

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
...keeping the memories alive**

Phan Rang News No. 34

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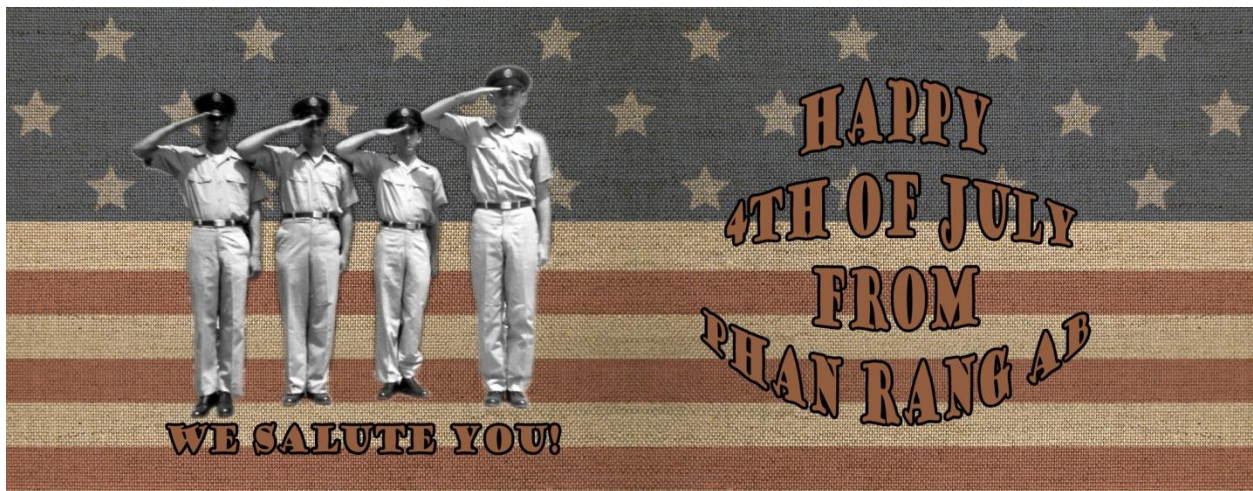
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From a photo by Robert Kellington. From left to right: Robert Kellington, Ron Mowry, Ross Osenbeagu and Tim Cosgrove

My Apology

(I need to start with an apology. I had been promising that I would have pricing information for the reunion events in time for this newsletter, however there are still things to be worked out before I can release anything. The Tucson guys are working very hard at getting the museum and AMARG Bone Yard tour pricing and information and I still have more information and negotiation I need to do with the hotel and catering manager for our banquet. I just heard from the Public Affairs office at Davis-Monthan AFB and that changed everything! The way it

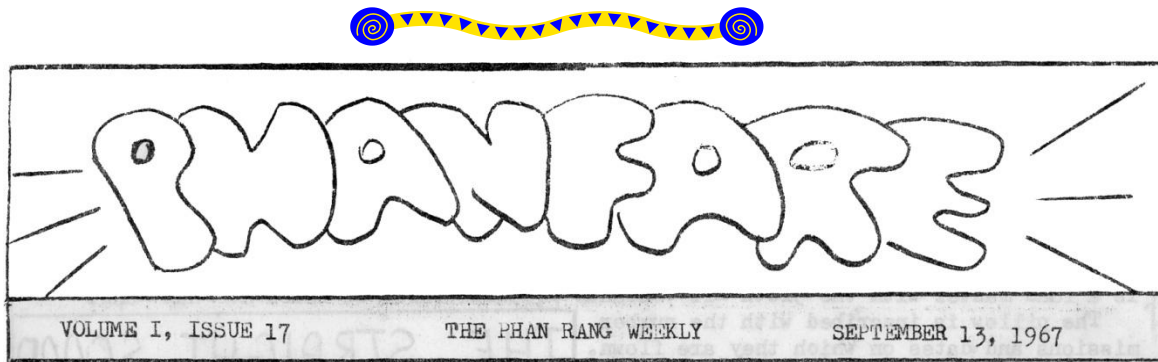
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looks now is on Friday, 10 October we are going to have a base tour of Davis-Monthan AFB and AMARG. The base tour is going to be limited to the capacity of one bus, so we will probably get a 53 passenger bus. The base tour will take us anywhere we want to go, so when we start signup we'll ask for your interest because public affairs has told us they will take us anywhere we want to go. The caveat is if we want to go on the flight line we have to transfer to a government bus. After the base tour the bus will go to AMARG for the bone yard portion of the tour and then to the Pima Air and Space Museum. For us they will stop and you can get out and look and touch the airplanes, unlike the bone yard tour that originates from the museum. Because it's going to be such a long day we could just go back to the hotel after the bone yard tour and for those that wished to visit the museum could do so on the following day.

On Saturday 11 Oct. we will have the Pima Air and Space Museum. The bone yard tour is not available on weekends.

I'm working on the entire reunion schedule so that when all the information comes in that will all come together as well. One other thing...there was a time when we ran out of double-occupancy room at the DoubleTree, but that is no longer the case. If you tried to make reservations and couldn't, please try again. I'm hoping that by next week at this time I will have the information out that you will need to complete your reunion planning.)



Reporter Flies Along on Colorful C-123 Mission (*PHANFARE, September 13, 1967*)

By: SSgt. Joe L. Bond

“I can feel that this is going to be a hot one,” said the small thin Captain upon entering the 310th Air Commando Squadron operations office. This comment was made at 615 A. M. He continued "Lieutenant Rasmusson (the Co-Pilot) where are we going today?"

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- Sir we are scheduled into Nha Trang, Pleiku, and a special forces camp on the Cambodian border.

Staff Sergeant B. W. Campbell, the loadmaster, who was standing near the water cooler, greeted both officers and said "three more trips and I go home",

The small sleepy eyed captain, told the sergeant not to worry as most of the trip over Vietnam Central highlands would be at sufficient altitude to avoid ground fire. Sergeant Campbell smiled and patted "Campbells Kingdom" a large foam rubber pillow, which has been with the sergeant on every mission he has flown over South Vietnam.

The pillow is appropriately inscribed with all missions and dates flown. The sergeant considers the pillow a good luck piece.

Following a short, but comprehensive briefing on the area, the crew as going into, the men boarded trucks, and rode to aircraft number 291.

After checking the aircraft over, A1C Curtis A. Isham, the flight engineer on the C-123 told Capt. J. N. Dole, pre-flight checks were complete and the engines could be started.

The huge engines turned over and started to catch hold, smoke and unburned gas rushed to the rear of the airplane in the wake of the turning props.

As a matter of routine the engines were run up and functional checks were completed before the start of the days mission. The Captain tried to feather both props (streamlining the prop blades to reduce drag in the event of an engine failure), the left engine would not feather and the aircraft commander, Capt. Dole, decided to shut down the engines and have the prop repaired.

An Air Force repair crew showed up shortly and 45 minutes later we were airborne. Loaded with six huge crates, the powerful C-123 steady gained altitude and leveled out at 3, 500 feet.

On arrival at Nha Trang Air Base, the huge cargo doors opened and three yellow fork lift trucks lined up and unloaded the cargo. Following the unloading, aircraft 291 taxed to the Special Forces Loading area.

An Army sergeant came rushing up and handed the loadmaster a six page cargo manifest. On the Manifest, was the darndest varies of commodities any one could imagine: four crates of pumpkin; four live cows; three pallets of unhappy chickens; seven cases of rations, and one pallet of tomatoes.

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Airman Isham, the flight engineer was out inspecting the engines and decided that we had a propeller oil leak on the right engine. According to Capt. Dole, the seal around the propeller governor was leaking and it would be an hour or two before mission number 29 could be resumed.

Capt. Dole decided lunch was in order, and all crew members boarded a flight line vehicle and headed for the officer's club and the mess hall.

Returning to the aircraft was accomplished on foot and everything from women to the most current news from the states was discussed. Morale in a C-123 crew is extremely high, considering the fact that there is little or no glory involved in hauling cows, chickens and other semi-war type cargo.

The aircraft maintenance people were just finishing up, when the crew returned; the ever present paper work was signed off and the mechanic who was soaked from head to toe and covered with grease smiled and departed.

The Special Forces cargo was loaded, all but one “Vietnamese cow) who had decided she did not need any flight time. She broke loose from two Vietnamese handlers, knocked them down and headed for the churning propellers of a C-7A aircraft which was starting to taxi. The cow stopped short of the propellers and a Texas round-up Vietnamese style, started.

Berthas as we will call her ran into a storage yard; two Americans tried to stop her, but decided better, when she pointed both long sharp horns at them and charged.

At this time, the Special Forces people sounded retreat and the cow charged onto the base flight line.

Fifteen minutes later, Bertha was listed as AWOL, and written down as missing a movement. The C-123 took off minus one cow and headed for Pleiku, which was approximately 50 minutes flying time away. The chickens cackled, the lone rooster crowed, and the cows mooed all the way to Pleiku.

Upon landing at Pleiku, the crew took in a long breath of fresh air and dropped off a box or two. Upon leaving Pleiku, we headed for Plei Djereng, and the Special Forces camp, where the cows and chickens would become the property of the Montagnard people who work with the Special Forces people.

The heavily loaded C-123 landed at the forward operating base and came to a stop. After taxiing into the unloading area, the cargo door was opened by SSgt. Campbell and 30 Montagnard soldiers rushed on board to claim the cow, chickens and food.

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Having unloaded the livestock, the C-123 took off to practice an airdrop. This is done quite frequently to keep the C-123 Provider crews proficient, as they are required to airdrop ammunition into the same camps when they are under enemy fire.

Upon returning to the strip, one three quarter ton truck was loaded for the return trip to Nha



Returning home to Phan Rang.

Trang, where it would be repaired and returned to Special Forces Camp at a later date.

Following a short stop at Nha Trang, the empty C-123 flew back to Phan Rang and made a very, very good landing. Campbell's Kingdom, was appropriately marked and mission number 29 went into the history books.

Crew weapons and flak vests were turned in and everybody headed for Snoopy's the 310th small but comfortable snack bar.

Sergeant Campbell now was down to two missions (he has flown 766 similar sorties) in the past year.

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Friendship Standing the Test of Time *(Comments by Jack Anderson)*

“The three of us in the background of the photoshopped photo are Ray Hudek, myself (Jack Anderson) and Denny Hawley. It was taken Tuesday, November 26, 1968. The foreground, of course is Denny (Denny has a whole chapter in Jack’s book...chapter 2) and I taken at the Phan Rang AB Reunion, Dayton, OH. 2012. Since I lived in Seattle in 1968 and our Port Call was at McChord AFB, I invited the two of them and a third guy, Chuck Barker to come spend Monday night with me at my folks. Denny and Ray took me up on it, Chuck decided to spend his



last night at home with his family. The following Thursday was Thanksgiving Day, so my mom decided Monday night would be Thanksgiving Day at our house in 1968. I must say, we ate until we were too stuffed to take another bite! The following morning we slipped into our 1405's in spite of it being cold and blustery in late November in Seattle.

I tell of this story in my chapter called "**The Long Road to Vietnam.**"

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Ray Hudek left us in December 2011, they both are prominent in my book, "**Vietnam Remembrances - Tales of the Flight Line.**" RIP Ray. Denny, I'll see you at the Phan Rang Reunion in October in Tucson!"

Doug's comments: Vietnam Remembrances is a book that transports you back to Vietnam and Phan Rang. There were times when I was reading it that I had to put it down for awhile because I felt like I had to get back to reality. I think his stories are in some ways our stories because we experienced so many of the same things.

Let me give you just a little example of what I mean. Yes, I have the author's permission to do so. This is from Chapter 4 '**Finally! Vietnam Bound**'.

"The moment we stepped through the plane's door onto the deplaning ramp, the suffocating heat hit us. We each did a stutter step backwards, as though we'd been slapped fiercely in the face, before we reluctantly continued forward. Within steps of the door, as we descended the ramp, we could feel the sweat running down our bodies; our shirts became damp as our bodies' cooling mechanisms kicked into high gear before we reached the landing. Sweat soaked into our underwear and socks, drops of sweat welled under our armpits and ran down our sides and legs. It was as though we had stepped from Seattle in November to the tropics with one step. We all breathed deeply, trying to find oxygen in the stagnant air. We would eventually become used to the heat, but that would take days, perhaps weeks. Right now we were FNGs (for non-military types, the NG stands for New Guys; I don't feel a need to explain the rest), trying to cope with oppressive heat and humidity unlike anything any of us had ever experienced before that moment."

"Upon hitting the tarmac, we were loaded onto a bus and taken to the transient center. We then found out our plane wasn't scheduled to take off for Phan Rang until later that afternoon, some twelve hours away."

"After checking in to the transit counter and checking our gear, the four of us decided to take a walk around the base and look things over. None of us could believe how scorching hot it was. We would soon become accustomed to the heat, sweat, and constant dampness of our bodies, but now it was new, suffocating, and downright irritating."

"Regardless of the heat, we had been sitting for far too long since Japan and needed to stretch our legs. We were also anxious to gather more information about this strange, new environment we had entered. We headed outside the transit hanger to look thing over. During this walk, I first noticed the "Vietnam smell!" It's a smell something like rotting canvas. It followed us everywhere for the next year. Every once in a while, even now, I'll get a whiff of

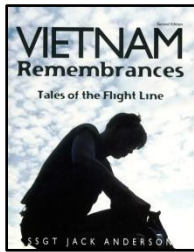
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that smell somewhere and stop in my tracks. My mind immediately transports me back to "the 'Nam." "That smell has never left me."

“We must have been wide-eyed FNGs during that walk, as we gawked and rubbernecked at everything. Green canvas and camouflaged paint surrounded us. We noticed the obvious focus of those around us. Guys hustled around in jeeps, trucks, and flight line vans, trying to get men, the occasional woman, and supplies out to where they were needed most. Cam Rahn was a supply depot and transient center. Many of the troops and materials used in Vietnam came through there. The activity and motion went nonstop. This wasn't the States, Dorothy.”

“We knew we were now in a different, strange, and unknown world; one we were soon to become very familiar with.”



That's it for now. Jack has given me permission to include other chapters from his book, and they will appear in future issues of the Phan Rang News. My year and a half at Phan Rang was mostly occupied by work and I didn't have much time to explore and experience what others did, mostly on the flight line, because that's where I worked, but after reading this book I can see Mike, Denny, Jack and the others just like they are straight out of my memories.

Click on the book or [here](#) to order yours.

Swift Boat Saves Pilots (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Thursday, August 8, 1968*)

SAIGON (Special) — Crew members of a U.S. Navy Swift boat operating out of Cat Lo rescued two Air Force pilots when their F-100 Supersabre went down 21 miles south of Phan Rang.

The pilots, attached to the 6114th Tactical Fighter Sq. at Phan Rang AB, began having trouble with their plane and headed for the coastline, broadcasting a "Mayday" distress signal.

Once over water, the pilots ejected. The Navy Swift boat, PCF 53, on routine Market Time patrol, spotted the two parachutes and rescued the men.

Meanwhile, a rescue helicopter was scrambled at Phan Rang AB. About 25 minutes later, the helicopter picked up the two men from the Swift boat and returned them to the base, uninjured and in good condition.

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Two Men From Area Honored For Military Service (*Florence Morning News, Monday, July 24, 1967*)

Airman 1.C. William H. Melton, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. j. Melton of Florence, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, as a metalsmith. . .

Maj. Gerald B. Youmans, whose sister, Lois R. Youmans, resides in Florence, is serving temporary duty at Phan Rang AB, as a B-57 Canberra pilot.

New Member of 821st Combat Security Police Squadron (*The Altoona Mirror, Altoona, PA., Tuesday, October 8, 1968*)

Airman 1.C. R. J. Vassas

VIETNAM — Air Force Airman 1. C. Richard J. Vassas, son of Mrs. Marie A. Vassas of 314 Craig St., Gallitzin, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base.

Airman Vassas is a member of the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron, an elite unit that has-been specially trained to repel enemy aggression and provide air base security.

The Phan Rang unit will be held in constant readiness to supplement the defense forces of any U.S. air base in the combat zone which night come under an enemy attack. The airman is a graduate of Greater Gallitzin Joint High School.

Tales of Phan Rang (part 9)

TALES OF PHAN RANG



BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR

Tales of Phan Rang (Part 9) 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.

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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.

Chapter 9 - Airdrops

Air drops were special events in their own right. We didn't drop many people, matter of fact I never air dropped a person. But, I had my share of cows, chickens, pigs, and goats. We would drop these critters in cages mounted to cargo pallets and parachutes on the pallets. The cages or the critters would be protected with padding or suspension straps to prevent injury when the pallets landed.

These airdrops were always to remote ARVN or Montangard villages that lacked electricity and refrigeration. They were also to rather small “drop zones”, something about the size of a half football field. On these missions we usually had one steer that was not “protected” with caging material or padding. We knew that these steers were intended for immediate slaughter and butchering so it was not necessary to prevent landing injury to this selected “paratrooper”. The size of the drop zone and the delivery of live animals made for some unique procedures.

Airdrops were one of two missions on which we would have the fifth crewmember. This would be a navigator who was supposed to be experienced in delivering cargo by parachute. In the States, paradrops of cargo were conducted at 1000 or 1200 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) and they were conducted into large drop zones. The navigator' responsibilities were to compute an “air release point” based on forecast or reported winds if available. Then help direct the aircraft commander to that point in the sky and command the release of the cargo. Knowing the winds and characteristics of the cargo chutes that we used it was possible to pretty accurately compute these parameters, of course using a 3 mile by 4 mile drop zone also made it rather difficult to miss. However, the extremely small drop zones in Vietnam required some modifications to this technique. For instance, the loadmasters used tape all the static

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lines together using masking tape. This meant that the parachutes on all three pallets would open together instead of “stringing out” like you see in the movies. Thus the entire cargo load would descend to earth in a tighter grouping than that of the standard type of airdrop.

The ACs would help this grouping also by flying a special type of pattern that was modeled after the fighter 360 degree overhead landing pattern. Specifically, we would line up with the drop zone on the planned airdrop heading and fly directly overhead at 7000 feet AGL. Every now and then we would rollup on the left wing and look down so that we could tell when we were exactly overhead. While we did this the loadmaster would build a “chain gate” at the front of the cargo, put a cargo “stop” at the rear, and loose all other tie downs on the pallets. He would also open the cargo door and usually lower the cargo ramp to make it parallel to the cargo bay floor. The loadmaster would then take a seat behind the paratroop door on either side of the cargo bay. Loadmasters were also smart enough to wear a harness and make sure that they were attached to the aircraft by a “pigtail” while participating in these airdrops.

When directly overhead the intended drop zone, the AC would go into a 60 degree descending

left bank turn, roll out momentarily on a downwind leg, and then go into a descending left turn to set up for a final approach to the drop zone. As I said this whole maneuver looks a lot up to this point like a fighter aircraft landing pattern. Just like a fighter we would roll out on final at about a mile and a quarter at about 400 feet AGL. We would continue a descent as if it were a landing until we got to about 100 feet where we would level off and proceed straight across the drop zone. The navigators that we carried on these missions were supposed to estimate 10 seconds from the drop and call, “10 seconds” over the intercom and at this point the loadmaster would remove the rear restraint from the cargo pallets. Then the navigators would give a five second countdown to the “green light”. At three seconds the co-pilot would start to bring the jets to full military power and at the call of “Green Light” the AC would start the nose up, advance the reciprocating engines to full METO power, and bring the nose up to a minimum of 60 degrees nose high. This maneuver caused the pallets of cargo to exit the cargo bay in one group and it also occurred close enough to the ground that the parachutes had enough time to open, the load would swing once, and then be on the ground within the confines of the small drop zones.

Very quickly the aircraft would be back to about 5000 feet AGL and now the AC is pushing the nose over maneuvering back to level flight. Sometimes the aircraft would go zero “G” in this maneuver just like the C-135 called the “Vomit Comet” that is used to expose the Astronauts to zero “G”. Matter of fact there is a rumor that at least one loadmaster floated out the rear of the aircraft during this zero “G” period. That is the reason that loadmasters wore “pigtails” on airdrop missions – so that they could pull themselves back into the airplane if they “floated out”.

Loadmasters had an additional duty when we were dropping steers. They would use the

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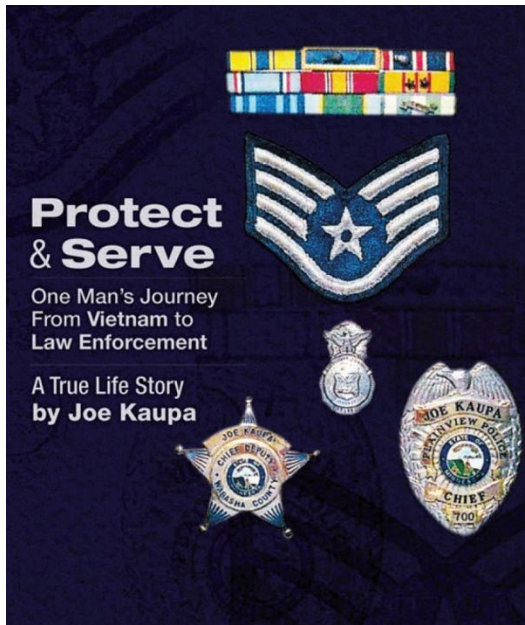
emergency escape crash axe and by smacking the steer right between the eyes attempt to stun the animal before it went out the back. This was because the steers would lose control of their “bodily functions” as they slipped over the edge of the ramp and entered the surly blue skies. Fifteen seconds, didn’t really work so then it was dropped to 10 seconds, then 5 and finally 3 seconds before we started to pull the nose up. Even so there were times when the steer would let go and everything would fly. Something little known to most people is that just like a convertible when the top is down, the breeze in an airplane when the cargo door is open, blows from the back to the front, and “cow pies” have been known to get all the way up to the cockpit. I even saw one come all the up from the back of the cargo bay and smack the co-pilot right in the side of the head. That is why I always closed my window when we were still at 7000 feet AGL before the drop.

TALES OF PHAN RANG



BY ROBERT CHAPELEAR

Protect & Serve - One Man’s Journey from Vietnam to Law Enforcement



Joe Kaupa starts his story by telling about his experience in Vietnam as a Security Policeman. “I was stationed at Phan Rang from May 1968 to May 1969. During my year at Phan Rang we received over 500 incoming Rocket and Mortar Rounds. The base also had many probes on the perimeter and one major ground sapper attack during the Tet Offensive on Jan 26, 1969 and the book goes into detail of that attack. I was assigned to the 35th Security Police Squadron and worked nights on "Panther Flight". The story tells of working on the base perimeter, SAT Team, Water Point (Off Base) and Central Security Control (CSC). This is a true story of the life of a young man growing up in rural Southeastern Minnesota, graduating from Plainview High School, joining the military immediately after

graduation, getting married to his childhood sweetheart, starting to raise a family and getting his orders to Vietnam. The book tells the story of his long year in Vietnam and what he and his fellow Vietnam Brothers went through. The final part of the story tells of his twenty-nine years

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as a law enforcement officer in rural Minnesota and the true experiences that he dealt with-- the sadness, the pain, and the stress-- Dangerous situations that not only happen in big cities, but also in small rural cities also. Readers will have a better understanding of what the Vietnam soldier went through and what a police officer and his family goes through each and every day. After reading this book, they will have a greater respect for the men and women that wear the badge. This is a true story, I know, because this is my story.

To buy Joe’s book, click [here](#).

More 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

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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...click to buy book</p>	<p>By Robert Chappellear...click to buy</p>	<p>By Jack Anderson...click to buy book</p>	<p>By Vic Markle...click to buy book</p>

Why the Phan Rang News?

Phan Rang News is compiled by Douglas Severt from various sources. Many of the articles come from material furnished to me by Kirk Minert and Joseph Burkhart and I thank them for trusting me with their precious documents and memorabilia. I originally started this venture to garner interest for the Phan Rang AB ‘Happy Valley’ reunions, but it has grown into more than that. Certainly it’s been a medium to keep the memories alive, but it’s also a way for those of us who were lucky enough to be stationed at Phan Rang AB to remain connected and to tell our stories.