of four times today he will climb to the wing to fill the thirsty tanks.

Cleared for takeoff, the pilots guide the aircraft to the runway and run up the engines. The roar resembles that of a large jet airliner. Brakes released, the long-winged Provider rolls forward for what seems a very few feet, and lifts gently from the ground.

For the next few minutes the plane continues to climb sharply, then levels off at a smooth cruising altitude. The jets are shut down and the big tri-blade fans pull the Provider steadily toward the next stop.

As the C-123 streaks towards Polei Kleng, it appears as a small group of buildings clustered near a short metal runway. The pilots make a steep descent toward the strip to avoid any ground fire in the immediate area and make a short field landing.

Shutting down the engines the crewmembers help Vietnamese troops unload half the cargo. The people at the camp laugh as they try to load the frightened animals on a small truck. They are grateful for the supplies.

A similar scene takes place at Plateua Gi, another Vietnamese outpost, where the rest of the cargo is unloaded.

At their next stop at Phu Cat the aircraft is serviced and the men ready the aircraft for passengers. From there they carry 42 American soldiers to Phan Thiet.

Reaching Phan Thiet late in the afternoon they pick up 13 more American troops and 24 enemy prisoners. Darkness follows them home to Phan Rang.

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It has been a busy day, but no an unusual one. Loadmaster Paine explains that the variety of cargo hauled in the C-123 is limitless. Each day the mission changes.

The Provider is also used for in-country movement of medical patients. Scheduled medical evacuation flights carry sick and wounded troops to hospitals or casualty staging areas. Providers are frequently modified in flight to pick up urgent patients.

Crews of the 315th Special Operations Wing, commanded by Col. Leslie J. Campbell Jr., control all C-123 operations in Vietnam.



Lieutenant Petruzzelli - Beginning Another Mission



Full House Aboard - Troops on the Move

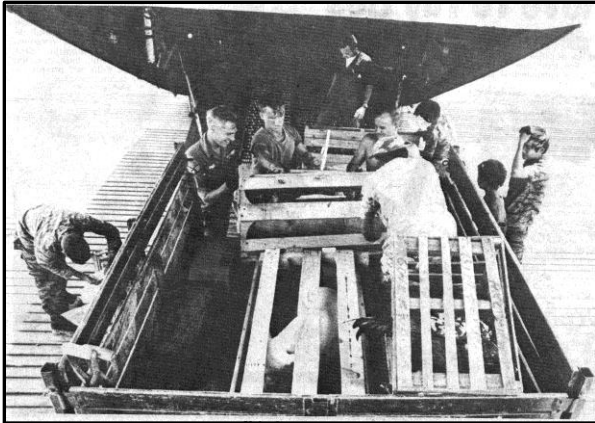
The C-123 performs many special missions outside the scope of its regular transport duties. Some of these include spraying insects at bases, hauling fuel bladders and air-dropping ammunition to isolated troops in the field. Continuing use daily uncovers new capabilities, new missions and new tactics to better accomplish the mission.

The men who hung the name Provider on this versatile transport may not have known how fitting the tag would be. But then, maybe they knew all along.

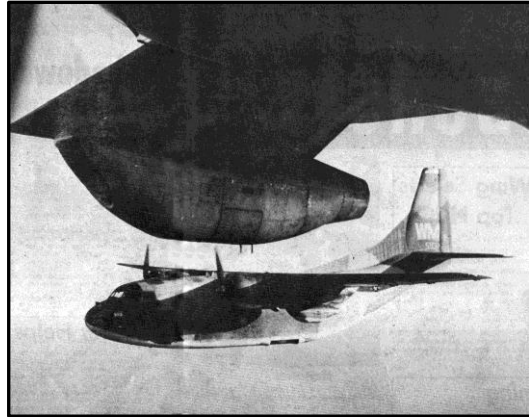
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**Unloading Livestock - At Civilian Irregular
Defense Camp**



End of a Long Day's Work - Heading for Home

Story by Sgt. Bob Palmer
Photos by SSgt. Paul Harrington

How to Start a F-100

By Tom Mix

Unbelievable Starting Option

Marine ground crews Finds F-100 'Super Sabre' Has An Unbelievable Starting Option. The F-100 Super Sabre had a large chamber to accept a large gas-generating cartridge. When ignited by electrical current, the expanding gas from the black powder-like pyrotechnic cartridge drove a starter turbine which brought the engine up to a self-sustaining RPM via a drive system.

This eliminated the need for heavy and bulky ground starting units, but the starter cartridge spewed out a characteristic dense cloud of choking black smoke, which was often mistaken by inexperienced ground crews for an engine fire.

The powder charge for the ground start came in a big sealed can, and upon opening and extracting the cartridge, you'd find two small metal tabs on the bottom of the cartridge. These tabs were the electrical contact that fired the cartridge when the pilot moved the throttle outboard on start, before bringing the throttle forward. As soon as a tiny RPM registered on the

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tachometer, you brought the throttle around the horn to feed fuel and engine ignition to the rapidly-building engine speed.

Sometimes the big metal receptacle that held the gas generator cartridge would get so dirty from repeated use that the metal tabs wouldn't make contact. Then the cartridge would refuse to fire, and the crew chief would give the starter receptacle a good healthy whack with a wooden wheel chock, usually curing the powder charge of any reluctance to detonate. We'd often take a can containing a starter cartridge along with us as an alternative starting means on cross-country.

So, let the journey begin:

Then- USAF Captain **John Green** flew his F-100 one day into the Marine Corps Air Station (aka NAS Millington) outside of Memphis one day, back in the early '70s, for fuel. He was met by a couple of young Marine ground crewmen, who asked what kind of plane he was flying. He replied “F-100 'Super Sabre” but that only got him further puzzled looks. One of the ground crew said, "Sir, I don't think we have tech data on this bird. What do you need for start . . . a huffer . . . or just electrical"?

"Neither one," John replied with his tongue in his cheek. "If I can get, oh, about six of you guys to give me a push to start me rolling, I'll just 'pop the clutch' and get the engine started that way."

More and more doubtful looks, but, "Uhhh, yes sir," was the final comeback. What else would a young Marine say?

The 'Hun' was pretty finely balanced aircraft on the two main gear struts, so when you tapped the toe brakes, the nose strut compressed so much that the nose would dip, just like the hood of cars used to dip when being clutch-started after a similar push from young friends.

So, now six Marines are standing at the ready, still doubtful, but not about to question an officer on 'procedure.'" Just get me going at about a fast walk," John called down from the cockpit. "I'll wave you all clear when we're fast enough, pop the clutch on this baby, and be on

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my way. And thanks for the good turnaround!”

With six Marines pushing, they quickly get the bird up to a brisk-stepping speed. John waves his arms, and the Marines warily stand well clear.

The nose dips as John "pops the clutch." There is a huge cloud of choking black smoke as the starter cartridge goes off, the Hun's engine whines into life, and off goes Captain Green to the end of the runway, leaving six puzzled Marines in his wake.

Blame Tom Mix for this one...he sent this to me in 2016 and I just rediscovered it.

CHEAP AUSSIE



Photo courtesy of **Bob Howe** who took the photo, but assures me he did not use their services!

No. 2 Squadron leaders knowing that they couldn't stop their troops from visiting the Strip, they wanted to ensure the safety of those that did partake. Squadron leaders ensured that their Doctor did regular health checks of the girls in the bars that were popular with the Aussies to ensure that they were clear of unwanted diseases. Cleared girls were given a certificate stating that they had been checked.

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Phan Rang Air Base Airdrome Information Sheet

◊ **PHAN RANG, VIETM** BN772862 11°38'N 108°57'E
AF (RAAF) 102 L6①, 8② H100(CON) 150 04L-22R (S-100, T-220, TT-318) (VVPA)
100(AM-2) 102 04R-22L

JASU - (MA-2) 4(MD-3A) 7(MD-3M) 4(C-25)
FUEL - A+, J4, 0-123, 0-128, 0-148, LOX
A-GEAR -

RWY 04L BAK-12	BAK-12	RWY 22R
(950')	(950')	
RWY 04R BAK-12	BAK-12	RWY 22L
(1000')	(1000')	

AERODROME REMARKS - CAUTION: Reduced rwy separation standards are in effect. Rwy 04R-22L clsd to C-47 and larger acft. CAUTION: Barrier housing Rwy 04R-22L lctd 1000' fr thld, 175' fr center of rwy, 10' above surface. Barrier housing Rwy 04L-22R lctd 950' fr thld, 200' fr center of rwy, 10' above surface. Extv lt acft tng within 30 NM radius 2200-1300Z dly. US controllers on duty 24 hrs dly. No tran prkg aval. 4 engine acft will taxi with outboard engines shut down. Tfc ptn alt 1100' convl, 1600' jet. Convl tfc rgt to Rwy 04, left to Rwy 22. Jet overhead entry rgt to Rwy 04 with left break, left entry to Rwy 22 with rgt break. Helis proh from overflying bldgs, reveted areas and will ctc Twr or Gnd Con for ldg instructions. Acft requiring customs services and/or carrying VIPs will confirm block time with PTD at least 15 min prior to ldg. PSP and AM-2 twys extremely rough. Helis desiring to land on W side of rwy or Aerial Port ramp must receive prior approval from PTD. ① Rwy 04L-22R. ② Rwy 04L.

COMMUNICATIONS (PTD 372.2)
①CAM RANH BAY APP CON - 241.2 135.9
TOWER - 265.6 124.7 (E) **GND CON** - 229.3 131.0
②CAM RANH BAY DEP CON - 273.3 125.0
ALCE ① - 281.8 140.4 8134 USB 4677 USB **PFSV: METRO** -

RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION
TACAN① PRG Chan 75 At Field
RBn②(HW) (AO/A2) AV 202 11°37'N 108°57'E At Field
■ **RADAR** ① - IFR Call CAM RANH BAY APP CON, VFR Call TOWER. 226.2x 256.6x
121.0x 247.1x (E)

RADIO/NAV REMARKS - ① Unusable 060°-230° below 12,000' beyond 25 NM. ② Unusable beyond 15 NM below 11,000' 220-260 rad clkwz; below 17,000' 340-020 rad clkwz; below 11,000' 020-060 rad clkwz; and below 9000' 060-090 rad clkwz. MP 0030-0430Z Thu.
③ Airlift acft ctc 15 min prior to ldg. ④ Unusable beyond 36 NM above 15,000' and beyond 22 NM below 5000' AGL. When on base leg or app to Rwy 04L, 04R if no xmsn is rcvd for a turn to dog leg or to final prior to crossing the 215 RAD of PRG TACAN or 215° brg fr AV RBn: ADF equipped acft proceed direct to AV climbing to 4000', ctc Radar. If unable execute ADF app. TACAN equipped acft turn rgt immediately, hdg 020°, ctc Radar. If unable, cont heading 020° and execute straight-in TACAN app to 04L, 04R. Do not fly W of the 225 RAD until 6 DME, high terrain W of final app. Possible loss of Radar ctc dur hvy rain, pilots must be alert for possible missed app. Circ to E only.

PHAN RANG **VA2-28**

There was a small booklet called an Airdrome Booklet that contained every airfield in Vietnam. They were written in “Airdrome Shorthand”¹. Describing every aspect of the base that an airman would need to know, such as the exact coordinates of the base, radio frequencies, information on runways such as length and material, obstacles such as describing the barrier housing (10' above surface), restricting for types of aircraft and much more.

¹ Most abbreviations are probably familiar to most veterans; however here is the definition for PSD: Pilot to Dispatch.

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It was a terrific resource with lots of personal notes on it, and about, the various fields in the Republic. More importantly, there is a lot of information about Navigation AIDS. This is the Phan Rang’s page in the Airdrome booklet. There is guidance on how aircraft are to taxi, what runways to use, how VIPs are to transit the base, how and where Helicopters are to land. It was a very important aid for C-123 crews because it had the radio frequencies for the remote fields they landed at, or airdropped to. (Airdrome Information sheet provided by Bob Howe (RAAF) and other Information provided by Dean DeLongchamp (C-123) and Bob Pahl (F-100) pilots)

Old friends can remind us of the person we used to be and help get us in touch with parts of ourselves that might have become suppressed over the years. Offering a new perspective: Reconnecting with old friends can give us a new perspective on our lives now relative to the past. The older you get the more important it is to know people who knew you when.



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I was assigned to the Korean White Horse INFANTRY unit in 1969 in the Phan Rang Area. It was a year I will never forget. Enclosed is a photo of myself along with Captain Kim putting on a Tac Kwon do Demonstration for a group of Arvin’s. This took

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place up at the command post. If you look in the background you can see the Phan Rang Air Base. I spent most of my time at co 2 just below what we called secret base 22 which was no secret to us that is for sure.

Best, **Denny Farrell**, Chicago.



Join us at the Hope Hotel on Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH., September 5, 6, and 7, 2024

Call 937-879-2696 for Hotel Reservations. When you call, make sure you mention the “Phan Rang Vietnam Veterans” to get the \$129 Room Rate, which also includes breakfast at Packy’s Bar & Grill in the hotel.

Here’s what you need to know: The Reunion Fee is \$40 and includes our operational costs. The **total cost for everything is \$130 per person** which includes a buffet meal on Thursday and Friday evening and a plated dinner on Saturday. Admission to the National Museum of the Air Force is free.



Doug’s Comments: What a better way to connect with old friends than the reunion. They didn’t have to know you THEN, because after just minutes of meeting someone you never met before, they will feel like Old Friends. We have met so many friends throughout the years, that they now are like family and as Linda Vettel would say “they have your back”. This truly will be a nostalgic reunion. 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.