

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

Phan Rang News No. 39

“Stories worth telling”

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JOURNEY TO PHAN RANG

Clark: A Crucial Air Field in War (*The Hutchinson News, Sunday, September 3, 1967*)

(The following is one of a series of special reports to The News by Sandy Alderson of Hutchinson, who is visiting his father, Maj. John L. Alderson, in Manila and Saigon.—Ed.)

By *SANDY ALDERSON*

MANILA — Clark Air Force Base, Republic of the Philippines, since its conception in the months following the Spanish American War, has grown concurrently with ever increasing American "interest" in Asia, until today Clark is a vital arm of air operations in Southeast Asia.

Clark, located on Luzon Island 40 miles north of Manila, was originally an army post, Fort Stotsenburg, but in 1918 ground was set aside for a new airfield, to be named in honor of the first American flyer in the Pacific.

Bomb Attacked

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The Pacific played no significant role in World War I, but during World War II, the Philippines was a highly contested key to the eastern Pacific. Clark and Manila were attacked on Dec. 7, 1941 along with Pearl Harbor. As a result, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was forced to make his famous withdrawal. From April, 1942, until MacArthur's return in January of 1945, the base was used by the Japanese for air strikes against the U.S. Navy.

Today, Clark is vitally Important In the Vietnam War. (The) 13th Air Force (is) responsible for communications and all air logistics for the Armed Forces in Southeast Asia Is headquartered at Clark. Its area of cognizance stretches from Thailand in the west to Australia In the south.

Five Squadrons

Also located here is the 405th Fighter Wing, commanded by Colonel "Chuck " Yeager, the first man to fly the speed of sound. Consisting of five squadrons, the 405th flies the F-100, the F-102, and the B-57 Canberra, so familiar to Hutchinson. Although home based at Clark, the 405th spends most of its time in South Vietnam. That's where Dad's outfit, the 13th Bomb Squadron, the "Devil's own grim reapers" is located. The 13th is commanded by Lt. Colonel George Cap, a native of Lucas and a student, at the Hutchinson National Guard Base back in 1965.

Willie in Vietnam, the air crews of the 13th fly a mission every day, but this weekend Dad was here for a little "rest and recuperation". While the Philippines doesn't offer the exotic promise of Tokyo or Bangkok, for the men of the 13th It's home.

Being almost a thousand miles from Saigon, the war sometimes seems as removed here as it does in the States. Five days of R & R here is a welcome chance to get away from it all. But it's not that easy. The war doesn't stop.

We were eating breakfast at the Officer's Club Sunday morning after church when Dad learned that his roommate at Phan Rang, Maj. Marty Anderson of Buffalo, New York, (Martin Weigner Andersen, 13th Bomb Squadron, 35th TAC Fighter Wing, 7th AF, Incident 08/19/1967, Panel 25E Line 15) and father of four daughters, was killed during a strike mission over III Corps, in South Vietnam.

Next stop, Saigon.

Saigon Passengers Motley Group *(The Hutchinson News, Monday, September 4, 1967)*

(This is the second in a series of special reports to The News by Sandy Alderson of Hutchinson, who is visiting his father, Maj. John I. Alderson, In Manila and Saigon. Ed.)

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By *SANDY ALDERSON*

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ENROUTE TO SAIGON— Up at 4 a.m. for the two and a half hour, 40-mile trip from Clark Air Force Base to Manila.

It was a very interesting trip. Water buffalo and broken down half ton trucks, vintage 1943, lined the "highway." (It was actually a long series of potholes connected by a short span of thin concrete.) But I made it in time.

Tax Collectors

Having over an hour until departure, I made a quick tour around the airport then, keeping a firm grip on briefcase and cameras, I headed for the check-in counter. I was scrutinized by no less than six pseudobureaucrats, who were interested only in collecting no less than three different taxes. Realizing the Philippines long association with the United States one can understand their mania for red tape.

For the last, several days the excitement and expectation of flying to Vietnam had been building up. Now, with less than half hour until takeoff it was all reaching a climax.

Suddenly across the waiting room came a loud "bang." braced up In my seat, Instinctively reached for my cameras, and shot a glance across the room.

Over in the corner a little Vietnamese had popped a balloon. She was now laughing heartily.

I was now literally "deflated." I sank back in my chair and began fiddling with my ticket, trying desperately to hide my face.

On boarding the plane, Pan American flight 841, I was assigned seat number 14c, on the aisle. In keeping with the spirit of the day I immediately fastened my seal belt, placed my motion sickness bag within easy reach, and read the emergency instructions twice, In English and French.

And aisle seat does have Its compensations. It is a good point from which to study your fellow passengers. What sort of person flies to Saigon, and why? While eating lunch I compiled a partial list.

Sixteen Australian infantrymen, their final destination unknown, but their general line of work quite obvious.

Several Chinese businessmen, complete with dark silk suits and patterned socks.

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Quite a few American businessmen and reporters, including several characters. One wore a tweed jacket and brown pants, with matching shoes, hat, and pipe. Probably owns a farm somewhere in Ireland. Another reminded me of Woody Allen. The one next to me was reading Tuesday's Honolulu Star - Bulletin, checking the stock quotations.

There were two other Americans, of dubious character. With long sideburns and wrinkled Ban-lon shirts there's no telling where they were headed. Probably home based in Newark, New Jersey.

To round out this motley crew and add a touch of respectability, there were two Salvation Army volunteers.

And the stewardesses. On overseas flights I think they try to have one for every language. There was a short Oriental. Very proper. Then there was a German blonde, one from France (no, she didn't have a big nose.), an Italian, and one that must have been Swiss, because she spoke every language in the book. The blonde was really nice. I asked her what a nice, good looking young girl was doing flying into an area that held untold mysteries and danger at every turn?

"I dunno," she replied.

I shrugged, sank back down in my seat, and read the emergency instructions one more time.

Phan Rang Once Used by Japanese (*The Hutchinson News, Saturday 9, September 9, 1967*)

(This is the fourth in a series of special reports to The News by Sandy Alderson of Hutchinson who flew to Saigon to visit his father, Maj. John L. Alderson. His last report was from Tan Son Nhut Air Base at Saigon.—Ed.)

By SANDY ALDERSON

Saigon - Riding back to Tan Son Nhut after my confrontation with MACV, things didn't look real good. When we got back I called Dad and explained the situation. He knew of a C-47 leaving Saigon for Phan Rang in the morning on "official business". But he knew the pilot so there was a good chance I could get on. Early the next morning I was out on the flight line. "No sweat!" was the answer to my request and a half hour later we were in the air headed north to Phan Rang.

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There were several other passengers, none of whom looked too official. As it turned out the reason for the trip was to pick up a couple crates for shipping sentry dogs. But when they arrived there were no such crates to be found. So on the return trip the official cargo consisted of two slot machines.

Used By Japanese

Phan Rang is not a new installation. There has been a base of some sort there since the Japanese used it in World War II. But only in the last two years has the U.S. begun to utilize it fully. Because of its ideal weather conditions all year round, in 1965 several squadrons were diverted to Phan Rang from Da Nang, in an effort to reduce the concentration in that area. Today, Phan Rang is the home of Air Force B-57s, F-100s, and C-123s, helicopters from the Army's 101st Airborne Division, and a squadron of eight Royal Australian Air Force B-57s.

Protected by Koreans

Nestled along the coast some 25 miles south of Cam Rahn Bay on the elbow of Vietnam, Phan Rang is one of the most secure bases in South Vietnam. Unlike Chu Lai and Da Nang to the north, Phan Rang has not been mortared or rocketed. A major deterrent to this is the Korean "White Horse" Division. Apparently the ROK's terrorize the surrounding area themselves. The V.C. are scared to death.

But the night still belongs to Charlie.

Quarters Comfortable

Dad's quarters here are not overly aesthetic, but are quite comfortable. Situated on a hilltop near the center of the base, it also offers an outstanding view of the surrounding terrain. On my first night here I was commenting on the great weather here compared to the monsoon rains in the Philippines, when suddenly yellow flashes began darting across the sky and disappearing behind a not too distant hill.

As Johnny Weismuller would say to Maureen O'Sullivan, "The natives were restless."

A few minutes later two artillery flares lit the sky, followed by more 50 caliber machine gun fire. This continued through most of the night. It's a common occurrence around here, but to a rookie like me it was a little disturbing.

He Goes to Barbecue Near Viet Cong Area (*The Hutchinson News, Monday, September 11, 1967*)

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(This is the fifth in a series of special reports to The News by Sandy Alderson of Hutchinson who is visiting his father Maj. John L. Alderson in South Vietnam. His last report described his visit to Phan Rang Air Base, where his father is stationed.-Ed.)

By SANDY ALDERSON

PHAN RANG-Would you believe a Saturday afternoon barbecue at a villa in the middle of South Vietnam? Neither would I.

It was given in honor of the 13th Bomb Squadron, by a George Bigelow, a civilian technical representative for a California electronics firm. It seems he has worked in various parts of the Far East for the past ten years, and plans to stay here for ten more. He hates Baseball.

We left the base at noon for the three mile trip to the villa, on the outskirts of Phan Rang City. There was a lot to see.

Just outside the gate we passed a small V.C. detention camp. It consisted of an acre of dirt, surrounded by rolls of barbed wire, with a tent in the center, the “Hanoi Hilton”.

Farther on we passed a Buddhist pagoda, complete with orange draped monks. The temple is over 1800 years old, one of the oldest in Vietnam. From a distance the red, perforated walls appeared to have the texture of a dry sponge. Since its heyday in 200 A.D., the interior has deteriorated into no more than a snake pit.

Just beyond the pagoda are the remains of a once strategic French fortress. Its sunken roof and crumbled clay walls are a vivid reminder of French fate in Indochina.

Cactus Fences

French influence in the area was also evident in more subtle ways. The entire route into the village was lined by thick stands of cactus. Apparently they were planted by the french many years ago, in lieu of more conventional fencing. It is still used today.

The villa has a large one story stucco building, surrounded by a high wall capped by strands of barbed wire. It fronted on the road and was engulfed on the other three sides by a large banana grove.

V. C. Territory

As it was the first trip off base by most of the pilots, one of the first questions was, “Where are the V.C.?” As it turned out, the banana grove was V.C. territory, but there was nothing to worry about because they only came out at night.

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After a delicious steak we commandeered a jeep and took off for a tour of the city. My guide was Sgt. John Simonson of Phoenix, Arizona. Since 1963 “Si” has spent more than two and a half years in South Vietnam. As we drove out the gate George’s only advice was “Watch out for the kids, they’re booby trapped!”

Smiles Help

It’s hard to describe the village itself. The bicycles, sidewalk stands, and the market place, were much the same as the Philippines. The only difference was the large number of olive green uniforms.

As we drove through the market and down the side streets, I found myself playing the part of the little ambassador, smiling and waving to everyone. It was more from nervousness than intention. If they smiled back it gave me a false feeling of security, if they didn’t, I’d smile wider.

(Note: **Richard Lynn "Sandy" Alderson** (born November 22, 1947) is the general manager of the New York Mets. He previously served as an executive with the Oakland Athletics, San Diego Padres and the commissioner's office of Major League Baseball. The son of an Air Force pilot, John Lester Alderson, who flew missions during World War II, Korea and Vietnam, Alderson attended Dartmouth College on a NROTC scholarship and graduated in 1969. He was born to mother Gwenny Parry Alderson. He attended Falls Church High School then joined the United States Marine Corps and served a tour of duty in Vietnam. He received his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1976. After law school, he worked for Farella Braun & Martel in San Francisco, California. He has two siblings, Kristy and Dave, a wife, Linda Alderson, and two kids, Bryn and Cate, who both also went to Dartmouth.

John Alderson, 87 years old, was struck and killed by a 21 year old driver of a jeep, November 2010. John Alderson, an Air Force veteran who flew bombing missions in three wars, including World War II and Vietnam.

In an interview John Alderson talked about his own military roots, growing up during the Depression and how after a career in the Air Force, he enjoyed living in St. Petersburg and playing competitive softball with an over-80 team in the Kids and Kubs league.

John Alderson was born in Gasport, N.Y., on the Erie Canal, on April 5, 1923, the son of a barber, Ernest Alderson.

"My father was a barber - getting 15 cents for a shave, maybe 35 cents for a haircut or something. So things were tough, it was during the Depression," Alderson said. "But things

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worked out and everybody in town wanted to be sure I knew I had to be home for supper. Everybody took care of you. Towns were great back then."

John Alderson said his father would have been of age to fight in World War I, but a childhood injury caused him to lose a leg. John Alderson joined the Air Force and flew a B-24 bomber called "Liberators" during World War II in 1944 and '45.

"I was in the 44th Bomb Group, and it was well-known for having five Congressional Medals of Honor given on one mission on the Ploiesti (Romania) Raid," said Alderson. "I wasn't there yet, Thank God, because that was a tough mission. When the war was over, I'd had 32 missions. Things were easing off quite a bit. I was pretty fortunate to have been over there then. I'm no hero."

In September of 1946, shortly after returning from World War II, John Alderson married and he and his wife, Gwenny, had a son, Sandy, a year later. Gwenny Alderson died in May 1997. Sandy was one of three children - two boys and a girl.

John Alderson flew B-26 bombers in the Korean War and served two tours in Vietnam, the first in 1967 and '68 flying a B-57 bomber. Alderson reflected fondly on one particular visit from Sandy during the summer of '67, when John Alderson was flying out of Phan Rang air base in South Vietnam. "Somehow he wangled a (job as a) foreign correspondent," John Alderson said. "Anyway, I got him on a test hop and I took him up and got him sick, which was exactly what I wanted to do. I remember this kid came up the ramp - you had a ramp to put up a ladder for us to get out of the plane - and he said, 'Sir, we don't clean up after somebody.' I said, 'No, I understand.' I guess Sandy had thrown up a little. But it was very enjoyable. I know Sandy'll never forget it."

John Alderson later served a second tour in Vietnam - after Sandy had served a tour as a Marine officer - when he returned to train Laotian pilots in the final years of the war, 1972-73. He retired from the Air Force in 1976.)

Vanderbilt Airman Helps Save Plane (*The Victoria Advocate, Sunday, Oct. 27, 1968*)

Katum, Vietnam - Mud, bursting air bags and enemy fire merged to badger Staff Sgt. Jesus Castaneda of Vanderbilt, but when he finished his job, a valuable transport was airborne over Katum, Vietnam.

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Sgt. Castaneda, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Castaneda of Vanderbilt, was a member of a 12-man U. S. Air Force maintenance team that recently recovered a C-123 Provider in an operation that was first thought to be impossible.



The Provider lay mired in mud with all three landing wheels off the runway at Katum. One propeller was bent; the left jet engine was an inch off the ground; the right wing extended 30 feet across the 80-foot-wide runway. The airstrip was blocked to other fixed-wing resupply aircraft and the Provider had to be quickly recovered or destroyed.

Sgt. Castaneda began the assignment that was plagued with difficulty but conquered by persistence when he boarded a helicopter at Phan Rang Air Base for the trip to the Special Forces encampment northeast of Saigon near the Cambodian border.

He and his crew were initiated to the trials of the job when incoming mortar rounds forced their helicopter to take off from Katum before their equipment was completely unloaded. Using inflatable air bags, the team began the arduous task of lifting the transport during a lull in the attack but mortar fire took them off the job periodically and then three lifting bags ruptured from pressure.

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The men took shelter as they awaited replacements from Phan Rang and then, even as enemy fire continued to pound the area, resumed work. They were again delayed, this time by darkness.

Sgt. Castaneda and the crew tackled the job in the early daylight that also brought increased enemy activity. On their third attempt to get the transport on to the runway, the Provider yielded.

Supporting tactical fighter pilots blasted the surrounding area with bomb and strafed as the maintenance men replaced the damaged propeller, started the engines and checked over the aircraft. A flight crew arrived and soon the once-doomed provider took off for Phan Rang.

The sergeant is assigned to the 315th special Operations Wing and supports the USAF tactical airlift system that maintains the lifeline throughout Vietnam.

He is a 1954 graduate of Industrial High School.

(Note: Another story about this event **“Recovery Team Frees Mired Plane While Facing Enemy Mortar Attack”** appeared in Phan Rang News 3. The source for that story was Seventh Air Force News, Oct. 30, 1968)

‘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

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](#).

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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. **(Act now as there are only a few more seats on this bus.)**
- **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.
- 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.

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- **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 72nd St. SE
Auburn, WA. 98092

If you have any questions, please [write](#) or call Doug Severt 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.**

Vietnam Remembrances - Tales of the Flight Line saga continues with **Quiet-Time Thoughts**, Chapter 33.

I've always cherished my quiet times; just me and my thoughts, with nothing outside to distract me, just me...and quiet. Quiet times often consisted of lying on the tarmac with a chock as my pillow, waiting for 248 to return from her second flight, just lying there and watching Orion make its slow crawl across the sky.

There were a couple of things in Vietnam I often reflected on during those quiet times.

First, I didn't think of home or mom during the mortar attacks. I guess thoughts of home and mom are reserved for GI's who have been fatally wounded. In war movies, dying GIs are always crying out for their mothers. Why didn't I have those thoughts, those feelings? Mostly, during the attacks, I just wanted to be someplace else. Nothing against my mom, she's a grand lady, but she wasn't close to my thoughts as the mortars rained around us.

Secondly, I never hated the VC. I thought of them as doing a job just as I was. I sometimes thought about the ones coming down from the North, the ones we bombed in Laos. Did they want to be there? Did they believe in their mission? Did a deep patriotism beat in their hearts? Why were they there? Were they forced to be? What went through their minds during their quiet times? Did they have quiet times? Did the ones launching mortars at us at Phan Rang

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come from the North, far from home like we were? What kept them there? What kept them fighting?

I knew I could never answer these questions, but I often thought of these things during my quiet times. I would have loved to have had the opportunity to talk to one of them and ask these questions, as naïve as that may sound. I would sometimes fantasize about a conversation with one of them. As it was, I just had to be content with my thoughts.

Then too, what about us GIs? Why were we there? Most of us had a hard time answering that. Many young men in America refused to go into the military, opting instead to leave the country. There was a lot of antiwar sentiment back home, but most of us weren't buying into it, each for our own reasons. My reason had more to do with not dishonoring my family than anything else, but others had lots of reasons. Running to Canada or Sweden, as many did, was unthinkable for any of us. We had just never seriously considered something like that.

The reason the US military said we were there had something to do with dominos. (The domino theory held that if South Vietnam fell to the communists, the other Southeast Asian countries around it would also topple to the communists, like dominos.) They also said we needed to keep South Vietnam free for democracy. We mostly thought that was a bunch of crap, but we felt the need to answer the call nonetheless.

Back at Hill AFB, all the GIs who had received orders for Southeast Asia—both Vietnam and Thailand—had to sit through an indoctrination movie about the war. It claimed that China had always looked at Vietnam as the Rice Bowl and wanted to possess it for the rice feed China's growing population. It also went on to talk about the Domino Theory, and about maintaining democracy for the South Vietnamese. According to the movie, those things were what the war was all about. It was also full of snarling Asian people whom we were supposed to learn to hate. We thought it was a pile of garbage. Poorly written, poorly directed, poorly acted, and a poor excuse for a war.

However, we were young men. Somehow my pulse quickened when I got my orders for Vietnam. That's where the action was. That's what the TV news constantly talked about. The others could have Thailand. Deep down I knew Vietnam was where I wanted to be. I had to go, to see what it was all about. Once there, there was no crying about how tough it was, no thinking about home and mom. Just get the job done. Keep 248 in the action. If enemy shot back, so be it.

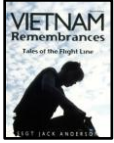
If you want to immerse yourself, please get the book. It's real easy, just click on the link below. Also if you've read the book and or would like to give some feedback either on the book or what you've read on these pages, please send in your comments. They are welcomed by both Jack and I.

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



TALES OF PHAN RANG



BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR

Tales of Phan Rang (Part 14) by Robert Chappellear

Tales of Phan Rang

Published by Robert L. Chappellear at Smashwords

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

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

About Robert Chappellear

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



Married with three sons and one step daughter and three grandchildren (1 grandson, and 2 granddaughters). Though I have made 36 moves during my lifetime I am now settled in Minnesota.

Chapter 14 - Engine Fires, Artillery, and Near Misses

Not every sortie or mission flown was as memorable as those previously described. Most were simple and proceeded exactly as planned. To tell the truth most missions would have to be classified as simply boring. However, there were some events that were memorable in their own right.

There was the engine fire while delivering ammunition to that wonderful place called Katum. As I recall this was someplace near the 5th month that I was in-country. I was in the aircraft commander upgrade program but was flying a mission as a co-pilot for another 1st Lieutenant that day. It was common that 2nd Lieutenants would acquire the required time in grade shortly after arriving in-country and thus would be promoted to the august rank of 1st Lieutenant. That had happened to me about one month after arriving at Phan Rang. Likewise it was common for co-pilots to be placed in the aircraft commander upgrade program someplace between 4 and 6 months after arriving. That program took about 6 weeks to complete and usually we Lieutenants who upgraded to aircraft commander would then fly either seat as required by the schedule. My AC that day had preceded me to Vietnam by a couple of months so he had just completed the AC upgrade and we were tasked that day to fly the “Boom Boom Shuffle”. We had completed two or maybe even three sorties and had been completely successful in avoiding mortar rounds, machine gun rounds and all other objects intended to punch holes in our airplane. We had delivered 30,000 or 45,000 pounds of 105 mm howitzer rounds and had just leveled off at probably 5,500 feet on a return to Bien Hoa AB.

When the Flight Engineer was completing his visual inspection of the number 2 engine as part of his cruise check he said over the interphone, “AC this is the flight engineer, it appears that we have an oil leak on the number 2 engine.”

The AC and I looked at each other and grinned. The big recip engines on the C-123 were known to leak badly. The A-1 aircraft also used R-2800s and the entire bottom of the airplane was typically covered with oil. The AC said over the intercom, “OK, I don’t think that we have anything to really worry about all of the engine instruments look good up here.”

Then the flight engineer says, “Correct that Lieutenant – that’s a fuel leak. Oh shit! It’s burning.”

Now the drill was;

“Throttle – affected engine – retard to idle”

“Mixture – affected engine – idle cut off”

“Propeller - affected engine – feather”

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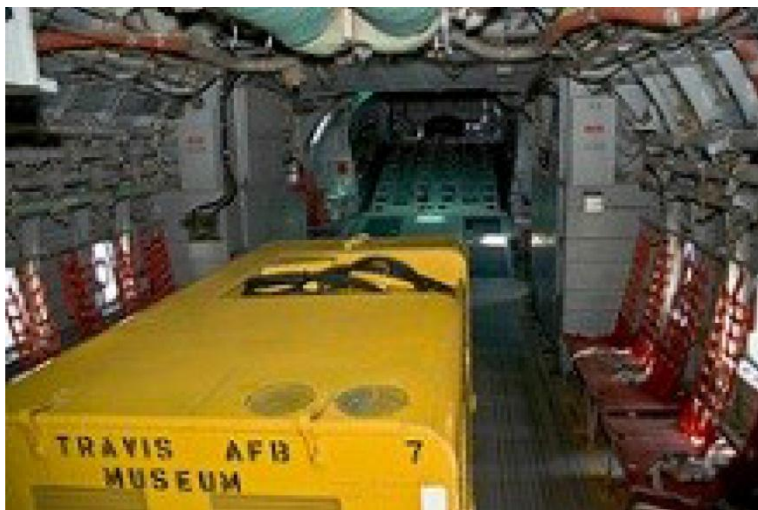
“Fire extinguisher – affected engine – discharge”

We had that engine shut down and the fire extinguisher discharged in just a couple of seconds. The problem that we had was that we did not know where the fuel leak originated. If it was from the engine, then the emergency procedure would extinguish it. If it was from the fuel nacelle then the only way to stop the fire was to emergency jettison the whole nacelle. There had been another C-123 try that about a month earlier and the damn thing had come loose only on one side. The airplane had run off the runway back home at Phan Rang upon landing and fortunately the entire crew successfully ground egressed the airplane.

We declared an in-flight emergency with “Paris”, the III Corps radar control facility and just after having done so the flight engineer reported that the fire was out. Apparently we were lucky and the fuel leak was actually someplace in the engine and not in the nacelle.

We landed at Bien Hoa and turned the aircraft over to the 12th SOS at that base. The 12th SOS also belonged to the 315th SOW and they took responsibility for repairing the fuel problem and readying the airplane for return to Phan Rang. In the meantime our entire crew returned to home station via another 309th SOS airplane.

There is also a recollection of encounters with artillery. Such encounters were not uncommon. Typically there were many “Artillery Warnings On Guard” every day. These were radio calls made on UHF frequency 243.0 which is known as “Guard”. It is a frequency monitored by all military aircraft. It is used for “Mayday” calls and for emergency communications as well as these “Artillery Warnings.” If the warnings were generated by Army sources then the call would



Looking AFT into the C-123 Cargo Bay (Note the canvas fold up passenger seats which line both sides of the aircraft.)

go something like, “Attention all aircraft flying in the vicinity of Firebase Carroll. There will be artillery fire in the vicinity of UTM coordinates MX 12341234. This is effective from surface to 12,000 feet. All aircraft avoid this area by 5 nautical miles.” We could tell if the warning was a B-52 ARC LIGHT strike for if this was the case then the announcement would be, “Attention all aircraft in vicinity of UTM

coordinates MX 12341234, this is Paddy with a heavy artillery warning on guard. Heavy artillery is scheduled for this area from

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surface to 30,000 feet; all aircraft avoid this area for the next 15 minutes.” On one or two occasions we had landed at some out of the way airfield that was within that 5 NM area and we had to wait until after the strike before we could take off and continue our mission. A time or two we were within 1 and a half miles of the strike and let me tell you 108 Mk 82 500 pound general purpose bombs from each of three B52s in a cell would make the ground shake.

As often as these announcements were made I guess that we got rather blasé about them. I recall an instance however, when flying through II Corps that I heard such an announcement about “artillery” that particular AC decided to ignore the warning. Instead he thought that the “big sky, little bullet” principle should apply. I think that the announcement said something about, “up to 10,000 feet”, and the AC said “don’t worry well go across at 10,000 - they always put some slop in that.” So there we go across the top of an overcast in the general vicinity of the declared artillery strike when something attracted me attention out the right side of the cockpit. I swear that I saw a 105 mm or maybe even an 8 inch high explosive artillery round at the top of its trajectory and just before it started back down towards its target. Nobody else on the crew saw it but I know that I did.

This seeing "things" that no one else saw was not uncommon. There was not the same type of air traffic control available in Vietnam as there was in the States or Europe. Basically, we flew where we wanted; when we wanted, and at whatever altitude we wanted modified only by what the AC thought prudent as affected by artillery warnings. This included when we were “Popeye” or in true instrument meteorological conditions or flying “on the gauges”. When the weather got bad during monsoon seasons we would still fly where we wanted, but usually we would request radar traffic advisories from “Paddy, Paris, or Parrot”. These were the available radar control facilities for IV Corps, III Corps and II Corps respectively. These agencies would provide radar guidance and do their best to help you avoid other traffic and assist with hand offs to individual approach controls etc. However, not all aircraft flying were in contact or controlled by any of these agencies. I recall a flight when we were trying to land at Bien Hoa. We were level at 3000 feet, talking to Paris and expecting hand off to Bien Hoa something caught my attention out the left side cockpit window. but I immediately recognized the silhouette of a CH-47 Chinook appeared to be in a hard bank to the left away from us. Then immediately called “Paris” on the radio and asked if they had replied, “No I see nothing else close to you.” But like I said, aids to navigation.

I guess that sometimes it pays to be lucky instead of good.



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Spooky Sprays VC-Kills 25 (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 18, 1968*)

PHU CAT—A U.S. Army unit about 40 miles south of Chu Lai near Ba To, received information recently of a suspected Viet Cong troop concentration nearby, along a river near the side of a mountain.

Immediately, an AC-47 Dragonship crew from C-Flight, 4th Special Operations Squadron at Phu Cat AB was summoned to the scene.

"We worked the area over pretty well," said Lt. Col. Al L. Morse, Colorado Springs, Colo., Dragonship pilot, "Clouds kept moving in and prevented us from shooting part of the time, but we managed to stay on target and fire when a clearing appeared."

Preliminary reports from ground elements confirmed that 25 enemy soldiers were killed and the attack was thwarted before it began by the rapid response and close coordination between "Spooky" and the ground controller.

Other crew members of the Dragonship were: Maj. Francis E. Esterlin II, Concord, Calif., instructor, pilot; Maj. Donald, W. Neal, Waco, Tex., navigator; TSgt. Longinous R. Reimer, Altus, Okla., flight engineer; Sgt. Kirby D. Wilson, Harnersville, Md., loadmaster; Sgt. Bernard E. Ducat, Danielson, Conn., and MC Leonard B. Cofer, Philadelphia.

Did you know Delos M. Cosgrove M.D., president and chief executive officer of Cleveland Clinic was a surgeon in the U. S. Air Force and served in Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam as Chief of U. S. Air Force Casualty Staging Flight. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Republic of Vietnam Commendation Medal.

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STAR WINNER

Maj. Elmer L. Slavery,
Jeffersonville, Ind., recently
received the Silver Star for
directing the destruction of an
enemy missile. He is a F-100
Subersabre pilot with the 352nd
Tactical Fighter Wing, Phan Rang
Air Base.
(Seventh Air Force News, Dec.
14, 1968)



Downs 34 Boiled Eggs - Airman Nears Cool Luke’s Record (*Seventh Air Force News, Dec. 18, 1968*)

PHAN RANG - With more than 100 witnesses ‘egging him on,’ A1C Kirk W. Minert, Elyria, Ohio, downed 34 hard boiled eggs in one hour to put the Air Force on top in the recent unofficial interservice egg eating contest. Previous claims were Army, 30, Navy, 29 ½, and Marine 15.

‘Cool Hand Luke’ in the film of the same name still holds the legendary 50 egg record.

A member of the engine conditioning branch, 35th Field Maintenance Squadron Airman Minert recalls that the idea got started while taking a break.

“I have something of a reputation as a chow hound,” Airman Minert said, ‘and as we talked of the ‘Luke’ movie and the recent attempts by other service branches to match it, one said ‘How many eggs can you eat Kirk’.”

“I said I couldn’t eat 50 but could beat the Army Record.”

On the day of the contest against time, Airman Minert did without his usual breakfast, lunch and supper. By 7:50 p.m., he felt hungry enough to begin.

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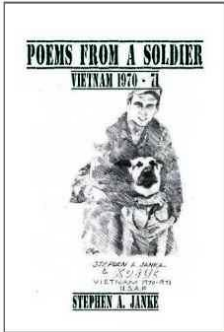

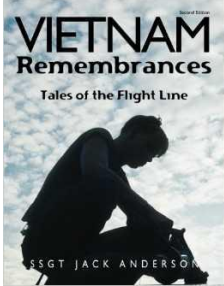
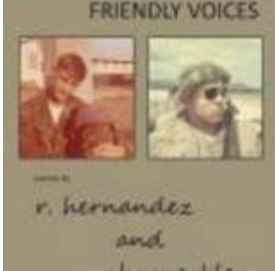
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I had two peelers and two coaches - and a heck of a lot of eggs. My goal was one egg per minute which lasted for about 22 minutes. It took the remainder of the hour to get the next dozen down,” he said.

(**Note:** Kirk will be at the reunion in Tucson and I was just wondering if anyone would like to see a repeat performance.)

Authors In Our Midst

			
By Steve Janke... click to buy book	By Robert Chappellear... click to buy	By Jack Anderson... click to buy book	By Vic Markle... click to buy book

Note: All articles reproduced here are from various sources and the book material is used with the author’s permission. Previous issues of this newsletter are available [online](#) or on the “Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB Facebook group site. Comments or suggestions are welcomed and can be sent to [Douglas Severt](#). Some have asked who edits this newsletter because of 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 or see 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 achieves 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.