

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

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Phan Rang News No. 37

**“Stories worth telling”**

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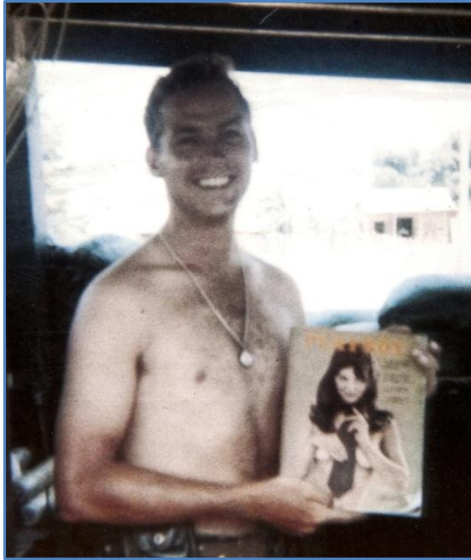
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**Phan Rang As I Remember It - by Pat O'Connor**

Pat had previously told us about some of the guys he remembers from Vietnam in Phan Rang News 36 and now he reminisces about just shortly before arriving in Vietnam.



**Pat O'Connor at the front guard post at the water point outside of the base.**

Prior to receiving orders to go to Nam, I first had to do a TDY Tour in 1967 in Guam.

We left March AFB in a KC 135. A number of hours after takeoff we landed on the main Island of Hawaii to refuel. We had to carry the old style 30 caliber Carbines with us. While walking into the food court area, I was stunned at how crowded it was. Every seat at the tables was taken, except for one. There was one girl at that table and the empty seat was directly across from her. I took my hat off and placed it on the chair and asked her if she would save me a seat. She said sure will. Any way it took almost 30 minutes to walk through the crowded line to order and get the food. When I went back to the table where the girl was saving me a seat, everyone was gone.

After eating my food I went out to the waiting area for our continuing flight to Guam. All of a sudden I felt two hands run through my hair and end up covering my eyes. It was the girl who was at that table earlier. She made comments on how much she loved my hair. Then read my

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name tag and said. Are you related to Donald O'Connor the actor? I said yes I am, he's my father. Then said you're going to Viet Nam aren't you. I said no I'm going to Guam for 6 months. So she asked, If Donald O'Connor is your father, why are you in the Military? So my response was "I told my father that I wanted to do my part with all the other service members". Don't know whether she bought that line or not. So we talked awhile longer, and they called for us to board our plane. She hugged me, and I walked through a guarded gate, was half way to the plane and heard someone yell halt. It was the gate guard telling the girl I met to stop, but she broke through, ran up to me jumped into my arms, kissed me and said, I'll look for your return in six months.

Needless to say a bunch of guys saw her jump on me, and did I ever get harassed on the plane. Truth is Donald O'Connor is my father's name, but he wasn't the actor. Several hours later we landed in Guam. I remember reading the sign over the terminal that read. Haffa Day. I thought to myself you mean this Island only has 'Half a day'?

So our duty assignment guarding B-52's and KC 135's was over before we knew it. Our return flight home in another KC 135 was a good one until we were about two hours out of March AFB. We had all just finished our sea rations and the aircraft lost cabin pressure at 38,000 feet. The pilot made a very quick descent to around 10,000 feet to stabilize the pressure. All of us lost our just eaten food.

We landed and there was a ceremonial band playing and family members there to welcome us home. All of us rushed past them directly to the bathroom so we could at least wash our faces. And so another six months at March AFB, then the orders came for Nam in 1968. We departed from Seattle Washington State on North West Orient Air Lines. One stop along the way in Yakota Japan to refuel. Then off to Cam Ranh Bay. While departing the plane I remember thinking, this may be the last time we see a Round Eyed Girl.

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**'Happy Valley' Phan Rang AB Reunion Information**



**Where: DoubleTree by Hilton, Reid Park, 445  
S. Alvernon Way, Tucson AZ**  
**When: October 9-11**  
**Single/Double rate \$99**

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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. 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](#).**

**Here's a breakdown of the activities for the reunion:**

- **Tour 1 -10 Oct.** - Davis-Monthan AFB and Bone Yard Tour (See note below). This tour is open to only 54 people (one bus is all that the base will allow) and you can [sign up](#) for that tour and we will request from the participants base points of interest where they would like to visit. In addition when you sign up I also need full name, SSN, date of birth, driver's license number and state of issue or if you have a military ID just state that as I need to prepare a 'Guest List' of all visitors and provide to them five days prior to the planned visit. The transportation cost for this tour is \$16.00 per passenger and is approximately 6 hours in duration. The bus will probably stop at a base restaurant or the BX for lunch and you will be on your own.
- **Tour 2 -10 Oct.** -Pima Air and Space Museum and Bone Yard Tour. You are on your own for lunch at the museum snack bar. Please visit the [museum web site](#) for information about the museum. The cost of this tour for transportation is \$21, \$12.50 for museum admittance, \$6 for Bone Yard tour and \$5 for a docent making the total cost at \$45.00 per person.
- **Tour 3 -11 Oct.** - Pima Air and Space Museum...the bone yard is closed on the weekends. There is a \$16.00 transportation cost for this tour and \$12.50 museum admission cost. The total cost for this tour is \$29.00 per person. You are on your own for lunch at the museum snack bar. Please visit the [museum web site](#) for information about the museum.
- **11 Oct.** - Southwest style Banquet buffet style in the Bonsai-Boojum Room. The cost of the banquet is \$56.00, which includes a 22% service tax and 8.1 sales tax.

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- All dates - the hotel courtesy bus is available to the Park Mall as well as all other destinations within a 3-mile radius of the hotel.

**Here’s the cost breakdown for the various activities:**

- **Tour 1** - Base and Bone Yard Tour and banquet and reunion fee: \$82.00 per person.
- **Tour 2** - Pima Air and Space Museum and Bone Yard Tour, banquet and reunion fee: \$112.00 per person.
- **Package 1** - Includes Tour 1 and Tour 3, banquet and reunion fee: \$111.00 per person.
  
- **Banquet only** and reunion fee: \$66.00

Please select from the options above (the cost stated are for each participant) and mail your check to:

**Jack Anderson  
826 72<sup>nd</sup> St. SE  
Auburn, WA. 98092**

If you have any questions, please [write](#) or call me at 405-732-5449. Once you decide on what you plan on doing please let [me](#) know as I will be keeping track of participants for each tour. If you DO NOT plan to attend the reunion you DO NOT need to respond. For Tour 1 participants, I will only consider you as being signed up when all required information is supplied.

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**Note:** This information is just to let you know what I’m doing and where the costs are coming from. I hope it doesn’t muddy the waters, but the most important information you need is listed above. First of all the banquet buffet cost \$42.00 + 22% Service Tax and 8.1% sales tax bring the total to \$55.37 and in all the calculations above I’ve rounded it off to \$56. The buffet is a ‘Southwest Buffet’ consisting of:

Roasted Chicken and Lime Soup  
Red Chile Caesar Salad  
Corn and Flour Tortilla Chips with Salsa and Guacamole  
Smoked Tomato, Cilantro and Black Bean Salad  
Grilled Chicken or Beef Fajitas  
Sea Bass Baked with Tequila, Lime and Cilantro  
Finished with a Ruby Red Grapefruit Beurre Blanc

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Flour and Corn Tortillas, Grilled Seasonal Vegetables, Spanish Rice  
Cornbread and Mesquite Honey Butter  
Caramel Flan, Toasted Pistachio Sugar Cookies

For our transportation needs we are contracting through Mountain View Tours, Inc. On Friday, 10 Oct. we will have two busses; a 54 passenger coach (\$849.00) and a 49 passenger coach (\$748.00) for 6.5 hours each. The 54 passenger coach will be used for the base and bone yard tour and the 49 passenger coach used for the Pima Air and Space Museum and Bone Yard tour. On Saturday, 11 Oct. we will have one 49 passenger coach for just the Pima Air and Space Museum.

The reduced museum admittance fee is \$12.50 for the museum and \$6 for the bone yard tour, all of which we have to pay for in advance.

The last fee is a ‘Reunion Fee’ of \$10 per person. This fee will help pay for the expense of printing schedules, buying name tags, supplying the hospitality suite with food and refreshments and other incidental expenses associated with a reunion and may be helpful in defraying transportation cost if we should come up short.

One last thing...in the event we have more than 54 people wanting to get on the base tour (Tour 1), I’m very sorry that we couldn’t accommodate everyone. Since the base makes the rules and will only allow one bus I thought it was too nice of a tour to turn down, because Public Affairs said they will take us anywhere we want to go. If it includes the flightline area, we have to transfer to a government bus. For the bone yard tour the bus can stop and passengers get out and look around and touch, unlike the bone yard tour from the museum which is just a windshield tour.



**Panic Grips Cities** (*Winnipeg Free Press, Wednesday, April 2, 1975*)

SAIGON, South Vietnam (AP) — Anarchy and panic gripped five more major cities in the central part of South Vietnam today as the Saigon government yielded the last of its enclaves there without position.

Military and administrative authorities fled from Tuy Hoa, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, Dalat and Cam Ranh, the latter with its big military base and deep water port that U.S. forces established.

The latest retreat of the Saigon government's demoralized forces brought the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong holdings to three-fourths of South Vietnam, including total control

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17 of the 44 provinces and third of the 244 district capitals. Their zone along the coast now extends to within 100 miles of here, although their forces are considerably closer inland to the north and northwest of the city.

Vietnamese officials said four U.S. cargo ships that have been trying to evacuate refugees from the Communist advance would be stationed off the abandoned cities in hopes some of those left behind could get out-to the ships.

President Nguyen Van Thieu summoned Premier Tran Thien Khiem, his cabinet and the top military commanders to a meeting and there was speculation that a new cabinet would be announced.

U.S. officials said they anticipated the Communist command would order a push on Saigon, but predictions of when that might happen varied. Many top U.S. officers in Washington said South Vietnam may go down the drain in two to four months unless the North Vietnamese are unprepared to make the final attack.

The Cambodian government also lost ground. The Khmer Rouge insurgents captured the town and naval base of Neak Luong and neighboring Banam, the government's last foothold on the Mekong River below Phnom Penh. Khmer Rouge forces were also drawing closer to Battambang, the country's second largest city 180 miles northwest of Phnom Penh, and its capture appeared near.

U.S. State Secretary Henry Kissinger was reported to be asking other countries to urge Hanoi to live up to the 1973 peace agreements which Kissinger negotiated. Ambassador John Scali, asked UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to appeal to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong not to interfere with the evacuation of South Vietnamese refugees. But Waldheim refused to go beyond a general appeal he made Monday on behalf, of "innocent persons, including those who have been displaced."

The Saigon command said radio contact was lost with Tuy Hoa and telephone communications had been lost with Dalat, the hill resort and vegetable-growing centre in the lower Central Highlands 150 miles northeast of here. Telephone communications also were lost with Nha Trang and the air base there was closed, a spokesman for the command said.

The Viet Cong delegation in Saigon said its forces had taken over Tuy Hoa and Qui Nhon but they made no mention of Nha Trang, which was abandoned Tuesday with Qui Nhon, or of Cam Ranh, Dalat, Phan Rang or Phan Thiet.

Reports from the field indicated that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces had" not yet arrived in Nha Trang and Cam Ranh, which are 25 miles apart. This raised hopes that more of

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the refugees there might be evacuated, but both cities were reported in chaos after the flight of government and military officials.

Qui Nhon and Nha Trang are among the major port cities of South Vietnam while Cam Ranh has one of the best deepwater anchorages in the world. All were former major U.S. bases where hundreds of millions of American aid dollars were invested.

Several hundred thousands of war refugees had been brought to the coastal enclaves from the Central Highlands and the northern part of the country in the past three weeks. Refugees and residents of the coastal cities were reported moving on foot southward along Highway the coastal highway.

The abandonment of Dalat and Tuy Hoa gave the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong control of two more provinces, Phu Yen and Tuyen Due.

About half of South Vietnam's 20 million population now are in the 17 provinces now conceded to the Communists or in areas contested by both Saigon and the Communist command.

South Vietnamese intelligence sources said that for the first time in the war the North Vietnamese are operating corps-size command structures.

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**Pentagon Brass Plunged In Gloom** *(Winnipeg Free Press, Wednesday, April 2, 1975)*

By Michael Getler

WASHINGTON (Special - TPNS) — A number of top United States defense experts now believe that South Vietnam has virtually no chance to halt the massive North Vietnamese offensive that is swiftly overrunning the countryside.

There is a growing feeling, especially among senior civilian officials, that the Saigon government and its remaining forces could well collapse within the next few weeks, either by political upheaval from within or by the steady advance of North Vietnam's army, which continues to grow as still more home-based reserve troops head southward.

Only the possibility that Hanoi will somehow fail to exploit fully the surprising military collapse, of Saigon's armies, or that the remaining South Vietnamese divisions will show a sudden willingness to fight, sustains some experienced military officers in their feeling that all may not yet be lost.

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"There are still several of us who think they (the South Vietnamese) would rather fight than be overrun," said one experienced army officer. "But the predominant view is that the thing is down the drain," he said.

The hasty abandonment of the entire northern half of the country to Hanoi's forces, virtually without a fight, has cost Saigon dearly and is responsible for a deep sense of gloom and frustration within the Pentagon.

In the course of their retreat, the South Vietnamese have lost hundreds of millions of dollars worth of U.S. military equipment and the equivalent of four to six divisions — almost half their force.

The scattering of these troops has made the odds even longer that the remaining three divisions in the Mekong Delta region furthest south, and the four divisions in the military region surrounding Saigon, can hold out against a North Vietnamese army now estimated to include some 18 divisions.

The North Vietnamese have two divisions in the Delta region and more than five already in the Saigon military region.

But it is the prospect that with no effective opposition left in the northern regions, Hanoi could easily bring several of the roughly nine additional divisions now in the two northernmost military regions further south for an all-out attack on Saigon or the Delta. In addition, still another of Hanoi's home-based reserve divisions now appears to be moving southward inside North Vietnam.

If it enters the south, it would be "the fourth such unit to-do so since the offensive began early this year.

Some military men believe that with huge areas of the south now coming under North Vietnamese control, the North may run into some guerrilla-style harassment behind its lines which could tie up some troops and keep them from moving south. In general, however, this is not regarded as much of a threat to the North.

Within the Pentagon, there is a considerable split in opinion about just what Saigon's chances are for staving off total defeat, though all views are pessimistic.

In general, top-ranking civilian officials are the most pessimistic. The military seems more divided, some believing that if the morale of the remaining divisions doesn't break and they stand and fight those troops can inflict heavy losses on the attacking forces and possibly force a stalemate.

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Some believe that the willingness of former leaders, such as former air force commander Nguyen Cao Ky, to present himself as a replacement for President Thieu who can rally the military forces means that not all of the South Vietnamese believe the battle is lost.

In the meanwhile, to bolster the chances for the remaining South Vietnamese forces, the Pentagon acknowledged, late Tuesday that it was speeding additional weapons and supplies; including some taken from National Guard armories in the United States, to Saigon, using money that had not as yet been obligated from congressionally approved funds.

To hundreds of military officers working in the Pentagon, many of whom spent the bulk of their careers operating out of areas that are now falling unopposed into Communist hands, there is a great sense of disbelief and frustration. This is a factor which some of the top civilian defiance officials feel may color some military judgments.

"There is just a hell of a lot of emotion here about what's happening in Vietnam," said one senior official.

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**Col. George Weart Tells Angel Flight of Vietnam Base and War** (*Sun-News, Las Cruces, N.M., Monday, May 8, 1967*)

By Bob Bundy  
Sun-News Staff

From an area of rural South Vietnamese countryside to a modern air base complete with a 10,000-foot concrete runway and other up-to-date facilities in a matter of months is the story of Phan Hang Air Base.

The growth of the installation, from the first surveyor's stake in the middle of a South Vietnam plain to today's busy air base, which handles flights of fighters and bombers each day, was delineated last week to members of New Mexico State University's Angel Flight by Col. George S. Weart.

**Homecoming**

It was a form of homecoming.

Weart was vice commander of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing when it was based at Holloman Air Force Base and was "adopted" by NMSU's Angel Flight. When the wing was deployed to Vietnam late in 1966, the care and feeding of the personnel, including homemade cookies,

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stateside magazines and scads of encouragement, was continued by members of the Angel Flight.

In return for the morale effort by members of the flight, Colonel Weart promised to report on the activity of the adopted unit the first time he returned to Las Cruces. He dropped in at NMSU while in transit to his new assignment as deputy for operations for the 17th Air Force in Europe. He will be stationed at a base located in Germany.

In his rundown to members of the flight, AFROTC personnel at NMSU and guests, Weart brought back the sincere thanks of all the members of the outfit who were the recipients of the morale boosting effort by the Angels.

Using color slides and a color film, the colonel reported on the growth of the base from the time he arrived on site to the time of his reassignment.

**Proud of "Red Horse"**

He was quite proud of the role of the Red Horse Squadron an Air Force engineering, and heavy construction crew, which moved into the site and made the dirt fly while aircraft were operating combat missions from the first aluminum runway. And he recounted all of the trials and tribulations attached to using that runway in all kinds of weather. And from his comments, there is "plenty of dust, heat, rain and mud in the Phan Rang area.

He was justly proud that a member of the outfit was first to down a MIG21 in combat. He was equally proud of the fact that Phan Rang was the first base to have air conditioned combat crew quarters and how, using a pre-fabrication technique, personnel barracks were constructed at the rate of three a day.

But a paved road did the most to boost base morale, the colonel noted.

**Paved Road**

Citing the soil and weather conditions to the area, which Weart kept constantly referring to as very similar to the Holloman area, the colonel said dust and mud was a constant source of irritation to the personnel and when the road from the personnel area to the operations and maintenance, warehouse and allied areas was completed "That paved road, did more to boost personnel morale, than anything."

The base is just over the hill from the sea in one direction and several miles distant from Cam Ranh Bay in another direction.

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It has been the target of several Viet Cong attacks but has never really suffered. "The VC has had no success penetrating our base defenses but they have tried," he said.

Touching on the combat activities carried out from the base, he reported briefly on the number of structures, sampans and fortifications hit, the number of secondary explosions and VC killed in action. The air war is being carried out by four F100 squadrons and a squadron of B57's based at Phan Rang.

**Graphic Scenes**

Graphic scenes of the dense Vietnam jungles, where much of the fighting is being done, and of F100s on napalm and conventional bomb runs were revealed in the color film.

In addition in its military functions, the base also handles some civilian air traffic, it was noted.

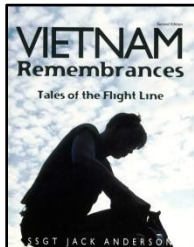
The air base is located near a unit of the 101st Air Borne Division.

Sorties are primary in support of ground action.

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**Vietnam Remembrances** - Tales of the Flight Line saga continues next week

I didn't have room in this edition to continue with Jack's book, but I will pick up where we left off next week, but if you want to immerse yourself, please get the book. It's real easy, just click on the link below. Also if you've read the book and or would like to give some feedback either on the book or what you've read on these pages, please send in your comments. They are welcomed by both Jack and I.



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

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## **TALES OF PHAN RANG**



**BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR**

### **Tales of Phan Rang (Part 12) 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 Chappelear**

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 12 - Victor Bravo**

There were other missions and sorties that were memorable for quite different reasons. One of my favorite memories is associated with a mission that started in IV Corp in the Mekong River Delta region and finished at Phan Rang in III Corp and it involved the Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron from Phan Rang. The Number 2 Squadron flew Canberra bombers. Usually they flew in support of the Royal Australian Army troops in III Corps. They had a real reputation as bombers, pilots, maintenance men and party animals.

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The Number 2 Squadron also had the habit of speaking in “fighter speech”, even though it had an Aussie twang. For instance, would speak of being “Bingo Baht”, which meant that they had only enough money left to pay for a pedicab back to the base. Or if they said they were, “Winchester Baht” that meant that they had no money left.

So here I am one day flying down in IV Corps transporting as much trash as possible between Tan Son Nhut and Binh Tuy as we possibly could carry. I think that we made about 14 sorties and now we have departed Binh Tuy on were on our way home to Phan Rang. We were cruising with the jets running for extra speed doing about 240 knots indicated and looking forward to getting home after a long day. We were also approaching the end of our “Crew Duty Day” which was another reason for hurrying home.

Everything was going good and we were looking forward to getting back to Phan Rang and some chow when “Paddy” the radar controller for IV Corps calls on the radio. The conversation goes, “Bookie 514 this Paddy”.

I answer, “Bookie 514 go ahead”

Paddy transmits, “Bookie 514, Hilda requests you contact them on company freq. You’re cleared to depart our frequency and call us when you are back up.”

Hilda was the callsign for the 841st Air Division Airlift Command Center at 7th Air Force Headquarters. They were the central command for all in theater airlift and they were the people that generated the “Frag” orders that told us where to go and what to pick up. I said, “We’ll talk to Hilda on our HF radio so if you have any traffic advisories we will be able to hear you on the current frequency anyway.”

Paddy replied, “Bookie thank you, we’ll call if we see anything.”

I used my radio command switch to select the HF radio and called, “Hilda, Hilda, this is Bookie 514”.

Hilda came back almost immediately with, “Bookie 514, this is Hilda with a change in your mission. We want you to stop by at Vung Tau on your way home and pick up a load.”

I replied back, “Hilda, Bookie 514 this entire crew is scheduled to fly tomorrow and we are pushing crew duty day. We really need to proceed direct home otherwise we will affect tomorrows flying schedule.”

Hilda answers back with, “Bookie 514, stand by”.

We continued on towards home and after about three minutes Hilda calls. “Bookie 514, Hilda”

I answer, “Bookie 514, go ahead”

They say, “Bookie 514, we have spoken to your wing command post via lima lima, and they say that they will schedule around your crew. It is important that you pick up this load at Vung Tau.

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It is a load for the Number 2 Squadron. It is 15,000 pounds of “Victor Bravo”. Do you understand the term – “Victor Bravo? Number 2 Squadron says that they are “Winchester Victor Bravo and this is classified as an “emergency re-supply mission – do you understand?”

I answer, “I understand “Victor Bravo”, and I understand “emergency re-supply”, we now need a crew duty day extension, we will need refueling at Vung Tau, and we will need some chow for the crew.”

Hilda came back, “Crew duty day extension is approved, fuel will be waiting and transportation to the mess hall. Give us a call when you get airborne.”

The flight engineer looked at me kind of funny, but we had flown together several times before and I could see him think for a while and then decide, “I know this AC, I trust him, he knows what’s going on here and I’ll go along with him.”

The load master; who definitely had been busting his hump all day was not really happy to be taking on one more load and made his dislike known by some rather surly responses to check list items as we prepared to descend and land at Vung Tau.

Vung Tau was a base right on the South China Sea. It was closer to the water than either Phan Rang or Cam Rahn Bay. I mean you could throw a rock from the runway and have it hit in the water. It was also the home base for the Royal Australian Army that was deployed to Vietnam and it was the supply and logistics depot for the Aussies. When we landed and taxied to the parking ramp I saw a refueling truck, a forklift, and four cargo pallets each with three four foot by four foot by four foot cardboard encased containers. C-123s could only carry three of these cargo pallets so I called to the loadmaster and said that if he couldn’t find a way to get the full load on board it would be OK. He said that he would find a way. He still sounded pissed.

The flight engineer immediately set to work refueling the airplane and the co-pilot and I walked about four city blocks away to a mess hall where we got meals in styrofoam food containers for ourselves and the other crew members. I personally by the way blame Vietnam and that war for the invention and proliferation of styrofoam food containers ala MacDonald’s and plastic knives, forks and spoons. I hate them!

Anyway when the co-pilot and I returned to the aircraft we found that the flight engineer had finished the refueling, and he and the loadmaster had finished the loading. The four of us sat on the cargo ramp and ate the meal before departure. As I moved from the cargo ramp forward along side the cargo pallets I noticed that the rearmost pallet had the three cardboard containers on it, the center pallet had three cardboard containers on the pallet and one more stacked on top of the other three, while the forward most pallet had three on the bottom and two stacked on top. I noted this and said to myself, “I’m sure that that loadmaster has calculated the center of gravity and it must be within limits.”

We started up and taxied out for takeoff. Lined up on the runway, and started our takeoff roll. Everything was going normally with acceleration and check speeds. We hit refusal speed just before rotation speed and I started to pull on the yoke. The yoke moved but the nose did not come up. I usually flew with left hand on the yoke and right hand on the throttles. I released the throttles and took hold of the yoke with both hands. I pulled harder but the nose still did not come off the ground. By now we were within the last 1000 feet of runway and doing about 140

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knots. The airplane is usually flying at 125 knots. I swear that I took my feet off the rudder pedals, put them on the instrument panel and pulled with all of my might. The nose rose slowly and we came off the ground about 200 feet into the 500 foot runway overrun. We staggered into the air and I nursed the airplane up to a safe distance from the ground before retracting the landing gear and flaps. It took a lot of nose up trim to maintain level flight and after leveling off at probably 3000 feet above the water I called the loadmaster on the intercom. I said, “ Hey load, this is the AC.”

He came back with, “Yes Sir”.

I asked, “Did you calculate the center of gravity before we took off?”

He said, “Yes Sir”.

I asked, “What was it?”

He replied, “About 10 inches M.A.C.”

I asked, “Isn’t 14 inches M.A.C. the forward most allowable C.G.?”

He answered back, “Yes Sir!”

I said, “You and I are gonna have a little talk when we get on the ground.”

The flight from Vung Tau to Phan Rang is only about one hour and ten minutes long but we were now getting close to 16 hours of crew duty day and we were all tired. So when we called ahead to the Airlift Control Element (ALCE) the conversation went something like,  
“Happy Valley ALCE, Bookie 514”

“Bookie 514, Happy Valley ALCE, go ahead.”

“Happy Valley ALCE, Bookie 514, we’ll be on the ground in about 10 minutes with 15,000 pounds of offload for the RAAF Number 2 Squadron. We are four hours over crew duty day; I request to taxi to the east side of the field and to shut down in our revetment. Would you tell the Number 2 Squadron that they have to come over to the east side to get their Victor Bravo?”

Happy Valley came back with,

“Bookie 514 that is disapproved. You will offload on the west side of the field at the ALCE cargo ramp.”

I then said, “Come on Happy Valley if we can’t taxi direct to the east side will you at least allow us to do an engines running off load?”

The ALCE said, “That’s approved.”

We landed and as we taxied into the west ALCE cargo ramp I noticed a flat bed trailer truck waiting next to the ALCE building. We came to a stop and retarded the engines to idle. I though that I heard a scream on the intercom and started to look over my right shoulder when one of the biggest Australians that I have ever seen in my life filled the flight deck entrance door.

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He reached over to the throttle quadrant, moved the mixtures to “idle cut-off”, reached up and turned both magneto switches to “off” pulled my and my co-pilots headsets off from our heads, opened our seat belt/shoulder harness and said, “Cum on mates! It’s time for a party!”

We were damn near physically lifted from our seats and carried out the back of the aircraft. We were actually passed from Aussie to Aussie and hustled out the cargo bay door as they were busy unloading the airplane. By the time the co-pilot and I got out of the aircraft the loadmaster and flight engineer were already ensconced on the roof of the truck drinking a “VB”. The copilot and I were also lifted up to the truck roof, passed a “VB” and watched as the 15,000 pounds of “Victor Bravo” or Victoria Bitters Beer was unloaded from our aircraft. There on the roof of the truck was where I was informed by the squadron commander that the Number 2 Squadron had been “Winchester Beer” for a couple of days and we were considered to be saviors. The Aussies, the VB Beer, and ourselves were then trucked to the Aussie barracks for a party that lasted late into the next morning.

Oh yeah, at sometime after 0200 the next morning my loadmaster came over to me and asked if I knew what “VB” was before I accepted them mission extension. I told him that yes I did. He then apologized for purposefully loading the airplane nose heavy and said that he would never do anything like that again. He then said that he really didn’t realize how difficult that would make the airplane to fly. I then explained to him that I never screwed over my crew and that he’d better learn to trust his ACs.

Then I also advised him that if he ever did anything like that again, I’d throw his ass out the cargo door from 10,000 feet.



**All-Sports Festival Fosters Friendship** (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Wednesday, Dec. 8, 1971)  
PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam

(Special)—Athletic competition has always fostered camaraderie among the participants.

The men of the U.S. Armed Forces stationed here and Vietnamese military men and civilian youths from the surrounding province of Ninh Thuan continued the friendly tradition when they met for the first time recently in an All-Sports Day festival in Phan Rang City.

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More than 100 Vietnamese and Americans participated in the two-day series, competing in soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball and table tennis.

The Vietnamese teams garnered the tennis, volleyball and table tennis crowns while the U.S. team from Phan Rang AB captured the basketball title. The competitors played to a tie in soccer.

The planning and coordination for the unique, two-day event were handled by Capt. Robert P. Carlberg, special services officer for the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, Army Capt. John A. Wallace from U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Advisory Team 45, and Hoang Due Chinh from the local province.

Carlberg, explaining the competition, said, "The purpose of the All-Sports Day was to bring American and Vietnamese together in friendly competition and give us a chance to get better acquainted. From all the smiling faces, I know we were successful."

With the success of the first All-Sports Day, plans are already under way to stage a similar event. "We plan to continue this affair on a monthly basis and hope in the near future we will be on a first-name basis with our new Vietnamese friends," Carlberg added.

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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)

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**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.

The book cover for "Poems from a Soldier: Vietnam 1970-71" by Stephen L. Janke. It features a black and white photograph of a soldier holding a dog.	The book cover for "Tales of Phan Rang" by Robert Chappellear. It features a photograph of a military aircraft on a runway.	The book cover for "Vietnam Remembrances: Tales of the Flight Line" by SSGT Jack Anderson. It features a silhouette of a person in a flight suit.	The book cover for "Friendly Voices" by Vic Markle. It features two small photographs of people.
By Steve Janke... <a href="#">click to buy book</a>	By Robert Chappellear... <a href="#">click to buy</a>	By Jack Anderson... <a href="#">click to buy book</a>	By Vic Markle... <a href="#">click to buy book</a>

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errors and possibly inaccurate information and I have to accept all the blame. I very seldom wear my glasses but I do use a larger font so that both you and I can read it better and I can possibly find typos, but I don't profess to know it all. Also sometimes my arthritic fingers get a little crazy and hit keys I never intended to hit. I take most of the articles appearing here from newspaper archives and the Phan Rang AB newspaper the PHANFARE. If you find that I've included some inaccurate information please notify me by email what the error is and I will correct it in the next issue.