

Phan Rang AB News No. 57

"Stories Worth Telling"

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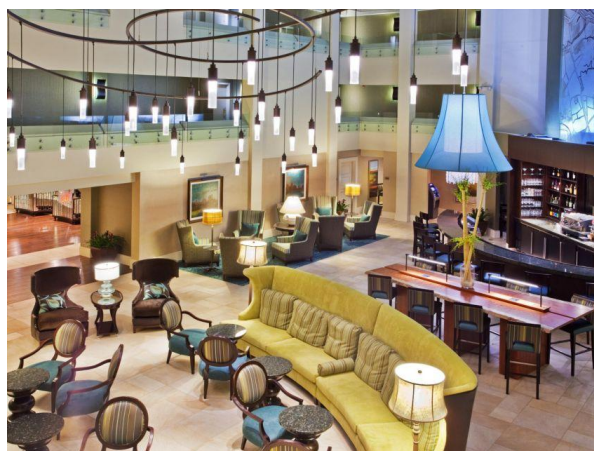
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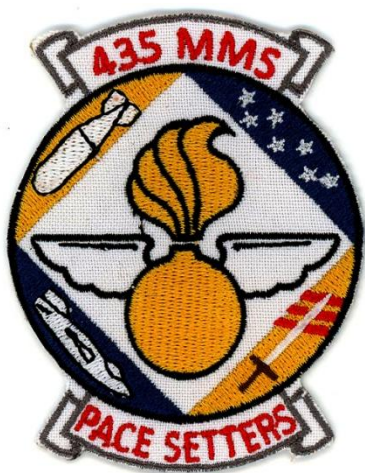




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Munitions Men Put Sting in Wing (*PhanFare 2 and 9 August 1967*)

Millions of pounds of bombs, rockets, and cannon shells are expended by the tactical fighters and bombers of this base each week, and the 435th Munitions Maintenance Squadron handles every single pound of them.

“Our commitment is to meet that daily frag.” Said CMSgt. Paul N. Thiebaun, 43, from Pittsburg, Pa., the squadron’s maintenance superintendent. “That’s our daily existence and they haven’t missed one yet.”

He was referring to the planned mission (frags) of the F-100 Super Sabres and B-57 bombers which are the business end of the 35th TFW.

Each aircraft is assigned a specific configuration of bombs, rockets, and shells for every combat mission, and the munitions men supply the specific ordnance required for each mission many hours before the aircrafts are scheduled to take off.

Commanded by Lt. Col. Frank Maretinjak, 50, the squadron has close to 200 enlisted men, a handful of officers, and more than 70 Vietnamese workers.

They assemble bombs and rockets, store vast amounts of munitions in the squadron bomb storage area, and deliver all ordnance to the flightline.

“You don’t see any fat ones (munitions specialists),” Sergeant Thiebaud commented. “They really get in shape here...They stay in shape too.”

“The munitions maintenance and storage area is in the hands of the hardest workers I’ve seen in a long, long while,” said their boss, CMSgt. John P. Patterson, 46, from Philadelphia, Pa.

Eleven crews of enlisted men work in the area, and each crew is determined to outdo all the other crews in the speed and efficiency with which it builds up and handles the ordinance.

Presently the crew of A1C Earl Bootier, a former squadron airman of the month, was selected as the 435th MMS Munitions Maintenance Crew of the Month. This crew includes A1C Steven V. Nickerson, A2C John Asher, A2C James H. Kucipeck, A2C Harold O. Otwell, A2C Robert G. Wells, A2C Walter Wiener, and A3C Richard A. Conner.

Safety briefing and inspections are held daily, said Sergeant Thiebuad.

Cranes, rough-terrain forklifts, ten-ton tractors, and 25 and 40-foot trailers are the “bread and butter” of the wing’s munitions handlers as they assemble ordnance and rush it to the flightline.

The ordnance is delivered directly to the fighter aircraft six to ten hours before take-off time, and bomber ordnance is delivered to a special storage area for the bombers 10 hours before their take-off time.

Sergeant Thiebaud could recall no instance of a munitions accident at Phan Rang, accenting the 435th MMS mission of providing “safe and reliable munitions” for the wing’s aircraft.

The munitions men work at their exacting jobs on a round-the-clock schedule, and munitions convoys are constantly on the move, shuttling between the bomb dump and the flightline, which is seven miles away. The ordnance is delivered to the bomb storage area by Army vehicles, and from there on it is the munitions workers' 'baby'.

They take bombs out of crates and add fins and boosters to bombs ranging from 250 to 1,000-pounders.

They put rockets together by attaching the rocket heads to motors and then inserting the products into rocket launchers made of cardboard and metal.

It takes a lot of time and muscle to do all this. Twenty tons of trash consisting of such things as bomb crates and fin protectors are removed from the bomb storage area each day as the ordnance is put into shape for action.



Fighter aircraft pylons have to be cleaned and inspected and repaired. These pylons serve as the fighters' bomb racks.

Maj. Felix E. Elliott Jr., 46, is the unit's popular maintenance supervisor and "he makes the whole thing go," according to Sergeant Thiebaud, who has been in service for 25 years and flew 12 combat missions as a B-24 bomber gunner in World War II.

TSgt. Charles E Haskins, 37, from Panama City, Fla., is the enlisted supervisor of munitions services, which includes the gun shop, pylon shop, and weapons release section.

The long hours of toil at the bomb storage are relieved by a weekly visit by Red Cross recreation center assistants. The girls bring Kool-aid, start group quiz games, and deliver 'puzzler' pamphlets filled with quizzes and brain-teasers of all kinds.

Two bomb dump mascots, a pair of dogs named Bullet and Ammo, also help in keeping up the morale of the tireless men whose munitions put the sting in the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

Phan Rang Who's Who

PHAN RANG STAFF MEMBERS

Joseph Burkhart: Master of Ceremonies

Robert Kellington: Tour Coordinator

Jack Anderson: Treasure

Lou Ruggerio: Site coordinator/Contract
negotiator

Douglas Severt: Reunion Coordinator

Ed Downey/Barbara Brandt: Ceremonies

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS

**Douglas Severt, Kenneth Rowsey, David
McGaughey, Vincent Joseph Miller (Susan
Anderson-Miller) and Kirk Minert**

**...and the 740 members (and counting) of the
“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB Facebook
group.**



WILLIAMS - CALL HIM SIR

It's January 1967. I'm on the old linked steel ramp on the East side of the runway. Revetment side not built yet. I had just arrived, first time in Vietnam, out of tech school, a few months at Clark AB, one stripe, very nervous.

It was supposed to be Scardino, Hammond and I on Jim Avery's weapons loading crew. We arrive at Phan Rang and are told Avery has been delayed at Clark and won't arrive for another

two or three weeks. So they split the three of us up and sent us to assist other people while we wait.

I'm told to go work with the "gun people". I'm put with a fellow named Tommy Williams who everyone called Rebel and another named Howard Taylor. Both good guys, good to work with. Williams was a serious, no-nonsense fellow. Taylor, a happy guy was always laughing. Throughout the day Taylor enjoyed poking Rebel with joking insults trying to get a response out of him which he usually got. They would go back and forth with remarks to each other. It was very funny and made the day go faster.

One day the three of us are at a B-57. Taylor and I are on top of the wing with the gun bay covers up. He is working on the guns, I'm assisting. Williams is on the ground directly in front of us eight feet below.

I'm handling one of the gun components that were lying on the wing and Williams yells up some instruction about it to me. I respond by saying "Yes Sir".

This sends Taylor into gales of laughter and he loudly says "Heyyyyy! Just because Rebel is from the South, you don't have to call him SIR".

This makes me laugh and the both of us are up there on the wing laughing while a scowl on Williams face is growing bigger and bigger.

Suddenly Williams jumps up off the ground and grabs Taylors boot and begins pulling him forward off the wing edge. Taylor wraps his arms around the gun bay cover and as he is screeching and hanging on for dear life, Williams yells "If I pull you off that wing and hang your NUTS up, you're going to call me SIR!".

The tug of war continued for another 30 seconds before Williams relented and let him go.

A few weeks later Avery showed up and collected me and that was the last I saw of those two guys.



Air Commandos Aid C-123's at Da Nang (*PhanFare 2 August 1967*)

In the Wake of the massive rocket attack on Da Nang Air Base, the 315th Air Commando Wing of Phan Rang is helping out the 311th Air Commando Sq. up there.

Three C-123's have been flown to the unit, according to wing scheduler TSgt. Weldon D. Knox. He noted that three of the Da Nang's unit's C-123's were damaged in the attack, and will undergo major maintenance at Phan Rang. Wing plans and scheduling technician SSgt. Donald G. Von Biskirk noted that a C-123 wing was flown up this week.

200 AF Sorties a Day Hit Cambodia...Fighters, Gunships Blast Reds (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Saturday, May 22, 1970)

TAN SON NHUT AB, Vietnam (Special) — The U.S. Air Force making its mark quickly and effectively in the thrust against enemy sanctuaries inside Cambodia.

Averaging more than 200 sorties a day since the operations began on May 1, Air Force fighter-bomber crews destroyed more than 1,000 enemy fortifications in the first 10 days of the operation. Pilots were also credited with destroying more than 600 bunkers, setting off more than 250 secondary explosions, and killing more than 300 enemy soldiers.

Air operations were conducted by AC-119 Stinger and Shadow gunships from the 14th Special Operations Wing, headquartered at Phan Rang AB; A-37 Dragonflies and F-100 Supersabres from the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Bien Hoa AB; F-100s from "the 31st TFW at Tuy Hoa AB and the 35th TFW AB of Phan Rang and F4 Phantoms of the 12th TFW at Phu Cut AB and 366th TFW at Da Nang AB.

Directing the air strikes were forward air controllers (FACs) flying out of such places as Quan Loi, Bien Hoa and Pleiku Air Bases.

O1 Bird Dogs of the 22nd Tactical Air Support Sq. had to move quickly to get ready for the move into Cambodia.

According to Maj. Robert Drawbaugh, air liaison officer for the 1st ARVN Airborne Div., the Bird Dogs moved into position for the offensive on 36 hours notice.

Normally working out of Phuoc Binh, Fire Support Base Buttons and Tay Ninh, the unit moved to Quan Loi April 30 and, Drawbaugh noted, were ready to go out for the first strike the morning of May 1.

FAC.s from other units worked under similar circumstances, from the 19th TASS out of Bien Hoa AB. 1st Lt. David E. Marrs directed the strike late in the day, as it was beginning to get dark. Two F4s of the 12th TFW were ready, but they were low on fuel and the weather was getting bad.

"I put my marker rockets along a line about 100 meters in the trees and the fighters dropped all their bombs along the line," Marrs said.

"The next day the ground forces discovered about 50 North Vietnamese Army soldiers killed and several 80mm mortar tubes and more than 100 82mm mortar rounds.

Ground fire against aircrews was sometimes intense. A-37 pilots Maj. Darrell D. Whitaker and 1st Lt. Thomas S. Obeirne were flying a mission in the Fishhook area of Cambodia when an Army hunter-killer helicopter team spotted about 40 enemy soldiers.

"The FAC immediately located the target and marked it with smoke rockets. We were told to hit right on his smoke." The major said. "As I made my first run, my wing man told me that I was receiving heavy ground fire from the woods."

As Whitaker pulled out of his bomb pass, he noticed that Obeirne was also receiving intense fire. When the aircraft had completed their passes, one of the helicopters went in to look at the area.

The helicopter took heavy ground fire and went down. The FAC directed the A37s to provide cover fire while another Army helicopter dashed in under a hail of gunfire to rescue the downed crewmen.

In another incident, a FAC even resorted to throwing a smoke grenade out the window of his aircraft to mark a target. Maj. Kermit L. Armbruster Jr. was directing air strikes against an enemy location to suppress fire when his last two marker rockets failed to fire.

"I took a smoke grenade and threw it out. It hit 30 meters from where I wanted." He said. The fighters spotted the smoke and placed their bombs nearby.

**From 2 August 1967 Phan Fare,
the Phan Rang AB Weekly**

**"Last week's temperatures
showed an extras maximum of 76
degrees. Precipitation over a five
day period was just .03 of an
inch."**

Swill Helps Swine (See related story in Phan Rang AB News 55 “Hogs to Get Leftovers”)



PHAN RANG AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF)

STIRRING THE POT

First Lieutenant James V. Cooley Jr. 25, Springville Ohio, second from left looks on as members of the 71 family “Dac Nhon Swine Association” stir a barrel of boiling swill prior to feeding the cooperative’s rapidly expanding swine herd. The success of the Vietnamese association is directly traceable to 1st Lt. Cooley’s efforts as base civic action officer in obtaining for the cooperative the base’s daily garbage free of charge for use as swine swill. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Christopher P Boles)

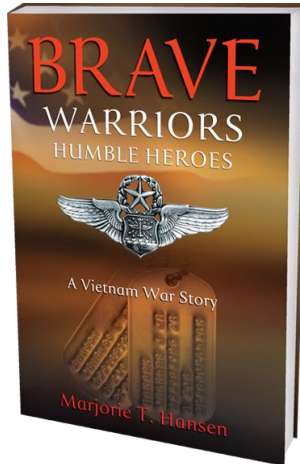
Dated Aug 29, 1969

AF Wing Receives Decoration (*Pacific Stars & Stripes*, Thursday, April 8, 1971)

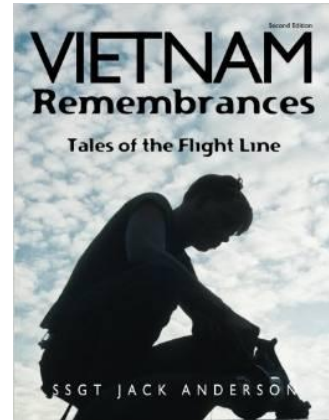
PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — President Nixon has bestowed the highest unit award, the Presidential Unit Citation, upon a Phan Rang AB unit — the 14th Special Operations Wg. (SOW).

The award was presented by Maj. Gen. Ernest C. Hardin Jr., 7th Air Force vice commander, during morning ceremonies at this coastal Vietnam air base.

The 14th is unique because its fighting units are the only Air Force units of their kind in Southeast Asia. Two, of the three fixed wing USAF gunship squadrons, the only USAF psychological warfare squadron, and the only USAF armed helicopter squadron are all part of the 14th.



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[Buy Jack's book](#)

Doug's Note: If you should be reading this newsletter, but didn't receive it in your email, but you would like to, you can receive it almost every week if you add your name to the Phan Rang mailing list. If you send [me](#) your email address I will add it and I promise you I will not send anything other than Phan Rang related news. Recently I had to delete about 30 addresses from the mailing list because no matter what I sent to those addresses, it was rejected as spam. I even tried just a one word message and it too was rejected so rather than get so many rejection notices I just deleted those addresses that considered my mailings as spam.

As you know by now I was fortunate to have meet Larry Theruer, a B57 Bummer who one day just sat down and wrote down all the stories he could remember from Phan Rang and he allowed me to share them with you. I have to admire someone that can remember so much in so much detail as Larry has done. He has a lot of stories to share with us.

And then there is Christopher Boles. He was a base photographer with the 600th Photo Sq. and he has a treasure trove of quality pictures. At least in every issue of this newsletter there will be one "Press Release" picture and by line that was actually released to the press at Phan Rang. The last I heard he's received some inspiration from Marjorie Hansen, so we may be hearing a lot more from Chris. Maybe he'll put out a Phan Rang picture book!