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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**

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**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](#).**

### **Belly-Landing of B-57 Praised** (*PHANFARE, August 23, 1967*)

Fellow pilots have hailed the skill of Captain Donald C. Orlando, 31, from Middlesex, NJ., in making a smooth and successful belly-landing here recently when his B-57 jet bomber's nose gear malfunctioned after a night strike.

A veteran of 160 combat missions in North and South Vietnam, Captain Orlando added "I was very fortunate in that the aircraft stopped in about 2,000 feet with very little damage to the underside of the fuselage."

The emergency began when he was unable to get the gear to extend while making a radar-controlled landing approach upon returning from a night interdiction bombing run.

"Fire crews on the base foamed the runway...to preclude the possibility of fire on landing, since the bottom of the fuselage would be scraping the concrete." Added Capt. Orlando, the fire teams were there as soon as the aircraft stopped. Everyone commented on how smooth a landing it was."

A wing safety official praised the pilot for making a successful landing despite the reduced vision and depth perception encountered in night landings.

The captain's emergency procedures included jettisoning of external ordnance. Then during the landing approach, he jettisoned his canopy to prepare for a fast exit.

### **C-123's Drop Paratroops Near Base** (*PHANFARE, August 23, 1967*)

Anyone looking up above the NCO Open Mess shortly after 8 a.m. on Monday saw a C-123 of the 309th Air Commando Squadron dropping a sting of Army paratroopers into a valley four miles beyond the perimeter of the base.

It was the third day of such paratrooper drops, as the air commando unit teamed up with the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to bring about jump-qualification of over 40 members of the Army and several Navy frogmen.

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The prelude to these jumps occurred on Monday, August 14, as Lt. Col. Quintin P. Sunday, commander of the support battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, and more than 40 qualified paratroopers of the unit jumped from a C-123 to test the new 'paratrooper school' program.

This is the first time that the new K-model C-123's, boasting two jet engines as well as the regular two prop engines, have been used for paratroops of Army troops.

Maj. William Robinson of the tactical operations branch of the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Commando Wing said "the K-models provide more safety for the paratroopers than the old B-model, and climb a lot faster."

He added that the school is a real innovation since Army paratroops are usually trained at jump schools back in the U. S. In this case, he explained, the Phan Rang jump school enables the Army to jump-qualify men who recently came into the unit from other units.

The major said that the training jumps were preceded by Army security team sweeps in the area to make sure there were no Viet Cong or cobras around.

Each trainee made five jumps. The C-123's made a series of drops in which 173 jumps were carried out on Saturday, 136 Sunday, and 174 Monday. "A few sprained ankles" were the only injuries recorded.

Major Robinson said the Army plans to hold the new school once a month from now on.

Co. Bill M. Richardson, Commander of the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Commando Wing, and Maj. Dick Mead, a top instructor pilot in the 309th ACS, carried out the C-123 paratroop missions with Capt. Patrick Tinsman and Major Idelson of the 309<sup>th</sup> as their navigators.

"We like to work with drops," Major Idelson commented. "The 101<sup>st</sup> is an outfit anybody would like to work with at any time."

The drops were carried out from an altitude of 1,250 feet. It took the C-123's only 20 minutes to drop planeloads of 45 to 50 paratroopers and get set for their next loads.

### **Largest 'AOM' in Vietnam Opens With Crowd of 2,500 On Hand** (*PHANFARE, August 13, 1967*)

2,500 Airmen were on hand for the grand opening of the new Phan Rang Airmen's Open Mess. Colonel James A. Wilson, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing commander cut the blue ribbon on August 11th at 7 p.m. officially opening the new facility.

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**Phan Rang AB Airman's Open Mess. Photo by Max Smith.**

Prior to last Friday's dedication, Phan Rang airmen were using a temporary facility which was constructed when the base was in its first stages of development.

The new AOM facility, formerly Phan Rang's first messhall had

been turned over to club officials in July for conversion into a modern AOM facility.

Master Sergeant Bobby B. Wolfe, the club manager said "that the \$25,000 conversion job which was completed in 41 days now gives Phan Rang Air Base the largest Airmen's Open Mess in Vietnam. He went on to say that "the new club can accommodate 3,500 airmen as opposed to 700 before the new club was opened."



**The Patio at the Airman's Club.**

Facilities in the new club include: a modern two chair barbershop, a complete snack bar and dining room, game room and a 140 sq. ft. patio equipped with a large stage. The new stage was designed with large musical and stage shows in mind and will allow for all types

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of entertainment.

Future plans for the new club, include: the installation of air-conditioning and the construction of a large swimming pool.

The clubs old facility will be turned into a game room and reading lounge for the enjoyment of members and their guests.

Two musical groups were on hand to entertain and a good time was had by all.

**With the Military Services** (*Delaware County (PA.) Daily Times, October 1966*)

Airman 1. C. Wayne R. Smith, whose parents live at 2717 Forwood St. Chester, has received the Air Medal at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam.

Smith was decorated for meritorious achievement during military flights in Vietnam. He is a graduate of Chester High School and attended the University of Delaware.

Airman S. C. William N. Westerberg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Westerberg of 31 S. Wells Ave., Glenolden is on duty at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. A 1962 graduate of Interboro High School, he arrived in Vietnam eight months ago.

## **TALES OF PHAN RANG**



**BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR**

### **Tales of Phan Rang (Part 8) by Robert Chappelear**

Tales of Phan Rang  
Published by Robert L. Chappelear 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 Chappelle

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.

### Chapter 8 - Rach Gia

Were there any times when I thought I might not come home? Of course there were such times. A special memorable incident involves the crash of our aircraft at a rather austere landing strip in southern Viet Nam.



Rach Gia was a little airdrome in the Viet Nam delta region. This was a 2000 foot pierced steel matting runway built on a dirt pile in the middle of the rice paddies. There were no PAX terminals, control towers, permanently based aircraft or troops. This runway was surrounded on all sides by a lake and we jokingly referred to this airfield as the "aircraft carrier". Our mission on the day of this incident involved delivering 15,000 gallons of jet fuel to this airfield.

Our C123 was loaded with a large rubber "bladder", a powered pump, and a length of 6 inch diameter hose that was used to transfer the jet fuel in our cargo bay to similar rubber bladders that laid in sandbag revetments

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alongside the runway. This fuel was then used by Army helicopters.

For this mission I was flying as co-pilot. The aircraft commander and I both noticed piles of dirt at the approach end of the runway - apparently an attempt was being made to "improve" this runway by trying to lengthen the island on which it was built. The piles of dirt were reported to be about 6 feet tall. However, as we passed over the threshold of the runway there was a loud BANG and the aircraft lurched. The aircraft commander continued the flair and touchdown. As the aircraft settled to the ground the right side continued to go down and the right wing dipped and dragged in the water on the right side of the runway. There was sound of tearing metal and screeches, and sparks were flying. I looked to the right and saw that the propeller was bashing into the steel matting runway and bending back, just like you see in the movies. I also noticed that there were piles of dirt on the sides of the runway, and as I watched, the jet engine suspended from the right wingtip was ripped off when it struck one of those piles of dirt. All of a sudden the aircraft spun to the right and headed for the lake. We made a full 90 degree right turn and came to a stop with the nose of the aircraft in the lake, and water up to the lower sill of the cockpit windows (and the cockpit on a C-123 is normally 14 feet above the runway). I saw the loadmaster spraying the right engine with a fire extinguisher and then the aircraft commander and I performed the engine shut down checklist and evacuated the aircraft. The flight engineer had opened the access panel and disconnected the series of batteries that are located in the left main landing gear wheel well and all three of us ran out the rear cargo door.

The four of us on the crew looked at each other, saw no blood, burns, or broken bones and then looked back at the aircraft. The aircraft was nose first about half way into the lake with the tail sticking up at about a 20 degree angle, the right side was limped over with the right main landing gear ground off, and we could see that the belly was ripped open. The right reciprocating engine looked OK but the propeller had all three blades bent back along the outer 2 feet and the jet engine was laying in the shallow part of the lake about 1000 feet back up the runway.



**C-123 taking off from Rach Gia.**

I had flown in and out of Rach Gia probably 30 or 40 times before this incident occurred and had never seen another aircraft or even a person there. This time, for some strange reason, there was another C-123. That crew was delivering beans and bullets or something and per our usual practice at this base had just offloaded the cargo in the turn around area at the end of the runway.

That crew shut down their

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engines and came out to see us. They confirmed that the right main landing gear had struck a dirt pile at the approach end (the piles were 10 to 15 feet tall, not 6) and then the gear collapsed as we touched down. They remarked that it made an outstanding fireworks display as we slid down the runway. They were ordered to depart if they could get around our wreckage and they did. We were airlifted out by a C-7 Caribou about three hours later and flew to Soc Trang where we changed to a C-130 and traveled to Ton Son Nhut that night. We got to debrief at 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters the next day and returned to Phan Rang the day after.

**To be continued.**

**VNAF to Get Phan Rang** (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Sunday Feb. 6, 1972*)

**SAIGON (UPI)** — The U.S. Air Force will turn over the sprawling \$60 million air base at Phan Rang, on South Vietnam's central coast, to the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) next month, the U.S. command announced Friday.

The transfer of the base, built in 1966, will leave only two major bases in Vietnam under American control — Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay.

Phan Rang, 165 miles northeast of Saigon, was headquarters of the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force's 315th Tactical Airlift Wing. Some units of the wing will remain operational to assist in the transfer. But the command said all American flying units at Phan Rang have been inactivated, redeployed to the United States or reassigned within Vietnam.

**Sgt. Horihan at Phan Rang** (*Winona Sunday News, February 2, 196\_*)

**Hokah, Minn - Sgt.** Edward R. Horihan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Horihan, Hokah, Rt. 1, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Sgt. Horihan, an air armament mechanic, is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to Williams AFB, Ariz.



**\$300,000 Automatic Dial System is 'Go'** (*PHANFARE, August 16<sup>1</sup>, 1967*)

A \$300,000 automatic dial telephone system revolutionizing communications on base went into operation yesterday. According to Capt. Donald Terrell, chief of telecommunications in the 1882<sup>nd</sup> Communications Squadron, said that about 550 of the projected 1,000 lines of the new system have been activated.

These cover the cantonment side of the base. The remaining 450 lines, on the 'flightline' side of the base, will be activated in "three to five month."

"It's almost going to be Stateside," said the officer, noting that the conversion to the new system was carried out by 1882<sup>nd</sup> Comm. Sq. personnel. Key roles were played by Capt. D. W. Autry, MSgt. N. H. Holifield, and TSgt. Clyde R. Mayo.

Actual construction of the new system was handled by the 485<sup>th</sup> Ground Electronics Engineering Installations Agency Sq. of Cam Rahn Bay. About 550 new telephone directories are available and can be picked up at the base communications building alongside the BX.

**Let the Air Force Solve the Problem** (*PHANFARE, August 16, 1967*)

(Editor's note: At the request of the director of personnel and the consolidated base personnel office, PHANFARE offers the following excerpts from a column written by Col. Earl L. Johnson, commander of the 823<sup>rd</sup> Air Division at Homestead AFB, Fla.)

"Congressmen do not exercise executive authority in Air Force matters. They do ask questions about complaints they receive from Air Force personnel and they do get answers...answers any of you would get if you ask questions of your base inspector general.

"I emphasize again that anyone may write his congressman without fear of reprisal action; however, in the interest of speed and economy, I urge all of you to use our Air Force established facilities to air your grievances...You might be surprised to find your problem can be solved quickly. Let's all try to run our Air Force ourselves."

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<sup>1</sup> This issue of PHANFARE had a date of August 13<sup>th</sup> on the first page and on the second page, the reverse side, the date was the 16<sup>th</sup>. No dates on pages 3 and 4. Page 5 is 16 August and on page 6, the reverse side, the date was 13 August.

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*(Doug's musings...when I read this I thought of the high number of troops that take their own lives in today's military and wondered what was different in our generation because I don't remember it being such a problem then? Were we better able to cope or did we watch out for each other better?)*

**S&S Hiker on Most Perilous Leg of Trip...Few Convoys; Jungles Ahead** (*Pacific Stars & Stripes Monday, September 29, 1969*)

(Editor's note: Stars and Stripes Vietnam staff correspondent Jim Clare began the final and most dangerous leg Sunday of his 500-mile hitchhiking journey from the Demilitarized Zone to Saigon.

(Clare, 25 an Army Specialist four TOY to Stripes from the Inf. Div., arrived in Phan Rang, 165 miles northeast of the capital Saturday and prepared to set out on the final stretch of Highway 1 through an area where U.S. convoys are scarce, the road is winding and the jungles are thick.

(Clare left the DMZ Sept. 20, unarmed and carrying only cameras and backpack, and traveling in everything from an ice cream truck to armed convoys has covered the first 335 miles of the highway without incident. From Phan Rang, he filed this report):

By SPEC. 4 JIM CLARE

DA NANG TO NHA TRANG ALONG HIGH-WAY ONE, Vietnam—In water-base fields the Vietnamese are harvesting rice now because of early rains. They cut the shoots, then spread the grain in large, cane-woven frisbees to dry in the sun.

Past this goes Highway One, and military vehicles—say, a truck carrying ice cream and a hitchhiker who is trying to go from the Demilitarized Zone to Saigon.

By Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Nha Trang, the highlands elbow to the sea, crowding the road to the coast, the hills intimidating on the right and dropping off to the sea rocks just beyond the driver's left shoulder.

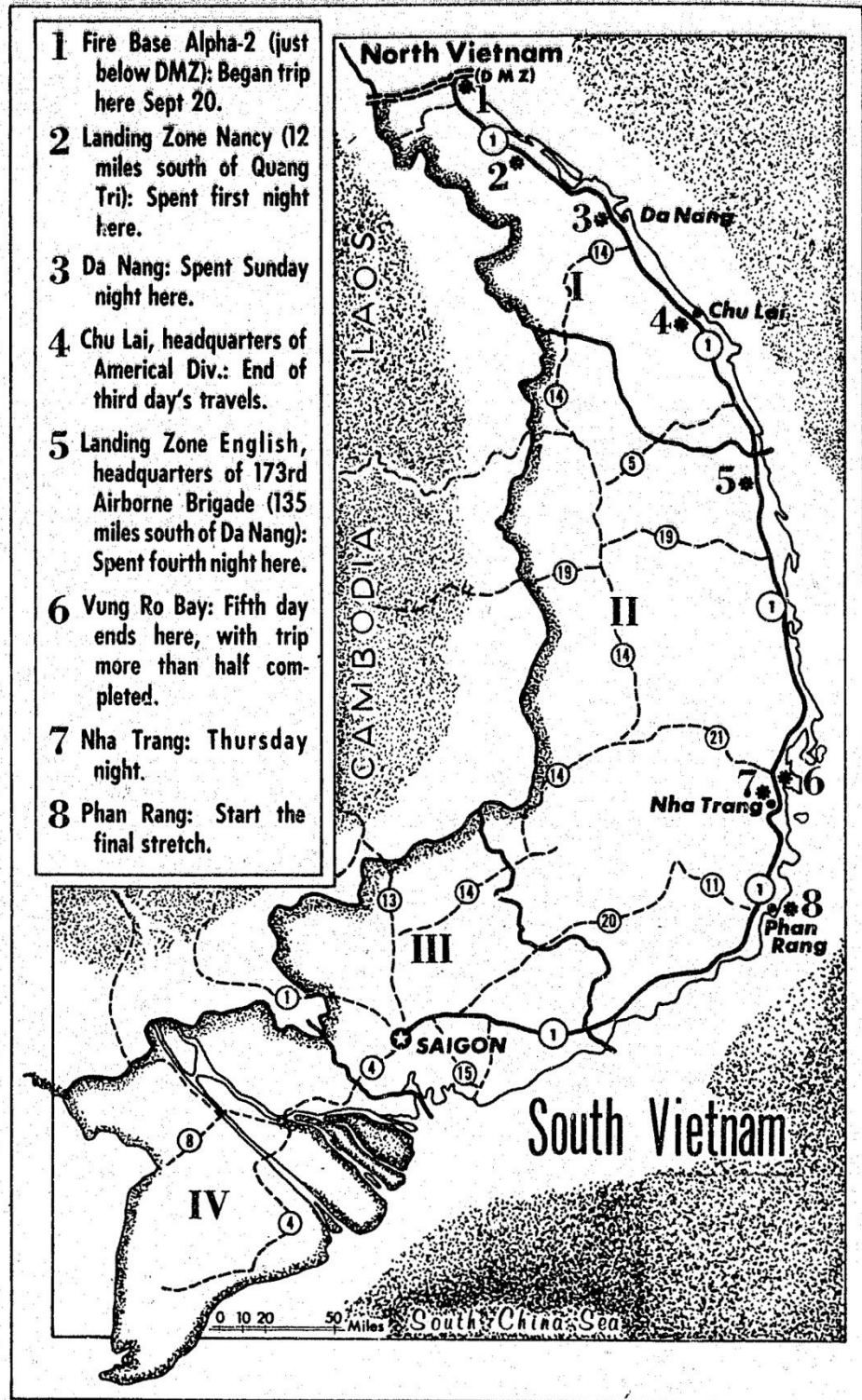
And where the road humps over the hill south of Qui Nhon, Vietnamese vegetable farms follow in step, terraced up and down the passes.

The road has changes, too. A lot of it is freeway paved. But parts are so torn up it's a wonder water buffalo aren't trapped in the pot holes.

The existence of a small scale deep water port at Vung Ro Bay says something about the road's condition. Ammunition and supplies are taken off ships at Vung Ro and trucked 15 miles north to the Army and Air Force at Tuy Hoa.

The large deep water port at Cam Ranh Bay is only some 100 miles south of Tuy Hoa, but Highway One between the two ports wasn't dependable for resupply because a section of it is now unpaved and susceptible to ambush.

But this section, along with most of the unimproved sections of Highway One, is being fixed up. From Dong Ha to Nha Trang, U.S. Army engineers, Marines, Seabees, RMK-BRJ construction men, and Korean civilian contractors are all working on different parts of the road.



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Where the road has been improved, other changes follow. "This end of town is new since the road was paved," said a 173rd Airborne Brigade trooper as he drove past new brick buildings in Bong Son just south of the brigade's LZ English. "Look," he pointed to a building called the Bamboo Inn, that looked exactly like numerous bars called the Bamboo Inn back in the United States.

There are also large differences in the lifestyles of the Americans who live along Highway One.

A MACV adviser at Dien Ban lives in a small outpost, teaches English in the district high school.

At Chu Lai there is a \$20,000 handball court. At LZ English there isn't, even a PX.

At Chu Lai during the night men working the second shift sit typing in offices, while beside the stage at the base of the deserted amphitheater a soldier in Special Services and a Red Cross girl sit facing each other singing folk songs. Up from the amphitheater on a hill by the sea you hear the noise from the clubs, the sound track from a movie and the pounding of a handball.

LZ English and Vung Ro Bay also have clubs and movies, but after dark at LZ English a lot of men go out to the perimeter, sit by the bunkers, and look at the night.

There are also different viewpoints about security along Highway One. Soldiers at Vung Ro Bay carry M14's even when walking inside the base. But Barney Jones, an RMK-BRJ safety engineer, drove unarmed from Vung Ro to Nha Trang. His main concern was that the Workmen along the way get their hard hats on, and close the doors when they get out of their trucks.

Before, I had ridden with U.S. military vehicles, but I went along with Jones because I'd waited all morning and no one was going to Nha Trang, and from noon to 3:30 p.m. there would be blasting on the road and only RMK trucks could get through.

Besides, if you can't depend on a safety engineer, who can you trust?

**'Ho Chi' Makes His Daily Rounds** (*PHANFARE, August 23, 1967*)

Keeping on the move is a must for SSgt. Donald B. Carl, 30, from Pittsburg, Pa., who travels about 150 miles within the perimeter of the base each day as unclassified-distribution courier.

"I know everyone on base...just about," said the sergeant, whose 'office' is a metro truck in which he delivers from 300 to 500 letters, folders, and packages each day to 'every organization on base.' He makes 84 stops each day.

He spends two hours 'breaking down' the incoming unclassified items for base units when he makes his pick-up at the post office, twice daily.

One of his jobs is playing paper boy since he distributes the Stars and Stripes.

The well-known face of the sergeant is adorned with a thick black brush mustache. "They call me Ho Chi" he grinned. Ho Chi, is assistant by A1C Oscar Scott, 24, from Jersey City, N.J.



Taking a break. Added by Bret Staggs

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### Authors in our Midst



**Rob Morris**

Click [here](#) to see all of his published books that are available on Amazon.

***Untold Valor: Forgotten Stories of American Bomber Crewmen in Europe in World War Two*** (Potomac, 2006)

***Combat Bombardier: Memoirs of Two Combat Tours Over Europe in World War Two*** (with Leonard Herman) (Xlibris, 2007)

***Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond: The 95th Bomb Group in War and Peace*** (Potomac, 2012)

***Untold Valor: The Second World War in the Pacific*** (Fonthill, 2014)

***The Civil War Chronicles*** (Instinctive UK, 2013)

***Presidents of the USA*** (Instinctive UK, 2013)

#### Not shown on Amazon but also his:

***501 Jazz Greats*** (Barrons UK) (Contributing Writer)

***The Battle of Gettysburg*** (Instinctive UK)

#### Magazine articles in:

*World War Two History Magazine*

*Dispatches*

#### Upcoming publications:

***Marinell: The Story of a P-51 and the People Who Knew Her***

***Dancing Through History: The Football Life of Ron McDole*** (ghost-writer)

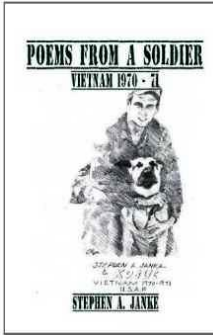
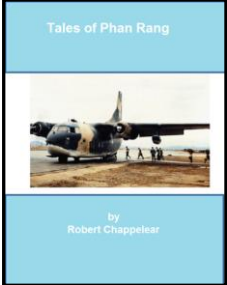
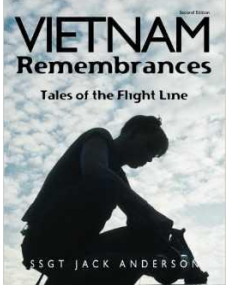
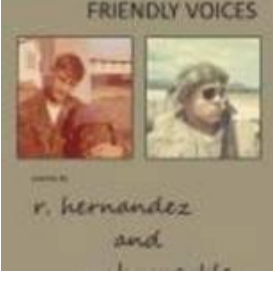
***The Spooky Gunship Story***



Mike Trahan, "**The Gift Part Two - The Air Force Years**", featuring the Spooky Cover, is now available on Amazon.com in Paperback and Kindle. It contains a personal account of our mission out of Nha Trang and Phan Rang during the last nine months of USAF AC-47 operations in Vietnam.



Click [here](#) to buy.

			
<p>By Steve Janke...<a href="#">click to buy book</a></p>	<p>By Robert Chappellear...<a href="#">click to buy</a></p>	<p>By Jack Anderson...<a href="#">click to buy book</a></p>	<p>By Vic Markle...<a href="#">click to buy book</a></p>

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. Any complaints or compliments can be directed to [me](#).