

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

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Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

**In this issue:**

**‘Happy Valley’ Phan Rang AB Reunion Update**

**Copter Battles High Winds to Rescue Seaman...the rest of the story**

**834<sup>th</sup> AD Commander Decorates Six 315<sup>th</sup> Air Crew Members**

**Bobcats Take Club Project**

**Mid-Missourians in Service**

**San Mateo Service News**

**APO 96321: A Morale Builder**

**Vietnam Roll**

**Augmentees Add Power To SPS Base Defense**

**Captain Powell Winds It Up**

**Squadrons Get Award In Combat**

**Tales of Phan Rang (part 16)**

**‘Happy Valley’ Phan Rang AB Reunion Update**

As expected Tour 1 for the [Davis-Monthan AFB](#) and the Bone Yard filled up quickly as it is the most desirable tour. As I’ve mentioned before I have to submit a ‘guest-list’ to the base of all visitors with their date of birth, social security number, license number and state of issue and of course a full name unless the visitor is a holder of a military ID. (They keep adding to information that they need, next time they’ll probably want to get our DNA.) I have all of that information for the perspective travelers, but what I do not have is an agenda of where on the base everyone wants to visit. As you may remember this tour is conducted by the base public affairs office and they said that we could visit anywhere on base we wanted to go, but I need at least three (3) places that we would stop for an in-depth tour. I’ve hyperlinked the base web site to make it easier to see what they do on the base and for you to supply [me](#) with a place of interest. Please message me at the link in the previous sentence and I will pick the three most popular spots from those submitted to me.

As for the other tours we only have 5 signed up for one and 13 for the other and that hardly justifies a bus, so at this point I’m not sure what we will do.

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

If you haven't already made hotel reservations, it's still not too late. Here is the [link](#) to the DoubleTree Hotel.

Once again we are fortunate to have Michaelangelo Rodriguez in attendance and he has a special humorous Phan Rang AB slide show planned for us. Last year he did an impromptu impression of his visit to San Antonio that was enjoyed by all...I think. You can read his presentation in its entirety in Phan Rang News 2 in the article titled '*Presentation to Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam Veterans, Reunion - San Antonio*'. Also in attendance will be Lt. Col. (ret.) Mike Maleski who will take care of the invocation and closing prayer and with any luck he will tell us about his very interesting and unusual career.

Please don't forget to bring your photos and other memorabilia to share with each other.

**“Veterans have an invisible line connecting them together forever and that only they can understand that fact...others will never get it”**

WWII Vet

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**Copter Battles High Winds to Rescue Seaman...the rest of the story**

*(Copter Battles High Winds to Rescue Seaman was originally published in the Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, April 15, 1967 and was reprinted in the Phan Rang News 40. Clearing the Air is Joseph Luther and his story follows.)*

The story on the “rescue at sea” is colossally in error – probably the product of “covering your ass” politics.



I was there on that rescue chopper.

The correct story appeared in Kaman's Rotor Tips magazine and also the MAC Flyer.

I was on that rescue mission and received the Kaman “Scroll of Honor” award, instead of the Distinguished Flying Cross – which was awarded to the idiots from Cam Ranh Bay who ran out of gas in the South China Sea. They were overzealous trying to make a save, got overextended, landed on an

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

island low on gas. My chopper had to rescue them and then the sailor on the LST.

We had to sling load two 55-gallon drums of jet fuel beneath the chopper, lift it off and fly out to the South China Sea to make two rescues – the Cam Ranh Bay crew and the sailor on a Korean LST. When we were trying to pick up the sling load, the HH43B bumped down on top of the drums of fuel several times. I could see ground crews running for their lives.

We set the sling load down on the island and then hand-pumped one drum into our chopper – engine running. Leaving the Cam Ranh crew refueling on the island, we flew on out to sea. The Navy provided an P3 Orion to navigate for us, as all we had was ADF that did not work over the horizon. This led to a great radio conversation when our pilot asked “where on that boat is the survivor?” The Navy responded that “he was on the forecastle.” My pilot then asked if that was the front or the back of that “boat”. Much laughter on the airwaves.

We made a harrowing pickup with the chopper flying backward and matching the pitch and roll of the LST as it made way in the heavy seas. At one time, I saw the ship’s rigging come up past our hatch. Successfully having picked up the patient, I began medical treatment. The pilots worked their circular slide rules, exchanged worried looks and called on the radio –“Is there any ship out here that we can land on.” Now, we were low on fuel. Eventually we landed at Phan Thiet .... did another hot refuel and flew back to Phan Rang. A very long day.

My unit commander, not wanting to embarrass the dumbass Cam Ranh Bay crew, did not put us in for the DFC, just the Kaman Honor Scroll. The Cam Ranh Bay crew put themselves in for the DFC for providing medical aid to the islanders. FUBAR AND BOHICA.

My commander then wrote an article for the Mac Flyer titled “Pedro 54 where are you?” We never got a military decoration for this mission.

**Read the truth >>>>**

“Braving winds gusting to more than 35 knots, an HH-43 crew from Det 1, 38th ARRSq, Phan Rang, RVN, flew to a Korean Navy ship 50 miles off shore to evacuate a seaman suffering from acute appendicitis. With just enough fuel for one attempt at a pickup, Capt Lamonte M. Kahler, RCC, maintained a 50-foot hover over the vessel which was underway and rising and falling about 15 feet. The swaying main mast and several antennas constantly threatened the HUSKIE as the patient was hoisted aboard. Due to the low fuel state, the helicopter landed at Phan Thiet and the seaman was transferred to a Phan Rang C-47. Sharing in the mercy mission were Capt Leonard D. Fialco, copilot; SSgt Ronald T. Cantwell, crewman; and A1C Joseph N. Luther, flight medic.”

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

**834<sup>th</sup> AD Commander Decorates Six 315<sup>th</sup> Air Crew Members** *(Phan Fare, April 5, 1969)*

Maj. Gen. Burl W. McLaughlin, commander, 834th Air Division, visited the 315th SOWg to preside over an awards and decorations ceremony and to speak at the monthly Dining In. Upon arrival, Col John W. Pauly escorted the general to the wing conference room where he observed the daily mission activity briefing.

The awards ceremony followed, at which time General McLaughlin presented Silver Stars to Majors Jack G. Womack and Roy L. Green from the 12<sup>th</sup> SOSq. Major Womack distinguished himself by gallantry as a spray formation leader defoliating infiltration and supply routes while under intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Major Green earned his for gallantry leading a defoliation mission against an enemy base camp and supply route.

In spite of the heavy ground fire which raked the formation, he made two passes to spray the jungle sanctuary and deny the enemy their area of operations.

Also presented were Distinguished Flying Crosses to First Lieutenant Dennis F. Murphy, and Myrle D. Svedbert, SSgt. David V. Randolph and A1C Patrick J. Nugent. Murphy, Svedberg and Randolph were cited for heroism by delivering urgently needed ammunition to Katum Special Forces Camp while the base was under enemy mortar attack.

Their skill and professionalism facilitated this delivery without injury to personnel or damage to the aircraft.

Nugent received his for participating in a combat essential delivery of 55 combat troops to Katum while under hostile attack. His devotion and skill assisted in the successful accomplishment of the mission without sustaining any battle damage to the aircraft or injury to crew.

Speaking later that evening, General McLaughlin cited the record breaking accomplishments being achieved by airlift crews in spite of the daily encounters with enemy forces, minimally equipped forward operating locations, and the long grueling duty day. He stated that efforts exerted by the crew members will go down in history as an accomplishment equal to that of the Berlin airlift.

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

**Bobcats Take Club Project** (*Phan Fare, April 5, 1969*)

Unit sponsorship of a self-help project designed to benefit E-4s and below over 21 years of age is the latest project undertaken by fighter pilots of the 615<sup>th</sup> TFS.

As originally envisioned by Col. Frank L. Gailer Jr., commander, 35<sup>th</sup> TFW, the project is an “Over 21” lounge within the Airmen’s Open Mess but providing the same services available at the NCO Open Mess.

The 615<sup>th</sup> “Bobcats” seeing the potential of the concept and observing that work was not progressing as rapidly as had been hoped for, adopted the club as a squadron project.

Headed by a specially-selected six-man task force, squadron members are pushing for a May 1 completion date. The barn-like interior of the structure adjoining the Airmen’s Open Mess is being rapidly transformed into a multi-decor lounge with themes ranging from the ski lodges of Colorado to New York’s Playboy Club.

Capt. Clyde E. O’Baker, officer-in-charge of the project and the pilot largely responsible for the interior design concepts, commented, “It’s certainly gratifying to be able to do this work for the airmen here.

“Realizing the consequences if the project were allowed to stagnate, we felt that the squadron members would gladly donate their time during off-duty hours to see that the club is completed as soon as possible.”

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**Mid-Missourians in Service** (*Daily Capital News, Jefferson City, Mo. Friday November 28, 1969*)

**Airman 1.C. JOSEPH B. RACKERS**, whose wife, Sandra the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bobby L. Wilbers, Holts Summit, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Airman Rackers is a supply inventory specialist assigned to the 35th Supply Squadron, a unit of the Pacific Air Forces, headquarters for air operations in Southeast Asia, the Far East, and Pacific area. He previously, served at Richards Gebaur AFB, Mo. Airman Rackers is a 1967 graduate of Jefferson City Senior High School.

**Airman 1. C. LYNN E. SHAFFER**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dwight Shaffer, New Bloomfield, has been decorated with the U. S. Air Force Commendation Medal

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

Airman Shaffer received the medal for meritorious service as an illustrator at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. He was cited for his outstanding duty performance.

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**San Mateo Service News** (*The Times, Monday, April 8, 1968*)

AT PHAN RANG - WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES, Vietnam - **Airman First Class William D. Hagan**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hagan of 68 Linden Ave., San Bruno is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Airman Hagan a security policeman is a member of the Pacific Air Forces.

Before his arrival in Vietnam, he was assigned to Francis E. Warren AFB, Wyo.

The airman is a graduate of Capuchino High School.

His wife Brenda, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Lindores of 1004 Clark Avenue, San Bruno.

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**APO 96321; A Morale Builder** (*Phan Fare, April 5, 1969*)

Air Post Office 96321 is a typical post office in Vietnam. There are a few bigger; there are many smaller, but none more important - - to the more than 9,000 mail-hungry servicemen it services.

“This building is the most frequented on base, “claims MSgt. Henry T. Staudte, superintendent of mails at APO 96321.

The base Catholic chaplain Capt. John H. Corcoran, tells why.

“In general, the single greatest morale factor of airmen is having contact with their loved ones back home,” the chaplain said. “In my ten months here, I’ve seen mail service greatly improve. With it, visits to the chaplains’ offices diminish. Naturally, mail brings good as well as bad news; we only find out when it brings bad news.”

This past year, the post office handled as much as 991,000 pounds of mail in a month and as little as 124,000 pounds for a month. Sergeant Staudte directs 20 airmen and 4 Vietnamese

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

civilians at the APO. Six of the men are graduates of the first two classes of postal and operations courses conducted at Keesler AFB, Miss., during September and October, 1968.

The incoming mail arrives at Phan Rang’s **Det. 8, 14<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port** in the early morning hours. A forklift removes the palletized, weather-sealed mail bags to a waiting 1 ½ ton truck. The trip to the APO takes five miles. (my memory obviously doesn’t serve me well, I never thought it would have been five miles between the aerial port and the post office unless they are figuring the distance between the C-123 revetment area and the post office.)

As the truck backs up to the receiving entrance at the post office, SSgt. Henry Basken R. Baskett Jr., (*yes, that is exactly the way his name was written*) greets the driver with “How many bags today?” The answer is eagerly awaited for it determines how long it will take his men to put the mail in the 5,500 individual boxes, and get the remainder of the mail out to 26 unit mail rooms the APO also handles.



**Phan Rang AB mail room. Photo by Logan Henderson.**

The amount of mail received is immediately telephoned to Base Personnel Services office. There, a Red Cross girl records on magnetic tape a daily summary of base activities such as what is playing at the theatre, what the clubs are featuring, and most important and first on the tape is the amount of bags of mail received and by what time it will be put up.

The recorded message can be heard anywhere on base by telephoning 112.



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

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Phan Rang News No. 41

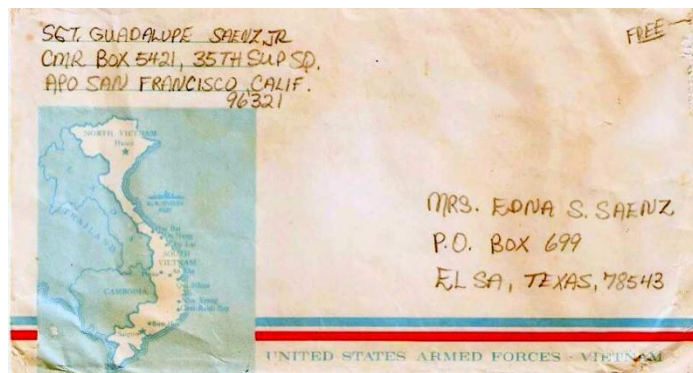
**“Stories worth telling”**

“Letter mail for APO 96321 is numerically sorted by the man’s box number at the San Francisco or Seattle Postal Concentration Centers, Sergeant Staudte explained. That is why it is so important for the sender to write the man’s complete address. I want to emphasize the necessity of the APO number and the man’s post office box number.

Failure to inform correspondents of the individual’s mailing address is our biggest headache,” Sergeant Staudte concluded.

“Well, it certainly is my biggest headache,” agreed the man who heads APO 96321’s consolidated mail room (CMR). Speaking was Sergeant Baskett.

“We’ve had mail come in here so poorly addressed you have to be a detective to figure out who it belongs to.



“Recently, for example, we had a letter come in from the States addressed to Sky Trooper First Class so and so, a serial number followed by APO 96321. No box number. Sky Trooper First Class! Now, you that is not a rank. But we had time since it wasn’t a rush season to locate the man through the finance section merely by his serial number.”

“On new arrivals here, we often receive mail for them long before they get here. We know an individual is coming as we receive a copy of his orders assigning him to units covered by this APO. We have a hold section. The orders tell us approximately when to expect him. We then make up a temporary locator card which is replaced by one he fills out upon his arrival.

“On mail that we can’t deliver, we sent it to air postal directory in Saigon. There, they have a record of everyone in Vietnam,” Sergeant Baskett explained.

“I also handle problems with customers,” Sergeant Baskett continued. “One upset man came in and complained that his mail box would not open. So I went to the boxes and watched him try. He worked the combination perfectly. Then he just stood there expecting the door to pop open! I had to show him that you have to turn the handle.”

Sgt. Ronald B. Banks, who handles all incoming packages, says he gets a personal satisfaction out of his job because, as he says, “I am the final link between the families back home who went to so much effort to send these packages to the airman.



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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

“I Also give out mail for those who are here on TDY (Temporary duty).” He explained. “Just recently one young airman kept coming to the window asking if there was any mail for him. Each time I felt bad because I’d have to send him away with, “Sorry no mail.” I could see it was getting him down. Then yesterday afternoon a flood of letters caught up with him. I called him on the phone. No, it is not part of my job to do so, but it sure makes me feel good inside.

Outgoing parcel post is handled primarily by Sgt. Sheppie D. King, who says that in his 10 months in Vietnam, American servicemen have mailed home more Vietnamese dolls than any other single item.

“But the most unusual item for shipment home was brought in by a major,” Sergeant King said. “He brought in a sealed package 3 feet long and 2 inches in diameter. “Believe it or not, it contains a mouse trap,” he told me. The major said his son has a collection of odd mouse traps from all over the world.

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**Vietnam Roll** (*The Abilene Reporter-News, Abilene, Texas, Thursday, September 24, 1968*)

U.S. Air Force **Airman First Class Larry D. Jeter**, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Jeter of 1003 North Avenue G, Haskell, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base.

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

The Airman is a graduate of Haskell High School and attended North Texas State University.

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U.S. Air Force **Airman First Class John V. Beasley Jr.**, son of Mr. and Mrs. John V. Beasley Sr. of 3335 Stephen Drive, Columbus, Ohio, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base.

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

His wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Long of 1107 N. Ninth, Haskell, Texas.

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

**Augmentees Add Power To SPS Base Defense** (*Phan Fare, April 5, 1969*)

Back in the days of the Old West when pioneers guided prairie schooners across the plains, Army cavalymen were often augmented in firepower by musket-carrying farmers, cowboys and blacksmiths to assure the safety of the wagon train.

Today, throughout South Vietnam, U.S. military installations have trained and armed support personnel who augment regular defense forces much in the manner that took place in the old west.

A typical example of this “augmentation program” can be seen at Phan Rang Air Base. The 10.4 square mile base is home for a fighter bomber wing and a transport wing. Since January, Phan Rang has been attacked nine times by enemy ground forces.

All attacks were successfully counter-attacked by Air Force security police with the assistance of “augmentees.”

On a day-to-day basis, the air base’s security is maintained by the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS. Its highly trained men are heavily armed with such weapons as M-60 machineguns, grenade launchers, and mortars. Sophisticated communications equipment can direct them in armored personnel carriers to a suspected trouble spot on base within minutes.

While sentry dog teams patrol the base perimeter all night, security policemen are in sandbag bunkers and towers adjacent to miles of barb wire surrounding the air base.

In the event of an enemy attack, augmentees would be called out from their duty sections or barracks to come under the control of the regular security police. There are issued weapons and moved to designated areas.

A continuous, aggressive training program for the augmentees is conducted by the 354<sup>th</sup> SPS.

After serving her one year with the 35<sup>th</sup> SPS, the administrator of the Phan Rang augmentee training program, Sergeant Larry D. Paul, departed this week.

The program calls upon cooks, bakers, but no candlestick makers,” said Sergeant Paul with a smile. “Regardless of what they were before, when the whistle blows, they become ‘instant’ security policemen.”

Behind that ‘instant’ transition are hours of classroom and field training by qualified instructors. Paul has handled the classroom portion while Sergeants Thomas J. Metzen and Roger T. Williams conduct the weapons training.

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

Airmen are selected for augmentee duty from all units on base. “I don’t know what the percentage of volunteers for augmentee duty is, but I do know that it is very high,” Sergeant Paul said. We’ve never had a case where we called upon a man for duty and he didn’t come forth willingly.”

Augmentee training includes care and maintenance of their basic weapon, the M-16 rifle, day and night firing of the M-16, guard orders, counter attack plans, self protection including use of the gas mask and first aid, counterintelligence, with emphasis on the local situation, care of field equipment, written tests, and finally, no-notice exercises.

“The idea is to get augmentee and security policeman working together as a team before an emergency arises.” Sergeant Paul said. “In the security business, there is no room for error. That one mistake me b fatal.”

Once trained, the augmentee’s proficiency is maintained by further training every 60 days.

How have they worked out?

“They do a bang-up job,” Paul said. “I’ve had numerous compliments from security police supervisors concerning their attitude. Job proficiency - we’re glad to have them working for us.”

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**Captain Powell Winds It Up** *(Phan Fare, April 5, 1969)*

Two hundred and sixty-five combat missions for a total of 649 hours flying time and Capt. Theodore R. Powell completed his combat tour in Vietnam.

An F-100 Supersabre pilot with the 615<sup>th</sup> TFS, he recently flew his last combat sortie with 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. James D. Thames as his wingman. Hitting a Viet Cong staging area 120 miles southwest of Saigon, they destroyed or damaged three enemy bunkers.

At the completion of his last flight, Captain Powell was given a taxiway escort back to the ramp by his fellow pilots followed by the traditional dousing with a fire hose and a victory toast.

During his tour in Vietnam, Captain Powell served four months flying the F-100 as a forward air controller over North Vietnam prior to the bombing halt. His 71 missions in this capacity contributed 350 hours to his total.

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

Upon his return to the states, Captain Powell will be assigned to the 4429<sup>th</sup> Combat Crew Training Squadron, Cannon AFB, N.M., as an instructor pilot in the AT-33. There, he will be teaching future forward air controllers in the technique used in air-to-ground weapons deliveries.

His awards and decorations earned as a fighter pilot in Vietnam include the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal.

**Squadrons Get Award In Combat** (*Air Force News, October 2, 1968*)

**PHAN RANG** — Four hundred aircrew members of the 315th Special Operations Wing here will be awarded the U.S. Marine Corps Presidential Unit Citation according to Col. John W. Pauly, 315th Commander.

The 315th crews of the 309th, 310th and 311th Special Operations Squadrons here and the 19th Special Operations Squadron, Tan Son Nhut AB, earned this decoration for their airlift support of the U.S. Marine Corps' 26th Regimental Landing Team during the 80-day communist siege of Khe Sanh.

C-123 Providers of the 315th entered the conflict in the late afternoon of Jan. 21. Khe Sanh was under heavy attack and the Marines were nearly out of ammunition.

Six Provider crews that had flown all day were immediately directed to Khe Sanh. Some of the crews made five trips, carrying ammunition to the embattled Marines far into the night.

This support continued until enemy pressure broke under the constant aerial bombardment and ground forces were able to move in and lift the siege.

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## **TALES OF PHAN RANG**



**BY ROBERT CHAPPELEAR**

**Tales of Phan Rang (Part 16) by Robert Chappelle**

Tales of Phan Rang

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam  
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Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

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

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

**About Robert Chappelle**



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

**Chapter 16 - Sydney R&R**

Snake School was in my seventh month, but I had saved the best for even later. I took my “Rest and Recuperation” (R&R) leave during my ninth month. I also held out so late so that I could virtually guarantee that I would get my first choice which was Sidney, Australia!!! That R&R was everything that I expected and maybe even more. I had a little information before departing and so I made reservations at a hotel in the section of Sidney known as Kings Cross. The reason that I chose this hotel is because it looked just like a new hotel back in my home town of Columbus, Ohio. It was a tower of about 14 stories with the entrance lobby on the first floor. It was a little more expensive than a “grunt” would like but what the hell, I was a “bachelor 1st Lieutenant on flying status” and I didn’t care. I departed Cam Rahn Bay AB on the 30th of June 1969 along with a couple hundred other troops. I knew no one and being completely honest I remember no one else from that trip. We left late in the evening and flew all night arriving in Sidney early morning on the 1st of July. I can still remember that when I got off the airplane at Sidney I had an immediate sensation that it was “cool”, not hippie “cool”, it was temperature cool, and it was not humid. It was so unbelievably pleasant weather wise that I knew immediately that I would enjoy the stay. I went through the indoctrination briefing where we were told such things as, “under no circumstances will you attempt to drive an automobile here in Australia, (they drive on the ‘wrong’ side of the road), you are guests in the country’ act like it, ya da, ya da, ya da.” I left the processing center and took a cab to the hotel that I had booked. The cabbie even remarked that there were very few people on R&R that

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

---

Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

used that particular hotel. I checked in, went to the room, and took a nap; after all it was about 0600 Sidney time. I woke about 0900 and went downstairs to the hotel restaurant for breakfast. I looked around and noticed that all of the waitress’s were “round eyes”! Again I knew that I would like this place.

After breakfast I went to the R&R center to look for activities. There I found all kinds of potential things to do. There were tours of the city, trips to Alice Springs, trips to “Ayres Rock”, night club tours, trips to the zoo, so on and so forth. There was even a “tour” set up where guys on R&R could go spend their time away from Vietnam with a rancher in the “outback”. I got the impression that was a “tour” for personnel that were coming back to Australia, having been there before. When I looked into it a little later I found out that people participating in this type of tour had to “book” them before departing Vietnam for they actually went right from the R&R airplane to the rancher’s car, usually a “Land Rover”, and left from the airport immediately. They were returned to the airport just in time to get on the return flight seven days later. Unfortunately, the trips to Alice Springs, and Ayres Rock were also items that had to be “prebooked” and though after finding out about these tours I thought that I would like to do both, I then found out that they were multiple day trips and that you couldn’t do them unless you signed up and left right after arriving in Sidney. I signed up for a tour of the city, another of the beaches, a tour of the zoo, another of the Sidney Opera House, and also a night club tour “with dates”.

The tour of the city was cool, I got to see the original city jail where the “convicts” deported from England to Australia were first “welcomed” the colony. That tour was where I also learned of the Aussie tradition that the pubs were open 364 days a year, with the only day that they were closed was Christmas Day. The pubs however, were open on “Boxing Day”. (Boxing Day is a British tradition and occurs on the day after the American “Christmas”.) On that tour I also received an invitation to a “4th of July” party. I had to ask, “Why would you Aussies celebrate the American 4th of July?” The answer was, “Hey Mate, any excuse for a party.” I went to that party in a suburb of Sidney that started on the 3rd of July and lasted until the 5th . It ranks right up there with memorable 4th of July parties and was even better than the “illegal” celebrations that we had in England twelve years later.

Put it all together, the R&R tours were wonderful. The Aussies in their homeland were just like the mates in Vietnam. The tours of the beaches were great even though it was middle of Aussie winter. There were still bikini clad “sights” to be seen. On the zoo tour I learned the difference between a “Rat” and a “Roo” as well as learning what a “Wallaby” was. Thus I learned the difference so when I got back to Vietnam and I would see the Australian C-7s flying around and when they called themselves “Wallaby Airlines”, I understood the difference.

I took the “Night Club with Dates” tour about my sixth night on the R&R. Up to that point I that Aussie doctors had a standard operating procedure of throwing all ugly Australian baby girls out with the afterbirth but I found out otherwise. I’m not going to say that I did not have fun for honestly I did. The girls that participated in this program were all friendly, charming and



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

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Phan Rang News No. 41

**“Stories worth telling”**

courteous. They were all good conversationalist, and good dancers. Most of them however, were ugly, overweight, or otherwise less than “choice”. I repeat that I had a good time, I got to see “Herman and his Hermits” as they sang their smash hit, “I’m ‘enery the Eighth”, and the girl that I was with was cute even though a trifle overweight.” It sounds bad to make these remarks about the Aussie girls that participated in this program but I am being entirely truthful about recollections of this experience. Of course, I had already been spoiled by meeting a young lady named Betty at the “Texas Steak House”. Betty was a waitress at that restaurant and you are right to think that it was an establishment that catered to American personnel on R&R. They served New York Strips, baked potato, salad with ranch dressing, garlic toast and beer. Betty was a beautiful little brunette that if she had asked I would have married her and taken her back to the United States. She was a doll! She was fun, smart, cute, etc. etc. etc. I formed these opinions when I as sober and not at all drunk. I guess that when you come right down to it, she was a nice girl doing her job, probably with a boy friend and not really interested in getting hooked up with some American in town only for a week. Never the less, if she had asked I probably would have immigrated to the land down under if she had shown a serious interest in me.

All in all the Aussies were very nice and tried very hard to ensure that we all were well cared for. Even when I was preparing to leave I found this to be so. I had to report to the departure terminal at about 0700 and so I decided that there was no need to go to bed that night. I went to the “Texas Steak House” for a final New York Strip and last talk to Betty and then one last walk about Kings Cross. I got in about 0300 and got a bright idea that I would make a telephone call to my parents in Columbus, Ohio. I picked up the room telephone and after a couple of minutes the hotel operator connected me to my mother and father in Columbus, Ohio. We spoke for about 45 or 50 minutes. Oh yeah, I figure that call cost about \$110.00 but I “reversed the charges.” After the conversation with my parents I looked at my watch and seeing that it was now about 0500 I decided to make another phone call, This time to a girl back in the States that I had been quite close to and actually we had been engaged to before I went to Vietnam. I had already paid my room bill and made arrangements for a cab back to the airport so I looked at my wallet and realized that I had \$78.00 American to spare. I then called the hotel operator and told her of my plan. I said that I had \$78.00 and that I wanted her to monitor my phone call and when I was within \$2.00 of the \$78.00 charge she should break into the conversation and at that time I would end the talk. I enjoyed the talk to Susan Marie and I also appreciated the interruption by the operator at about 20 or 25 minutes into the conversation when she told me that I was approaching my \$78.00 limit. I thanked the operator and bid my adieu to Susan. I went downstairs to the hotel desk, paid my phone bill (\$76.00) and at about 0600 and caught my cab back to the airport.

Twenty years later after I retired from the USAF and while I was visiting my parents, I said to my Dad that I would reimburse him for the cost of that phone call from Sidney, Australia. Dad looked at me and said, “Ma Bell musta’ got confused that day ‘cause they thought it was a reverse charge phone call from Sidney, Ohio. You owe me \$1.10.”

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

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**TALES OF PHAN RANG**



**BY ROBERT CHAPELEAR**

To buy Robert Chappellear’s book, click [here](#).

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