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It's Quiet Work-Except for Sniper (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Tuesday, October 28, 1969*)

By SPEC. 4 PHILIP MCCOMBS

PHAN RANG, Vietnam (Special) — Spec. 4 William E. Maurice of Roanoke Rapids, N.C., was working hard, but slowly.

He kept an eye on Buddha Mountain, a hill 700 meters south.

"No trouble so far," he said.

Warm morning sunlight sparkled in the rice paddies. Infantry troops and fire trucks

stood by. An Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team had searched the area.

Maurice and his fellow 1st Logistical Command troops were replacing two damaged sections in the 13-mile fuel pipeline from the sea to the giant Air Force base at Phan Rang.

"We could fix it in an hour," said his boss, Maj. Charles W. Malone of Hays, Kan., "but we take it slow. The important thing is to check for traps."

Maurice got his Purple Heart a few months ago when a trap exploded. Another time, the crew had come under heavy AK fire at this spot.

"Charlie doesn't do much of that anymore," said Maurice. "We've made it too inconvenient for him."

That's a nice way of saying Charlie got mauled every time he tried an ambush. Malone is proud of that.

Maurice and the others liked being out to fix the pipe. Driving out, you could sense the electric excitement of the Vietnamese along the road. They knew something was happening.

They were right. Rifle fire crackled out of the field near Buddha Mountain.

"That was too darn close." said Spec. 4 Melvin E. Marold of East Peoria, Ill., another repair man.

Everyone hid behind the trucks.

"Wish I knew where that was coming from, I'd return fire," said Malone. He surveyed the fields angrily. "Too many farmers around."

More crackling from the field.

"I'll put a stop to that stuff," said the major. He grabbed a rifle and jumped into his jeep.

Maurice and Marold grabbed rifles and jumped in with him. They didn't have to go. Nobody told them to.

"Let's go get them," said Maurice.

They raced along a trail into the field, jumped out, split up, and swept through 700 meters of paddy to Buddha Mountain.

They opened fire on a cave where they suspected the sniper fire had originated, then went back. They were soaking wet.

The harassing operation had been successful. The sniper fire had stopped.

Maurice and Marold pitched in to fit the new sections of pipe. The work was done in another half-hour.

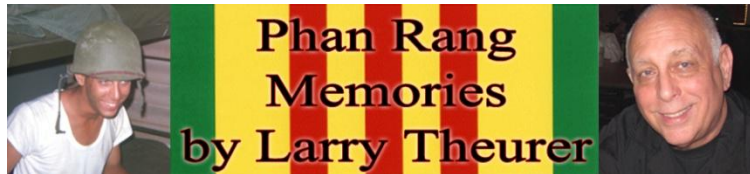
"These guys seem gung-ho for support troops," said one old hand with the unit. "They don't like getting shot at, and the more aggressive they are, the less it happens."



FILL ER UP

PHAN RANG (7AF) ANYTHING ELSE SIR?

Colonel **Frank L. Gailer Jr.** commander of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB is the first customer at the new base service station. Members of the 35th Transportation Squadron operate the facility. (USAF Photo by A1C Christopher P Boles)



Now this event I did not actually see

It was told directly to me but I don't remember the name of the fellow who told it.

We are hanging around the line Quonset hut in the afternoon and one of the guys arrives laughing. He had been doing duty for the first sergeant that morning. He said his chore for the day was to help gather up the "honey buckets" (the bottom of a cut off 55 gallon drum placed under the holes in the outhouses) , load them on a truck and go dump them in a large pit the Army had dug where the refuse would be doused with gasoline and burned.

He and his fellow workers are at the pit dumping when a pickup truck driven by another person arrived. The guy backs up to the pit, drops the tailgate and hooked it with only ONE chain.

He climbs up into the back of the truck and standing on the tailgate begins dumping. The chain broke. In pit he went, right up to his neck. Everybody is standing there in shock looking at him but no one wanted to go touch him.

The guy climbs out of the pit so furious that no one dared laugh even though they were dying inside to do so. The guy stripped completely naked, got in the truck and drove away.

Hogs to Get Leftovers (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Tuesday, October 28, 1969)

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Under a recently signed agreement between Phan Rang AB and the "Dae Nhon Swine Association," a cooperative, the base garbage will be given to farmers to help them raise more and better swine.

The cooperative's aim is to improve the standard of living for its more than 300 members, and make more fresh pork available.

Collection of the garbage will be a Vietnamese effort. By pooling their resources, the cooperative has purchased several used trucks to pick up the refuse. Once collected, the estimated 40 barrels a day will be divided among participating members. The swill is then combined with chopped banana tree stalks.

Mr. C119 Cast Long Shadow Over Enemy (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Saturday, June 21, 1969*)

By TSGT. JOHN B. MAHONY

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — At 53, Air Force Lt. Col. Matthew A. Boonstra, Tolowa Borough, N. J., admits being one of the oldest, if not the oldest, pilot flying combat missions in Vietnam.



LT. COL. BOONSTRA

Boonstra flies AC119 Shadow gunships. The twin-engined, propeller-driven Shadows were designed and built as troop carriers in the late 1940s. "Back then, we called them Flying Boxcars," Boonstra recalled as he gave his Shadow a preflight check on the Phan Rang flightline. "But I didn't begin flying one until 1951 when I joined the Green Hornet Sq, in Korea."

Since then he has logged 5,600 flying hours in C119s.

Boonstra has more than 27 years military service, but only 12 of them have been active duty. Those 12, however, were years when his country needed his flying skills — World War II, the Korean War, the Dominican Airlift of 1965, the Pueblo seizure, and the Vietnam War.

This month, before flying his 80th combat mission since his arrival in Vietnam in January, Boonstra commented, "We're getting more utilization out of the C119 than we ever dreamed possible."

The AC119 is armed with four miniguns, each capable of firing 6,000 rounds a minute.

Boonstra's love for aviation goes back to 1933 when he was in high school. His dad owned a dairy farm outside Paterson, N. J. It was there that he built an open-cockpit, Heath mid-wing airplane from a kit, adding his own modifications.

Before World War II, he owned a single-engined Waco biplane which he flew , . . "for sport between milkings down on the farm."

A month after Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was sent to Parks Air College, East St. Louis, 111.

Boonstra was assigned duty in the Southwest Pacific, From 1942 till the end of the war he flew twin-engined C47s and later C46s from bases in New Guinea, Hollandia, Biak, and the Philippines.

After earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses and four Air Medals, he went back to dairy farming in New Jersey.

He was assigned to a C47 troop carrier reserve group at Floyd Bennett NAS, New York. The unit was recalled to active duty in 1951, during the Korean War.

The group split up and he went to Sewart Air Force Base, Tenn., where he received flight training in a new aircraft, the C119 Flying Boxcar. From there he went to Ashiya AB in southern Japan where he flew airlift missions.

His involvement in the Vietnam War goes back to 1967, when he checked out Vietnamese Air Force pilots and copilots in the C119 at McGuire. Then, in early 1968, he ferried Flying Boxcars to Vietnam for delivery to the Vietnamese Air Force.

Hearing about the Flying Boxcar being converted for combat missions, Boonstra volunteered for active duty to fly Shadows in Vietnam.

Bespectacled and gray-headed and perhaps not as slender or adventurous as when he taxied that Boonstra "special" around his dad's hay field, "Mr. C119" is still considered tops by those who fly with him.

A Conversation about Agent Orange



James Kucipeck wrote on Facebook: AGENT ORANGE and Phan Rang! It's high time that we had a frank discussion about it. I was blissfully ignorant of the whole issue because I never thought that they sprayed at PR. It all came to light about a year ago when I entered the VA Health Care system. The counselor asked me if I had been exposed to AO; I really had no idea. He also stated that the government had no accurate records of where they sprayed and the VA has taken the position that they ASSUME that we were all were exposed. They gave me a sheet listing all the side

effects of AO. While riding home with my wife, a nurse, she reviewed the sheet and commented that many of my service friends have some of medical issues, heart problems, diabetes, neuropathy, etc.

I started doing some research on line and made some phone calls to my friends and found out that we indeed had AO on base and that it was sprayed around the base. It never dawned on me 'til I followed Christopher Boles post and pictures and saw this comment by James Gilliland "looking at all the brown earth and we were told that they didn't spray the organ stuff on us well why hasn't the grass grown back in those areas?" That stuff is insidious. I have friends who have been diagnosed with AO who were clerk types at Long Binh, another a ground forward air controller assigned to the VN army in the Mekong, etc.

On Nov. 24th I am going to have my AO registry exam in Albany, NY thanks to a conversation with our brother John Ryan and I must say that I am a bit nervous. Now I am healthy as a horse and my children are all normal. I do want to find out what is in my system from Phan Rang. On Nov. 24th I am going to have my AO registry exam in Albany, NY thanks to a conversation with our brother John Ryan and I must say that I am a bit nervous. Now I am healthy as a horse and my children are all normal. I do want to find out what is in my system from Phan Rang.

As I look at our numbers from our Phan Rang group, 703 to date and growing, we have a wealth of information from the early days of PR '66 to our leaving in the '70's. Let's share that history here among brothers! Sorry about being so long winded but that is the nature of the beast!

Ken Creasy: I was denied Medicare supplement insurance because of neuropathy from Type 2 diabetes caused by AO.

James Kucipeck: Hey guys, Duane Rawson pointed me toward a FB group "Sprayed and Betrayed" about AO. Check it out! I joined the group.

Jim Cummings: It is very important that you collect all the medical records that support any AO problems from as far back as you can. If you file a claim and you can show them you had problem X from way back when, and they approve your claim, you can get paid from the first day you can prove the AO problem. That's \$\$\$\$\$\$ you will get.

Linda Teller Kozumplik: Our understanding was boots on the ground was exposure to AO. Tony filed a claim and was approved for Ischemic Heart Disease two years ago and just this week was approved for Type II Diabetes, Tinnitus and Hearing Loss. Although he hasn't had the AO Registry Exam, our local Veterans Service Officer helped us figure out what ailments he has that might be AO related and eligible for compensation.

Dan Poormon: Prostate cancer in 2001 at the age of 50 and secondary bone cancer as of 2009. Very aggressive, been on Chemo since Dec '10. 100 % since Aug 2011. VA has been very good to me. My oncologist at the VAMC in Buffalo, NY also teaches at the Roswell Cancer Research Center in Buffalo, NY. One of the best. Great people and updated facility. I was at PR Jun 70 - 71. Do you know why it was called AO? It's because it was shipped in orange 55 gallon drums. (Second hand info.) I hear it was more potent DDT than what was used on farms in the 50 - 60's.

Mike Kampmann: Charles Hendry I remember that day well, the AO was running out of the aircraft parking area and down the concrete in front of our line shack we were putting sand bags in the gutter to try and stop it. I don't remember how they got it all cleaned up, but I was like you really didn't want to get it on me. One other thing I noticed while I was there I never seen a GI service an AO tank always Vietnamese people just a thought

Steven Silvers: I have parkinsons which is connected to AO, also many of the side effects , am seeing a great group of Drs. at the VA hosp in San Francisco. Many of us do remember seeing the C123 flying and spraying if you go on line you can see some of the spraying around Pang Rang.

Charles W. Johnston: Nha Trang and Phan Rang 69 -70, skin cancer, Stage 4 Lung Cancer, Neuropathy both legs, severe rheumatoid arthritis, Pacemaker implanted.

James Kucipeck: I knew in my heart of hearts that you guys that served at PR would respond to my post on AO. I guess I didn't expect the kind of private personal medical information that you are revealing here. I am sure that you will be prompted to get to the VA if you haven't already. Stay on top of your medical issues. I am in process of drafting letters to my two senators and congresswomen asking them to look into and force the powers that be to release definitive information as exactly where AO was sprayed and I hope you do the same. And by the way I have my AO registry exam scheduled for 11/24 in Albany, NY. Nervous!

John Ryan: Relax Jim. Albany VA will take very good care of you. That is where I rec'd the seed implant for my prostate cancer. They have a top of the line staff there.

Bruce Dobson: James, I was at PRAB in '66 in the 1182 Comm Sq. I Have CLL.& 100%. I also had Colon Cancer surgery in Aug. The CLL will show up on a CBC, complete blood count. It is high white blood count. I was diagnosed until I was 66. Good luck.

James Kucipeck: What we haven't heard yet is from someone who actually worked OPERATION RANCH HAND, air crews, pilots, maintenance personnel, etc

Charles W. Johnston: They all may be dead.

Bruce Dobson: I am surprised at the lack of knowledge about AO on this Blog. I asked a couple of years ago to talk about this and had very little response. The VVA has been pushing this issue forever. If you want more info on AO go to the www.vva.org and look up the "Faces of Agent Orange". I am on the VVA National AO Committee. If you any questions please send me an email.

Tom Strait: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for all the discussion of AO around PR. I have not signed with VA but due to your info I now have the paperwork. To that end, let me ask a question. I was with the C-123's of 309th Squadron from 7/68 to 7/69. During that time, the C123's of the 309th were cargo only and to the best of my knowledge so were the 310th and 311th squadrons C-123s. I do remember one transit bird at PR but it was so dirty and smelled so bad, I wouldn't go near it. And it was there for one day. So my question; when was a Ranch Hand squadron transferred to PR as I have heard some refer to? I also remember the silver planes spraying and was told for insects.

John Ryan: The silver bird was for insects. I was with 315 CAMS and worked on transient spray bird but they were a separate Squadron, same Wing. To my knowledge up until I left PR in Aug '69 there were no Ranch Hand Spray Birds based at Phan Rang. They flew out of Bien Hoa. However, the VA considers anyone who served InCountry as presumed to have been exposed. You still would need to develop one of the presumptive conditions.

Joseph Burkhart: Tom the silver C-123's just sprayed DDT and malathion for 'squito control according to many folks , the RANCH-HAND deal moved PCS to PRAB mid to late 69 BUT were transit A/C throughout 67 & 68 and sprayed the perimeter of PR frequently . Just look back through some of the different photos from that time frame and see the barren landscape around the base and perimeter .Also when these A/C had an in-flight emergency they would circle the base and DUMP their load of AO prior to landing .Anyone remember YELLOW-RAIN?

Marjorie T Hansen: One of the best sources for Ranch Hand history is on Wikipedia. "For operations along the central coast and the Ho Chi Minh Trail regions, Ranch hand operated out of Da Nang (1964-71). Other bases of operations included Phu Cat (1968-1970), Tan Son Nhut (1962-66) Nha Trang (1968-69) Phan Rang (1970-72) and Tuy Hoa ((1971-72)"

Cheryl Junot: We were told it would possibly affect the next five generations of our family. We have had two sons who had cancer of which our 10 old did not survive. He was conceived the year his dad came home from PR. Our daughter had had numerous biopsies. A O was also sprayed around the perimeter of numerous bases in the US and several areas in the states were also test sites including Beaumont TX. We have gone to several informative meetings concerning AO and the stories told are just gut wrenching. I urge all who served to check out were they served and if they are qualified and to be tested.

Morris Hall: Good luck... I went through the process 2 years ago and receive 10%. You don't have to prove that you were sprayed, just that you were there. Even if you don't get anything today it can help in the future if you are registered. If you are retired from the USAF they also have a program that matches whatever the VA gives you.

James Braun: Morris do you know what the program is called and why would it be limited to retirees. I am 80% and would like to know more.

Charles W. Johnston: James, I don't know what Morris is talking about either. I do know that if you are retired military and 50% disabled or greater you draw VA compensation as well as your full military retirement.

Morris Hall: Hope I can explain easily. If you are retired and draw VA Disability then your retired pay is reduced by an equal amount so you don't have to pay tax. But the USAF (and probably other services) have what is called CRSC which gives you an equal amount back into your retired monthly check. Make Sense? It's how they equal things out between those of us who are retired and those that aren't. Here is a link that explains.

Charles W. Johnston: If you are retired and have 50% or better service connected disability then you draw both, whatever 50% equals out to with the VA plus your full military retired pay after taxes. I know because I was in that category before I was rated 100%.

Morris Hall: You're correct... I should mention there is CRDP which is in the same article. I believe that is what I'm getting...its been a while.

Charles W. Johnston: It's been a while for me to. They have to make things so complicated. They were supposed to phase everyone in over a period of time to draw retired pay minus taxes plus disability % no matter what % you had but that got put on back shelf and is gathering dust. They left it at 50% or greater. I think the sponsor of the bill has finally given up on it.

Dana Harrington: The contaminated herbicides were sprayed over virtually the entire occupied and determined vital to operations parts of RVN. The aerial delivered insecticides were delivered wherever there was US or Allied involvement.

Dana Harrington: Parkinson's Disease? Ya, I know it well. The VA is taking care of that for me. Neuropathy without a diagnosis of diabetes equals you are screwed.

Steven Silvers: I am the same I can't understand why the Neuropathy without diabetes is not accepted, if the Neuropathy came early it would be. Ft Miley in SF has a great Parkinsons program.

Marjorie T. Hansen: My book is focused on Agent Orange. I have become a reluctant student of Agent Orange. If I can be of any assistance to anyone about the use of Agent Orange at Phan Rang or NKP, please let me know.

Of course, all of you were aware that Operation Ranch Hand flew out of Phan Rang until early 1971. Although you might have been informed by the VA that the government had no accurate records of where they sprayed, my research indicates that is not accurate.

I have a picture of Charlie's clothes drying in the defoliated dirt at Phan Rang in 1971.

In the last few months, Hatfield Consulting, funded by the Ford Foundation, has been soil and water testing at many of the bases in Vietnam and have found that Bien Hoa, Da Nang, and Phu Cat show that all of these bases are hot spots for high dioxin concentration in soil and water tables. I spoke, by phone with the CEO and President of Hatfield Consulting in Vancouver about the soil and water testing in Vietnam and Thailand. Hatfield Consulting, Ford Foundation, and the Aspen Institute, Dialog on Vietnam War; all are good resources for you to go to for credible information. Much testing has been done in Vietnam and Laos by Hatfield--but to date, nothing has been done in Thailand that has been released. I have no way of knowing if any testing has been done.

The DOD, VA, and Dept of State denied the use of Agent Orange in Thailand until 2010 when Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) had the CHECO Report declassified that outlined in detail the significant usage of toxic herbicides at all of the USAF bases in Thailand during the war. The State Dept, US Embassy in Bangkok approved the usage of toxic herbicides in Thailand, months after Operation Ranch Hand ended in Vietnam. Spraying of herbicides took place around the Stinger trailers while I was at NKP in Jan- Feb 1972, months after the DOD said in their letter to me " ...the DOD decided in 1970 not to use Agent Orange anymore..."

Get with your senators and representatives and push them on these usage issues. Also, involve your state liasons (veterans- VA issues) and groups like Vietnam Veterans of America to assist you with information and assistance.

Please let me know if I can help.

Marjorie T. Hansen (Marge)

Sam Lewis: Thanks Marge, When I was manning the perimeter of Phan Rang Mar 67-68 there was very little green growing around that base including the perimeter although the general area landscape was lush and green. I saw the C123s spraying that stuff sometimes right on top of us and I waded through it minus any green stuff getting to the towers.

Jack Anderson: Marge, I was a crew chief on B-57's. All our missions were flown in Laos over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. My understanding was that Agent Orange was being sprayed up and

down the "Ho." If so, many of our planes were covered with it when they returned. As mechanics, we climbed all over them after they got back, thus being covered with the stuff. (We didn't fly on the missions.) Does your research have mention of spraying in Laos? Thank you for your information! We were stationed at Phan Rang.

Marjorie T Hansen: Jack, there is credible information available on the C 123 Operation Ranch Hand missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Hatfield Consulting is currently involved in soil and water sampling/testing. The challenges for the crews on contaminated aircraft are similar to what the Navy Blue Water veterans are dealing with, and the C 123 crews who served on the 123's after the war. The IOM is ready to make a recommendation to the VA any day now on the C 123 issue.

Marjorie T Hansen: Jack, ...to continue...however, if you were stationed at Phan Rang, you qualify with "boots on the ground in Vietnam" for compensation if your medical issues are on the presumptive list that has been agreed to by the VA.

Jack Anderson: This may not be pertinent to the discussion, but in mid October our squadron was pulled out of Vietnam as one of Nixon's first pull outs. We accompanied our planes to Guam, Wake and finally Hawaii. Refueling and maintaining them as necessary. When our C-130 arrived in Hawaii, at first we weren't allowed off the plane. Two guys came on dressed in white moon-suits completely covered from head to toe. They looked like something out of "Ghostbusters." Both had spray canisters strapped to their backs and sprayed each of us down until we were dripping with the stuff. We were all gagging after inhaling it since we were given nothing to cover our breathing. I've assumed since DDT was still legal that's what it was. Do you have any other possibilities?

Jerry Hartley: In 67 and until I left after TET in 68, the Spray Bird, although part of the 315th (12th SOS), flew out of Bien Hoa AB. We did do some Maintenance on them at Phan Rang. Got sick while working around them due to the aroma, which always stayed with them.

Jack Anderson: Funny thing: in 1968-69, we thought Agent Orange was a good thing!

Curtis Hendrix: Marjorie T. Hansen what is the name of your book? I want to get one to send my state Senator Scott.

Marjorie T Hansen: **Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story** by Marjorie T. Hansen. Tell Senator Scott that the book is at the Texas Tech University Vietnam War Archive at Lubbock, TX; listed in the Edwin Moise bibliography of the Vietnam War in the Air War section, and in the permanent collection at the Nimitz Library at the US Naval Academy as a reference source on the Vietnam War

Marjorie T Hansen: ...continued from above. The Edwin Moise Bibliography is at Clemson University. Otherwise, Senator Scott might dismiss the book as not a credible source.

Curtis Hendrix: Thanks Marjorie T Hansen ordered from Amazon one for me and one to send Senator Scott. Tim Scott is new on the job, so maybe he will be open. I'm sure it would be a waste of time with Senator Graham.

James Kucipeck: Curtis Hendrix thanks for asking the same question I had in mind. I just ordered the book from Amazon.

Marjorie T Hansen: In response to Jack Anderson's question about the decontamination/remediation/ neutralization chemical that might have been used , Jack has asked a very important question that I can't find an answer to. Nothing but soap and water should have been used on any of our personnel coming out of Vietnam. The Dept of the Army developed a decontamination policy/guide after the Vietnam War indicating the chemical neutralization is never recommended and can increase harm to humans.

Jack Anderson: Having lived on Maui for ten years I know of the Hawaiian paranoia over invasive species. I suspect they drove the spraying.



From the National Archives, posted by Henk Scharringa.

Every once in a while a picture is posted to our Phan Rang AB Facebook group that just screams out at you. I don't know if the pose was intentional or what but it joins some of the other classics like "Bummers in a Tree" and "How I learned to Love the Bomb". Dean Ford posted the picture and he only remembers the guys name on the left to be Randy Hothan. So far some caption suggestions have been "Private Joker", "Animal Mother" and "Full Metal Jacket During Tet". I've added the extra art work to the picture.

