

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 63

“Stories worth telling”

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2015 Reunion Information

Phan Rang Medics to Go, But Their Knowledge to Stay (*Pacific Stars & Stripes, Tuesday, April 20, 1971.*)

PHAN RANG AB, Vietnam (Special) — Four U.S. Air Force medics are waging a very special, private war here in the city of Phag Rang — a war against ignorance, disease and death— a war to save lives.

Dr. (Capt.) William G. Kraybill, Jr., along with three USAF medical technicians, M. Sgt Vernon W. Priesing, and S. Sgts. Craig E. Wenzel, and Wendel I. Wingo, are working with their Vietnamese counterparts at the Ninh Thuan Provincial Hospital in downtown Phan Rang. They are treating myriad diseases practically unknown in the United States.

The physical act of treating patients, however, is secondary to these men. Their main function is one of teacher, both to Vietnamese medical personnel at the hospital and to Vietnamese peasants, living in hamlets and villages surrounding Phan Rang.

"Education is the most vital thing we can give these people, for without proper public health

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measures being enforced, or better yet, willingly observed by the people in this area, the battle we, are waging against disease here will continue without, let up," said Kraybill. "I myself came into Vietnam completely unaware of many of these peoples' problems. My first month in fact, I spent curled up with a text book on tropical diseases found in this area. Leprosy, plague, spinal tuberculosis, skin infections, and other diseases I had barely heard of were suddenly commonplace, and the only way to begin getting rid of them was through education."

"When I was assigned to the MILPHAP (military public health assistance program) staff last September, I found many inroads had already been made by the Vietnamese themselves under the guidance of U.S. medical personnel. One of the truly outstanding programs is the 'model hamlet'," the doctor continued.

"Vietnamese and U.S. medics went to a village and initiated a program of improving public health facilities, this included educating the villagers in personal and public sanitation areas such as disposal of trash, human waste and garbage, in addition to starting a program of immunizations. Once the hamlet was brought up to contemporary standards, the public health officers began inviting hamlet chiefs from neighboring villages in to visit. Between what we told them should be done, and what they saw could be done, the program began to spread out. There are now several hamlets which have made drastic improvements and the ideas are spreading to neighboring hamlets. By reducing breeding grounds for flies and rats, we are beginning to make an inroad against the diseases carried by them, such as plague.

"Our number one. problem, however, is not a disease caused by filth; it is tuberculosis. There are forms of TB here I had only heard of in textbooks," Kraybill commented. "Perhaps the most unusual is spinal tuberculosis. Everyone thinks of TB as a disease which strikes the lungs. However, some rare forms also strike bone tissue. If, it isn't caught in time, the afflicted person can be crippled for life!

In our clinic, the doctors treat 30 or 40 people a day. Lack of trained personnel limits us to operating, two days a week. Working with Dr. Doan Trinh, the province public health officer, I see every patient to help make a diagnosis. Not everyone who comes in has TB. Many are simply suffering from coughs caused by colds or other minor illnesses. But, and this is important many who come in do have tuberculosis. By catching it early enough, we stand a good chance of arresting the disease and curing the patient.

"It is significant that people are coming in more freely. They are aware of the dangers of the disease through the public health programs and are taking steps to protect their health. Once something like this starts snowballing, effective public health becomes a reality.

"No doctor can ever feel satisfied with progress against disease, when there is still so much to be done, but at least we've made a start, and the Vietnamese doctors, nurses, and technicians can carry the ball the rest of the way.

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"The MILPHAP actions here will end in July," the doctor concluded, "and the Vietnamese medical personnel are more than able to handle any future actions."

An other program initiated by the MILPHAP group is referring persons requiring specialized treatment to the USAF Hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. Those unable to make the trip to Cam Ranh are seen by doctors from the USAF, base there who travel down to Phan Rang.

"We have three doctors who visit regularly," said Kraybill. "Dr. Charles Rubin, an ophthalmologist, handles all persons needing eye treatment, while Dr. Thomas Hoshaw handles cases where the eyes, ears, nose and throat are infected. Dr. Louis Breshie also visits here frequently and serves as a urologist. Most of the doctors really enjoy the chance to treat patients with diseases which are unfamiliar to them. It's a real challenge that sometimes draws on all of our experience."

SMILING FACES (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Christopher P. Boles)



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David Norris in Vietnam Honor Unit (*Journal Courier, Jacksonville, Ill, May 30, 1971*)
WITH U.S. COMBAT AIR FORCES, Vietnam — U.S. Air Force Sergeant David H. Norris, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Norris, 544 Brooklyn, Jacksonville, is a member of the 14th Special Operations Wing in Southeast Asia that has earned the Presidential Unit Citation.

Sergeant Norris, assigned Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, an aircraft mechanic with the wing which has received the highest U.S. organizational award for its performance as the only USAF unit of its kind in the combat theater.

The 14th is headquartered Phan Rang and operated from nine major locations in Southeast Asia. Wing aircrews fly seven types of aircraft—including fixed-wing gunships and the Air Force's only armed helicopters—on such special missions as leaflet drops, defense of allied outposts and escort for search and rescue. The 14th was credited with the defense of more than 3,600 allied positions, hundreds of ground teams and patrols, and the surrender of more than 33,000 enemy troops.

In February, the 14th also implemented Vietnamese Air Force combat crew training in AC-119 gunships into its mission to support the Vietnamese Improvement and Modernization Program.

Sergeant Norris will wear distinctive service ribbon to mark his affiliation with the wing.

He is a 1968 graduate of Jacksonville High School.

Third Lieutenants Visit Phan Rang AB

PRAN RANG AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF)

TO PROTECT THE FIREMEN- Explaining the use of a firefighting suit to three U.S. Air Force Academy cadets is Major John C. Acton Jr. (left), 39, Jacksonville Ark. He is the commander of Detachment 1, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron here. Listening are (left to right) Cadets Stephen H. Graverock, 21, Fullerton Calif., James T. Jeffus. 20, Santa Fe NM, and Arthur H. Hardy, 20, Ipswich, Mass. Firemen working with Det. 1 wear the suit for protection while battling aircraft fires on the runway. (U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C Christopher P. Boles) Dated Aug 15, 1969

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I SCRAP A MISSION

I’m at the North end of the runway doing the final “arming” of the weapons right before takeoff, removing safety devices, charging guns, etc.

A B-57 pulls up and my co-worker and I approach the nose and split, him toward the left wing, me to the right.

I immediately notice something wrong and yell to him to stop and signal him to re-join me at the nose.

There I point out to him a puddle of hydraulic fluid on the ground under the nose gear.

The pilots of course can’t see this from the cockpit and are wondering what’s up.

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I see the fluid is leaking from a hose on the nose gear. I kneel down and scoop up a handful of it and walk to the side of the cockpit, hold up my dripping hand and show it to the pilot and give him a thumb down signal.

I could see the look of disappointment on his and the navigators faces. They turned around and headed back to the revetments.

I was so glad I caught that before they took off and maybe saved their lives from the serious trouble of hydraulic fluid loss but at the same time I felt bad praying that there were not some Army guys somewhere waiting for that bomber to come.

(A2C Lawrence (Larry) Theurer was with the 8th Tactical Bomb Squadron, loading munitions aboard the B-57 Canberras. I was fortunate to have meet Larry at the B-57 Bummers reunion in Branson, Missouri and after I had seen what he had written I asked if I could share his stories with the Phan Rang community. Of course he agreed and this is just another one of the many stories to come.)

Spooky, Army, Navy Team Up for Results *(Seventh Air Force News, December 11, 1968)*

NHA TRANG — When enemy soldiers moved from the Truong Son mountain range near Nha Trang to escape Allied units in hot pursuit recently, they ran directly into units of the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Army who were waiting with a suitable welcome.

The contact was made after AC-47 "Spookys" of the 4th Special Operations Squadron here began receiving position reports from Navy skimmer boats of the Inshore Undersea Warfare Group (IUWG)-1, Western Pacific Detachment, Unit 4, patrolling the area.

The three-man coastal reconnaissance team aboard the skimmer was making its usual night-time inspection of the Dong Bo shores south of Nha Trang, when they spotted lanterns moving along the restricted shoreline.

The men opened up with their .30 cal machine gun. They quickly came under fire from shore positions, and moments later a mortar round exploded in the water nearby.

"We put in a call for Spooky and artillery right away," said boat captain, Signalman Second Class Edward W. Meduit, Butte, Mont.

Within minutes shells from artillery units at nearby Camp McDermott slammed into the target area. And an AC-47 dragonship was overhead pinpointing the enemy with three 7.62mm miniguns.

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The joint force continued to blast the area for an hour. The lights and enemy activity had ceased.

As a team, it would be hard to match the effect of these three units in joint actions. Navy observers with powerful "Starlight" scopes to peer through the darkness watch the artillery penetrate to the floor of the brush and Spooky minigun fire as it saturates the same area. By daylight, a fourth force is brought in to perform reconnaissance of the actions. Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) units from Nha Trang have gone so far as to make assault landings on some of the beaches and islands in Nha Trang's harbor. Added to the many secondary explosions Spooky and Navy .50 caliber fire account for through the night, are findings of equipment and weapons of what might once have been a VC or NVA squad.

Directors of the combined display met recently aboard one of IUWG's 36-foot harbor defense vessels. The Air Force's Lt. Col. Joseph W. Lentine, San Jose, Calif., represented Spooky.

Navy Lt. (junior grade) Joseph D. Lopez, Central Valley, Calif., pointed out areas of action to Colonel Lentine and Army Capt. Donald J. Banta, Las Vegas.; Banta directs the heavy guns of "A" Battery, 7th Battalion, 13th Artillery at McDermott.

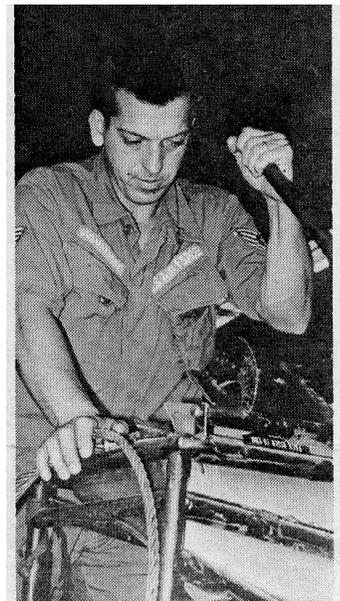


Maintaining Chutes

MSgt. George H. Puckett, NCO in charge of the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron Parachute Shop, reinforces stitches in an F-100 Supersabre Drag Chute.

**Parachute Packing Is
Serious Task**

PHAN RANG—Aircraft of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here fly more than 100 sorties per day. Though all these aircraft are different sizes and are used for a multitude of purposes, they all have one thing in common. Each aircraft depends on parachutes.



Final Step

SSgt. Elmer E. Overstreet, completes the final step in drag chute packing, the loading into the cartridge.

The task of maintaining and

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packing these chutes for use is the job of the 35th Field Maintenance Squadron's Parachute Shop.

Non-commissioned-officer-in-charge of the shop, MSgt. George H. Puckett, Dallas, Tex., commented, "We pack every chute as if it were a "life or death" matter, because it is!"

Two kinds of chutes are packed in this shop; drag chutes that help brake the jet powered aircraft on landing, and personnel chutes that the pilots wear.

"Of the two chutes," said Sergeant Puckett, "the personnel chute takes longer to pack. It's bigger and harder to handle. Every personnel chute is packed as if it will surely used, though they seldom are."

Other riggers in this section include A1C John C. Getz, Denver, Colo., SSgt. Elmer E. Overstreet, Norfolk, Va. And A1C Alvin E. Tackett, Trumann, Ark.

‘Patches,’ AF’s Hole-iest Aircraft Returns (*Seventh Air Force News, December 11, 1968*)

Something Special To ‘Hands’

BIEN HOA — How are you going to keep 'em down on the Ranch after they've seen Bien Hoa? Ask the men of the 12th Special Operations Squadron (Defoliation) who recently received their ol' hand "Patches" back from the United States.

"Patches" is a UC-123 aircraft flown by the Ranch Hands of the squadron. But she's not just any old UC-123. Patches has the distinction of being the most shot-up aircraft in Vietnam with 547 holes punched in her by enemy ground fire.

The durable Provider took the hits in her stride for a good number of



‘Patches’ Is Back

Most shot-at aircraft in Vietnam returns to the Ranch Hands of the 12th Special Operations Squadron following a facelifting and addition of two J-85 jet engines. Checking over her log book of 547 hits from enemy ground fire are new crew chief Ray A. Barker, (right) Fresno, Calif., and Sergeant Charles Wynn, Baltimore, Md., assistant crew chief.

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missions, but toward the end of her first tour Patches had her camouflage paint removed and was left with a gleaming silver skin. She was taken off defoliation missions and given the more sedate job of mosquito suppression runs.

Then, in May 1968, Patches was sent back to the States. At first she was headed for the Air Force Museum and retirement as a curiosity. A last minute reprieve, however, saved her from being put out to pasture and Patches was converted into a 'K' model with the addition of two J-85 jet engines.

Word came back later that Patches would be returning to Vietnam and the men of the 12th SOS spared no effort to insure her return to Bien Hoa. And return she did recently to a large gathering of crew members and maintenance personnel of the squadron who had assembled to welcome her.

For the occasion Patches sported four painted purple hearts on her nose and the inscription "547 Hits" on her silver skin. . . .ready to go back to work.

Providers Bring Troops to Rest Site *by Maj. Ed Lindberg*

PHAN RANG—Excitement stirs troops in the cargo compartment of the C-123 Provider as Maj. Phillip W. Shields, Tacoma, Wash., swings his lumbering aircraft into position and starts it on its final approach descent.

It finally settles on the narrow steel strip and Civilian Irregular Defense Group troops of the 3rd Mobile Strike Force are home.

The Vietnamese troops will rest, re-supply and spend five days with their families and friends before once again using their skill in the dense jungles.

While circling the field, Major Shields radioed for landing instructions from Capt. Fred D. Oates, Panama City, Fla., a member of one of the 834th Air Division's Combat Control Teams (CCT).

Members of the CCT in their radio-equipped Jeeps, are already in position, having arrived early in the morning by another Provider to activate the seemingly abandoned airstrip.

At the strip's tiny base camp they act as air controllers issuing weather information and landing instructions to the airlift crews.

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This photo is not from the events described in the accompanying story, but is from another similar troop movement. Photo by A1C Christopher P. Boles.

Supervising activities on the ground is another C-123 pilot, Capt. Charles Smith III, Alexandria, Va., of the 19th Special Operations Squadron.

"I'm responsible for the orderly flow of all activities on the ground," said Captain Smith. "Working through the CCT, I direct aircraft parking and coordinate with special forces personnel to quickly off-load the tired jungle fighters and rapidly on-load cargo and refreshed replacement troops.

"Since the airstrip is so small we've got to keep the planes and troops moving to avoid ramp congestion. We are working under a tight schedule to move the troops each way," he continued.

"These troops will be lifted by helicopter to a landing zone as soon as the Provider aircrews deliver them to their forward operating base. Since the entire force works as an integrated

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fighting unit, they must all be delivered today!"

Armed guards are seen on the grassy turf which grows around the pierced steel plate runway and ramp. Peering anxiously through the sentries on the sidelines are the troopers' families.

In 15 days there will be another similar assemblage of personnel and equipment, and tactical airlift crews from the 315th Special Operations Wing will help complete another move airlifting the combat veterans home.

The last flight of a Captain from the 615th, circa 1969. Can anyone identify?



(U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C
Christopher P. Boles)

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Part I----

When we (the 71st SOS) first arrived in country, we began Air Ops out of Nha Trang.

The core crews were ferrying the C119's from Stateside to Nha Trang. As we gained more aircraft to fly, 14th SOW pipelined us into "training missions"; until we were certified a combat ready unit.

Even as a know-nothing 2 striper, I questioned the logic of fragging a "training mission" every night to hunt down a mobile 37mm gun that was working the A Shau Valley knocking down the Fighters heading North. I questioned one of the Intel officers at a pre-mission briefing, asking "we were big, slow and low; what chance would we have against a mobile 37mm, even if we DID find it"?

I was told to sit down and be quiet. The point to this was: our first missions were primarily Armed Recon to validate our capabilities and minimize potential losses. Once we were certified and our facilities were prepared at Phan Rang, we began Air Operations in earnest. Missions for the most part were still fairly safe; just Armed Recon and reacting to Fire Support Base attacks. We didn't really have too much resistance from Charlie. Charlie was a fast study and our crew found one night, just how much they learned.

Part II---

I think we all had our own personal "aha moment" in SVN. Mine was about late spring 1969. Up until then, missions were almost, dare I say "routine".

We were fragged to support Ground Forces around Nui Ba Den (Black Virgin/witch Mountain) NW of Tan Son Nhut. We went through all the pre-target briefings and set up for "work".

I will NEVER forget the view from #1 gunport when we arrived on station at The Virgin Mountain. I looked out and there before my eyes was an image of what "war" would look like on the Silver Screen.

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The Mountain was divided up into four quadrants. We arrived from the South and were told to suppress enemy fire in our quadrant. In the opposing quadrant (180 degrees out from us) a Spooky was working their section.

While we searched for enemy AAA, I could see the Cobra Gunsips making rocket passes on the flank of the Mountain in our quadrant. Overhead were FAC's working all of us. The radio chatter was horrendous.

Charlie decided to finally get to work and a 4 four-man 51 cal. pit opened up on the Cobras and that was our cue to enter the fray. We rolled in on top of the 51 cal. and poured in about 3000 rounds on top of the gun crew.

One down. While I was reloading my 2 minis., a second pit opened up trying to bag a Cobra. Nope not tonight Charlie; Pilot just slewed the old girl a few degrees and hosed #2 gunpit until there was no further reaction.

As we rolled out from the firing orbit, we attracted the attention of a third gunpit which now focused on US. As the Pilot rolled into firing position; the sky lit up and we took fire from outside our firing orbit. Unknowingly we had been caught in a well planned trap; with the first gunpits as lures. I had just put #1 gun back online and it was unresponsive; so I bent down to make sure I secured the electrical connector.

As I stood up, my fellow gunner Terry was thrown back from between his two minis and up against the RH side of the cargo compartment, slumping down on the ammo boxes. I thought that one of his guns had blown up because we were getting some really bad ammo for awhile.

Terry had a large gash in his helmet and was bleeding around his neck. Don, our IO and medical man rushed to his aid. He advised the Aircraft Commander that he was not injured badly; but the Aircraft Commander pulled off target and we recovered at Tan Son Nhut for Medical Assistance for Terry.

While Terry was at the medical clinic, Squire Riley (FE) and I stayed behind and inspected our girl. We had taken about 25 rounds of Armor Piercing 51 Cal. If I hadn't bent down when I did, I would have been mortally wounded by the 4th or 5th round to hit the aircraft. The stream of rounds went from just aft of the front crew door all the way to the left vertical stabilizer.

Terry was ok, he had minor lacerations on his neck from the aircraft skin; which erupted when that round hit. You could put your fingertips through the gash in his helmet.

Terry was our units first Purple Heart.

Protecting
PHAN RANG AB
by Ken Swickard
VD Cases

Most of the VD (venereal disease) cases were seen during the daytime Military Sick Call hours.

Many times, those infected would beg, plead or threaten you, just to be treated under the table. But that never happened.

Since I only worked at night, I saw very few, and my career was more important than a few doses of Bicillin under the table. Actually, I cannot remember anyone ever asking me, directly, to "cure" him or her outside of official medical procedures.

There was one Security First Lieutenant that was a complete ass to us medics. He openly would tell us that he hated medics and would do anything under his authority to make our lives miserable. He would come in at night for treatment and was always verbally abusive. He had a real chip on his shoulder.

Well, he finally came in one night and was diagnosed with VD. We treated him with the recommended dose of the day and off he went. (of course I slightly shanked the end of the needle so that it went in slick as grease, but came out like a fish hook.) Since rank had its privileges, enlisted folks got gonorrhea, officers only had "Non-specific urethritis". We found out that he was married to an Air Force Nurse, and he had reason to believe that she was home having an affair with another medical professional.

This was his disdain for all medics. In his records I made sure that the finding of gonococcus bacterium was properly listed as gonorrhea. It was obvious that his wife, if in fact guilty, was not the only partner not being faithful. Anyhow, military regulations, being as they are, require that all departing medical records be shipped to the individuals new assignment, "or other medical authority". When this guy left, and the fact that his wife was "other medical authority", I shipped them to her, at work, since she was assigned to the hospital of his next base. (Hey, I never said I was a super nice guy, just a nice guy). Never, never, ever, make war with the medics!

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Dragon’s Fire Aids Troopers (*Seventh Air Force News, December 11, 1968*)

PLEIKU — An AC-47 Dragonship crew with the 4th Special Operations Squadron here flying its night airborne alert patrol over Chu Lai recently supported troops in contact with an enemy force 18 miles southwest of Da Nang.

Upon arrival in the area, the aircraft commander, Lt. Col. Warren R. Poison, West Boylston, Mass., was directed to the target and advised to fire on the enemy by the ground controller.

After moving the aircraft into position, he unleashed the 7.62 mini-guns, firing directly on the target. After saturating the area, the Dragonship returned to its night airborne alert patrol.

Other crew members were 1st Lt. Thomas H. Hoffman, Bass River, Mass., co-pilot; 1st Lt. Charles T. Carrington, Philadelphia, Pa., navigator; SSgt. Kenneth U. Marshall, Ashland, Kan., flight engineer; Sgt. Ronald W. Peterson, Pennock, Minn., loadmaster; Sgt. Frank E. Devlin, Jr., Walnut Creek, Calif., and A1C Larry F. McNulty, Jacksonville, Ark., gunners.



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Crowne Plaza Charleston Airport - conv. Ctr., 4831 Tanger Outlet Boulevard North Charleston,
South Carolina 29418.

Here’s what you need to know about the reunion		
Cost: \$124.00 per room, per day. Includes 2 full breakfast buffets. Rooms will be available at the group rate three days prior to event and three days following event based upon availability.	Cancellation policy: You may cancel any time prior to 24 hours prior to 4 p.m. arrival without any penalties. If you cancel less than 24 hours prior to 4 p.m. arrival, the individual may be subject to pay the hotel a cancellation fee equal to the first nights room and tax.	
Internet: Complimentary high speed internet in lobby, meeting areas and sleeping rooms.	Guarantee & Billing: Guests are responsible for paying all reserved accommodations and incidentals.	
Check-in time: 4:00 p.m.	Check-out time: 11:00 a.m.	
Rooms: <i>The hotel will offer a mix of king, double queen and handicap accessible rooms based upon availability.</i>	Parking: Complimentary parking and airport shuttle.	
Banquet: We are still in the planning stages, but it will be somewhere in the ballpark of \$55 for 3 entrees and \$48 for 2.	Tours: We will have a base tour and probably a downtown tour, but this is also still in the planning stages and once they are finalized I will let everyone know.	
<p>Click here to make your reservations</p> <p>Make plans now to join us in Charleston, 8-11 October 2015.</p>		
Breakdown of the days		
8 Oct. Travel/Arrive Charleston	9 Oct. Base/City Tours	10 Oct. Tour - Evening Banquet
11 Oct. Check-out/Travel		

