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315th Air Commando Wing Gets A New Commander (*PHANFARE, August 13, 1967*)

Colonel Bill M Richardson, 46, from Russellville, Ky., has become commander of the 315th Air Commando Wing, where C-123 Provider transports bring supplies to Army Special Forces camps all over South Vietnam.

A B-26 bomber pilot in World War II, the colonel has eight months in Vietnam. His comment on taking over the wings: "It's a very fine outfit...I have some good people to work with."

The colonel's appointment as commander comes as a time of major changes for the Provided unit, which has four airlift squadrons and a squadron which specializes in defoliation operations to deny the cover of forest and other hiding places to the enemy.

Recently the wing moved its headquarters and the majority of its personnel and aircraft to Phan Rang Air Base in a move designed to consolidate its major maintenance operations at a single base.

The wing's 'B' model Providers are currently being replaced by improved 'K' models from the United States. The new models, according to Col. Richardson, have two additional jet engines which comprise a "significant safety factor". The presence of these engines 'pays off' said Col. Richardson, "in taking off from short landing strips with heavy loads."

The air commando wing's C-123's use approximately 150 runways and landing strips all over South Vietnam. They fly approximately 945,000 miles per month, and in the process they airlift approximately 25,000 tons of cargo and at least 70,000 passengers to places all over the country.

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The airlift squadrons, Col. Richardson stated, provide a "a regular airline schedule" for troops in Vietnam. These squadrons also deliver "combat-essential war cargo" with or without a parachute.

Base Receives Huge Gold Trophy for Best Mission Support in 7th AF (PHANFARE, August 23, 1967)

Major General Gordon W. Graham, outgoing vice-commander of 7th Air Force, recently presented a huge gold trophy to Phan Rang Air Base symbolizing victory in a new quarterly 7th Air Force competition to determine which of its bases is providing the best mission support.



The ceremony took place beneath American, Vietnamese, and Australian Flags outside the recently completed headquarters of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

Colonel Lewis R. Riley, base commander, has placed the trophy, which stands almost three feet high, at the entrance to his office. The 50-year-old native of Kansas City, Mo.

Said "Without the high morale, and everyone pitching in and doing his job, we would never have won it."

Ten bases in South Vietnam competed for the award, which Colonel Riley described as being directed by the commander of 7th AF.

The base commander said the award is based on points scored in a management control system encompassing "the various activities across the base in support of the mission."

"You know Phan Rang is noted across Southeast Asia for its high morale," he continued, "and this high morale is what goes to make this management control system a going proposition."

He noted that recreational facilities and base appearance and maintenance were two of the more important categories in the point system for this award.

Other categories included: specialty knowledge testing, officer effectiveness reports, motor vehicle 'down' time (denoting vehicles temporarily out of commission), ground safety, and effectiveness of navigational aids.

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"We went out to win it, and we won it," said Colonel Riley about the new award. "I don't think it was any great surprise."

Tuy Hoa scored second in the 7th AF contest and Pleiku was third.

Named as the winner of the award was 35th Combat Support Group of Phan Rang.

35th CES Building Snazzy 'LOX' Plant (*PhanFare, August 23, 1967*)

Phan Rang Air Base will soon have the latest model (LOX) Liquid Oxygen Generating plant in South Vietnam. The five ton plant which is being constructed wholly by Air Force personnel under the supervision of a factory technical representative is programmed to be operational in 90 days.

Phan Rang Air Base has many uses for liquid oxygen. First and foremost, is the large quantity needed by fighter and bomber crews who have to have oxygen during many of their combat missions. Next in importance is the base hospital where it is used to treat lung infections and diseases. It is also used to run cutting and welding torches in Phan Rang's many service organizations.

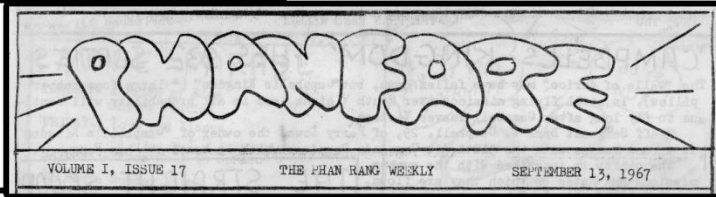
According to Master Sergeant George W. Becker, 37, of Pitman, New Jersey, the Air Force Inspector on the project for Seventh Air Force, "Installation work on the new plant is proceeding rapidly and barring no unexpected material difficulties, the construction of the physical plant should be finished on time."

The concrete slab for the plant was laid by the 35th Civil Engineer Squadron at Phan Rang and all plumbing and wiring work on the project was accomplished by the same organization.

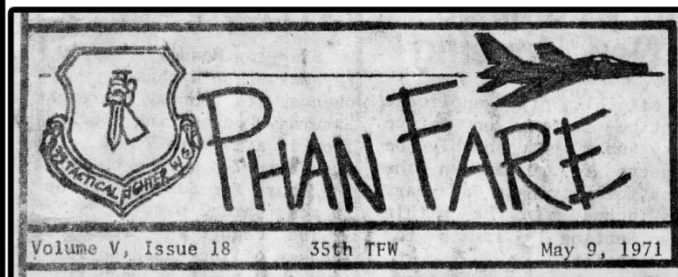
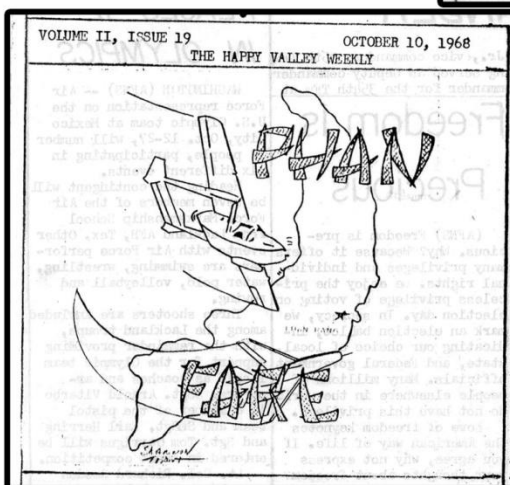
The PHANFARE masthead Evolution



1967



1968



1971

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TALES OF PHAN RANG



BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR

Tales of Phan Rang (Part 5) by Robert Chappellear

Tales of Phan Rang

Published by Robert L. Chappellear at Smashwords
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An account of the author's one year tour of duty flying C-123 cargo aircraft in Viet Nam. Provides descriptions of life in country and the missions that were flown.

This book is a description of that year providing an insight into what it was like to live and fly in that conflict and during that time of the war.

About Robert Chappellear

Retired from two careers, the first was as a fighter pilot for the USAF; the second as a system engineer for a defense contractor. Accumulated 6000 hours of flying time in 7 different operational assignments including three tours to Asia and one to Europe. As an engineer I worked on the airborne command post, nuclear aircraft carriers, presidential helicopters, and various other communication systems.

Married with three sons and one step daughter and three grandchildren (1 grandson, and 2 granddaughters). Though I have made 36 moves during my lifetime I am now settled in Minnesota. Looking forward to additional traveling throughout the United States after my wife's retirement in two years.



Chapter 6 – Katum

We used to re-supply Special Forces camps and artillery fire support bases that were very close to the Cambodian or Laotian borders. One of the fire support bases located close to the Cambodian border down in III Corps was known as Katum. This base was located almost directly north of Saigon and within a few hundred feet of the border. Landing at this base could be extremely nerve wracking due to the knowledge that we were sure to be shot at on the way in and on the way out as well as mortared on the ground.

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Enroute to Kontom.



Flying over the Central Highlands of South Vietnam.

Of course, the aircraft load for these missions was always 3 cargo pallets or 15,000 pounds of high explosive 105 millimeter artillery rounds.

Adrenaline levels were usually pretty high for these missions for we all remembered the scenes



of a C-130 being struck by a mortar round at Khe Sahn. Just to emphasize this point there was the wreckage of a C-123 lying a couple hundred yards short of the dirt runway at Kotum. I never did find out what happened to the crew of that airplane.

Anyway, for these missions which we called "Boom Boom Shuffles" we did a lot of in the air preparation, even more than the standard "before descent, approach to field, and before

landing" checklist. For instance we secured the cargo in the front of the cargo bay with something called a "chain gate", but used loose easily, disconnected restraints in the rear of the cargo. This was to allow for rapid off loading once we got on the ground. Then the loadmaster would open the rear cargo door, and lower the cargo ramp part way before we even began the final approach. We always landed from south to north at Kotum (Cambodia was only 100 yards off the north end of the runway and in those days we did not "violate" Cambodian airspace.) For the same reason we always took off from north to south. Matter of fact the entire operation started from 7000 feet above the ground and went from there through a 360 descending left turn to a short final approach, to touchdown and roll out (with the loadmaster lowering the ramp the rest of the way). We flew what was called an "assault landing" and we never stopped the aircraft, instead we slowed to turn off the runway into a offload area where the loadmaster and crew chief would push the load out the back while the airplane was on the move, turn back on to the runway, and immediately take off to the south. The loadmaster would raise the ramp and close the cargo door while we were on departure and they always said that if the cargo door was closed before we were airborne then we were on the ground too long! We were usually followed down the runway by exploding mortar shells both during the landing and during the takeoff. As I remarked, "I often wondered and sometimes still wonder what happened to the crew of that other C-123."

This whole procedure made for interesting moments. On one of these Kotum missions as we taxied and off loaded through the gravel "parking" area I saw two grunts come running out of a bunker located just to the side of the taxiway. They both had rucksacks in hand and I could see without a doubt that they were both Americans. However, I had heard nothing about any expected passengers and I kept taxiing even though at a comparatively slow speed.

The loadmaster shouted, "Hoo Haa Lieutenant, keep on moving!" as we rounded the corner back on to the runway and I continued the take off roll.

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As I leveled off at about 5000 feet something attracted my attention at the door from the cargo bay to the cockpit. I looked to my lower right rear and saw a beaming and smiling face looking up at me. It was an Army Specialist 4th Class who then told me that he had finished his tour and was on his way home after his year in Nam. He said that normally the Army guys would be picked up at the fire support base by helicopter but there was not a helicopter available that day to pick up him or his friend. He told me that he had warned his friend that we (the C-123s) would not be on the ground long and that they should be ready to run us down if they expected to get to Ton Son Nhut and to catch the Freedom Bird home.

He then said, "I told him but, he didn't move fast enough!"

We dropped off the specialist at the PAX Terminal at Ton Son Nut and then taxied over to the "Hot Cargo" loading area and loaded on another 15,000 pounds of high explosive 105 millimeter artillery shells. We then made another sortie into Katum and this time I was watching for the other guy who was going home and I taxied through the off load area especially slow and the loadmaster, flight engineer and I made sure that the other Army Specialist made it on board.

We made a total of 14 sorties into Katum that day and this was the average for the "Boom Boom Shuffle". I don't know why but I got such a perverse sort of pleasure from this mission and volunteered to fly it often.

There was a tradition in the wing that each individual got to request the mission and the crew that they flew with on their "Fini Flight" or the last mission that they flew in-country.

Now it was not common to fly with the same crew in Vietnam. Usually the squadron schedulers just picked the next available aircraft commander, co-pilot, navigator, flight engineer, or loadmaster available to fill a schedule. Someone in our wing determined that at least for administrative purposes it was appropriate to create "dedicated crews". Administratively this allowed for a commissioned officer (the aircraft commander) to write Officer Efficiency Reports (OERs) on the co-pilot, and Efficiency Reports (ERs) on the no-commissioned officers (NCOs) that were flight engineers and loadmasters. However, for this dedicated crew and evaluation system to make sense it was necessary that we all fly together at least occasionally. I found that the persons that I had been "crewed" with were personable and quite capable in their jobs. I mention that because I had a crewed loadmaster that was related to a guy who had the initials of LBJ. This loadmaster was a National Guardsman that had originally been deployed to Vietnam as a munitions handler. The story that we heard was that his notoriety and an envious supervisor resulted in the young man asking for reassignment and cross training. He did not try to use his "political pull" to get the assignment curtailed but rather he requested to cross train in-country to be a C-123 loadmaster. He accomplished this and then we became "crewed".

So there we were flying over South Vietnam when this loadmaster came over the intercom and says, "Hey Lieutenant, this is load."

I replied, "Yeah load, go ahead,"

He says, "I'm going to fly my Fini Flight next week will you be my aircraft commander"?

Like a smart ass I answered, "Yeah, I'll do it as long as we fly the "Boom Boom Shuffle".

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He said, "OK"

And we did. Successfully apparently; seeing as how I am here to tell the story, and I understand he is a successful attorney in Texas.

Phan Rang AB Gets ARC Unit (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, Aug. 26, 1967*)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (7AF) —The American Red Cross recently opened its new \$24,000 recreation facility at Phan Rang air base. The structure, constructed by a team from the 554th Civil Eng. Sq. (Red Horse), was officially opened with a 'busting in' ceremony.

'Busting in' was Airman 1.C. William G. Peterson, 22, who gained the honor of breaking through an aluminum foil barrier stretched across the main entrance.

An Ageless Queen Reigns Over the Delta (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, July 26, 1969*)

By T.SGT, ART DENES

BINH THUY AB, Vietnam Special) — This air base is a home fit for a queen. A queen whose realm is the vast Mekong Delta.

Her title is "The Delta Queen," but she is not ordinary royalty.

The Delta Queen is a 1943 twin-engine Douglas ('47 Skytrain and in her 26 years she has flown nearly two million miles.

Her majesty's consort is Maj. Gene G. Cowles of Demon, Tex. brought her to his new kingdom in August 1968. Since then she has been assigned to the 632nd Combat Support Group and has logged more than 600 flight hours in her role as a support aircraft.

Before coming to Binh Thuy, the C47 was used to transport diplomats on Taiwan. Cowles picked up the aircraft at Clark AB, Philippines.

"The name originated among the pilots," explains Maj. Cyril K. LaFraneis of Orlando, Fla., co-pilot of the Queen. "The drawing of a lady was designed and painted on the side of the plane by S.Sgt, Francis Ramos of Lincoln, Calif, one of our two crew chiefs."

Another attendant to the Queen is S.Sgt. Calvin W. Beeghly, Bolivar, Mo., the other crew chief. "We keep her in good shape," explains Beeghly. "When we taxi into another field

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and park beside other 47's she really shines."

The Delta Queen's throne is a steel revetment on the flightline. The plane's shiny silver exterior makes her stand out in contrast to the camouflage colors of the AC-47 Spooky gunships parked nearby.

The C-47 has always been praised for its ability to fly nearly anything, anywhere, under any conditions and the Delta Queen is no exception.

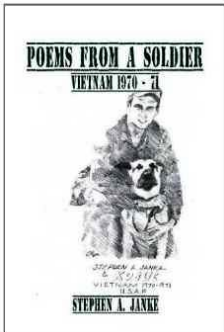
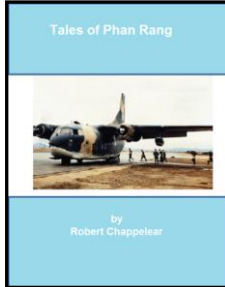
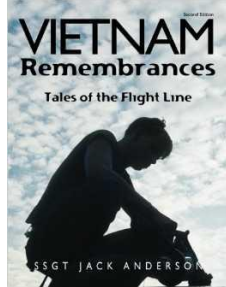
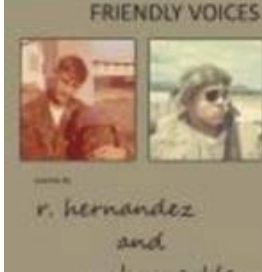
"We've hauled everything from hamburgers to electrical generators since the Queen has been here," said Cowles.

For years the C-47 also has been lauded for its flying characteristics. Again the Queen has proven that her age has not lessened her abilities.

The plane was enroute to Singapore recently when the number-two engine developed a persistent backfire. Cowles was forced to shut down the engine. He explained, however, that with only one engine the Queen still retained her poise and made a normal landing for repair at the Royal Malaysian AFB in Kwantan, Malaysia.

The Queen's role as a support aircraft keeps her airborne an average of 60 hours a month, flying nearly 10,000 miles.

Authors in our Midst

			
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The 2014 "Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB Reunion

The 2014 "Happy Valley" Phan Rang AB Reunion

Where: DoubleTree by Hilton, Reid Park, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson AZ

When: October 9-11

Single/Double rate \$99

Banquet 11 October in the Bonsai Room



You may now make your hotel reservations for the reunion. Click on the Double Tree logo above and it will take you to the Phan Rang AB Reunion Web Site. Please make your reservations early which will help us greatly in the planning process and also to insure that everyone that wants to attend gets the reunion rate. This is a smaller hotel than the previous year, so we have to watch it very carefully. Remember if circumstances prevent you from attending you can always cancel within 24 hours of your check-in date. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact [me](#).

Articles and graphics are compiled by Douglas Severt from many sources. Most of the pictures are from the 'Happy Valley' Phan Rang AB Facebook group, posted by members of that group.