

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

Phan Rang News No. 45

“Stories worth telling”

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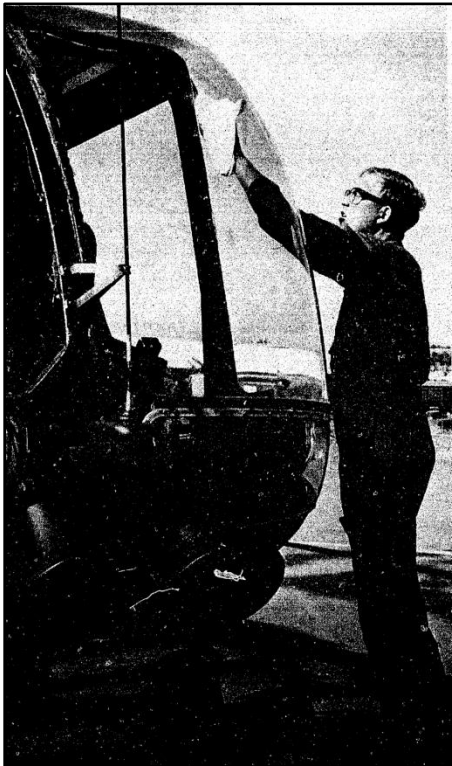
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Pedro: A Little Bird with a Big Job

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special)-The aircraft is small in size compared to the giant C5 Galaxy or C141 Starlifter transports of the U.S. Air Force. It does not compare to the F4 Phantom jet fighter in speed or range, and unlike the F111, it carries no sophisticated weapons systems.



Sgt. Larry K. Fisher, a flight engineer, washes down pilot's windshield keeping a Pedro ready to go.

It has a simple name — Pedro — it's a helicopter, and its mission is to save lives. It is flown by the aircrews of Det. 1, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Sq. here, who are on alert 24 hours daily, ready to scramble their twin-rotor life-saver to respond to any trouble call from disabled aircraft or one that has an unsafe condition.

Capt. Mike H. Nelson is a Pedro aircraft commander and a veteran of both base and regional aircrew rescue missions. He said, "We may receive our scramble call from the Phan Rang AB control tower or the Joint Rescue Coordination Center at Tan Son Nhut AB, near Saigon. From the initial call we can plan our mission requirements, we may or may not be needed. But if it is decided that we are needed in the rescue, we'll be there.

Primarily designed as an airborne firefighter, Pedro, a Kaman HH43 Huskie helicopter, doubles its role in Southeast Asia as an evacuation and rescue helicopter.

The specially modified Pedros on duty here have increased range and speed and use a 200-foot cable for rescuing downed airmen from tropical jungles.

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The helicopter airlifts a team of two aerial firefighters and a medic to the scene of an aircraft crash. The firemen use a fire suppression kit which is slung underneath the aircraft. The kit includes a foam dispenser capable of discharging 850 pounds of foam, enough to clear a path for the evacuation of a downed crew, with the aid of the downwash from the helicopter's rotors.

The detachment has the assigned task of evacuating airmen downed in the Phan Rang area. To do this the helicopter flight mechanic doubles as the hoist operator, and with the aid of the jungle penetrator seat or evacuation basket, can place a medical technician on the ground to assist the injured and then extract the crew and the medical man to speed them to the nearest medical facility.

At right, a Pedro crew takes on board a simulated survivor in a training mission. The dummy is being lifted aboard by an improved hoist system capable of taking a man out of dense jungle.



Swett Given Civic Award (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, August 21 1970)

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Maj. Ben H. Swett was recently selected to receive the Phan Rang AB Civic Action Quarterly Award for April through June.

Swett, a navigator with the 311th Tactical Airlift Sq, and civic action coordinator for the 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, was chosen for the award by the base civic action office.

Cited for his active support of local civic action programs, Swett received particular praise for the 315th TAW's participation in the "Dollars for Scholars" program, the collection of school supplies for the surrounding communities, and the construction of a hamlet road.

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In addition, the 14-year Air Force veteran coordinated several other civic action projects, including construction of desks and furniture for the Thap Ban Tu School.

FAC With a Sting Directs Base Camp 'Kill' (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Wednesday, August 5, 1970*)

BIEN HOA AB, Vietnam (Special) — For more than five hours, the U.S. Air Force OV10 Bronco swooped and circled overhead. Below, the jungle heaved and shook with explosions as repeated Allied air strikes shattered enemy base camp hiding beneath the dense jungle foliage.

At the end of five hours of relentless bombing, gutted cache sites and bomb blackened bunkers remained of what was once an enemy camp of 50 to 60 fortifications and bunkers.



Kirk Minert: "This is OV-10A #648 Bronco FAC aircraft that they had at Phan Rang 1968/69." Added by John Rowston

Piloting the OV10 was 1st Lt. James L. Woods, 25, a forward air controller (FAC) with the 19th Tactical Air Support Sq. here. The day would see him direct air strikes for aircraft from two Air Force bases, two U.S. fighting services and two Allied countries. It would be a long, tiring day but a very worthwhile one.

Upon reaching his sector, Woods made contact with an Army hunter-killer helicopter team, consisting of a light observation helicopter (LOH) and a UH1 Huey Cobra helicopter gunship. The team had seen considerable enemy activity in an area some 30 miles northwest of Xuan Loc city in Long Khanh Province. The LOH pilot said the target was most likely an enemy cache site and base camp. The mission, however, started with problems.

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"Just as I arrived on target" said Woods, "the helicopters had to return to base to refuel. In the meantime, my strike had been canceled due to weather, so I requested a new strike."

This strike consisted of two A37 Dragonflies from the 90th Attack Squadron, They were scrambled from Bien Hoa AB to support the request. The A37s were piloted by First Lieutenants Quentin J. McGregor, 23, and John P. Cerak, 25.

"As the A37 flight was about to arrive, the LOH reported that he was ready to return to the target area, but, that his high ship and cover, the Cobra, had not refueled yet," the lieutenant continued, "However, I told the LOH that I would have my A37 flight act as cover for him. He returned on station and immediately drew heavy small arms fire from the target area. I marked this target and put the A37s to work on it.

"Meanwhile, the LOH landed at an old fire support base to have a good look at himself. He had taken a lot of rounds, but fortunately wasn't hit. He then returned to the base camp area along with the Cobra gunship.

"The A37s pounded the area from which the ground fire had come during their strike they got a good secondary explosion opening the possibility that they were striking a cache of explosives. They were credited with destroying six enemy fortifications and six bunkers.

"About this time, a Canberra, from the Royal Australian Air Force's Number 2 Squadron at Phan Rang AB, checked in with me," Woods went on. "I marked the new target for them. It was just a little to the right of the A37 target. The Canberra dropped three bombs on each pass and hit right on the target. They were really good hits, and that ended the ground fire from that area.

"I had the fighters set their first bomb fuses for instantaneous detonation to blow away the trees and then the next bombs with delayed fusing to get the exposed bunkers," continued Woods. "The enemy had built some fairly large hootches in the area, and under each he had built a good-sized bunker. There were also some pallets spotted in the area like those found at some of the cache sites in Cambodia.

"The LOH went in to get a reading on the battle damage caused by the Canberra. He stated that there was absolutely nothing left of the hootches or bunkers where the A37s and Canberra had hit. Pieces of them were blown all over the jungle, and where they originally were, there were only craters," added the lieutenant.

As soon as Woods had finished with the Canberra, two USAF FIDO Super Sabres from Phan Rang AB arrived. They were replacements for the mission which the lieutenant had lost earlier in the day. Their mission was a landing zone preparation near the current target.

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"When the FIDO's arrived, I put them in on the landing zone 'prep' which was near the target that I had been working on. After they expended all their bombs on the landing zone, I brought them to the original Canberra target. I had them strafe the area thoroughly with their 20mm cannons, They did a real job. The LOH again went in to have a look, and he reported that the Super Sabres had accounted for two more fortifications and another bunker.

"As the LOH flew at treetop level over the target, he saw that hootches blown away by previous bomb blasts revealed more bunkers underneath.

"The base camp and storage sites were much larger than we originally realized," Woods explained. "As we got into it and blew away some of the jungle, we kept uncovering more and more of the camp. As the new targets appeared, I kept calling for more and more tactical air.

"I was able to stay on target for so long because I had a centerline extra fuel tank on my OV10. Of course, that didn't do much to help the many parts of my body that were beginning to go to sleep or ache," the lieutenant continued with a grin.

"I was told there was a set of free air (a flight unable to expend its ordnance on its original Target and available for a target of opportunity) available from Bien Hoa AB. I asked for this flight and soon had them on station," the lieutenant continued.

The flight consisted of two A37s from the 90th AS here. They were piloted by Lt. Col. Thomas J. Magner and Capt. Howard K. Carroll.

Woods marked the new bunkers which the LOH had found. He then directed the A37s to start their bomb runs. "On our first three passes Woods directed us to drop our bombs directly on his smoke," Carroll recalled. "Then he had us climb while the LOH went in to look at the target. The LOH pilot said all the bunkers in this area had been destroyed. The LOH pilot then told the FAC about another bunker complex about 400 yards from the first one we had hit. The FAC marked this new target, and we dropped our remaining bombs on it. Again we held high and dry while the LOH went into have a look. He said this target was also completely destroyed."

Another LOH now working in the area discovered a supply cache of 55-gallon drums. The A37 flight was next directed against this new site. Using their miniguns, the 90th pilots destroyed all the drums. All totaled, this A37 flight was credited with destroying 17 bunkers and six fortifications, plus the drum cache.

It had now been more than five hours since Woods had first arrived on target in his OV10. He was out of ammunition, out of smoke rockets, almost out of fuel and finally out of targets. Warily he turned his Bronco back toward Bien Hoa AB. It had been a "long kind of day." It had also been the kind of day that saw the death of an enemy base camp.

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Airmen Have Good Will Sewed Up (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Monday May 24, 1971*)

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Fifteen Phan Rang AB airmen traveled to Ba Ran village, six miles from this coastal air base in Ninh Thuan Province, recently to present needed supplies to a Vietnamese sewing class. Air Force Maj. William S. Pantle, of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wins (TAW), led the way with yarn, thread and crocheting needles in hand.

Pantle, the 315th community relations officer, led another group from the unit earlier this year to donate the initial supply of assorted sewing, knitting and embroidery materials to the Montagnard and Vietnamese villagers.

The materials were accepted by a French priest, Father Beliard, and two Vietnamese nuns who used the items to set up a sewing training center for the residents of the foothills hamlets. The village of Ba Rau is made up of two Montagnard and one Vietnamese hamlets.

The sewing class, started six weeks ago, has a dual purpose. The boys and girls will learn how to crochet and sew but they will also produce items that can be sold in the local economy to raise money to help the project become self-sufficient.

The items made by the teenagers include handkerchiefs, hats and booties for babies, sweaters, and shawls. While at the school, Col. Robert R. Flynn, 315th TAW vice commander, Pantle, and 1st Lts. Dennis Kasselmann, 310th Tactical Airlift Sq. (TAS), and John S. Print of the 311th TAS, were each presented a shawl by the students of the class. The shawls, some, of the first made, were given in appreciation of the help rendered by the airlifters of the 815th TAW.

The needed yarn, thread and needles are purchased by Phan Rang AB airmen while they are on R&R or leave.

B-57 Parking Area Before Revetments



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Left picture is what Phan Rang (south side) looked like for the B-57s in January 1967 - soon thereafter they moved into revetments on the north side. Right picture is another view of the PSP ramp on the south side - Jan 1967. Photos submitted by Frederick Sabian.

To GI, Dad Is Better Than Letter (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Monday, November 10, 1969)

ESCONDIDO, Calif. (AP) — John Fee's boy Gregory is a 19-year-old-soldier in Vietnam. He needed cheering up, with something better than a letter," says Fee. So father went to the front to cheer him up.

Home after eight days in Vietnam, Fee said: "It seemed the thing to do."

"The boys couldn't believe that here was a soldier's father, right up in the combat zone," said Fee, an Escondido building contractor. "We drank beer and shot the breeze about the States.

"They thought it was great. To them, it was like being home again."

Greg's reaction? "He thought it was wonderful," said Fee.

A widower, Fee first planned to meet his son on rest and recreation leave in Australia, but the specialist 4 was unable to work it out in time.

Fee obtained written permission from the U.S. State Department and Army authorities and armed with a passport, flew to Saigon. There he and his son toured the city—"all the places the men go, even the zoo!"

When his son's leave was up, Fee found a ride on the same helicopter to the front near Tay Ninh, 60 miles northwest of Saigon. He stayed a day and a night as guest of the 322nd Engineering Company.

"The boys still gripe, just like I did in the Air Corps back in World War II," Fee told his neighbors. "They don't like to hear about the antiwar demonstrations back home. They feel it plays into the hands of the enemy.

"They know they have an ugly job to do, but under the circumstances they think it's a job that has to be done."

Men in Service

Chronicle-Telegram, Elyria, Ohio, Monday 7 June 1971

Sgt Chifton E. Oskins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Marsh of 222 Denison Ave., is a

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member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

The 35th has received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for its contribution to the military forces and local citizenry of the country.

Sgt Oskins, a jet engine mechanic, will wear a Distinctive Service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the unit.

The sergeant is a 1968 graduate of Elyria High School.

Airman 1. C John Kovach, son Of Helen Kovach Of 315 Inwood Blvd. Avon Lake, is a member of the 14th Special Operations Wing in Southeast Asia that has earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

Airman Kovach, assigned at Phan Rang AB. Vietnam, is an aircraft maintenance specialist With the Wing Which has received the highest organizational award for its performance as the only USAF Unit of its kind in the Combat theater.

The 14th is headquartered at Phan Rang and operated from nine major locations in Southeast Asia.

Airman Kovach will wear a Distinctive Service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the wing.

He attended Avon Lake High School.

Chronicle-Telegram, Elyria, Ohio, Thursday 3 June 1971

Airman 1.C. Merle Wolfe, son of Mr. and Mrs. Merlea Wolfe, 2014 Julia Ave., Avon, is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, which has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

The 35th has received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for its contribution to the military forces and local citizenry the country.

Airman Wolfe, a security policeman, is a 1967 graduate Avon High School.

U. S. Air Force **S. Sgt. Kenneth A, Dembiec**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Dembiec, 522 W. 25th St., Lorain is a member of the 14th Special Operations Wing in Southeast Asia that has earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

Sgt. Dembiec, assigned at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, is a weapons mechanic with the wing which has received the award.

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Chronicle-Telegram, Elyria, Ohio, Sunday 13 June 1971

U.S. Air Force **Sgt. Daniel P. Krasienko** son of Mr. and Mrs, Joseph Plaso, 41605 Elmwood St., has arrived for duty at Eglin AFB, Fla.

Sgt. Krasienko, an aircraft maintenance specialist, is assigned to a unit of the Tactical Air Command which provides combat units for air support of U.S. ground forces. He previously served at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

The sergeant is a 1967 graduate of Elyria High School. His wife, Linda, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Kroneker, 2204 N. Island Rd., Grafton.

Chronicle-Telegram, Elyria, Ohio, Sunday 13 June 1971

Sgt. Maurice Cross Jr. is among communications personnel who share honors with the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, in earning the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

Sgt. Cross, son of Mrs. Curtis L. Nelson of 3724 Clifton Ave., Lorain, is a communications specialist and provides essential support for wing F-100 Super Sabre fighter-bomber operations at the coastal installation.

The sergeant is a 1966 graduate of Clearview High School.

Florence Morning News, Monday 7 June 1971

S.Sgt. Charles W. Berry, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Berry of Latta is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

Sgt. Billy G. Sellers, son of Mrs. Mack Sellers of Conway is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that, has been honored by the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

Sgt. Carland Allen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Odell Allen of Loris is a member of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, that has been honored by the Vietnam Armed Forces.

The Corbin Daily Tribune 18 April 1969

Master Sergeant Gerald A. Karr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey R. Karr of Rt. 1, Keavy, is on duty in Phan Rang AB. Vietnam.

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Sergeant Karr, a helicopter flight engineer, is assigned to a unit of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. Before his arrival in South east Asia, he served at Sheppard AFB, Tex.

A graduate of Lily High School, the sergeant attended Black Hills College in Rapid City, S. D.

His wife, Barbara is the daughter of Mrs. Edna M. Pearce of 105 Yeager Court, San Antonio.

(Indiana Evening Gazette. Thursday. Jan. 19, 1967)

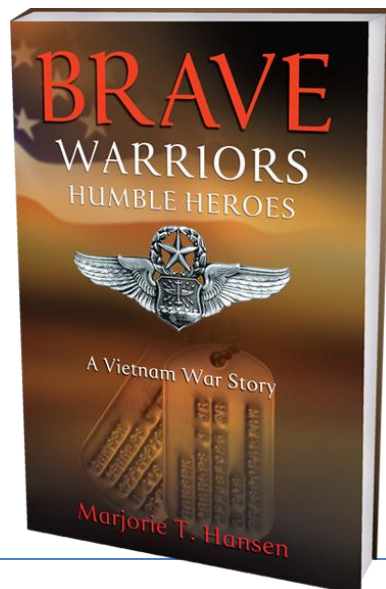
Airman Mottarn at Phan Rang AB. **Airman Second Class Harold R. Mottarn, Jr.**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold R. Mottarn, Sr., of Indiana R. D. 3, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

Airman Mottarn, a construction equipment repairman, was graduated from Marion Center High School.

Doug’s Note: I’m on the road for a few weeks and don’t have access to all my good material, but I did manage to find some interesting articles to put together another Phan Rang Newsletter. In fact shortly I will be returning to the pioneer era without the Internet as we travel to the north woods of Northern Wisconsin...yes, I will have electricity and indoor bathrooms, but I might miss a week or two of sending out the Phan Rang news.

I really enjoyed reading about the FAC sting on the base camp. The story had a dateline of Bien Hoa AB with the Aussie’s from Phan Rang AB playing a critical role. While I make my way to Wisconsin and my class reunion I can’t wait for the new addition of Robert Chappelle’s ‘Tales of Phan Rang’ to be released. If you previously purchased it, you can get the new edition for free. If you only read it in the Phan Rang News, go ahead and [buy](#) the book, you’ll be rewarding yourself with some great reading and providing a small reward to the author who did an excellent job of preserving his Vietnam memories.

Another book I can’t wait to get my hands on is ‘BRAVE WARRIORS, HUMBLE HEROES: A Vietnam War Story’ by Marge Hansen. I think this book is going to be a book the whole family will enjoy and will be an answer to the question so many people have asked...what was it like in Vietnam? Marge wrote that the book has been accepted at the Texas Tech University Vietnam War Archives --they even asked for an autographed copy for the reading room at the Archives. Clemson University Edwin Moise Vietnam War Bibliography has already included the book data in the Air War section below Air Force Association article data. And the Nimitz



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Library at the United States Naval Academy has accepted the book to be always available as a source book and a copy available for the midshipmen for reading and research. Marge said ‘I’m a little surprised by this. My book is just the day by day coping, getting the job done, and going home to loved ones. Is it possible that after all of these years the world really wants to know more about the Vietnam War?’ The article ‘To GI, Dad Is Better Than Letter’ reminded me a little bit about Charlie and Marge in Vietnam. Marge Hansen wanted me to relay to all that she will miss us in Tucson this year, but promises to be in attendance at our next reunion. You can preorder your copy of the book by clicking [here](#).