

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"

In this issue:

Washington State Picks Pilot as 'Tops'

Robert Beckel Star Wa-Hi athlete flew to the top in U.S.A.F.

Student Athletic Games - Phan Rang: Phan Rang AB GIs Aid School Athletes

Joint Effort Foils Sapper Attack

Phan Rang Memories by Larry Theurer: Bouncing Bombs

AC-119 Tails by Jim Mattison: Smoke Float

Major Turns Teacher

2015 Reunion Information

a little humor by Joe Schwarzer

Washington State Picks Pilot as 'Tops'
(Seventh Air Force News, December 11, 1968)

PHAN RANG — One of three "Outstanding Young Men of Washington State" for 1968 Capt. Robert D. Beckel, Walla Walla, Wash., a staff member and F-100 Supersabre fighter pilot with the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here.

He was selected for this honor by the Washington State Jaycees.

Assigned as Chief, 35th TFW Standardization/Evaluation Division, Captain Beckel was a member of the USAF Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team, Nellis AFB, Nev. prior to being transferred to Vietnam.



Notified of his selection for promotion to major in the coming months, Captain Beckel has earned the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters and the Air Medal with 14 oak leaf clusters. During his tour in Vietnam, he has flown 302 combat sorties.

Captain Beckel's nomination, submitted by Donalds J. Locati, Walla Walla Jaycees, said,

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"

"Duty, Honor, Country. These three words depict the life and goals of Captain Robert Duane Beckel."

"He feels that they dictate what he ought to be, what he can be and what he will be. He believes they make you strong enough to know when you are weak and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid."

"We know his tremendous desire for peace with honor and justice and his belief in freedom of religion, education, art and science and government make him a truly outstanding young man."

"What better nominee could you choose than one whose profession is peace."

Robert Beckel Star Wa-Hi athlete flew to the top in U.S.A.F. (*Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, Sunday, February 22, 1967*)



On the basketball court at Walla Walla High School, he soared above his peers, once scoring 48 points in a single game. He was commander of Wa-Hi's ROTC program his senior year, and graduated from the school with flying colors in the class of '55.

When he left town to join the U.S. Air Force, the sky was the limit, and he continued to fly ahead of the pack. A stellar career in the military took off when he earned his pilot wings in June 1960.

Since then, he's flown with the Thunderbirds — a daredevil precision aerial demonstration team — and chalked up 313 combat missions in fighter planes.

Robert Beckel has been climbing his way to top in the Air Force for more than 30 years, and has at last hit cruising speed.

The 49-year-old Wa-Hi grad is now a two-star general and third in command of the Air Force's Strategic Air Command in Nebraska — the unit responsible for long-range bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and the majority of this nation's nuclear firepower.

"He was a good student, very active in sports and very much interested in the military," recalls Beckel's mother, Evelyn Beckel, who still lives in Walla Walla.

Evelyn and her husband Lloyd were not in the military, but their son took an interest early on. "I remember he wore a military suit when he was 5 years old," Evelyn says.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

Most people in town, however, probably remember Beckel foremost as a star athlete. He joined the varsity baseball team at Wa-Hi as a freshman, and played varsity basketball for three years. He set a number of state records, including once racking up 48 points during a single state tournament game.

But scoring with the U.S. Air Force was apparently more important. He once left a state basketball tournament before the final game to return to Walla Walla to take an entrance exam for the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado.

He was accepted to the academy, graduating in 1959 with a bachelor’s of science degree and the rank of second lieutenant.

After Beckel finished pilot school at the top of his class in 1960, he underwent jet fighter training, and then took an assignment flying F-100s and F-105s at a U.S. base in Germany.

He flew with the Thunderbirds for two years, taking the solo position for the “Ambassadors in Blue” team that performs around the world.

From those high-altitude stunts above adoring hometown crowds Beckel flew directly into combat over Vietnam. Precision flying became a matter of life and death for whole troops of soldiers, not just the pilot.

“Our troops would be in close battle with the Viet Cong, and we were asked to lay our weapons close to friendly forces, but without killing our own,” he explains.

For night battles, jet fighter pilots had to take off and land by flares, and on any mission a plane could be shot down by enemy ground fire.

“It takes dedication and training,” he says. “If called upon, you may have to give your life for your country. But you don’t sit around worrying about it.”

After more than a year at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, he was called to Nellis Air Force Base to teach others how to fly F-100s. From there, he seemed to make all the right moves for a quick ascent up the command post ladder.

He continued his education, attending the Command and Staff Course at the Naval War College and the National War College in the early 1970s. He also earned a master’s degree in international affairs from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Beckel worked as an Air Force liaison for the U.S. House of Representatives and was chief aide for several years to Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

He held command positions with various Air Force wings and divisions until 1981, when he returned to the U.S. Air Force Academy as commandant of cadets.

He was promoted to major general Aug. 1, 1982, just after he took a deputy chief of staff position at Air Force headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Beckel joined the Strategic Air Command in September 1984 as deputy chief of staff for operations, and was promoted to his current position there — chief of staff — in October 1985.

“He puts 300 percent into everything he does,” says his wife, Donna Beckel, formerly Donna McAdams of Walla Walla. “He’s a perfectionist. And he loves his country.”

Student Athletic Games - Phan Rang
Phan Rang AB GIs Aid School Athletes



PHAN RANG — More than three thousand Vietnamese citizens joined with provincial and military officials representing Phan Rang AB, at opening ceremonies of the first annual Provincial High Schools Sports Meet recently held at Phan Rang City.

After the opening ceremonies, the crowd enjoyed a Karate demonstration presented by members of the Republic of Korea's 9th "White Horse" Division stationed at Phan Rang AB — and cheered on their favorites as the games began.

Among the base officials attending were Colonels William M. Menaker, Browns Mills, N.J., 35th Tactical Fighter Wing deputy commander for materiel; and Robert G. Goold, Provo, Utah, commander, Phan Rang AB; Lt.Col. Joseph F. Hermann Jr., Portland, Ore., chairman, base civic action council and commander, 35th Transportation Squadron; and 1st Lt. Bryan A. Wolter, Algoma, Wis., base civic actions officer.

As a token of appreciation, Nguyen Van Khue, chief of youth services, Ninh Thuan Province, presented Colonel Menaker, Colonel Goold and Lieutenant Wolter with banners for the base's assistance in making the meet possible.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



These pictures from a student athletics games event at Phan Rang City were taken by U.S. Air Force Photographer Christopher P. Boles, 600TH Photo Squadron. Imagine your country being at war and still life goes on. Students from several communities came together to compete with each other. Thanks to Vinh Ho for his translations. Please enjoy the pictures.



Spectators going to the Student Athletic Games.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



The grandstands with the military delegation and other dignitaries in the first row.



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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"



While senior province advisor Steven Nager looks on, Colonel William M. Menaker, 50, Browns Falls, NJ, 35th TFW deputy commander for material, signs a volley ball to be used in the first

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

annual Provincial High Schools Sports Meet of Ninh Thuan Province. (USAF Photo by A1C Christopher P. Boles) Dated April 1969

NEXT WEEK I WILL FEATURE THE PICTURES FROM THE KOREAN KARATE DEMONSTRATION PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA’S 9TH “WHITE HORSE” DIVISION THAT IS MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE .

Joint Effort Foils Sapper Attack *(Article submitted to Facebook by David Gile)*

By SSgt. Douglas L. Christy

PHAN RANG — A North Vietnamese Army reconsapper was detained and two other NVA were killed during recent nighttime activity on the base perimeter here.

Members of the 35th Security Police Squadron killed the two NVA at the fence line. A patrol of the Number 2 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force Airfields Defense Guards, injured the other NVA during a fire-fight. He was detained later near the base.

The action began shortly after midnight when A1C Carl H. Baker, a tower guard, sighted movement at the canal near the fence. Reaction forces arrived but were unable to detect further signs of the enemy.

"Shortly our attention, was drawn to a tower about 100 yards down the fence," stated MSgt. Louiel C. Gibson Jr., night perimeter supervisor, Panther Flight. From their post, Sergeants Ronald E. White and James E. Burns, were watching someone moving near the fence. The person disappeared when Sergeant Gibson shined a small spotlight into the man's position.

"Then things started happening," the sergeant said. "We heard gunfire from Airman Baker's post, so we hustled down there fast."

The airmail had spotted a pair of individuals in the fence. They were made visible by the new lighting system recently installed on the perimeter. Sighting through a starlight scope mounted on his M-16, A1C Baker fired two shots, sending the pair ducking for cover and possibly wounding one.

When Sergeant Gibson arrived, the tower guard pointed out where the two NVA were trying to hide. The sergeant went to the road where he met Staff Sergeants Robert L. Dragich and James M. Blair Jr., sentry dog supervisors. Accompanying them was Sgt. Jesse Glenn from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing Office of Information.

The security policemen positioned themselves on the road and had the enemy illuminated with a large, jeep-mounted spotlight. Second Lt. Dennis M. O'Callaghan, a member of the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron here, joined them.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

"I gave the standard challenge in Vietnamese and English," Sergeant Gibson said. When they did not respond, I yelled 'get up,' Both did and began running toward the canal."

A hail of gunfire then brought the pair down. "We found out later that one had a grenade in his hand and the other was carrying an automatic pistol suspended from his neck by a cord," remarked Sergeant Dragich. "In the action that followed the challenge, for some reason the one did not toss his grenade. At first he probably could not see us because of the lights. We were about 12 feet away at the time. Lucky thing for us."

That morning we sent out a patrol on a daylight sweep," stated Flight Lieutenant Brian J. Lawler, Number 2 Squadron defense officer.

"While a main force went looking for signs of the enemy's escape route, several stayed at the bridge over the canal and were looking around it. That was when they found the injured sapper hiding in the canal a short distance from where the ADG patrol had made contact several hours earlier," he said.

"Even while the ambulance was en route to pick up the detained sapper and give him more extensive treatment, he was talking. He told us interesting things about his unit," the flight lieutenant said "and he told us where he had hidden two automatic rifles, grenades, ammunition and assorted medical and personal equipment."

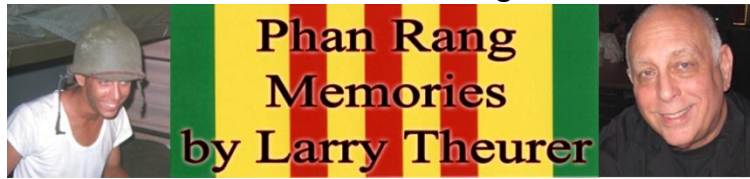


David Knighton: I remember that they had the two bodies laying out at the Guardmount area the next morning. We were an augmentee group that were there for extra training on the M60 that morning. I actually got to hold the pistol when the NCOIC showed it to me in his office. It had a Red Star on it. I think it was a 32 caliber but it has been a while. Just remember how cool that Red Star looked though. I think it was Jan. or Feb. 1970 and a couple months later the Beach got hit by Sappers and we were taken down there for extra security. Was down there for 10 days I believe until my supervisor in Ammo got me pulled back up on base to operate the Crane to unload bombs during the Cambodian "Incursion" in the Spring of 1970.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”



BOUNCING BOMBS

I’m heading toward the line shack Quonset hut walking past the big steel revetments on my right.

As I pass by the revetment rows, coming at me down an aisle at a high rate of speed is a small tractor towing one of the small bomb trailers.

The trailer is basically just two steel I-beams on four rubber tires. This one has four 250 pound bombs laying cross-wise on it, held by one strap. Fortunately for me, without any fuses in them.

The guy driving it is going like hell, at least 25MPH+. I can hear the tractor engine roaring.

He races right up to the end of the aisle and attempts to turn right and locks up the brakes, causing the front of the tractor to squat down, the back of the tractor to rise up and the hinged tongue of the trailer to jackknife into the ground. The trailer flips up 90 degrees vertical like a catapult, the strap breaks and all the bombs were launched 7 to 8 feet in the air right past the tractor directly toward me.

I looked for where to run for protection. There was nothing but flat concrete. The bombs were between me and the revetments, and the ditch behind the line shack was 100 feet away. I’m thinking Oh Oh. *(Doug’s note: I really think Larry was thinking something other than Oh Oh!)*

I’m frozen there with my eyes as big as pie plates, watching four 250lb bombs flying through the air about to connect with a solid concrete surface 15 feet from me. The only thought in my head was how the heck is my mother going to have a funeral for me when these things explode, they won’t even be able to find a piece of my shoelaces.

With loud clangs two of the bombs came down on my left, landed sideways, tumbled and rolled 15 feet before coming to a rest.

A third bomb came down on my right in an arc like a plane landing on a runway, did not tumble at all but slid by me eight feet away just wiggling its tail back and forth like a fish swimming.

The fourth bomb did the damndest thing I’ve ever seen. It landed in front of me, vertically straight on its nose and like an iron basketball, with four loud “clang, clang, clang, clang’s” like a

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

church bell, bounced on the concrete, four foot high, two foot high, one foot high and then stood there vertically on its nose, wobbled for two seconds and toppled over with a final clang.

I stood there trembling in total shock for a minute wondering should I assist this guy putting the bombs back on the trailer or chew him out for scaring me so badly. I was too shook up to do either. I just walked away.

(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.)



SMOKE FLOAT

During the monsoon season visibility was horrendous; pretty much nonexistent from 3000 foot altitude.

Even though Charlie’s activities also diminished during the wet season; he was still out there and capable of harassing our Special Forces Camps and LZ’s. Despite the weather, we still would launch our daily fragged missions; so we could provide quick reaction firepower.

Our missions were typically 5 hours in duration; and boring holes in the skies were just that “boring”. One night we had completed our patrol and it was uneventful due to the weather. Our aircraft commander (A/C) deemed it worthwhile to expend all the ammo in our 4 miniguns (6000 rounds) and then call it a night. To give us a target to shoot at, our A/C asked the I/O (Illuminator Operator) to pitch out a smoke float. The smoke float was an old Navy device that was pretty much just a 4 x 4 with a smoke charge. The I/O tossed the smoke float and once it ignited on the ground; our NOS (Night Observation Sight) operator picked up the hotspot.

The pilot flew a few orbits, hosing down the “target”. We expended the ammo from all 4 miniguns; and went home for the night.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"

Fast forward a few days later. We were receiving our pre-mission briefing which happened to include the results of our "engagement" a few nights before. It so seems that when the smoke float ignited, some Charlie's ran over to investigate. About the time they arrived at the smoke float; they were greeted by 6,000 rounds of 7.62 from above! We were credited with 5 KBA (killed by air).

Jim Mattison
Shadow Gunner 68-69

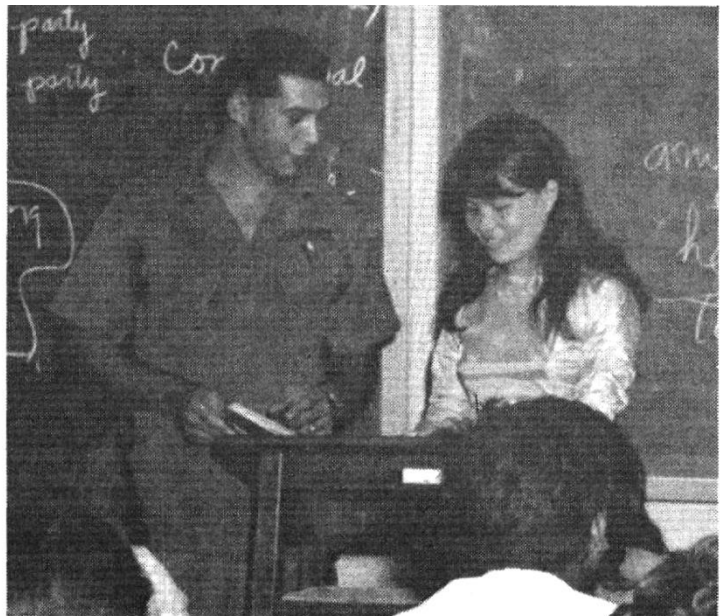
School's in at Phan Rang Major Turns Teacher

PHAN RANG — The lack of a school bell does not stop Maj. Richard J. Mustico, Ballston Lake, N.Y., of the 315th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron here in concluding classes for 18 Vietnamese students.

Working with Miss Kim Dau, Vietnamese Educational Special Assistant, he teaches intermediate conversational English to personnel who are employed throughout the base.

The class is designed to assist the indigenous personnel who have frequent contact with servicemen by discussing American ways of English expressions and the proper usage of grammar.

Using texts and manuals furnished by the Defense Language Institute, he directs his efforts to enhance the abilities and capabilities of these personnel, all who have previously completed at least a year's English study.



Teach Me Today

Maj. Richard J. Mustico, confers with Miss Kim Dau on the translation of English into Vietnamese. He instructs 18 local national base employees in conversational English.

U.S.A.F. Photo by Christopher Boles.

When technical or complex conversational problems arise, he turns to Miss Dau for translation assistance.

To break up the routine of the usual readings and recitations, he often spends the sixth day in

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

“Stories worth telling”

a relaxed atmosphere by conducting spelling bees and having the students listen to pre-recorded tapes.

In the near future he anticipates showing selected American films to exemplify some of our everyday language in action.

Because of his continuous efforts, Major Mustico is a familiar face to all the Vietnamese employees on base.



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.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"

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. Good news for those wishing to take the base tour. We originally were told it had to be limited to just 40 people and now they've lifted that and it's unlimited.

[Click here to make your reservations](#)

Make plans now to join us in Charleston, 8-11 October 2015.

Breakdown of the days

8 Oct. Travel/Arrive Charleston	9 Oct. Base/City Tours	10 Oct. Tour - Evening Banquet
11 Oct. Check-out/Travel		

The Silence

About six miles from Maastricht, in the Netherlands lie buried 8,301 American soldiers who died in "Operation Market Garden" in the battles to liberate Holland in the fall and winter of 1944-5. Everyone of the men buried in the cemetery, as well as those in the Canadian and British military cemeteries has been adopted by a Dutch family who mind the grave, decorate, and keep alive the memory of the soldier they have adopted. It is even the custom to keep a portrait of "their" American soldier in a place of honor in their home. Annually on "Liberation Day" Memorial Services are held for "the men who died to liberate Holland." The day concludes with a concert. The final piece is always "IL Silenzio", a memorial piece commissioned by the Dutch and first played in 1965 on the 20th anniversary of Holland's liberation. It has been the concluding piece of the memorial concert ever since.

This year the soloist was a 13 year old Dutch girl, Melissa Venema, backed by André Rieu and his orchestra (the Royal Orchestra of the Netherlands). This beautiful concert piece is based upon the original version of taps and was composed by Italian composer Nino Rossi.

Watch at this site and go full screen. Beautiful & moving.

<http://www.flixy.com/trumpet-solo-melissa-venema.htm>

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 64

"Stories worth telling"

a little humor by Joe Schwarzer

On some air bases the Air Force is on one side of the field and civilian aircraft use the other side of the field, with the control tower in the middle....

One day the tower received a call from an aircraft asking, "What time is it?"

The tower responded, "Who is calling?"

The aircraft replied, "What difference does it make?"

The tower replied "It makes a lot of difference.

If it is an American Airlines flight, it is 3 o'clock.

If it is an Air Force plane, it is 1500 hours.

If it is a Navy aircraft, it is 6 bells.

If it is an Army aircraft, the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the 3.

If it is a Marine Corps aircraft, it's Thursday afternoon and 120 minutes to "Happy Hour.

