

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
“Keeping the memories alive” Newsletter 300

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The Impersonal War

A series by John Bennetts in Vietnam

(The Age, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, March 28, 1968)

Saigon - The American air base at Phan Rang almost fills a flat coastal valley 160 miles north-east of Saigon.

The base is neat and clean, an oasis of order in the desolation that is South Vietnam.

The Americans neither confirm nor deny the story that they have leased the base area for 99 years. But they have built as though they expect to be here for a large part of that time.

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The main strip is 10,000 feet long, suitable for use by the heaviest bombers - or, in peace time, the largest commercial aircraft.

On a gentle slope west of the strip, with fine views of the surrounding hills and the South China Sea, are the living quarters of the 5400 servicemen who staff the base.

The fliers have sound-proofed, windowless air-conditioned rooms in which they can sleep undisturbed in the daytime after flying at night.

Sites are reserved on the base for married quarters and, according to one prominent sign, for a dependants' schools which is “Scheduled for construction in 1971.”

In the officers', sergeants' and men's messes there is stereophonic music and plenty of good food and cold beer. For entertainment there are movies most nights and trips to the beach for swimming and sailing, provided the road is clear of mines and not under Viet Cong sniper fire.

For the men at Phan Rang the war is sometimes close but more often remote.

Air crews return from missions talking about the number of enemy reported killed and the number of structures reported damaged in their bombing and strafing runs.

Sometimes the American F100 fighter bombers and B57 light bombers return from low-level attacks punctured by ground fire or they make crash landings out in the guerilla country. But almost invariably their crews escape injury and are quickly rescued by helicopters.

The Vietnam war is a particularly impersonal affair for the 300 Australians stationed at Phan Rang.

They belong to the RAAF No. 2 Squadron and they fly or service eight Canberra bombers.

For the air crews the main difference between life here and at a base in Australia is separation from their families.

Bombing as they usually do from several thousand feet, the Australians rarely see their targets or the effects of their attacks.

Crews say they worked harder during training in Australia than they do on operations in Vietnam.

When a young Australian pilot walks into the mess and says: “I killed some people today” it is hardly surprising that he sounds a bit off-hand about it.

His only evidence is a bomb damage assessment compiled by a ground patrol or by someone who has inspected his target from a low-flying reconnaissance aircraft.

Canberra bombers first came into service with the RAAF 16 years ago and the Canberras at Phan Rang are about 12 years old. They are almost antiques in comparison with the supersonic fighter-bombers which the Americans have at the base.

But, according to the Canberra pilots, the American supersonics are “lead sleds” which fly only because they have enormously powerful engines.

“A brick outhouse would fly if you put enough power in it, “the Canberra men say, looking scornfully at the dart-shaped F-100, which is able to fly for only two hours and has to be abandoned if its engine stops.

The big-winged Canberra is much slower but it can remain aloft for more than four hours and from sufficient altitude, can glide 50 miles or more and make a safe dead-stick landing.

With a load of World War II 1000-lb, bombs, the Canberra is probably the most reliable and effective strike aircraft operating in South Vietnam.

Although they fly only 4.1 percent of the daylight sorties launched from Phan Rang, the Australian Canberras account for 11.5 per cent of the destruction of enemy structures by Phan Rang-based aircraft.

I flew last week with a crew who, from 4000 feet and a horizontal range of a mile and a half, put a bomb within five metres of the middle of a Viet Cong bunker complex.

The pilot was Squadron Leader Ron Crump, who flew fighters and lectured at Point Cook before joining No. 2 Squadron. The navigator-bombardier was John Gazaley, a quiet mathematical wizard who plays Handel sonatas on a treble recorder in his spare time.

The Australian Canberras are under the control of the United States Seventh Air Force. They are obliged to undertake any bombing mission of which they are technically capable anywhere in South Vietnam except within 10 kilometers of the Cambodian and Laotian borders.

American aircraft at Phan Rang operate right up to the borders. But to avoid disputes with the Cambodian and Laotian Governments, the Australian Government insists that the Canberras must not fly within 10 kilometres of the borders.

Other policy limitations are that the Australian Canberras must not carry napalm and must not cross the border between South and North Vietnam.

The Canberra crews fly about 40 hours a month and more than half their are at night.

The Americans leave much of the night work to the Australians who specialise in the very accurate flying required for radar-guided bombing attacks.

Using the “combat sky spot” technique, the Canberra crews maintain course, altitude and speed with such precision that after flying for up to 150 miles in darkness they put their bombs down within 200 meters of their targets.

On their daylight missions the Canberras are guided to their targets by forward air controllers (FACs), the highly skilled airmen who fly small Cessna aircraft and control all air and artillery strikes within specified areas.

To prevent the bombing of friendly troops or innocent civilians, the FACs are in constant

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communication with ground force commanders and South Vietnamese authorities.

Australian Canberra pilots say they often have to circle for half an hour or longer while the FAC gets Vietnamese permission to bomb an opportunity target such as a source of anti-aircraft fire in an inhabited area.

Wing Commander David Evans, commanding officer of No. 2 Squadron says the frequency of these delays is evidence of the care taken to ensure that allied aircraft do not hit the wrong targets.

Since it has been in Vietnam No. 2 Squadron has been credited with about 200 “kills,” verified by body count. But undoubtedly many more Viet Cong have been entombed in bunkers crushed by Australian bombs.

More importantly, however, the Australian strikes have denied the communists the use of scores of hideouts and strong points.

Thanks to the skill of the squadron engineer, Wing Commander Peter Carter, and his ground staff, the Canberras are better aircraft now than when they were built.

Under the pressure of operational service the “bugs” have been eliminated and the ingenuity of the squadron’s technicians has vastly improved the instrumentation, electrical systems and bomb-handling mechanisms of the Canberras.

In nearly 12 months’ war service the squadron has had to cancel a mission only once because of aircraft unserviceability.

The RAAF does not have the same opportunities or responsibilities as the army for civic action work designed to win Vietnamese hearts and minds.

But the men of No. 2 Squadron have adopted a Roman Catholic orphanage in Phan Rang town.

The squadron’s Chaplin, Father Pat McCormick, organizes supplies of food, medicine, household

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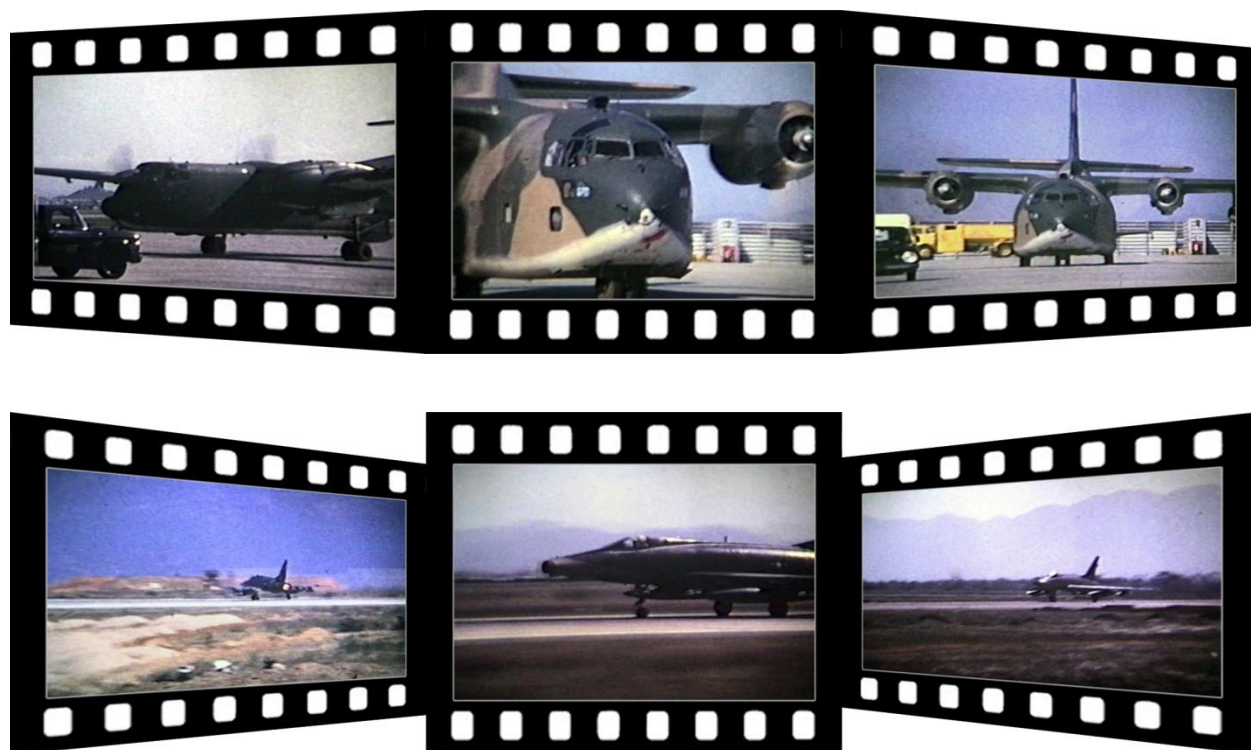
equipment and fire wood.

The squadron medical officer, Flight Lieutenant Rob Rowley, regularly checks the children’s health.

A spraying program carried out by hygiene Sergeant Danny Rayner has rid the orphanage of insect pests and a working party of airmen has installed playground equipment.

No. 2 Squadron’s relationship with the orphanage at Phan Rang offsets to some extent the impersonality of its dealing with the rest of South Vietnam. (*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, Thursday March 28, 1968)

PHAN RANG IN ACTION



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NOW WE KNOW THE OTHER GUY!

Every once in a while a picture is posted to our Phan Rang AB Facebook group that just screams out at you. I don't know if the pose was intentional or what but it joins some of the other classics like “Bummers in a Tree” and “How I learned to Love the Bomb”. Dean Ford posted the picture and he only remembers the guys name on the left to be Randy Hothan. So far some caption suggestions have been “Private Joker”, “Animal Mother” and “Full Metal Jacket During Tet”. I've added the extra art work to the picture. In my opinion Hollywood could not have done a better job. There have been a lot of good pictures from Phan Rang AB, but this photo has to rank near the top!



PAUL K GLASSER has come forward and admitted that the guy on the right is him. So the other guy is **Randy Hothan** and the photographer was **Dean Ford**. Dean Ford took this photo sometime during 1969 in the 435 MMS barracks. Paul said Randy and I were cubicle mates. We have stayed in touch over the years especially around the Holidays. Randy lives in Nebraska, and I live in Washington (state).

Red Guns Down F4, 2 Copters

By SPEC, 4 RONALD MINNIX

SAIGON — Two helicopters and an F4 Phantom were hit by enemy ground fire and crashed, killing 13 soldiers and wounding five others during action in South Vietnam, U.S. officials reported Saturday (8 February 1969).

A U.S. Marine Corps CH46 helicopter on a medical evacuation mission was downed by enemy fire Friday (7 February 1969), five miles northwest of An Hoa in Quang Nam Province. Five U.S. servicemen were killed, two wounded and the helicopter destroyed.

This was the second medical evacuation helicopter downed by enemy fire in 10 days, U.S. officials said.

Officials said that six Korean soldiers were killed along with a U.S. crewman in the downing by enemy fire Thursday (6 February 1969) of a U.S. Army Huey helicopter making a combat assault near Phan Rang, 165 miles northeast of Saigon. Two other U.S. crewmen were wounded.

The Marine Corps Phantom jet was downed Friday north of An Hoa, 40 miles southwest of Da Nang. One of the plane's two crewmen was rescued but the other was killed.

Meanwhile, eight enemy soldiers were killed when helicopters and Air Force fighter-bombers pounded an unknown-size enemy force west of Kontum, 120 miles southeast of Da Nang. The strikes, also destroyed 15 bunkers and five sampans. There were no U.S. casualties.

Farther south, Supersabre pilots from the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing blasted enemy positions near Pleiku, 140 miles southeast of Da Nang, while supporting elements of the 4th Inf. Div. Elsewhere Friday, Supersabre pilots from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, from Phan Rang AB destroyed 15 fortifications, five sampans and two bunkers northeast of Ca Mau, 160 miles southwest of Saigon.

(Pacific Stars & Stripes, Monday, February 10, 1969.)

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Just during this three day period, 6-8 February 1969, 108 American military souls were lost. This statement means that while simply reading statistics about a situation might provide information, it's often only when you see visual representations like pictures that the full impact and emotional weight of the data truly becomes clear and impactful, so here are the victims listed by day:

6 February 1969



Ronald Daniel Briggs



Eugene Christiansen



William Harrison



Robert O'Hara



William Ogden



Donald Parsons



David Padgett



Charles Stanley

7 February 1969



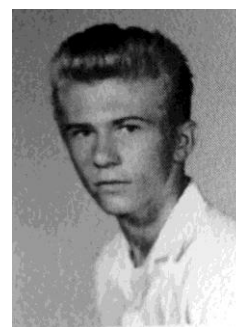
Ernest Bartolina Jr.



Wallace Bergstrom Jr.



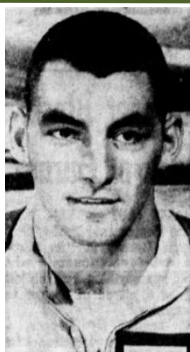
Raymond Glover



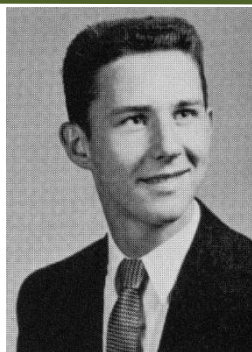
Charles Miller

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Russell Moke



John Prombo



Rodney Shank



Walter Tyrrell



Gary Norman Young



Richard Deleidi

8 February 1969



Thomas Edward Clark



Lloyd Junior Hucks

‘Tramp Steamers’

‘Garbage Run’ in Viet Nam Carries About Everything

by Elizabeth Halstead

SAIGON (UPI "There goes the Garbage Run," said one of the men in the operations Hut at Tan Son Nhut air base, watching the squat C123 transport bustle down the field and boost itself into the air.

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Almost every morning of the week, as the sun is rising over Saigon one of the old C123s, aptly named "Providers," is off for a day of pickups and deliveries that includes everything from bullets to army bands.

The men of the 315th Air Commando Wing fly these and other transports in a war that is almost entirely supplied by air. The plane's on the spot assignments make them the tramp steamers of South Viet Nam. They pick up cargoes at fields little more than jungle clearings and often fly a few yards over rice paddies to drop them.

The crews of these unarmed planes know what the word speed means, and their techniques for shoving cargoes out of the rear doors of the cavernous cargo spaces require timing, team-working and nimble footwork.

I climbed aboard one of the old twin-engine C123s for a day's ride on the "Garbage Run." The plane was loaded with more than 3 1/2 tons of "C" rations, the troops delight, bound for Bac Lieu in the Mekong delta.

Most of the flights are short, and as the plane braked to a stop at Bac Lieu, the boxes of rations, stacked on wheeled pallets, were quickly pushed down the rear ramp as 18 members of a 36-piece Army band waited to board for a 15-minute flight to Soc Trang.

The rest of the band had been delayed after playing a concert for Vietnamese villagers, and so we took off, landed and unloaded them and were back over Bac Lieu in less than 45 minutes, only to lose precious time circling the short, 1,700-foot field as combat helicopters took off for an operation.

BAND WAITING

By the time we landed the other half of the band was waiting and they piled into the back, lugging their tubas and cymbals and clarinets. As soon they scrambled out at Soc Trang we were off again, heading this time for Can Tho where workers were hauling pallets stacked with gas drums and sandbags over to the loading area.

Capt. Alex Ow, 32, of Honolulu, was checked out for the next flight, air drops to an American

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Special Forces camp and South Vietnamese government outposts along the Cambodian border.

The plane's loadmaster, Airman I C. Richard Hannah of Amber, Oklahoma checked the pallets as fast as they were pushed into the plane to make sure the gas barrels were tied down, and then we took off for the jungle outposts.

I was strapped to a support near the back door of the plane as the crew opened it and got ready to shove the load out. We circled the U.S. camp at Cal Cal several times, only about 50 feet above the rice paddies, waiting for a signal from the ground.

Finally the green smoke signal shut up and immediately a red light in the cargo space went on.

Staff Sgt. Brian Hollister of Winchendon, Mass., the flight mechanic, rechecked the safety strap around his waist. He, Hannah and a Vietnamese helper would be pushing the barrels out the back door. They didn't want to follow them.

A buzzer sounded as the plane zoomed low over the paddies and the three men shoved out part of the load. Parachutes attached to the pallets popped open and they floated to the flooded ground where men in small sampans flying the orange Vietnamese flag waited to retrieve them.

The plane banked and came in low again, making repeated passes until the rest of the gas and then the sandbags were dropped. Then back to Can Tho for more and other drops at the South Vietnamese outposts.

It was late when we landed back at Saigon, another "Garbage Run" completed, as different from yesterday as it would be from tomorrow. Somewhere else there were gas and food, vehicles and pigs. Vietnamese civilians, U.S. troops and ammunition to be hauled.

Our airlift schedule is based on the Viet Cong," said Col. Robert T. Simpson, commander of the 315th. "When combat increases we just fly more."
(*The Times, Shreveport, Louisiana, Sunday, September 11, 1966*)

MAGPIE 61 CIRCLES HIGH ABOVE THE CANALS AND PADDIES OF SOUTH VIETNAM

(The Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, Monday, September 16, 1968)

The R.A.A.F. Canberra circles 24,000 feet above the canals and paddies of South

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Vietnam’s Mekong Delta and calls for the FAC (Forward Air Control) to make out the bombing target.

“Magpie 61 here, we have two 500 lb. bombs for you,” the bomber pilot radios.

The unseen FAC pilot answers: “Great, Magpie 61. I think we can put them to good use. You see where the river breaks out to the east of that township. Your target is on the south bank of the first canal after the turn-off. I’ll drop some smoke for you.”

The FAC’s light aircraft swoops down and marks the target area - a complex of surface military structures - with a smoke bomb. Meanwhile the Canberra has come down to its bombing level of 3,000 feet.

“Well, there’s someone down there for sure,” the FAC pilot calls.

“I saw a fair bit of tracer whizzing past then, but it shouldn’t bother you too much at your altitude. You see my smoke? The target’s just 30 metres to the right from where you are now.

“I’d like you to drop your 500 pounders first. Do you want to do a trial run?”

The R.A.A.F. pilot answers that he does and the navigator wriggles up to the nose-cone of the jet and peers down through his bombing sights.

They finish the trial run and the FAC swoops down to place another marker.

The navigator directs the pilot in over the target.

“Right. Little ore right. Right. Steady. Steady. Steady-steady. Steady-steady. Bombs away.”

The FAC swoops low over the bombed target area and reports: “That was fine 61m now I want you to drop the one thousand about 30 metres to the right and give them 75 metres spacing.”

The Canberra comes in again and repeats the bombing procedure.

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The explosions give the jet a slight jolt, and the black smoke billows up and drifts away exposing a great black burnt scar in the green landscape.

“Oh that was just great 61, I’ll give you three structures destroyed and one damaged and one bunker destroyed. Look forward to working with you again.”

The Canberra returns to Phan Rang where the 260 men of No. 2 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force are based on the coastline some 170 miles north-east of Saigon.

Veteran Planes

There are eight of the more than 14-year-old Canberras at Phan Rang Air Base which the Australians share with four squadrons of F-100 super Sabre fighter-bombers and one squadron of B-57 bombers of the U.S. Air Force 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

The 500 and 1,000lb bombs are from Australia’s World War II stockpile. They have the only 1,000lb bombs in Vietnam, but the supply is almost exhausted now, and they will soon switch to the American’s 750lb bombs.

Despite the age of the aircraft and bombs, the Australian squadron’s performance compares more than favourably with the American effort.

According to U.S. figures, in the 15 months that the Australians have been at Phan Rang, No 2 Squadron has carried out eight per cent of the total sorties and scored 15 per cent of the bomb damage assessment.

The Australians have dropped more than 25,000 bombs - all World War II stock - hitting some 5,500 targets.

(By John Nance at Phan Rang.)

Roanoke Native Killed in Crash in S. Vietnam

VIRGINIA BEACH - A young Air Force officer from Virginia Beach, a Roanoke native, 1st Lt.

Dwaine E. Mattox, has been killed in Vietnam.



Mattox, 26, was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Willard E. Mattox of the 1700 block of Wolfsnare Road.

According to his father, Mattox was killed when his plane crashed in Cam Ranh Bay. Details as to whether the plane was shot down by enemy fire or crashed by accident haven't been received.

Mattox had been in Vietnam only four weeks when he was killed.

He was graduated from Princess Anne High School in 1962, attended North Carolina Wesleyan College and received a BS degree from North Carolina State University.

He was born in Roanoke and moved with his parents to Virginia Beach in 1951, Both parents are natives of Roanoke.

In addition to his parents, Mattox is survived by a brother, David K. Mattox, and a sister, Mrs. Karen Mattox Howell.

(The World-News, Roanoke, Virginia, Friday, August 14, 1970)

Note: Additional information about this incident can be found in Phan Rang Newsletter 155 “Casualty List for Ninh Thuan Province”, Phan Rang Newsletter 197 “Chronological List of all Aircraft Losses for Phan Rang AB” and Phan Rang Newsletter 143 “AF Plane Crashes at Cam Ranh AB” and a memorial to Dwaine in Phan Rang Newsletter 196.

For me it's hard to let this story go because Dwaine and I would have been the same age, but not only that, I just want to record every detail for prosperity that I had on Dwaine and those individuals who's life's he touched. Some of these details may also have been covered in Phan Rang News 196.

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John Anthony Ward who wrote the tribute to Dwaine said that he and Dwaine were paired up with an instructor pilot, Grant Reed Waugh for a week. We were being trained for upgrade to Aircraft Commander on the C-123 after we arrived at Phan Rang, since we both had prior flight experience from our previous assignments. What that training entailed was to have each of us to fly the left seat with an instructor in the right seat acting as co-pilot. During a regular cargo mission of as many as 8 to 10 flights a day, we would swap seats giving each of us left seat experience. We trained that way for a week. The following week we were split up, with one continuing with the instructor to complete training, and the other was assigned to fly with a line Aircraft commander for that week. John was selected for the later, and the first day of that arrangement is when the mishap occurred.

David “Keith” Mattox, the only surviving brother of still keeps in touch with John Ward and most recently thanked him for writing the tribute to his brother. He also remains a close friend of Dwaine’s hootch mate, Stan Fleener Jr. who went on to become a pilot with South West airlines after Vietnam. Stan and I remain in contact from time to time and Stan shared a wealth of info as he and Dwaine went through C-123 training together in Ohio as buddies. Marie Agrifoglio, the wife of Robert, the only survivor of the crash at Cam Ranh Bay still share emails and I’m proud to say that Marie and I also remain in contact with each other.

A photo collage of pictures of Dwaine, his girl friend and his siblings.





Parrish Brothers Serve in Vietnam

Ardmore Daily Ardmoreite Ardmore, Oklahoma, Feb. 23, 1969



GARY W. PARRISH

Capt. Gary Wayne Parrish, 23, son of Mrs. Christine Chandler, Dallas, and nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fulton, Wilson, is on duty at Phan Rang, Vietnam.

He graduated from Wilson High School in 1963, having played football for three years and making All-State fullback. After having attended North Texas State University, he enlisted in the Army in 1966 and took his basic training at Ft. Polk, La.

Parrish completed OCS at Ft. Sill in 1967. He was then stationed in Nuremburg, Germany, for 17 months. He went to Vietnam in October 1968. He was promoted to Captain on Jan. 18, 1969. His wife, Janet, and daughter, Vicki, reside in Denton, Tex.

Capt. Parrish's address is HHB, 2nd Btr, 320 Arty., 101st ABN Div. Arty., APO, San Francisco, Calif. 96383.



LONNIE W. PARRISH

Lt. Lonnie W. Parrish, III, 25, son of Mrs. Christine Chandler, Dallas, and the nephew of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fulton, Wilson, is presently stationed at Phan Rang, Vietnam.

Lt. Parrish attended Wilson High School for three years and graduated from Ft. Lauderdale High School in 1961. He received his B.S. degree in business administration from North Texas State University in 1967.

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In August 1968 he graduated from jet pilot training school at Big Spring, Tex. He was sent to Vietnam, Dec. 31, 1968.

His wife, Susan, resides in Wichita, Kan.

Parrish’s address is 310th S.O.S., Box 7378, San Francisco, Calif. 96321.

AWARDS

(The Buffalo News, Buffalo, New York, Thursday June 10, 1971)

William P. Bedore, staff sergeant, 3826 River, Youngstown, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

John V. Rinker, sergeant, Cuba, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

John E. Renninger, sergeant, 863 Pioneer, North Tonawanda, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Paul F. Gaylor, sergeant, 4 Ward, LeRoy, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Patrick A. O’Connor, airman 1/C, 845 Onidea, Lewiston, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

John C. Donhauser, airman 1/C, Springville, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

RETIREMENT

(Burlington, N.C. Times-News, Wednesday, February 28, 1996)

A retirement ceremony was held for Lt. Col. James W. Kinney, chaplain at Keesler Air Force Base recently. A native of Winston-Salem, he is the son of Annie Mae Kinney of Burlington and the late Rev. Paul G. Kinney.

He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina and the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C. He did graduate study in counseling at St. Mary’s University in San

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Antonio, Texas. Ordained a Lutheran pastor in 1963, he served civilian churches before being commissioned an Air Force Chaplain in 1968. He served at Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, with other overseas tours in Italy, Australia and Turkey, and temporary duty in Saudi Arabia, and became chaplain at Moody Air Force Base in Ga. in 1985. His awards include the Bronze Star, and Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with five Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Force Commendation Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters.



HOTEL REGISTRATION INFORMATION FOR THE 2025 PHAN RANG VIETNAM VETERANS REUNION

HOUSTON, TX. 2-4 OCTOBER

CROWNE PLAZA HOUSTON MED CTR-GALLERIA AREA HOTEL INFORMATION

- **ROOM RATE \$109 FOR KING OR QUEEN**
- **BREAKFAST IS INCLUDED FOR UP TO 2 PEOPLE PER ROOM, PER DAY**
- **OVERNIGHT PARKING IS DISCOUNTED TO \$15 PER VEHICLE, PER NIGHT**
- **COMP WIFI IN ALL GROUP GUESTROOMS**
- **RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE AT THE SUPPLIED LINK FOR GROUP RATE**
- **RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE SEPTEMBER 12**

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MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW



AUTHORIZED SITE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS CAN BE
ACCESSED BY USING THE QR CODE (ON THE LEFT) OR
CLICKING ON THIS LINK.

[MAKE RESERVATIONS HERE](#)



All books are available on Amazon.com. (Search: Phan Rang) Each book is approximately 400 pages or over and is hard cover, and represents just 2,000 pages of the approximately 7,000 pages and still counting of the Phan Rang Newsletters.



Doug's Comments: This newsletter was researched and composed by Douglas Severt. 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.