

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 286

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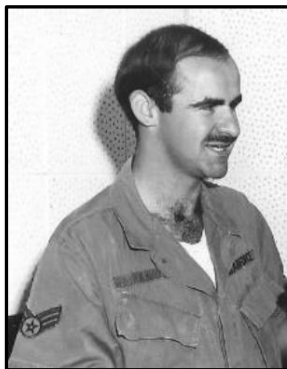
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James Baranowski
315th Special Operations Wg.

My Vietnam War Experiences by Sgt James C. Baranowski



In 1968 I was stationed in the Air Force at Robins AFB in GA. I asked for a transfer overseas and was told that the only place that I could go was to Vietnam. I volunteered to go to Vietnam. On my way to Phan Rang AB, Vietnam in late January 1969 the base came under heavy and an infamous attack by the Viet Cong. My plane into Vietnam was held up in Guam. I finally arrived at Phan Rang and one of the things I remember most as I got off the plane was the smell. I had never smelled anything like it before. It was bad. ***What was I getting into?***

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, RVN

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The base was called ‘Happy Valley’. It got the name from Bob Hope on one of his entertainment tours at Phan Rang.

My initial barracks was an old Quonset hut called Q8. It had beds, showers, a volleyball court, and a BBQ area with picnic tables. During my time off we played a lot of volleyball and card games with my buddies Coop, aka Jackie Cooper, Tommy, aka Tom Tucker, and Greg Hines. Coop was from Missouri; Tommy was from Whittier, Ca. and Greg was from Pittsburg. Saturday was party night. Of course, every Saturday a box of steaks and large cans of lima beans and sliced potatoes “fell” off the back of one of our planes and brought to our BBQ area. We had many great parties.

The base was subject to many mortar and rocket attacks. In the early days of my tour of duty the sirens went off during the night. While initially when I was in Q8, I would jump out of bed, put on my boots, helmet and flax jacket and run out to the bunker. After a few weeks I was no longer a rookie. During the attacks I would watch the newbie’s running around. I would raise my head and say to the rookies that the rockets were 3 clicks out, which is less than 2 miles, and heading in the opposite direction. I would then roll over and went back to sleep.

While in Q8, I came down with pneumonia. I was taken to the base dispensary where I was admitted for treatment. I asked the doctors what I had and they told me that I had viral pneumonia. The doctors could not tell me anything more about it. During my stay in the hospital the base came under mortar and rocket attack with sirens going off. The nurses came around and shook me real hard and told me that we had to get to the bunker. I looked around and said to them “where is everyone?” They said that they left me for last because I was sleeping so soundly during the attack. I said thanks a lot. I eventually recovered and went back to my duty assignment.

My first assignment was with the headquarters of the 315th Special Operations Wing in human resources as an administrative specialist. The unit was on the opposite side of the base as to where my barracks was. My first job was to type up certifications for medals awarded to wing personnel. The office was air-conditioned and I had an electric typewriter. We worked 6 days a week for 10-hour days.

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While in Vietnam we had an extension of the University of Maryland on the base to take courses for college credit. I took advantage of it. I studied business law and a course in Far Eastern History. The history course was interesting because I learned about China, Japan, Korea and the rest of Southeast Asia. I used this learning later when I went to Japan.

To keep fit, I ran around the outdoor track for five miles with a weight belt on me. I was down to about 160 pounds and was one lean guy. Part of the reason for the weight loss was not only because I was active but we did not have refrigerators, snacks in the barracks and no TVs. I ate in a large chow hall where I had three square meals a day.

After one year I decided to extend my tour duty for another six months. With the extension, I was granted a 30 day leave to go anywhere in the world on Uncle Sam’s dime, I decided to go home to Mishawaka, Indiana for Christmas. My reasons for extending were: one, I was single; two, my pay /income was tax free; three, I earned 10% interest on a savings account; four, I was going to college and five, I would get another R & R during the six months. You typically got one R & R in the year I was over there. I was also allowed to take another week’s leave.

My first R & R was in October 1969 where I went to Hong Kong. I had a great time. What I remember about this leave was that I met an Army guy and we went out to dinner to the top of the Hong Kong Hilton overlooking the harbor. It was October fest with Chinamen dressed in German grab. There I was an American of Polish decent in Hong Kong listening to Chinamen playing Um Pah Pah music. What a night! I went to Sydney, Australia with Coop, Tommy, and Greg. The city was great; the people were wonderful; one of my most favorite places in the world. Every night was a party!

In 1970 the 315th changed its name to the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing. Our mission was the same. We flew the C-123K Provider aircraft providing supplies around the country as well as flying troops and civilians across country.

The C-123 had jet pods which allowed it to take off on short runways in remote mountainous locations and evade hostile fire from surrounding mountains. Our other mission was to spray Agent Orange. To this day and for days in the past I would never bring this up when I was in the presence of Army or Marine veterans. More on Agent Orange later.

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I also had a new assignment where I was the admin for the Wing Commander. The wing commander was one of the high-ranking officers on the base. It was an ideal assignment because when I had nothing to do, I studied for my classes. After the war I told people that I flew a typewriter in the Air Force and that I was Radar as in the movie MASH.

Our base was about seven square miles in area along the coastline. The base had US Air Force, US Army, Korean Marines and Australian Air Force on base. We had about 7000 troops on the base. The base was an old WWII base used by the Japanese during WWII. The French came in during the Indochina War and used the base. We took over the base in 1965 for the Vietnam War. The base had two concrete runways of 10,499 feet comparable to any large airport in the United States. The base was not the largest Air Force base in Vietnam but it became notable because of all the bases, Phan Rang was the most attacked with mortars and rockets by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese in 1969. We took more attacks than any other base in Vietnam. We were primarily attacked at night for several reasons. One, maintenance on all the aircraft was done at night. If a mechanic messed up the maintenance, the plane could not fly or worse yet, the air crewmen lives were put at risk for crashing. Two, the air crewmen slept at night. The attacks would keep them up and they would not be sharp for missions the next day, again putting them at risk.

There was one attack at Q8 during the night that I will never forget. The sirens went off and mortars and rockets were hitting the base. The Vietcong had penetrated the heavily fortified base perimeter. Attack was imminent. The sergeant in charge of the barracks decided to open the container where the M16s were stored. The M16s were passed out. I got one. I looked at the chamber and saw that there was no ammunition. I said to the sergeant what are we supposed to do say to the Viet Cong “bang bang your dead”? He told me that I was a smart ass. Never got the ammunition and Viet Cong did not attack our barracks because they were more interested in hitting our aircraft. We were not issued the ammo because we were airmen and they were afraid that we would shoot one another. We were not trained for combat. What a night!

The base had many Vietnamese civilians working on base. Mama-san would launder our uniforms, fix our beds and clean our barracks. We also had a barber on base. It turns out after

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one attack they security police discovered his body as he was killed as a Vietcong. You never knew who the bad guys were on the base.

In April 1970 I went on leave to Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan. The expo had dozens of countries represented. I saw a moon rock. The lines to the exhibits were long but I was able to use my military ID to bypass the lines and use the VIP entrances. One memorable event was having lunch at one of the restaurants at the expo. Seating was limited so I was asked if a lady could join me. She was the assistant comptroller from Monaco. All I remember is her telling me that she did not enjoy her job and stay at the expo. Other than that, we had a nice lunch. I also went to one of the two Canadian exhibits. I figured I would go there because they would speak English. When I sat down with a group of Canadian's, they began to tell me about their displeasure for Americans. One night the tour group had a party for GIs at a local restaurant. We took off our shoes and left them at the entrance. The restaurant served Sake. If you ever drank Sake, it is served warm. I started drinking it. For some reason my glass was always full. My hostess kept filling it up. I got so drunk that night I do not remember how I got my shoes on and how I got back to my hotel room. I must say I woke up the next morning with no hangover. If you ever want to get smashed, drink Sake.

A most memorable attack on the base was on June 7, 1969. Normally, I would have had that day off but for some reason I changed my day off. Rockets hit the base around 2:00pm, which is unusual to be attacked during the day. A couple of rockets hit near the mailroom. I normally go to the mailroom on my day off at this time of day. One of the rockets went through the roof of the base human resources.

An airman by the name of Walter Dart was sitting at his desk. The rocket blew him away killing him instantly. He was one of two airmen killed that day. He was posthumously promoted to sergeant. His name is on The Wall in DC. For whatever reason I will never know why I was not killed that day.

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While in Vietnam I received two Air Force Commendation Medals for meritorious service on the job. Working for a high-ranking officer certainly helped. Most airmen did not even get one. I was also awarded a plaque for the 315th.



In August 1970 I left Phan Rang to fly home for completing my assignment. There were 270 GIs on the plane heading home. One GI, yours truly, got off the plane in Tokyo, Japan. Since I had studied Far Eastern history in college on base, I wanted to see some of what I learned.

The USO had a high school student, who wanted to learn English, and she served as my tour guide at no cost to me. We went down to Kamakura, which has one of the largest Buddha's in Japan. It was huge, 44 feet tall. We also went to the Tokyo tower, which is similar to the Eiffel tower in France. Two things I remember about Tokyo. One night I was at downtown at The Ginza. I was taking some pictures and this wall of people come walking down the street chatting in Japanese. I saw another English-speaking couple and asked them what was going on. They told me that they were protesting the war in Vietnam. You could always figure out who was in the military because of the spit shine shoes they wore. I was no different. Fortunately, they just walked on by me with no harm to me. The other thing I remember most about Tokyo were the restaurants. I had some of the best beef in the world. Nothing has ever come close to that delicious meal. The highlight of my trip was to go and climb Mount Fuji. It was clear of snow. The USO made arrangements for me to stay at a Japanese inn at the base of the mountain. I went by train to the mountain. The inn was a traditional Japanese inn. Everyone spoke Japanese, which I did not. They took me to my room. There was no furniture in the room like a bed. They opened up the walls and pulled out these huge mattresses that looked like pillows. It was the most comfortable sleep I ever had.

The next day I went down to breakfast to eat my American style breakfast that the USO ordered. Well, guess what happened? They started serving me a traditional Japanese meal. I had to eat it because I was climbing the mountain that day. The meal was totally opposite of the American palate. It was cold, unfried, and unsweetened. I ate soybean curd because they did not understand English and I did not understand Japanese.

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My birthday is July 4th. I turned 21 in Vietnam. I had never worked on my birthday. I asked the duty Sergeant for the day off for my birthday. He said sorry son, get your ass into your duty assignment. Only day I ever worked on my birthday.

My buddy from Chicago, who lived with me in Q8, took me into the City of Phan Rang. I cannot give you, his name. I can say his famous uncle was named Al. We went to a bar for a drink. I went outside to wait for him. Some “bandits”, which are boys 8 or 9 years old, stole my watch my mother gave me for graduation from high school. My buddy had warned me and reminds me of the day. For 40 years I lost track of him. I was able to locate him. In 2022 I was able to visit him in Chicago and he reminded me about the watch.

While on a visit to the city of Phan Rang, a youngster came up to me with his older sister. He was pimping his sister for 500 piasters, which was about \$3.50. There was a rumor in Vietnam that if you came down with the Black Syphilis that you would be shipped off to an island off the coast of Vietnam never to return to the US. I am sure that it was to keep troops in line.

On another occasion when I was in Phan Rang, a mama-san, which is an older Vietnamese woman, stopped in front of me, went to bathroom, cleaned herself and proceeded down the road. To this day I believe it was her way of expressing herself towards US troops in Vietnam without being hostile towards me.

The Air Force had strict rules to follow. Your flak jacket was supposed to be on a hanger on your locker at the foot of your bed. This did not make sense to me. I had a chair near bed close to my head. I moved my flak jacket to the chair. I figured that I could grab the jacket without getting up and subjecting myself to mortars. I was called into the squadron commander’s office. He proceeded to chew me out. He was pissed. He could have given me an Article 15 for the behavior. I was lucky in that all I got was the chewing out.

While in Vietnam I received two Air Force Commendation Medals for meritorious service on the job. Working for a high-ranking officer certainly helped. Most airmen did not even get one. I was also awarded a plaque for the 315th.

While in the wing commander’s office, I was able to process and see classified documents. Our

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mission was to fly Agent Orange. We would fly as many as 4 to 8 aircraft wing tips to wing tip to defoliate the jungles for air attacks by our aircraft. The defoliation was also used to expose roads and provide landing zones for our helicopters to fly troops into combat. One message was about how Agent Orange was causing harm to the Vietnamese with deforming children and killing the citizens. At the time the US government said that these statements were false with AO not of any health concerns. Years later we now know that this was not the case. Many GI have died or are dying from AO. Anyone stationed in Vietnam was subject to the effects of AO. Years after Vietnam I lost a high school classmate who was in Vietnam. He was in his 40's. I also lost someone from my hometown that lived in a barracks across the road from me at Phan Rang. He died of cancer. My buddy, Coop, also died of cancer. I am convinced that AO was instrumental in their passing.

The war was not always about terrible events. Coop and I volunteered to move an old Quonset hut from the base to an orphanage in town. We put it up in a day to give the kids shelter. It was most gratifying. We did not have security with us; however, Coop had an M16 with him. Two Vietnamese in black pajamas and rifles walked within 100 feet of us. Coop grabbed his M16. He did not fire. They just continued walking on by. They scared the shit out of us.

After I had volunteered to extend my tour of duty for another six months, I decided to request another six-month extension. I was working for the wing commander, going to college and was single. I had 8 months to go on my enlistment. By extending I would then finish my enlistment in-country. My request came back disapproved. My wing commander sent a letter which went all the way up to higher headquarters at PACAF. It came back disapproved. I asked why. It was 1970. I was told that President Nixon wanted to start sending troops home. I reminded them that was going to college, had earned a commendation medal and was single. I told them that I would stay in Vietnam and they could send a GI home who had a wife with three kids, who was going crazy because her husband was in Vietnam. They did not buy my logic. I said if you send me back stateside that I would apply for an early out of the service to go to college. I would only be at my next duty assignment for a few months, which made no sense. So, guess what happened? They did not buy the logic and sent me stateside. I applied for the early out and got out to go to college. The military was not noted for common sense.

The weather at Phan Rang was kind of nice all year round. The base was on the coastline and

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Corsair.

His career culminated in assignments to Myrtle Beach AFB where he commanded the 353rd Tactical Fighter Squadron, Moody Air Force Base, Valdosta, GA, where he was the 347th Combat Support Group Commander, and Myrtle Beach Air Force Base where he was the 354th Commander for Resource Management and where he retired in 1985.

Colonel Davis was a command pilot with over 4,500 hours of flight time, including 250+ combat missions with 350+ combat hours in both the F-100 and the A-7D.

He was a member of The Order of Daedalians, The USAF Super Sabre Society, and the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association. Col. Davis proudly passed the fighter pilot torch on to his son Col. (Ret) Ricky A. Davis on June 6, 1983, as he pinned his son’s wings on. On January 22, 2016 (a short six weeks ago), he then proudly passed his legacy on to the third generation of fighter pilots, as he was able to pin the wings onto his grandson, Lt. Brian Davis (grandson).

The Colonel served his Country, with steadfast determination and guidance. He was highly principled and had an unwavering purpose for us all to know and understand the difference between Right and Wrong.

Source: The Intake Magazine of the Super Sabre Society.



Steve McClain
612th Tactical Fighter Sq.

- Family: Wife Gail, Children: Son Mike and wife Carrie live in Flagstaff and have two children Ava (17) and Connor (10); Daughter Erin and husband Jason live in Tucson and have two children Kai (6) and Riley (3).
- Travel: Cruises: To the Baltics including St Petersburg (a must-see city), Mediterranean--Venice to Rome, South America--Rio to Santiago, South Pacific--Sydney to Auckland. Next, around the British Isles.
- Class 70-02 Reunions: Las Vegas, San Antonio, Charleston, New Orleans, San Diego, Nashville (Cancelled due to COVID)

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- Reunions--Good Old Boys Attaché Club (GOBAC). Every 2 to 3 years, a group of 12 attachés (and wives) I worked with during my Singapore attaché tour gather in a different host country--UK, France, Israel, India, Australia, New Zealand and the US. We last met in New Zealand in Feb 2020, next in France in June 2022.



Steve and Gail McClain

Air Force Career—29 Years, 11 Months and 9 Days and 3,416 Flying Hours (Single Seat)

- UPT Laredo AFB: Class 70-02: Sept 68 to Sept 69
- F-100 CCTS Luke AFB: Sept 69 to July 70
- 612 TFS Phan Rang, 1Lt—F-100 with 529 hours: Jul 70 to Jul 71
 - 251 Missions: EOT DFC and 13 Air Medals
- 357 TFS DMAFB, Capt.—A-7D: July 71 to Aug 75
 - Wing, Stan Eval
- ASTRA-AF/IG Pentagon, Capt.: Aug 75 to Sept 76
- 314 AD Osan, Major: Sept 76 to Sept 77
 - Weapons and Tactics Officer
- 355 TFW DMAFB, Major--A-7D with 1110 hours/A-10: Sept 77 to June 81
 - Chief, Wing Weapons and Tactics
 - A-10 FWS Validation Class
- Ft Leavenworth, Major--Army Command & Staff College: MMAS: June 81 to Aug 82
- Elmendorf AFB, Major/Lt Col-- Alaskan Air Command: Aug 82 to July 85
 - Chief, Weapons and Tactics Div
 - Flew A-10s at Eielson AFB
- 355 TTW DMAFB, Lt Col--A-10 with 1777 hours: July 85 to Feb 90
 - 357 TFS Squadron Commander and ADO
- Langley AFB, Col—TAC/ACC IGI: Feb 90 to Jan 92
 - Director of Inspections
 - Legion of Merit
- Anderson AFB—Wing Commander: Jan 92 to Jan 94
 - Typhoons ACE: five in 2-years, two with eye-wall passage across the base; \$63M in damages
 - PACAF’s largest engineering program \$274M in construction and design
 - Legion of Merit

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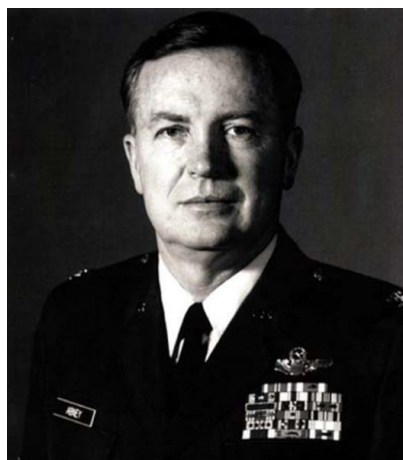
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- US Embassy Singapore—Air Attaché: Jan 94 to June 97
 - \$2B in sales to Singapore Air Force: F-16s, KC-135s, CH-47 and AH-64. F-15SG pending \$1.6B
 - Defense Superior Service Medal
- DMAFB—Retired in Sept. 1997 as O-6
- Pima Community College: Refreshers in Anatomy & Physiology, Microbiology, etc.: 1998-1999
- Physicians Assistants School: MSPAS—A.T. Stills University Mesa, AZ: June 1999 to Aug 2001
- Physician Assistant: Sep 2001-Nov 2020
 - Urgent Care, ER

(Note: Other references to Steve McClain can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 188.)



Floyd D. Abney
352nd Tactical Fighter Sq.



Colonel **Floyd J. Abney** was born September 2, 1936, in Phoenix, Arizona. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1954 immediately following graduation from Winslow High School, Winslow, Arizona. He completed the radar technician course at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, that same year. His subsequent assignments included Mill Valley Air Force Station, California, from 1954 to 1956, Naha Air Base, Okinawa, from 1956 to 1960, and Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, from 1960 to 1961, having then attained the rank of technical sergeant.

At that time, Colonel Abney was selected to attend Officer’s Candidate School and received his commission in 1962. From 1963 to 1964, Colonel Abney completed undergraduate pilot training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona followed by F 100 training with the 4514th and 4517th Combat Crew Training Squadrons at Luke Air Force Base. He next served with the 81st Tactical Fighter Squadron, Hahn Air Base, West Germany from 1964 to 1966.

In 1966 he returned to Luke Air Force Base as an F-100 instructor pilot with the 451st Combat Crew Training Squadron completing that tour in 1968. Following completion of the fighter weapons instructor’s course at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, Colonel Abney served in 1969 and 1970 as an F-100 standardization evaluation pilot and weapons officer with the 352nd Tactical

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Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. Again returning to Luke Air Force Base at the 451st Combat Crew Squadron, he shortly transitioned to the A-7 and flew with the 3101h Tactical Fighter Training Squadron until 1971. He continued in the A-7 as an instructor pilot and weapons officer in his subsequent assignment with the 333rd Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona until 1973.

Colonel Abney then attended Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Following graduation in 1974, he served as an operations inspector with the Tactical Air Command's Office of the Inspector General, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. In 1976, Colonel Abney was assigned to Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, South Carolina, serving first as operations officer, 356th Tactical Fighter Squadron and following transition from the A-7D to the A-10 aircraft, as operations officer, 355th Tactical Fighter Squadron and lastly as squadron commander, 353rd Tactical Fighter Squadron.

His next tour was overseas to RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge, United Kingdom, in 1983 as an assistant deputy commander for operations. He was promoted to colonel in January 1984 and became the deputy commander for operations in July 1984. Colonel Abney was then selected to serve as commander, 20th Combat Support Group, RAF Upper Heyford. Following his tour in England, on August 1, 1986, Colonel Abney was assigned as the Senior USAFE Liaison Officer to HQ USAREUR, Campbell Barracks, Heidelberg, West Germany.

He retired from that position on February 29, 1988. Colonel Abney earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Troy State University, Montgomery, Alabama, attended Squadron Officer School and Air and Command Staff College in residence and completed the Industrial College of the Armed Forces Institute by correspondence.

Colonel Abney was a command pilot with 5,110 flying hours in the F-100, A-7 and A-10 fighter aircraft. Four hundred hours were in combat in the F-100. His decorations included the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Air Medal with 12 oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Air Force Achievement Medal.

As a civilian, Colonel Abney continued his flying career, remaining in West Germany following

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retirement, employed by Tracor International flying Lear Jet aircraft from Sernbach Air Base in support of various military programs. Those programs terminated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and Colonel Abney returned to the United States in December 1989 making his home in Phoenix, Arizona. He was first employed in commercial airlines as a first officer with American Airlines, followed by First Officer with America West Airlines.

In November 1991 he accepted a position as chief pilot of Sawyer Aviation, Sky Harbor International Airport, Phoenix flying a variety of civilian aircraft and managing their charter operation until August of 1977. At that time he was recruited by Bank One, Phoenix to direct their flight operations department at Deer Valley Airfield.

He held that position at the time of his death, August 14, 2002. He was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s T-Cell lymphoma/HTLC-1 virus in late April 2002, and his oncologist advised him this form of cancer was peculiar to and recognized by the Veterans Administration as related to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

(source: The Intake and US Air force)

(Note: For additional references to Floyd Abney, see Phan Rang Newsletter 154)



Jack E. Wilhite
120th Tactical Fighter Sq.

Jack Wilhite’s¹ career began at the age of 19 when he was hired by the FBI to work under J. Edgar Hoover in Washington D.C. and Phoenix, AZ.

He continued his service and joined the Army Air Corps, beginning a 32-year career as a pilot accruing more than 41,000 flying hours, 5,000 of those in military fighter jets. In 1956 he transitioned into the Colorado Air National Guard. During his time in the military, he served in

¹ In the February 13, 1969 issue of the Phan Fare, Jack commented on a mission and he said “The target was a base camp and a heavy bunker complex in a small wooded area. It was hard to hit because it was so compact. Previous flights had been unable to hit it, because of a strong wind but we said we would give it a try. The wind was pretty bad,” continued Major Wilhite, “but the forward air controller (FAC put his smoke markers down and we (flying one of the missions along with Wilhite was Major William H. Neuens) went and dropped our bombs right where he wanted them. The FAC was pretty elated about the whole thing; I guess he had been trying for that target for quite a while.” Ten enemy bunkers were destroyed and five damaged.

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multiple wars, to include WWII, the Korean War, and Vietnam.

While serving in Vietnam he was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 13 Air Medals, a



Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, 21 other awards and decoration and survived an ejection from an F-100 Super Sabre.

In addition to his military career, Wilhite served as a reserve officer at the Jefferson County Sheriff's department for more than 35 years.

During that time he earned The Distinguished Service Medal, rescuing a Boy Scout troop and other citizens from a raging forest fire.

Wilhite's love of aviation was evident through his service as President, Vice President, Board Member, and Chairman of the Board for the Colorado Aviation Historical Society, including the CAHS Hall of Fame Banquet Chairman.

He was hired by United Airlines in 1956 where he spent more than 32-years as a pilot of the Convair 240, DC-6, DC-7, DC-8, and DC-10. Wilhite retired from United Airlines as a Captain in 1988.

After he retired from United Airlines, Wilhite continued his involvement with the aviation community by performing in air show aerobatics; flying rare MiG-17 Fighter Jet, where he raised more than \$400,000 for charity through ride donations.

Jack dedicated his time to educating the general public, especially children, about aviation history. Colonel Jack E. Wilhite is a Veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and was President of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society.

(Note: For additional references to Jack E. Wilhite see Phan Rang Newsletters 2, 8, 71, 125 and 228.)



Robert D. Beckel
614th Tactical Fighter Sq.
35th Tactical Fighter Wing

Lieutenant General **Robert D. Beckel** was commander, 15th Air Force, March Air Force Base, CA

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from 1990 until his retirement in 1992. The Fifteenth Air Force is responsible for the worldwide operation of the Strategic Air Command air refueling tanker force as well as two of the command’s strategic bomber units.

General Beckel was born in Walla Walla, Wash., in 1937. He earned a bachelor of science



degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1959 as a member of its first class, and a master of science degree in international affairs from The George Washington University in 1971. The general completed the Naval Command and Staff Course in 1971, and National War College in 1975.

Upon graduation from the academy, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He received pilot wings in June 1960 at Vance Air Force Base, Okla., where he was the outstanding graduate of his class. He then completed jet fighter training at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., and Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. In August 1961 General Beckel was assigned to the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing, Spangdahlem Air Base, West Germany, where he flew F-100s and F-105s.

The general next became a member of the U.S. Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds. From December 1965 to December 1967 he flew the solo position for the “Ambassadors in Blue” in demonstrations throughout the world.

While serving as flight commander of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron, South Vietnam, he flew 313 combat missions in the F-100 from December 1967 until January 1969. He returned to Nellis Air Force Base and joined the 4525th Fighter Weapons Wing as an F-100 instructor. General Beckel served as executive officer for the wing commander and then moved to the 66th Fighter Weapons Squadron as an operational test and evaluation officer, flying the F-105.

The general attended the Command and Staff Course at the Naval War College from August 1970 to June 1971. He then was assigned to the Office of Legislative Liaison, Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C., where he worked in the House of Representatives. In 1972 he became chief aide to Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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He entered the National War College in August 1974. Upon graduation in July 1975, he served as vice commander of the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Beale Air Force Base, Calif., and flew SR-71s and T-38s. There he became commander of the 100th Combat Support Group in October 1976 and, later, the 100th Air Refueling Wing. In August 1978 General Beckel transferred to K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base, Mich., as commander of the 410th Bombardment Wing. In June 1979 he became commander of 7th Air Division, Strategic Air Command, Ramstein Air Base, West Germany.

The general returned to the Air Force Academy in February 1981 as commandant of cadets. In June 1982 he became director of operations, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. He transferred to Headquarters Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., in September 1984 as deputy chief of staff for operations, and in October 1985 became chief of staff. General Beckel was assigned to Europe in July 1987 as deputy chairman, NATO Military Committee, Headquarters North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Brussels, Belgium.

The general is a command pilot with more than 4,400 flying hours. His military awards and decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with four oak leaf clusters, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and Air Medal with 15 oak leaf clusters. He was named to the Helms All-American basketball team in 1959 and was on the U.S. Air Forces in Europe and all-Air Force basketball teams in 1961.

(Note: For additional references for Robert Beckel see Phan Rang Newsletters 64, 183 and 295.)



Francis C. Gideon Jr.
165th Tactical Fighter Sq.

From a Hero to a Bum

“In March 1969, one of my squadron mates and I were returning to Phan Rang from a mission in III Corps and had not expended our 20mm. On a whim, we checked in with a local FAC to see if he had any use for our bullets. As usual, he had dangerous enemy hooch nestled in a valley

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about 10 miles from home and asked if we would like to shoot it up. Silly question.

My buddy rolled in first and fired a nice burst into the hooch. I followed, diving right into the



base of the valley with mountains rising in the background. When I finally decided to pull up, “up” was a long way up. If I was going to miss the mountain, I would need all the G’s available and would have to climb at a pretty good rate. So I pulled right up to the point of stalling, and sailed out of there, just barely. In fact, I thought I heard a little “thunk” as I went by the ridgeline.

The FAC was watching the show, of course, and quickly yelled, “Hey, Two, did you hit those trees?” Naturally, I said I didn’t think so. But then I looked in the rearview mirror and was surprised to see ½ of the left slab gone and a couple of dents in the right. (Paradoxically, there was just over 6.0 Gs on the G-meter, and I have often wondered if I had pulled just a little harder, would I have missed the trees altogether, or mushed into them with fatal results. I like to think I had a sense of the max performance possible, and got all the climb I could out of the aircraft.

Thinking to myself that this was going to be hard to hide, I called Lead over to check out the damage. He let out a low whistle and proceeded to describe holes in the left flap, holes in the fuselage, a mashed and mangled left drop tank, major slab damage, and other miscellaneous scratches.

I headed for home and did a controllability check. From the cockpit, I could not feel any degraded flight characteristics, and the engine was fine. So I left the gear down, flew on over to Phan Rang, and landed. The Wing King was clearly not happy about my messing up his F-100, not to mention that I had almost killed myself for a hooch that had been plastered 1,000 times before, so he grounded me on the spot.

Now, I am not particularly proud of the foregoing, but I do know that all F-100 drivers in SEA either hit the trees or almost did. One of the peculiarities of our flying out of Phan Rang at that

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point in the war was that 90% of our targets were in III Corps, and most of the rest were in the Delta. As a result, we had very little experience in mountain flying.

The story goes on. “*Gunsmoke One*” opened each wing meeting with an Awards Ceremony. [I was called] to the podium to educate the boys on how to strafe in the mountains. I had a pretty good presentation, too, having spoken to some smart jocks from Tuy Hoa and Phu Cat to pick their brains on successful mountain-strafting techniques. I started my remarks with the observation that, “It doesn’t take long to go from a hero to a bum around here.” Even *Gunsmoke One*, Col. Frank Gailer, had to smile a little.

But the story does not end there. I left Phan Rang in July and got a Consecutive Overseas Tour (COT) to Lakenheath. A few months later, guess who showed up at the Heath as our new wing commander—of course, Frank Gailer!² The first thing I heard after he took over was a call from my squadron commander that the new wing commander wanted me to report to his office ASAP. I presumed he wanted to tell me what an honor it was for him to have me in his wing.

I reported in with a snappy salute. He looked at me for a long minute and then reached into the top right drawer of his desk and pulled out a small piece of wood. It was a mangled palm tree branch about the size of your middle finger. “Do you know what this is?” he asked. I answered that I thought I did. “Good!” he said, “Don’t forget it! Dismissed.” As I closed his office door behind me, I could hear him chuckling under his breath.

This is a story about dumb flying, but it is also a story about good leadership. Frank Gailer had many ways he could have handled my tree busting act, up to and including taking my wings. But he saw possibilities in a young first lieutenant and decided to gamble on a second chance. ...I saw him from time to time after he retired, and he always regaled whoever was within shouting distance with a story, at my expense, accompanied by raucous laughter, of how easy it was to go from a “hero to a bum.”

Maj. Gen. Francis C. Gideon Jr. was the chief of safety of the U.S. Air Force, and commander,

² Phan Rang Newsletter 72 contains an article and picture of Col. Frank L. Gailer Jr. presenting First Lieutenant Francis C. Gideon Jr., when he was 24 years old, with the “Order of the Able Aeronaut” for landing his crippled F-100 Supersabre with minimal damage.

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Headquarters Air Force Safety Center, Kirtland Air Force Base, NM He served as the senior uniformed adviser to the chief of staff and the secretary of the Air Force on all issues involving the safety of a combined active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian force of more than 700,000 people serving approximately 2,300 locations in the United States and overseas.

His career touched many aspects of the Air Force mission as a fighter pilot, an experimental test pilot, and in acquisition, intelligence and logistics. His assignments spanned the globe from Thailand to England. He commanded one of the Air Force’s three test wings and its center for scientific and technical intelligence. He is a command pilot with almost 3,000 hours flying in 30 kinds of aircraft. He was an A-10 test pilot and flew 220 combat missions in Southeast Asia in F-100s and F-4s. Rusty Gideon retired from the USAF on July 1, 2000.

(source: The Intake Magazine and US Air force)

(Note: For additional references for Francis C. Gideon Jr. see Phan Rang Newsletters 1, 72, 162, 183, 199 and 283.)



Richard W. Dabney
35th Tactical Fighter Sq.



Richard (Dick) Dabney was assigned to pilot training at Reese AFB, Lubbock, TX, after graduating from OCS. His first daughter, Kathy, was born at Lackland, during OCS. His second daughter, Karen, was born at Reese AFB, during pilot training.

He remembers that he was the first pilot training class (64-C) to fly the T-38. It was a brand new airplane then, and a blast to fly.

After graduating from pilot training the next assignment was Luke AFB for advanced fighter training in F-100s. Then on to RAF Wethersfield in England in 1964. This was a three-year tour with lots of TDYs to Aviano, Wheelus, Cigli, etc. He also played ALO/FAC with the US Army in Germany, because at that time the USAF didn’t have full-time ALOs attached to Brigades.

In 1967 he received orders to Phan Rang, Vietnam, a concurrent overseas tour. Sharon stayed in her home state of North Dakota while he was in Vietnam for a year. He flew 301 combat

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missions in F-100s in Vietnam. He was shot down once³ but managed to land (prang) the airplane down, on fire, on the runway at Bien Hoa. Great fun in those days. “We were all in our 20s.”

In 1968 he went to Nellis AFB and became an F-111 IP. Lots of stories there. The F-111 was known as the TFX then and there was lots of controversy about the airplane. In 1972 he was sent to Takhli, Thailand and flew for 42 combat missions in the F-111. This was a 5 month TDY out of Nellis.

In 1973 he was sent to General Dynamics, Ft. Worth as USAF F-111 acceptance pilot, then in 1975 to Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque as flight ops type at Air Force Contract Management Division. His last assignment was to Osan AB, Korea in 1978.

He came home in 1979 and retired in 1980. He then got into real estate in Albuquerque and has been involved with that for 23 years now. He will retire a second time soon, he hopes.

He and Sharon have two daughters and four grandkids.

(**Source:** Intake Magazine, Super Sabre Society and Air Force Officer Candidate School Alumni (usafocsalumni.org))

(Note: For additional references for Richard W. Dabney see Phan Rang Newsletters 125, 248 and 261.)

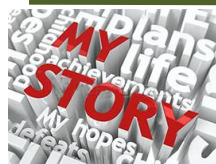
³ Risks Life to Save Jet

(Pacific Stars & Stripes, Wednesday, July 3 1968) PHAN RANG, Vietnam (Special)—Air Force Capt. Richard W. Dabney, 27, Cavalier, N.D., risked his life to save his battle damaged F100 Supersabre. An F100 pilot with the 35th Tactical Fighter Sq., Dabney was flying an alert mission in support of troops in contact 30 miles southwest of Bien Hoa AB when his plane was hit by ground fire. As he pulled away from the target, the 'fire warning' light came on, and there was a severe explosion in the aft section of the F100. Realizing that he was only 20 miles from Bien Hoa AB, Dabney notified the base tower that he had an emergency and would be coming in for a landing, on a direct heading. When the tower advised him that that runway had no crash barrier and that he should circle the field, Dabney momentarily thought of ejecting from the stricken Supersabre. Then, with controls failing and smoke filling the cockpit, he decided to continue on his direct approach. As he touched down, Dabney deployed the drag chute but it failed. Keeping cool, he slowed down to 80 m.p.h. using his brakes and then, with only 3,000 feet of runway left, he locked the brakes and blew the tires. The friction of the wheels on the runway slowed the aircraft to 34 m.p.h. With the end of the runway in sight, Dabney tried to steer onto a taxi ramp. The aircraft spun to a stop. Dabney attempted to jettison the canopy but this failed. With the aircraft burning around him he raised the canopy mechanically and escaped. An inspection of the Supersabre, after the Bien Hoa fire department had put out the fire, revealed the plane had been hit four times.

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Timothy Ramsey
435 Munition Maint. Sq.



56 years ago I PCS straight out of Lowry tech school -- 17 Feb 1967 I arrived at Phan Rang. I flew from Travis AFB, Ca. with a short stop in Hawaii and finally landed at Ton Son Nhut early in the evening. I walked from the plane to the terminal which looked like a civilian terminal turned over to the military. Outside were sandbag bunkers each with an ARVN (The Army of the Republic of Vietnam) security. Inside the terminal it looked as though time stood still, behind the check-in counter up on the wall were the boards that showed departure and arrivals and the date and times had not been changed since it went from civilian to military control.

We went through the terminal to vehicles that would take us to billeting. We checked in and were given sheets and pillow case, towel, and then taken to our room in the billet. I got a bunk and was told where the shower and latrine was, and they warned us not to have any food smell on our fingers because the rats would chew at our fingers. I was dog tired and had no problem falling asleep. The next morning I was in desperate need of a shower. The shower was three walls with a pipe sticking out. So I'm taking my shower and I have my hair and face lathered up and as I'm rinsing off the soap and I here this noise that went “ swap swap swap”. I get the soap off me and turn around and see an old lady swing different articles of material onto a cement slab. As an 18 year old kid I wasn't expecting this and didn't know what to do except grab my towel and cover myself. As I walked by her she smiled at me with her red stained mouth and said good morning. I just hurried to my bunk and got dressed as quickly as possible and then I went and turned in my linen and towel and was told where the chow hall was.

At the chow hall I got my tray and got my first taste of powered eggs and a sausage patty that looked like a hockey puck. I went to the water dispenser and got a glass of water that at first I thought it was spoiled Orange juice. I ate as much of the meal as I could tolerate.

We were then loaded on a bus and taken to the plane, a C-123K. It wasn't a long fight but when we got to Phan Rang it was like the plane just fell out of the sky. We landed on PSP and then

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the plane taxied to the end of the runway dropping the cargo door. The load master pointed to me and said this is where you get off. I pull my duffel bag to the end of the platform and he told me to jump, well the engines were still running and the props kicking up a lot of dust. I hesitated and before I knew it he kicked my bag off and was ready to push me off but I jumped down and grabbed my bag and headed off the PSP and stepped right into the prop wash which just about blew me over. Before I could gather myself together the cargo door was raised and they were ready to take off.

I was told there was a shelter to go to and wait to be picked up. It wasn't that far from the runway so after I got there and while waiting I could see I was on the opposite side of the main base. Across the runway I could see the control tower and other buildings. I was in the shelter for perhaps 15 or 20 minutes when a pickup truck came and an elderly Vietnamese man looked out the window and said “I pick you up, you get in”. Once inside he said you show me papers, so I did. He said “oh you go MMS I take you”.

I went into the orderly room got signed in and was told which barracks I was assigned to. Then they gave me a helmet, web belt and weapons card number. Weapons were stored in the orderly room. Then I went and claimed a bunk and locker.

After stowing away my gear i was introduced to the 8 man shitter and also where the piss pipes were. I grew up in a village where we had outhouses but the first time was a little awkward when you had to pass by 4 or 5 other guys taking a shit. There was no running water for washing and shaving - they would park a water buffalo behind the barracks and you would use your helmet as a water basin.

I was assigned to the bomb dump and my first job entailed building 750lb bombs with high and low drag fins. Then I got on delivery crew, ended up putting 20mm in plane cans working on the flight line.

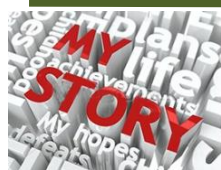
I left Phan Rang 17 February 1968. I managed to get up to Cam Ranh Bay but due to TET I had to wait a week before catching a ride home, for an 18 year, I turned 19 in-country and it was one fantastic year!

(Note: For additional references for Tim Ramsey see Phan Rang Newsletters 52, 136 and 234.)

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Buddy Cox
310th Special Operations Sq.
315 Tactical Airlift Wing



I was born in Texarkana, Texas which is right across the border from Texarkana, Arkansas where I grew up. I graduated from the University of Arkansas.

I joined the Air Force 5 July 67 and completed Officer Training School 28 September 1967. Started my flying career at Sel Field, Selma, Alabama, flying the Cessna T-41 Mescalero. The T-41 is a military version of the popular Cessna 172, operated by the United States Air Force and Army, as a pilot-training aircraft. After that initial training I moved across town to Craig AFB to continue my pilot training. I was there from November 1967 to January 1969.

Shortly after I completed basic pilot training I went to Basic and Jungle Survival Schools then started C-123 training school from March to May 1969 at Hurlbert AFB, FL. My tour to Phan Rang, Vietnam started 18 May 1969. The day I arrived, one of our planes was shot down with all killed. I got one of the pilots room. I left 17 May 1970 after serving as a C-123 copilot and aircraft commander. There were many interesting stories to tell from this assignment because each days flying assignment was usually completely different from the previous days and the missions were often fraught with danger and each day provided new challenges.

My tour to Phan Rang, Vietnam was from 18 May 1969 to 19 May 1970 as a C-123 copilot and aircraft commander. There were many interesting stories to tell from this assignment because each days flying assignments was usually completely different from the previous days and the missions were often fraught with danger and each days provided new challenges.

Most of our airfields that we frequented were primitive unimproved dirt patches usually covered with PSP (Marston Mat, more properly called pierced (or perforated) steel planking (PSP), is standardized, perforated steel matting material.) hardly describable as an airfield. In this one instance we landed at an Army base which was a star shaped heavily fortified compound. They had previously been hit by rockets and one of the rocket holes on the taxiway

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was only filled with loose dirt. As we taxied out we sank in the hole. They tried to pull us out of the hole but it was going to damage the plane. The only way to get it out was jack it up on bladders and fill the hole. Unfortunately, the bladders would not arrive until the next day. The Army commander was very upset. He said the plane would be a mortar magnet and would not survive the night. To make it worse, we could not stay in the compound. He assigned a couple of local tribe members to guard us. They looked like 15 year olds kids with tight fatigues, cowboy fatigue hats, plus M-16s.

We dug a shallow hole under the low wing fuel tank (in retrospect probably the most dangerous spot to stay). We had our .38's which were inadequate to protect ourselves. We were really lucky because Uncle Ho had just died and there was an unofficial truce for 3 days so we had an uneventful night. Next day the bladders arrived and we were out and on our way by 10 AM. We were headed back to Phan Rang when we got a frag for the day. We told them we didn't sleep at all and were returning to Phan Rang to rest and that was what we did.



Our mission was interrupted when our aircraft hit a rocket hole that was just filled with sand and rocks, not enough to support the weight of the C-123 Provider aircraft. An inflatable bladder was flown in the next day to lift the aircraft which allowed us to leave.

In 1971, I married 2Lt. Mary Fitter. She had an assignment to Goose Bay (Happy Valley, Labrador, Canada) as Chief of Redistribution and Marketing (base junkie). I asked to accompany her but there were no jobs up there for me; I was a new KC-135 Aircraft Commander. As circumstantial as it was, a KC-135 copilot was killed when their plane blew up over the Mediterranean and he had the HU-16 Goose job, so I got it. There were two fishing camps. One was No-Name and No-No-Name Lake for trout, char and pike. The other was the Adlatok River which was famous for the finest Atlantic Salmon Fishing. It was a rustic camp while the lake

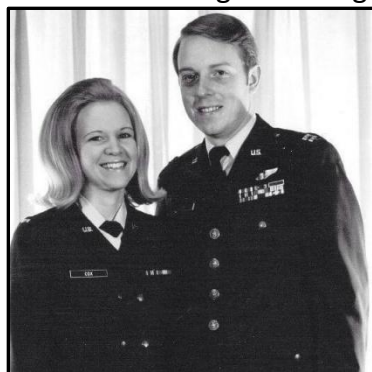
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camp was posh. Survival instructors were fishing guides for the VIP’s. It was tricky landing in the river. Winds and strong currents made hooking up to a buoy very difficult. A crew member used a gaff to snag it. If he missed, the prop would hit it.

Goose Bay, Labrador was a popular fishing destination for VIPs. There were two fishing camps. One was No-Name and No-No-Name Lake for trout, char and pike. The other was the Adlatok River which was famous for the finest Atlantic Salmon Fishing. It was a rustic camp while the lake camp was posh. Survival instructors were fishing guides for the VIP’s. It was tricky landing in the river. Winds and strong currents made hooking up to a buoy very difficult. A crew member used a gaff to snag it. If he missed, the prop would hit it.



**My wife, 2Lt. Mary Fitter,
and I in our assignment
photo.**



**U-1 Otter at Goose AB. The DeHavilland Otter is the
primary means of transportation to remote parts of
Labrador and was even used in Vietnam.**

After the military I worked for American Airlines based at DFW. Flew B-727 and DC-10 as Flight Engineer, MB-80 as Copilot and Captain. Retired 16 Oct 2004 at age 60. Mostly I flew the MD-80 the lowest paid equipment at the most desired base. There were 3000 pilots at DFW. I flew with a different pilot each month. At most I flew with 300-400 pilots over 18 years. I would never fly with the pilots that were hired the same year as me. It was the perfect job for me, the AF had 10% assholes and AA had 1%. DFW had a box and you checked it before the start of each 3 day trip. You must have a phone but you don’t have to answer it. No office, no phone, no desk. You bid on what monthly trip you wanted. We met the other pilot on the first trip of the month. 90% were ex military.

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Finally, my real name is **Herman Bailes Cox Jr**; Buddy is just my nickname and also my stage name ‘Buddy’s Big Band’. I live in Euless TX (Euless owns 1/3 of DFW). We use Carswell AFB now named NAS-JRB, Ft. Worth, for the Commissary, BX, MWR, pharmacy and Optical.

Pilot Experience.

- **C-123 School Mar-May 69. Vietnam 18May69-17May70 copilot and aircraft commander**
- **Distinguished Flying Cross, 6 Air Medals, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.**
- **Castle AFB KC-135 training Jun 70-Aug 70. Distinguished Grad.**
- **Blytheville AFB KC-135 Sep 70-Aug 71. Aircraft Commander B-707/720 added to Pilot license. Safety officer for base aero club flying 2 club T-34’s**
- **Sep 71-Nov 72 Goose Bay AB, CND. HU-16B aircraft commander/instructor/evaluator pilot. Support to remote sites where water landings were required. Flew a mission to rescue an injured Russian sailor 300 miles in the Atlantic to base hospital at Goose.**
- **Oct 72- Jun 76 Carswell AFB aircraft commander/simulator instructor, Stan/eval instructor. Did test refueling of the YF-16 and the B-1.**
- **Flew a 90 day combat tour from U-Tapao AB Thailand 1973.**
- **Jul 67-Jun 80 AFROTC instructor and Flight Instructor Program chief. Taught Ground School and monitored Student pilot’s training. Spare time flew C-172 and Mooney 20C.**
- **Jul80-Aug83 KC-135 instructor at Kadena AB, JAP. Flew missions out of PI, Japan, Korea, and Diego Garcia.**
- **Aug 83-Non87 KC-135 training flight instructor. Delivered the first B-1B from Edwards AFB, Offutt AFB, to Dyess AFB.**
- **Angel Flight South Central**

Civilian Aircraft Flown	Military Aircraft Flown
C-150	T-41
C-172	T-37
7BCM Tailwheel	T-38
M20C	C-123K
T-34	KC-135A
MD80	HU16B Water Landing

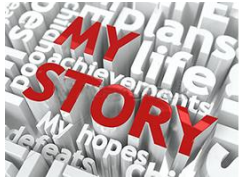
(Note: For additional references for Buddy Cox see Phan Rang Newsletters 162, 165, 188, 213,

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217, 225, 239 and 241.)



Dean DeLongchamp
310th Tactical Airlift Sq.



PART 1 - Born at the height of WWII on March 3rd 1944 in Negaunee, Michigan. Negaunee is in the heart of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula (U.P.). Consequently we are called/known as Yoopers, and proud of it. We are a rural enclave who make their living from Iron Mining. We’ve mined Iron ore since the mid 1840’s. We are a rugged group with most family’s

bread winners employed by Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, known as CCI. We love our sports and follow our high school teams religiously, especially during the long winters, which run through March most years.



Dean and his wife stand next to the ‘Yooper snowmeter’ which shows the depth of snow fall in the UP.

The record high snowfall was the winter of 1978-79 at 390.4 inches. The 54 year average is 240.8 inches and the all time low is 181 inches experienced in the winter of 1999-2000.

By any measure that’s a lot of snow!

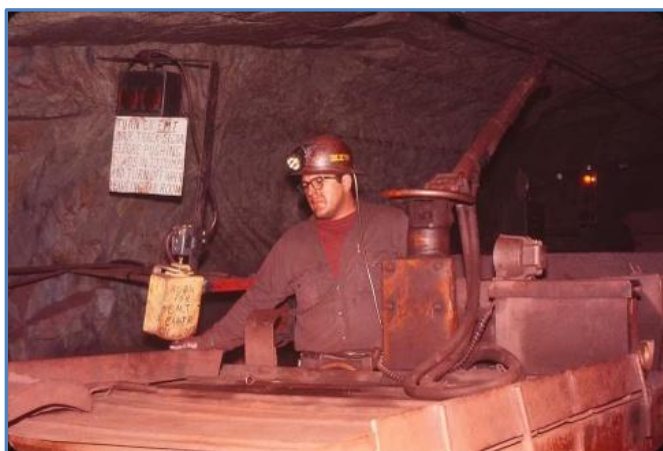
So, all in all, it was a wonderful time growing up in my town. We embraced the weather and played in it. We ski jumped and skied cross country. Our neighboring town of Ishpeming provided downhill skiing for free with rope tows on three different runs. We had free skating rinks and warm up shacks in the winter. In our summers we spent time in several lakes around the area. They were cold, but that’s all we had, so we grinned and accepted it. I’ve played football in the snow in the fall, and ran track in the snow in the spring. We’ve seen snowflakes

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in every month of the year. We get the most snow east of the Rockies. It’s either grin and bear it, or stay in and be miserable. Remember “**We are the Miners**”! While the mines have not died out after 178 years of mining in our iron ore range, we are preparing for the future by embracing tourism. What was once our weakest economy of the year, winter tourism, is now one of our best tourism seasons. Snow is the engine that fuels our winter season. Life is still good on the Iron Range and I look forward to every visit I can make home, because I’m a Yooper. Go Miners!



My dad working deep underground in the mine.

My grandparents on each side were/are miners, drawn here by the rich iron ore reserves. We are a rough and tumble group who at one time had over 20 bars and two churches in a town of about 3,500 people. But oh, do we love our sports teams. The two local schools are located three miles apart. My hometown of Negaunee are the “Miners” and our main

rivals are the Ishpeming “Hematites” (a specific type iron ore). Our population came from the Nordic countries first; Italy and France second; and England and Ireland third. My father started working in the mines during the mid-40’s. He started in underground mining at the entry level of miners, drilling, dynamiting and scraping. Working to a depth of 3,800 feet underground. He slowly worked his way up the ladder and after 20 years entered management for the next 20 years in open pit mining, retiring after 40 years in 1984.

With 75% of the boys who graduated high school each year going into mining, how was I going to escape it? How about Football? I was a 172 pound speedster and I made up my mind to speed away from mining. Becoming an All-Star receiver in the toughest football conference in the U.P., the Great Lakes Conference, helped greatly. After a couple of pre-college changes on school possibilities, I settled on the University of Wisconsin-Superior. It filled all my requirements. It had a football team and AFROTC. Football would help pay for college and AFROTC would get me into the AF. Football didn’t work out as well as I thought it would as guys

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20 pounds heavier than me were just as fast. So after making the traveling team my first year, I saw myself drop down the depth chart, with my grades going down just as fast, I opted to dedicate more time to my studies. Oh, did I forget to mention, Vietnam was also breathing down my neck? So, reinvigorated to improve my grades and with a pilot’s slot in my back pocket, I was set for the near time.

All went well and in the fall of my senior year I entered the AFROTC Flight Instruction Program (FIP). I led my FIP class, soloing first, completing a cross-country flight first. All was looking great for my future. Oh, did I mention that choices you make define who you become? My choices had been pretty damn good to this point. I had my pilot slot and my degree in my hand, I had beat my way out of the mines at home. Oh, wait a minute! The AFROTC commander called the FIP class together and announced we all had to take a check ride! We had flown a grand total of 20 hours back in September and not a minute since. We implored the boss to get us three hours each to refresh ourselves. In his infinite wisdom the boss picked me as the “Guinea Pig” and said I had done so well I was going for the check ride first. Let me tell you, it’s not always best to be first. My first choice I had to make was what runway to take off on, I guessed right and still had a pilot’s slot.

So we take off and I ask him if he wants me to do some touch and goes. He very gruffly says, no; go into a climbing right hand stall! What’s that? We never practiced stalls, but I had a 50/50 chance of guessing which rudder to kick in! I guessed Nav. School as I guessed the wrong rudder and “Mr Happiness” recovered us from the spin I had started. I asked again if he wanted me to do some touch and goes. What he said cannot be repeated here. Our commander gave all the rest of the class three practice hours. My classmate each spent three hours practicing stalls, the dirty rotten pilots! My choice sent me to Nav. school. By the way, I ended my career outranking all of my FIP classmates! On to the next phase of my Biography, an Air Force career.

PART 2 - So, armed with a college degree and a slot at USAF Navigators School, I pointed my 1958 red and white Corvette convertible West! Already using navigator terms like West! Given that I went West over the Mississippi River in St. Louis, and then East back over the same river, and finally back over the river to the west again, maybe



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Nav. School won't be so easy! Come on guys, my hometown only had one traffic light and the U.P. only had about 50 miles of divided highways in Yooper Land. But on the positive side, each hour headed west brings me that much further away from Negaunee's iron mines! Life is good and so were the divided highways almost all the way to Sacramento, the home of Air Force's Nav. School, Mather AFB.

Long forgotten was the decision to go with the wrong rudder! Heck, as I write this, “Masters of the Air” is the big hit on TV and the star is the NAVIGATOR! I was going to find (and date) every blonde haired, blue eyed surfer girl in California. So on my second night I come across a bevy of blondes at an adjoining table at the Liki Tiki, five blondes and one brown eyed, brown haired beauty. After one dance with the cutest blonde, I was turned down by each of the other blondes and was looking disaster in the eye if the brown eyed beauty rejected my



Dean and Sylvia, 1970

request. She didn't and I married her nine months later and we will celebrate our 57th anniversary in the summer of 2024. If I had made the correct choice on the rudders, I would never have met Sylvia Diaz and our lives would have been totally different. Great choice! I was 23 and on my second night out. She was 19 and a college freshman on her first night out.



C-124 Globemaster

124. At one time it was MAC's most giant cargo plane.

I found Nav School to be fairly easy and graduated high enough in the class to be able to pick one of the good airplane selections. Most of the class was stuck with SAC assignments. Not me, I went retro and picked a MAC (Military Airlift Command) C-124, becoming the last 2LT to be put on a C-

Sylvia and I were off to the 19th MAS in San Antonio, Texas. It was a great first plane for a Nav.

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The nav. equipment we had was one step ahead of what Christopher Columbus had. It was a challenge and I learned a lot. Each trip took about 100 hours and I checked out as a line nav. in three flights. By November I had flown to Vietnam once and Europe twice. We didn't have any additional duties, so it was bank your 100 hours and then wait about three weeks until we could fly again. It was old and slow, but it did do its job. Unfortunately it didn't last long. But long enough to have our first child, Michael on 31 October 1968.

We had arrived in October of 1967 and left for Eglin AFB and C-123K training in March of 1969. Remarkably, we went from the second slowest transport (C-124C's) to one of the slowest (C-123C's). Again, we only had the barest of modern navigation equipment. We were losing ground in trying to keep up with Columbus! My wife went to live with my folks



C-123K Provider.

in America's Siberia, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, near KI Sawyer AFB, while I went to the heat of Vietnam where my most important job was our air dropping role. I left for Vietnam in July of 1969 after stopping off for Survival School (I'll pass on going to any reunions there. We were hungry, thirsty and all beat up)!

Las Cruces Sun-News

LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO, TUESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1959

Vol. 89—No. 197

First Lieutenant Robert D. DeLongchamp, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence DeLongchamp of 637 Carr St., Negaunee, Mich., is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Lieutenant DeLongchamp is a navigator in a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to Kelly AFB, Tex.

The lieutenant, a 1962 graduate of Negaunee High School, earned his B. S. degree at Wisconsin State University in 1966 where he was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program. He is a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon.

His wife, Sylvia, is the daughter of Mrs. Esther Diaz, 225 S. San. Pedro, Las Cruces.

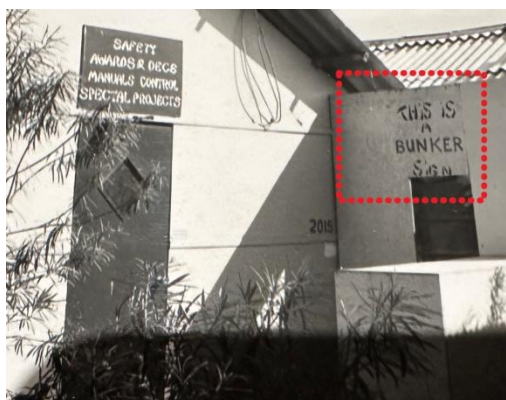
I arrived at my new home, Phan Rang AB (PRAB), in late July of 1969. Mostly it was hauling just about anything and/or anyone on most missions. However, on some missions we more than

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earned our pay. When we saw airdrop on the frag we knew it was going to be an exciting day because it meant some ground unit was in trouble and needed immediate help. I was the lead airdrop navigator in the 310th SOS, so I got most of the tough missions, however, you could die just as easily on a milk run (Routine flight), and many did. In about November of 1969 the Air Force in all its infinite wisdom noticed I had missed Jungle Survivor School and sent me to the Philippines for the training. I embraced the opportunity to leave combat for 10 days out of Vietnam.



In about February I got a tasking from my Squadron Commander to fix up our bunkers in advance of our big inspection that was coming. We got permission to raid CE for lumber to cover up all our sandbags so it would look a lot more clean around the squadron. It worked all right, we failed the inspection and had to identify all our fixed up bunkers that didn't look like bunkers any more. We had to put the following message on every bunker entrance, “This is a Bunker”. Shades of Major-

Major of movie fame.

In April of 1970 combat airdrop missions picked up considerably as the North Vietnamese troops were really pouring across the border where II Corps was almost connected to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. C-7's were a doing the main airdrop mission at Dak Seang and when I was on R&R in Hawaii, all hell broke loose. I arrived back on about 12 April and we had been ordered to take over the airdrop mission from the C-7's which had lost three planes and all crews that week.



Airdropping critical supplies at Dak Pek.

I was still in civvies when we practiced our planned airdrops that after noon. We were slated to start air dropping on the morning of the 13th. We had an intelligence brief scheduled around 4 a.m. and were told the frag was for three planes to airdrop critical supplies at dawn. We were told we could expect to

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lose one plane. It was interesting to see each crew looking at each other crew wondering which one was going to be the one shot down. Next we were shepherded to the chow haul for what could become our last meal. It was Shit on a Shingle (SOS). We found it a little ironic, as prisoners on death row got better. We left at dawn and formed up with our FAC near Dak Pek, our target. I was lead navigator and we went in first. There was virtually nothing left of the camp but a Mortar Pit and scattered troops around the fringes of the camp. I have never been more scared than descending at 120 knots indicated and at a descent rate of 1,000 feet per minute. The world stopped as the better part of 2,000 NVA continued their attack. We flew into a hail of small arms fire. Bullets were flying and troops were dying. We flew missions of support all that week and in the end stopped the attack. I don't want to say it was bad, but two soldiers on the ground won the Medal of Honor. Over 1,400 NVA troops were killed or wounded and we suffered 100's of troops killed, wounded and missing between Dak Seang and Dak Pek's camps. We were one of the units which won a Presidential Unit Citation for our actions in that timeframe, and I won a DFC.

The mission to support Dak Pek as paraphrased from a description in the book “Assault on Dak Pek” by Leigh Wade was the impetus for Dean earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. “Several Skyraider aircraft suddenly appeared at the mouth of the valley, flying low, between the mountains. They were closely followed by a C-123. “Dak Pek, this is Alpha Delta Three,” the pilot of the cargo plane said on the radio. “We have some stuff you asked for, where do you want us to drop it? Over?” They marked the spot with yellow smoke, several feet from the mortar pit. After the pilot identified the smoke correctly, the controller told him to drop the resupply directly on it. The C-123, taking heavy ground fire, began making very low passes, and the brightly colored cargo chutes came floating down. Several men ran out and began breaking out the ammunition and carrying it to fighting positions. All the bundles landed inside the perimeter wire and none was lost to the enemy.

We spent a week air dropping ammo, water, blood and weapons that kept our ground troops supplied with enough of their needed supplies to survive and live to fight again. It was my proudest moment in the Air Force. About three weeks later I was called upon to resupply troops who were being overrun in the Hiep Duc Valley. In a stroke of pure luck, our Wing Navigator, Major Ernie Servetas heard the discussion about the mission and said it looked

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interesting and he wanted to take the mission. The Wing Vice Commander also wanted to fly the mission. They were hit really badly and the Vice Commander lost part of his foot and the plane was riddled with .50 caliber bullets. I left two days later with a 50 day roll back of my tour if I would ferry a plane home. I’m not sure which was more dangerous, the Hiep Duc Valley or ferrying the mission home. **Good by Vietnam!**

PART 3 - I got a 50 day curtailment in my tour in Vietnam. It was a bribe to ferry one of several C-123K’s home. I’m not sure it was not safer to stay and fight. The distances we had to traverse across the Pacific were simply unsafe. On some legs we carried fuel badders on the floor and transferred the fuel into the tanks. Additionally, we carried 55 gallon barrels of oil to pump into the engines. On our first night in freedom at Clark AFB, we had a wonderful steak dinner at the club. We were excited to be away from the threats we faced every day at Phan Rang. Many toasts were made and we imbibed quite freely. The explosion of the 5 p.m. cannon proved to all club goers we weren’t long removed from Vietnam as the aftermath of the cannon’s roar found all five of our crew huddled under the table!

Our trip to the states was fairly uneventful and found us at Travis AFB after a trip of eight days. Our war was over and we were alive. That was enough to be thankful! We parted our ways and have not been together in 54 years except for the few reunions attended by a couple of the crew members. It was time to go forward with our careers. My assignment was to be an instructor at Nav School, mother had called me home. During my 3-1/2 years there I moved up the ladder. A regular commission arrived, I became a “Night Celestial Navigation” lead instructor, which is the hardest class taught in Nav. School, and after two years I moved up to Stan/Eval for my last year. Operationally I was making all the right moves.



Dean getting ready for another mission.

My Fini-Flight proved to be very interesting. We had landing gear troubles on a night cel mission on Over Water West. The flight was uneventful until we came in to land about 1 am. The students passed their check rides and the instructors passed theirs, however, the plane failed its job when one landing gear got stuck in the up position. Try as we could, we couldn’t get it down. The Crisis Action Team (CAT

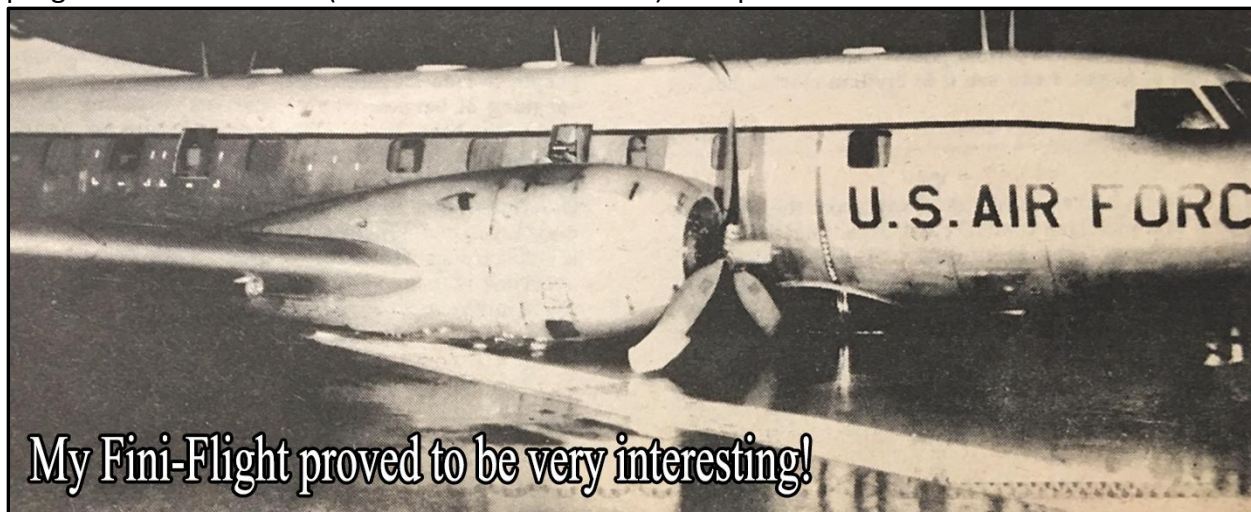
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team) offered all kinds of suggestions but after flying in circles for 1-1/2 hours to burn off fuel and dumping some of our loose equipment into Folsom Lake, it was decided we would hand crank the gear that was down into the up position with the other stuck landing gear and belly in.

Shades of my last mission in Vietnam that crash landed after being shot up very badly. My luck on that mission was some of the brass thought it was an interesting flight and volunteered to replace me on the flight in Vietnam. There were no parachutes onboard the T-29 on this dark and rainy night. Prayers were said and we snuggled up our seatbelts and hung on for the landing. Driftmeters were pinging off as the belly of the beast tore its undercarriage apart and slid down the runway to a 3-point landing. Only the venerable T-29 suffered. All onboard escaped out the open doors and gathered upwind just like in the manuals. For me, another assignment waited my arrival and it didn't have wings. All the students onboard stayed with the program and did not SIE (Self Initiated Elimination) and quit the course.



My Fini-Flight proved to be very interesting!

Capt. Bob DeLongchamp prepared the instructors and students in the navigator compartment for the impending controlled crash landing, while the pilots continued to try to extend the stuck landing gear. Captain DeLongchamp had come on the mission as a standardization instructor navigator, but now he was directing emergency actions in the cabin. Escape hatches were removed and lashed down with other loose objects and student seating positions were rehearsed and checked to minimize injury.

They were much luckier than the Major who replaced me on my Fini-Flight in the Hiep Duc Valley, he was on the KC-135 that crashed short of the runway in Spain and blew up a couple of years later. God rest the soul of Ernie Servetas and his crew mates.

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A rated supplement job awaited me. I was to become an Assistant Professor of Aerospace Studies (APAS) at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was a relaxing and fun assignment, followed by a follow on assignment to AFROTC Headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama. It was the beginning of a love affair with the business of AFROTC and the warmth of the people of the Deep South. I made Major there and was brought back to operations and C-141's. I thought it was going to be the end of my career, but a fast moving Colonel took me under his wing and remarkably I made Lieutenant Colonel while flying the line.

I did take part on one mission that I didn't understand. We were collecting and giving used equipment from a recent Middle Eastern conflict to the Mujahideen to fight the Russians in Afghanistan. We were a part of Charlie Wilson's War and didn't even know it until years later. To make the charade even worse, we wore Levi's and college sweatshirts, like no one knew where we were from, given America was the only country with C-141's.

After three years I was called back to the rated supplement when the Air Force went looking for Lieutenant Colonel rated officers to open a number of new detachments. Having made Lieutenant Colonel, I checked all blocks and was selected to command the new unit at the University of South Florida in 1982. We created some new twists to our program and flourished, becoming one of the fastest new units to make viability in the number of students we had. Thinking I knew something no one else knew, the AF brought me back to Maxwell and promoted me to Colonel. There turned out to be an overage of Colonels after I pinned on and I was told to find a job in Air University. I became the DOO of AU and was the action officer with a Pentagon working group representing the Army, Navy, Marines and the Air force that brought in “jointness” to the military.

In 1991 on the heels of that success I was offered the position of Senior Military Representative of the United States to the government of Columbia. I knew that job would be intimately involved in bringing Pablo Escobar to account. It had strings attached concerning your families that I wasn't willing to inflict on my family so I called it a career, retiring in November of 1991 after 29 years at the rank of Colonel and awarded the “*Legion of Merit*”. Not a bad career for someone whose career turned on guessing wrongly on which rudder would prevent a stall!

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PART 4 - After debating what would be my future occupation after retiring from the Air Force in the fall of 1991, I decided to accept the offer of Athletic Director and Girl’s Basketball coach at Montgomery Catholic High School, Montgomery, Alabama. With a Colonel’s retirement pay in hand, I went with what my heart wanted to do, not what my pocketbook wanted. I had the opportunity to be a “Beltway Bandit” but passed on it because of the stress of a high paying job coupled with the high costs of living in Washington D.C.. The chance to go to school with my children and have the amount of time off that a job in education gives you swung the decision. Having a Colonel’s retirement pay made the choice a lot easier and the job afforded us some perks that were really great, like almost all holidays off and two months off in the summer. That meant we’d have more time to use our lake place on beautiful Lake Martin and get in three weeks a year at our camp in Michigan’s beautiful Upper Peninsula.



Our cabin

Time at camp allowed us to refresh our palates and get in our annual food fix of eating the renowned local specialties like pasties (a meat pie consisting of meat, turnips, onions, chopped up potatoes and chopped rutabaga’s, all rolled up inside the equivalent of a pie crust). It’s a delicious local delicacy brought to the area by the immigration of miners from Wales, United Kingdom. Many local churches in the UP have been paid for by pasty bake sales. Just about every town in the U.P. has Pasty Shops on a couple of their corners. Other local cuisine was imported by the Italian miners who came to mine the omnipresent iron ore. They brought us cudigi’s, hot regional sandwiches consisting of a sausage patty, peppers and onions cooked on a grill. But enough about food, I’m getting hungry!

Our Deer Camp is legendary in that it is probably the camp that was the inspiration for the song “Second Day of Deer Camp” that is still played probably daily during deer hunting season, not only in the UP, but Northern Wisconsin as well. It is located about six miles up the Peshekee River in Marquette County. It’s an old lumberjack cabin the lumber company gave to the family to use.

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During deer season almost everyone who hunts the Peshekee Grade knows of the camp. Its name is the “Boars Nest”. Some nights during deer season up to 42 hunters have been stuffed inside and there *might* be alcohol involved! I had many fun times there.

Stories are told and told over and over again. One story I always remember is the cooks role: if anyone says anything

derogatory about the meal, they become the cook. One night as we sat down to eat, one of my cousins as he started to eat said “*this tastes like shit*” his brother turned to admonish him and give him the cook’s apron, but the sinner, realizing the error of his ways said just as quickly, “*but that’s just the way I like it*”, quickly getting out of taking over the cook’s role! The stories are repeated yearly and get belly laughs like they are brand new stories.



Sylvia and Dean with one of their granddaughters.

The job of being an Athletic Director was all consuming and even interfered with some of that vacation time that was promised. I had a great athletic background and at a small high school (240 kids 9th-12th), my services were needed in a number of sports. Over my 14 years at the school I ended up being the coach of Girl’s Varsity Basketball, Varsity Tennis, All Golf, Swimming one year,

Girl’s Varsity Volleyball, Middle School football, All Track and where ever else I was needed, like cooking burgers at the concession stand. Things were a little slow in the beginning but slowly my successors have built the school’s athletic program into a power house in Football, Track, Cross Country, and Volleyball; with solid programs in the other sports. Our volleyball team is the two time defending state champion, while our Football team has a 53-5 record over the past five years ending with a state championship last fall and one other finals appearance and two other trips to the

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semifinals. In addition, our boys basketball program won back to back state championships in 1999 and in 2000, jump starting our rise to a power in the state. We’ve won numerous other individual state championships over the years. Our school is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Our sports program started about 80 years ago with the end of WWII. It’s very humbling having been a part of building the foundation of the athletic program. Our facilities are second to none and I was there when the school started putting resources into the athletic program. So yes, I’m proud of my “retirement” years and happy for the sports legacy I helped build. I could have retired for good as a “Beltway Bandit” with lots of money in my pocket, instead I find myself retired from Education with less money in my pockets, but a lifetime of memories and friends that I made an impact on.

Every segment of my four-part biography had its highs and lows, but I don’t regret any choices I made, especially the choice of the wrong rudder. It brought me the wonderful life I’ve had to this point. Thanks for the help Sylvia (wife of 57 years) and the children we’ve had Mike, Michelle and Melissa; grandchildren; Gracie, Hannah, Mike-Mike, TJ, Wills, Emma and Anna. Daughter-in-law Cindy and son-in-laws Tim and Pat. You’ve all brought joy to our lives, May your life get filled with the happiness you’ve brought your Mother and I! We are looking forward to building at least one more chapter of my biography as time continues to go by.

Bring it on!



Two best Mates. Dean, left and Buddy Cox (Previous Bio.) have been best mates since their assignments together at Phan Rang AB and remain so today.

Note: For additional references for Dean Delongchamp see Phan Rang Newsletters 162, 165, 195, 196, 216, 217, 225, 241, 243, 280 and 284.)

Doing what friends Do. Dean wrote the following about his friend Buddy

Cox. “I was acting as the assistant ops officer and stayed at the squadron late, waiting for Buddy’s plane to get in. He flew in just under the wire. He had landed at a dirt field and had been cleared by VC in broken English to land. As he landed the Marines tried to wave him off. They ran to the plane and told him to turn around and they would give him covering fire. They let him know the enemy controlled half the airfield. He fired up the jets and got out of Dodge as quickly as possible. When he landed back at PRAB he came in and

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said what he had done and to put him in for the Metal Of Honor. I told him they didn't give it for stupidity, but I wouldn't let the squadron commander know. He accepted that choice.

He was one of my most favorite friends for my year there and I would fly with him anytime, even into enemy controlled airfields! We are still in touch on a regular basis.”



Dannie Laine Maddox
35th Civil Eng. Sq.
315th Civil Eng. Sq.

I graduated high school in Sheffield, AL. in 1968. I joined the USAF in July 1968 then completed basic training at Lackland later that year. I was assigned to the fire department and sent to Barksdale AB in Bossier City, LA. I went TDY to Guam in July of 1970 in support of ARC Light missions being flown from there. These missions for suspended for a period in Nov. of 70 and we returned to Barksdale. Just before Christmas.



Fireman at PRAB (age 22)

I received orders for Phan Rang AB, and In April 1971, I arrived at Cam Ranh and then PRAB. I was assigned to the alarm room (communication center) about a month into my tour and worked there until the Vietnamese took control (don't remember the exact time frame, but I was close to my DEROS date in late March 1972). My job at Phan Rang was the same throughout my tour, however because of the drawdown I was at first assigned to 35th Civil Engineering Sq. and then the 315th Civil Engineering Sq. My departure from Phan Rang AB was unusual in that the 'freedom bird' (PanAm) flew into Phan Rang and loaded the aircraft with just troops from Phan Rang.

We then flew to Tan Son Nhut then to Guam, Hawaii, and finally to Travis AFB, Ca. I was discharged at Travis on my return to the states and I began the next **chapter of my life.**

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I worked at a cutting tool company for about 10 years and decided it was time to go back to school. I completed an AD in nursing in 1986, BSN in 1989, and MSN in 1992, and during this 10 year period I was employed (holidays, weekends, midnights, birthdays I worked them all).

I completed about 30 years with the VA medical center in LR, AR. while working in ER, ICU, and the last 20 years in the drug and alcohol section. During this period of return the academic world, I re-enlisted in a MAPS unit at Little Rock AFB, AR. After about 10 years of enlisted service, I transferred to the Army and was commissioned in Army Nurse Corps. I was activated in 2005 and taught the medics going to Afghanistan and Iraq. I ended military service with a little over 30 years with retirement in 2006. I retired completely in 2013.



Kathleen and Dannie at our activation in 2005 (age 55)



Current photo, age 75



Doug’s Comments: Sometimes unknowingly someone can do or say something that has a lifelong impact and they probably had no idea of the consequences. One event that will stay with me forever was when I was on my way home after 18 month in Vietnam. It was shortly after departure from San Francisco on my way to Minneapolis that the pilot made an announcement over the intercom that he wanted to ‘Welcome Home’ the servicemen on board from Vietnam and there was applause throughout the cabin. I strongly suspect that the pilot of that airplane was a former

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Air Force pilot. I still hear those words after all these years as I was sitting there in my uniform, a little sheepishly because I never liked attention to be drawn toward me, but that really made a difference for me. I hope that you have enjoyed reading about all of these heroes. On another subject I just totaled up all the pages of the Phan Rang Newsletter and the astounding total number of pages for 286 issues is **5,981** pages. I never would have thought that starting a newsletter back in 2012 for the purpose of promoting our annual reunion would result in a history of an airbase in the Republic of Vietnam. Admittedly not all the pages are of a historical nature, but there are pages dedicated to our annual reunion and the people that make up what has become known as “The Phan Rang Vietnam Veterans Group”. I’m really proud of what the issues add up to. I’m thankful for the thousand or so contributors from the USA, Europe and Australia that have shared their little piece of history with me and together with news stories from every source imaginable, and the personal stories and bio’s like in this issue, we have created a history like no other that we shared with each other, but now future generations will be able to research through the archives at Ancestry, Fold3, the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University and other history centers that I’ve shared my data with. An added benefit of doing all of this is I feel like I’ve made hundreds of new friends and somehow a few disgruntled ones. So many people have been brought together with a shared appreciation of the sacrifices they made and made friends for life. 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.