

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

In this issue:

Services Aren’t Just On Sunday

BRAVE WARRIORS, HUMBLE HEROES: A Vietnam War Story

35th TFW Packs Up for Long Flight Home

Working Trip Home For Pilots

F-100 from Two Perspectives (jpg)

Rhett O. Webber At Phan Rang AB

Phan Rang Free Fire Zone

Terry Brodt Remembers Early Days At Fighter Base

Doug’s Note

Services Aren’t Just On Sunday (*Pacific Stars & Stripes Friday, Oct. 20, 1967*)

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (01)—Visiting Montagnard tribesmen, counseling airmen. on the flight line and hosting All-American, basketball players are among the highlights of the combat tour which is ending for Chaplain (Capt.) Franklin D. Hartsell.

"I think it has been the most rewarding experience of my young ministry," said the Protestant chaplain, who has been in the Air Force five years. He agreed that his tour at Phan Rang has gone far beyond conducting Sunday services. "

"I spend most of my time down on the flight line," Hartsell said, explaining that he has attempted to counsel Protestant airmen of the base at the places where they work.

"I thoroughly enjoy talking with the pilots," he continued. The chaplain converses with F-100 and B-57 pilots before combat missions and finds time to seek them out to congratulate them when missions have been completed.

In reviewing the off-base program of the chaplains at Phan Rang, he expressed pride in the fact that the Protestant men of the chapel donated almost \$7,000 over an 11-month period for construction of a mission center at Phuoc Doc for the training of Montagnard missionaries.

"This effort," he pointed out, is meant to show the Vietnamese that we as Americans are very much concerned about them personally."

Several months ago, two "Montagnard missionaries, Sau and Kar, were the guests of honor at the tiny base chapel. (This chapel has since been replaced by a much larger building).

The two missionaries were the heroes of a book called "The Bamboo Cross", describing their struggle to lead their people's escape from Viet Cong oppression.

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
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Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

BRAVE WARRIORS, HUMBLE HEROES: A Vietnam War Story

In the last issue I gave you a teaser about Marjorie T. Hansen, who wrote a book titled **“Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story”** from her husband’s letters home. Now I want to give you more information about this incredible lady.

About the Author

Marjorie T. Hansen

Marjorie T. Hansen became a military wife in 1958 when she married First Lieutenant Charles J. Hansen, Jr., United States Air Force, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Class of 1956. Marge shared his military experience that forever changed their lives—the Cold War, Vietnam War, and the aftermath of war. *Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story* pays tribute to their enduring love that played out all over the world: Japan, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, Alabama, California, Hawaii, South Vietnam, North Dakota, Texas, and even a remote jungle base in the war zone on the Laotian-Thailand border.

Marge earned the Bachelor of Science degree from Florida State University and the Master of Public Administration from the University of Oklahoma. Her professional experience includes teacher in public higher education, communications instructor and education administrator for the United States Air Force, and manager in corporate marketing communications for Texas Instruments.

She lives in the Dallas area and continues her work to seek help for military dependents who were exposed to Agent Orange at USAF bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War. Marge is actively involved with the United States Naval Academy Alumni Association, Life Member;

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Life Member; Air Force Association, Gold Star Wives, Vietnam Veterans Association, Florida State University and University of Oklahoma alumni associations, American Association of University Women (AAUW), Alpha Xi Delta, and is a member of the Church of the Holy Communion, Dallas, TX. She has two sons and three granddaughters.



**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
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Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Excerpts from Charlie’s letters from the Vietnam War

Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam

2 June ‘71

Today we flew to Tan Son Nhut and made two trips from there to Loc Ninh hauling gasoline in huge rubber-like rolls. Between the two trips I bought a paper and read the war news that was two days old. Seems the South Vietnamese have abandoned the town of Snoul, Cambodia and are beating a retreat SW meeting heavy resistance in the process. Out of curiosity I looked for Snoul on my map and located it 15 miles NW of Loc Ninh. A close look around during the 2nd landing revealed 25 or 30 South Vietnam tanks and armored cars resting around the small strip and lots of smoke up towards the NW. There really is a war over here!

9 June ‘71

The base I went to about a week ago that was so close to the action in Cambodia got hit by sappers a couple of days ago and blew up all of the gasoline we took in. The South Vietnamese retreated from Cambodia so fast that our US planes had to destroy about 50 trucks, tanks, and artillery which they left behind in usable condition.

3 Aug ‘71

The flights were mostly safe and uneventful, except for yesterday. We transported two ARVN KIA’s from Ton San Nhut—flag draped coffins, honor guard, and family members. One widow had three small children with her. Destination was Qui Nhon but we brought them as far as Phan Rang. That means they’ll spend a few days and nights sleeping in a warehouse with the coffins until a flight finally gets them the rest of the way. What a mess all of this is!

Nakhon Phanom AB (NKP) Thailand

29 Mar ‘72

We are all kind of stunned after last night’s Spectre mishap—I imagine it will get lots of stateside publicity. They apparently took a direct hit from a SAM. They were working east of NKP in an area that has been off limits to Stingers for a couple of months. Today has been long and somber—lots to reflect on. I miss you terribly tonight, and I love you. —Charlie

Q&A with Marjorie T. Hansen

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
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Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story is a gripping journey into one of the most divisive and turbulent periods in our nation’s history.

What motivated you to write this remarkable, intensely personal true story?

When I discovered a story unfolding in Charlie’s letters from the Vietnam War, I realized I had a valuable piece of history I needed to share as our country continues to heal from the Vietnam War. My life with Charlie was a love story that spanned oceans—filled with faith, hope, and love that perhaps could bring comfort and reassurance to those who have shared similar experiences as they have endured the loneliness and sacrifices brought on by war. I knew I needed to include Charlie’s letters along with my personal, private thoughts. I felt an urgency to keep Charlie’s legacy alive for my family and write about our brave warriors and humble heroes. The story became a tribute not only to Charlie but to all of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War, the families who waited at home, and all whose voices have not been heard. My hope is the book will lead to a new, fresh dialogue on Vietnam veterans’ health care, an overhaul of Agent Orange claims, and care for military dependents that were exposed to Agent Orange at the USAF bases in Thailand during the war.

Was this an easy story for you to write?

While painful at times reliving the life I had lost, I was uplifted by the memories of the incredible life I had with Charlie—filled not only with enduring love, there was excitement, adventure, danger, foreign travel, and lots of fun. Women in the early ‘70s didn’t travel around Southeast Asia alone during the war. I was locked in a dark, dirty room in an airport in South Vietnam suspected of being a spy! And only a handful of us would dare join our husbands in a war zone at a remote jungle area on the Laotian-Thailand border, surrounded by North Vietnamese sympathizers and enemy insurgents. Would I take that risk again? You bet I would. During war there is such intensity knowing there is no promise of tomorrow. Whatever risks I had to take to be with Charlie I took. I love history, research, and writing although I never considered writing a book until after he died. I had planned to submit my Thailand adventure to Stars and Stripes but never found the perfect words to describe being in a war zone and living in a combat crew trailer while Charlie flew combat missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos in an AC-119K Stinger gunship barraged by heavy anti-aircraft artillery every night. What stories I have to tell my grandchildren now. My favorite story to tell is Charlie’s story. Yes, it was an easy story to write.

You have introduced some provocative and controversial issues in the Epilogue of your book. Why talk about Agent Orange now—40 years after the end of the Vietnam War?

I was a witness to history at Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand (NKP) in 1972. I was there during the spraying of toxic herbicides. Information on the usage of toxic herbicides on the USAF bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War was classified until 2010 when it became available thru the

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Critical health information was withheld from military personnel, military dependents, civilian workers on the bases, and the American public. Questions need to be asked and those who need help need to be helped. That is not happening. We are an exceptional country and we do exceptional things; and I believe with visibility and a fresh new dialogue on Agent Orange, problems can be fixed. I will be overjoyed if my book makes a difference.

In your book you said, “Where Charlie saw challenges as opportunities to serve his country, I saw our brave warriors being sent into harm’s way to fight and die in a war they could not win. If the gunship missions over the Trail were to stop the trucks from getting to South Vietnam with supplies, why weren’t our warriors allowed to stop the trucks before they got on the Trail?” After 40 years, has your perspective of the Vietnam War changed?

You have asked a good question. The answer is on page 214 in my book. You will find a powerful paragraph from “The Weinberger Doctrine” by John T. Correll, March 2014, Air Force Magazine of the Air Force Association that perfectly frames the aftermath of the Vietnam War: “Long after the United States pulled out of Vietnam, the memory of the conflict hung over the nation like a cloud. The armed forces left 58,178 dead there in the first war the US had ever lost—and which the nation did not fight to win.”

Do you have special memories of Charlie, and thoughts about Charlie’s legacy that you would like to share?

All of my memories of Charlie are special—many I’ve shared in the book. I will always remember the joy I felt when the Stinger gunships returned safely from their night combat missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and circled the perimeter shining their lights down to expose any threatening activity around NKP. It was the most beautiful sight I’d ever seen when I knew Charlie was onboard, and would soon be back in my arms smelling like sweat, cigarettes, and avgas. Heaven!

The legacy Charlie left behind for his family is a pathway for us and for future generations to follow. His commitment to a life of service to others started when he was a young child serving as an acolyte influenced by a simple but powerful verse in the Bible: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). He lived his faith by unselfishly sharing his time, talent, and financial blessings with those who needed his help. Faith, hope, and love helped define his life. Charlie’s legacy will live on forever in *Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story*.

www.BraveWarriorsHumbleHeroes.com

**“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB, Vietnam
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Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

35th TFW Packs Up for Long Flight Home (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, July 10, 1971*)

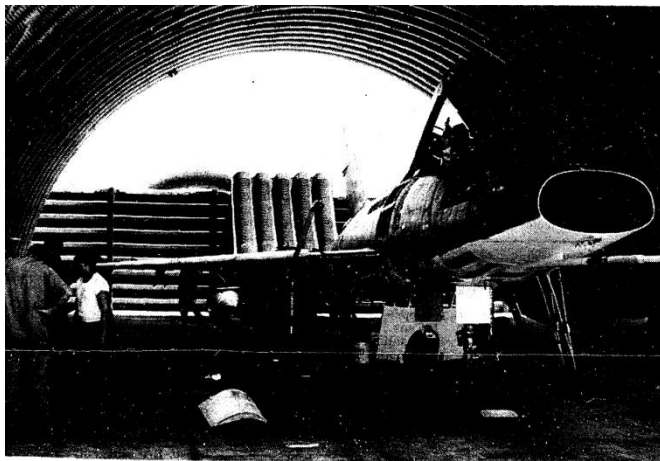
By SPEC. 4 LARRY A. MYERS

S&S Staff Correspondent

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam — Five years and 157,100 combat strikes after its arrival, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here is preparing to leave Vietnam.

The unit's F-100 Super Sabre jets, which have blasted enemy targets in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, completed their final combat missions June 25.

The planes will be turned over to stateside Air National Guard units, sources here said.



F-100 jets of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing are hauled into revetments at Phan Rang to be completely checked out before being flown back to the United States.

Going home for a unit like the 35th, with dozens of complicated aircraft, hundreds of pieces of ground support equipment and tons of other supplies, is not a simple undertaking.

"We began planning for the move in May, as soon as we got the word from 7th AF that we were going," said Lt. Col. Paul D. Glanville, logistics plans officer.

Glanville and other wing personnel spent days devising an elaborate schedule so that the aircraft and equipment could be redeployed orderly and efficiently.

Fulfilling the wing's combat mission, putting the aircraft and ground equipment into top-notch condition, plus packing and shipping critical parts and equipment were among the major items to consider, Glanville said.

"The whole operation is so vast and complex it is really hard to explain," said Lt. Col. Charles S. Bailey, wing maintenance chief.

"To begin with, this is the first time such a wholly operational unit has gone directly to the Air National Guard from an operational theater," Bailey said.

This means that the entire F-100 operation must be moved lock, stock and barrel to the United States.

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Preparing the aircraft — some of the planes are 15 years old — and support equipment for the move is the biggest job. It will take two weeks of hard work by 1,500 men before the first group of aircraft is ready for the long flight back, Bailey said.

Each plane is given a complete going-over, including engine and structural repair, cleaning, repainting, new tires, ground checks, flight checks and inspection after inspection.

Air Force and Air National Guard liaison personnel here must certify that every piece of equipment is in good condition before it can be shipped to the United States, Bailey said.

Classified equipment and communications gear used only in Southeast Asia is removed from the planes at Phan Rang, Bailey said. Bomb and rocket racks, items of no use to the Air national guard, are taken off.

Bailey and his maintenance personnel must also clean, repair and paint all the special ground equipment used to support the F-100s, such as hydraulic systems testing devices and portable generators.

There are 260 items like dust covers, tanks and ramps that are needed to maintain the planes in a non-flying status. Maintenance is responsible for these items too, Bailey said.

Excluding the aircraft, 1,100 tons of supplies and equipment must be shipped out in two months. The majority of the gear will be moved by ship.

However, some essential items will be moved by air to receiving units stateside as well as to two stopover points, Glanville said.

A 36-man team and maintenance and repair equipment will be sent to each of the two stopover points several days before the aircraft leave Vietnam, Glanville said. After the move, this equipment too will be turned over to the Air National Guard.

"We don't have any really big problems, but hundreds of little ones that often compound each other. It's really challenging work," he concluded.

Working Trip Home For Pilots (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, July 10, 1971*)

S&S Vietnam Bureau

PHAN RANG, Vietnam Catching a "freedom bird" something that most servicemen in Vietnam look forward to, but for about 60 Air Force pilots here, DEROSing means a lot hard work because they will flying their own birds' home.

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

The men and their aircraft, F100 Super Sabres, are being returned to the U.S. as part of the redeployment of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here, which began standing down late in June.

"The flying itself will be simple compared to the combat missions we're used to," said Capt. Dave Hesp.

"The only difficult part will be the 13 in-flight refuelings," he said.

"We've been practicing that for the last few weeks to check out ourselves and our equipment," Hesp said. The pilots have also been practicing water survival techniques at a nearby beach.

"Most of us haven't actually got in the water and climbed into a one-man raft for a year so," Hesp said.

The wing commander, Col. Creeg P. Nolan Jr., felt a brief refresher course might come handy, Hesp said.

The flight, which will take 22 ½ hours in three hops, will be the first such long distance journey for most of the pilots, Hesp said.

"Taking a single seat fighter that far across water is something few people do," Hesp said. "It'll be a long hard ride, but it will be great to be flying your own DEROS bird."

"You won't have to sit in hot, sweaty Cam Ranh Bay for hours and you can take lots of baggage with you," Hesp said.

"We're even going to take box lunches."



Pilots of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing waded into the South China Sea to practice with life rafts as they prepare to fly their F-100s out of Vietnam.

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

**“Stories worth telling”
F-100 from Two Perspectives**



20 Jan 1969. Picture submitted by Henk Scharringa



July 1967. Photo by Darrel Couch, Submitted by Henk Scharringa

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Rhett O. Webber At Phan Rang AB (*The News, Frederick, Maryland, Wednesday, March 15, 1967*)

The safe takeoff and landing of aircraft using either of the two runways at Phan Rang Air Base in Vietnam, is the job of S.Sgt. Rhett O. Webber of Knoxville.

Situated in a glass walled room atop a five-story tower resembling a lighthouse, Sergeant Webber works to keep in communication with aircraft landing, taxiing, or taking off.

If an aircraft is unable to land visually due to darkness or bad weather, he brings it in by radar with the aid of the Ground Control Approach system.

The 24-year-old air traffic controller, son of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Webber of Knoxville, is assigned to the 1882nd Communication Squadron at Phan Rang.

A graduate of Brunswick High School, Sergeant Webber attended Louisiana State University at Alexandria, La.

Phan Rang Free Fire Zone...with comments from Facebook

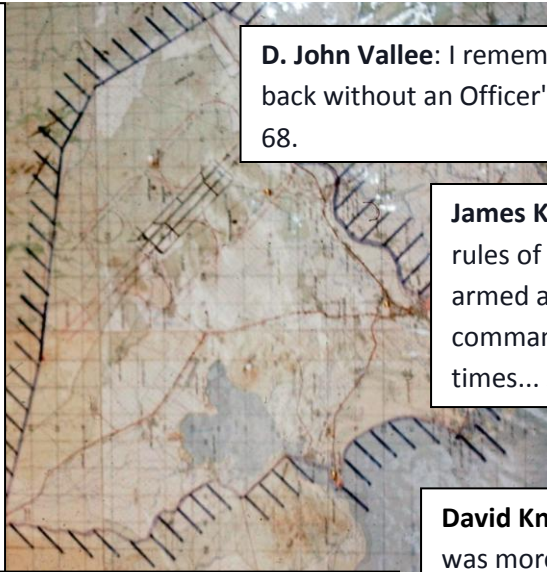
Charles Hough: When returning from a night psy ops mission, we were on final for runway 35 when we received tracers coming up just off our left wing. We contacted the tower and they alerted the acft following us, a C 119 Shadow., It rolled in on a LH low level orbit around the suspected source with their flood light. Turned out to be friendly perimeter security patrol that was bored. Good thing the C119 didn't open up with mini guns.

Charles Hough: Shortly after the tracer incident the base security shot the C119 crew mascot the called it a stray dog. That dog had been with the squadron for several years. It even wore a custom made flight jacket. That "get even" shooting almost started a base feud! 1970/71

D. John Vallee: I remember you could not fire back without an Officer's approval, that was 67-68.

James Kestner: We stuck to MACV rules of engagement in 68-69. If armed and did not stop after command of "halt dừng lại" three times... shoot to kill...

David Knighton: Around the Air Base was more of a "Modified" Free Fire Zone. You couldn't just start shooting without notifying CSC first and getting permission. Down at the Air Force Beach though it was different. That area was a real Free Fire Zone because it was so isolated.



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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

Terry Brodt Remembers Early Days At Fighter Base (*The News, Van Nuys (Calif.) Thursday, November 9, 1967*)

Airman first Class Terry V. Brodt, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent R. Brodt. 8530 Cedros Ave., Panorama City, was one of the few veterans around when his unit, the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron, celebrated its first anniversary of combat operations in South Vietnam at Phan Rang Air Base.

Base War Rugged

Airman Brodt was with the squadron when it first went to Southeast Asia from England AFB, La. All of the original pilots have departed for new assignments, with only a few enlisted men left.

The young operations clerk recalls that ". . . it has been most interesting and fruitful year. I have learned quite a bit about Air Force operations in Southeast Asia."

"The men just coming Phan Rang cannot appreciate how good it is," said Airman Brodt "We lived in tents, walked in ankle deep mud and choked on dust. There were no paved roads. It was an adventure that all who were deployed with the squadron will never forget."

The squadron, originally a bomber unit in World War II averaged 1000 hours of fighter time each month during the past year and flew 8000 sorties during the same time.

The past year also has seen the squadron fighting the Vietnam war in one other way — that of humanitarianism.

Help With Schools

Airman Brodt and the other men of the 614th have donated more than \$1700 in the past year to schools in Phan Rang and Thap Cham for scholarships and improvements. Presently they are giving special support to one school, the An Phuoc High School in Thap Cham.

The airman was graduated from Thousand Oaks High School in 1964. He entered the Air Force in March 1966.

Phan Rang AB News is available in the files section of the ‘Happy Valley’ Phan Rang AB Facebook group and all the issues are conveniently located on my website. When you click on a particular link/issue, allow a few minutes for it to download depending upon your bandwidth, but you will be downloading a PDF file that is at least 1.5mb in size. If you need it in Word format, please let me know and I will send it to you.

Doug’s 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 always

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

Phan Rang News No. 44

“Stories worth telling”

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 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.