

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 66

“Stories worth telling”

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35th Flies 100,000 Combat Sorties (*Seventh Air Force News, August 13, 1969*)

PHAN RANG-After approximately three years of operations, the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) flew its 100,000th combat sortie recently.

Piloting the F-100 Supersabre for the 100,000th flight was Col. Frank L. Galier Jr., Great Neck, N.Y., 35th TFW commander. His wingman was Lt. Col. Robert H. Buss, Mankato, Minn., 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron commander.

Starting on the next sortie the same day were two Air Force F-100s piloted by Lieutenant Colonels Len C. Russell, Macks Creek, Mo., 352nd TFS commander, and Allan E. Aaronson, San Antonio, 615th TFS commander.

The tactical fighter squadrons are equipped with supersabres, while the 8th Tactical Bomber Squadron, the only one of its kind in Vietnam, is equipped with the B-57 Canberra bomber.

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Also contributing towards the 100,000th total and to the effectiveness of the 35th TFW was the Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron, equipped with the MK-20 Canberra, an aircraft similar to the B-57s of the 8th TBS.

(Note in **Phan Rang News 1** this article appeared. **35TH T.F.W. TOPS 75,000 SORTIES** (Phan Fare, October 10, 1968, so in less than 11 months the 35th TFW flew 25,000 combat sorties. Our Facebook group has a lot of photographs when the 35th TFW achieved the 75,000 sorties milestone, but nothing from the 100,000th. In fact at the 2013 Phan Rang AB reunion at San Antonio, Texas, our group presented BGen. Frank L. Gailer Jr. with a plaque to commemorate that earlier event. If anyone has any pictures, please share them.)

The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing recently completed its 75,000th combat sortie since it began operations at Phan Rang Air Base in October 1966.

The record-breaking flight was made Monday afternoon by an F-100 Supersabre piloted by Col. Frank L. Gailer Jr., 35th TFW Commander.

The record-breaking flight was made Monday afternoon by an F-100 Supersabre piloted by Col. Frank L. Gailer Jr., 35th TFW Commander. Speaking to Phan Rang personnel who were on hand to witness the completion of the 75,000 sorties, Colonel Gailer praised the “courage and aggressiveness” of the men who have flown with the 35th.

He thanked “everyone associated with the wing, both aircrews and support personnel” for their “outstanding contributions which made the 75,000 sorties possible.

During the two years that the 35th has operated at Phan Rang, the unit has supported almost every major ground and air operation conducted in Vietnam.

The 35th TFW consists of tactical units which provide a unique and versatile combination that is unlike any other Air Force unit in Vietnam. Four of the units, the 120th, 352nd, 614th and 615th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, are equipped with F-100 Supersabres, the venerable “workhorse” of air support in South Vietnam.

The 120th TFS is the newest addition to the 35th TFW, coming to Vietnam from Colorado in May of this year as the first Air National Guard unit deployed to a war zone as a unit since World War II.

Another integral part of the Wing is the 8th Tactical Bombardment Squadron, now in its 51st year and fourth war, flying the B-57 Canberra bomber, this unit has a primary mission of interdicting enemy supply routes.

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Since coming to Phan Rang one year ago, the 8th has destroyed more than 3,000 enemy trucks carrying supplies into South Vietnam.

The Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron also made an important contribution towards the 75,000 total and to the effectiveness of the 35th TFW. The 2 Squadron flies the Australian Canberra, an aircraft similar to the B-57s of the 8th TBS.

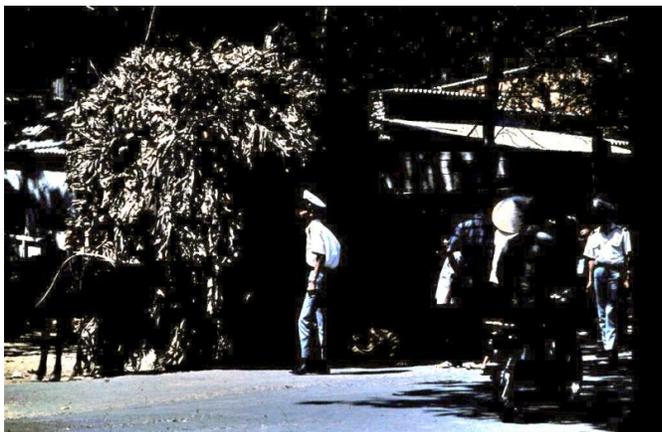
During the past two years and 75,000 sorties, the 35th TFW has accounted for about 6,400 enemy soldiers killed by air (by body count). The 35th has also destroyed or damaged 42,253 fortifications, 3,087 sampans, 25,085 bunkers and accounted for 29, 749 secondary explosions and fires.



BUSTING THE VIETNAMESE TROJAN HORSE

Phan Rang. MSgt Richard H. Rice 35th TFW Civic Action NCOIC, 1967-68

For months VC terrorist and sabotage units had been slipping into Phan Rang, the capitol city of Ninh Tuan province, Phan Rang and killing American civilian aid workers and foreign aid workers using RPGs at night or explosive charges. It was damaging the morale of everyone. No one was sleeping easy.



**A closer shot of the Sugarcane load that concealed the VC hit team.
Note how it is stacked...not the normal (vertical) way.**

Returning from a mission to the Montagnard hamlet of Cat Gia with Capt. Powers of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) one afternoon a most challenging, unforgettable incident occurred. Capt Powers was driving his jeep. I was riding shotgun in the right front seat. When we were about thirty yards from MACV entrance we started to pass a slow moving ox cart. It was stacked high with sugarcane. Sitting in the driver's seat

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was a gnarly looking old man wearing a weathered beaten conical hat. I noticed that the sugarcane was stacked vertical, not horizontal so this was very usual.

Suddenly the cart hit a rut and the load shifted making an opening in the load. I caught a glance of at least three Vietnamese squatting in the middle of the cane. One of them was looking at me, at least I thought so. I turned to Capt Powers and said quietly. “ There’s VC hiding inside that load. I don’t know how well armed they are. Maybe you should turn into MACV, have the information relayed to the Phan Rang main entrance gate guards, who are armed with machine guns. (I said that because I was the only one with an automatic weapon.)



Sugarcane loaded this way was normal and of course easier to do. Obviously if VC would have been hidden under the load they would have been smothered or at best had heat strokes in route.

If we tried to capture them a shootout would probably occur injuring nearby villagers. Not good PR for MACV or Civic Action. Plus it would probably eliminate some of our friendly contacts. Also once in custody the VC would, under interrogation, give out valuable intelligence information.

Powers turned into MACV and relayed the info, then took a route through the back of MACV into Phan Rang. Had we passed the cart the VC would have quickly vanished into the nearby neighborhood.

About the time we arrived at the gate the guards had already captured the VC team. I never reported the incident to my OIC, Lt. Querido nor did Powers report it to his commander. Had we done so we would have been in all probably decorated for our actions.

Since we discovered how the VC were slipping through the guards. Guess we both just figured it was our duty. Capt Powers and I became good friends and team mates. He had just come under the command of a new Major to MACV. The Major was bent on earning the Combat Infantry badge (CIB) despite the fact that MACV was not a combat organization.

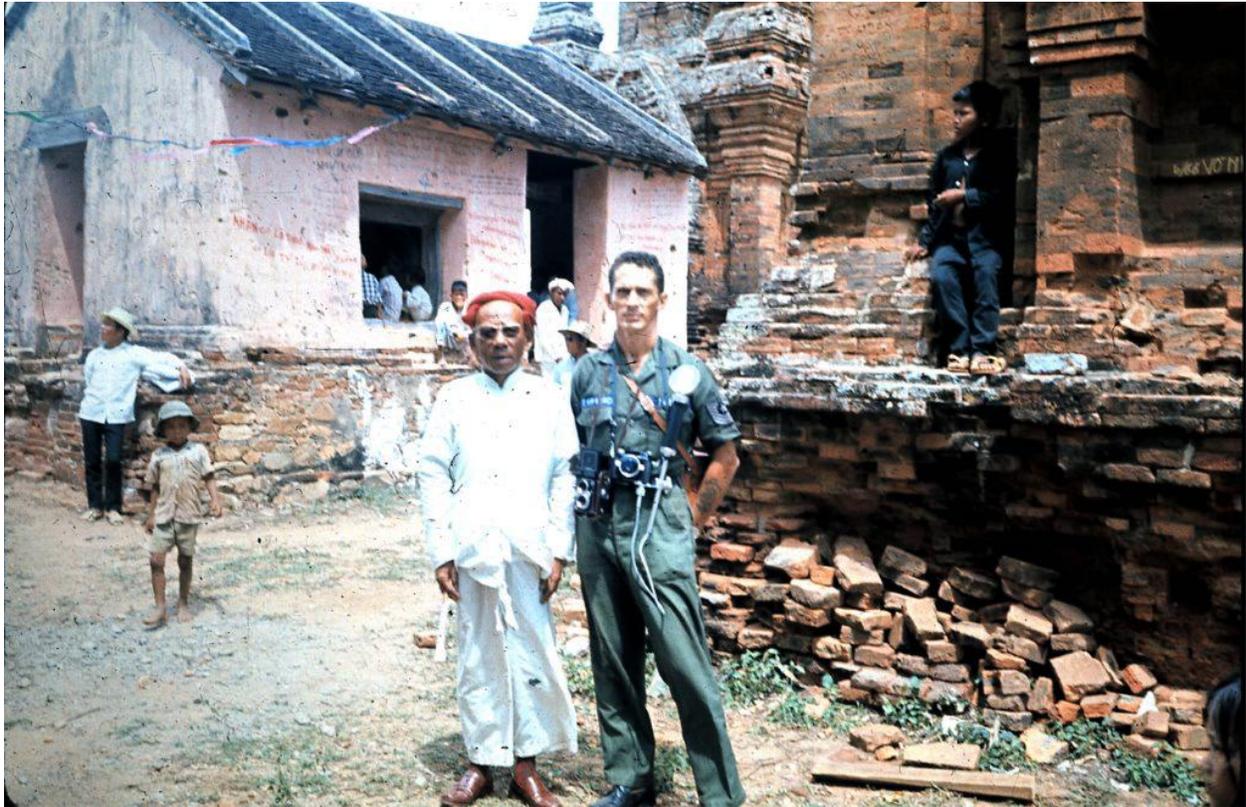
About three months after I returned to the states I learned he was killed in an ambush.

Powers told me one time, “ That SOB is going to get us killed one day trying to get the CIB.” Unfortunately he was right. About three months after I returned to the states I learned he was killed in an ambush. The Major received his Combat Infantry Badge and my friend was dead because of it.

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MSgt Richard Rice and a Cham elder at the temple of Po Clong gari, Thap Cham Hill. I was taking photographs for our CAT officer to send to PACAF HQ. in Hawaii.



C-123s Provide Airlift Record

By MAJ. ED LINDBERG

PHAN RANG —June 15, 1969, will go down in the books as a red-letter day for Air Force airlift operations in Southeast Asia.

It was on that day that the men who fly, load and maintain the C-123 Provider aircraft set a record that has eluded the grasp of every Air Force airlift unit flying in Southeast Asia. That was the day the 315th Special Operations Wing, which operates Providers in the Republic of Vietnam. flew 100 per cent of its scheduled sorties.

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Every day airlift units in Vietnam come close to this record but maintenance problems, weather, hostile action, or a number of other circumstances always end up stopping a small percentage of the cargo missions.

The record was set shortly after Col. Leslie J. Campbell assumed command of the wing, which launches Providers for the 19th Special Operations Squadron at Tan Son Nhut; the 311th SOS at Da Nang and the 309th and 310th SOSs at Phan Rang.

On the record day, the 315th Special Operations Wing made 327 takeoffs and that many landings from airfields of every shape and description, some just 2,000-foot dirt strips.

The 150 crewmen hauled 2,795 passengers and nearly 600-tons of cargo, an average per aircraft of 24 tons.

According to Colonel Campbell, "The successful completion of this unprecedented accomplishment is a tribute to the diligent efforts of the maintenance personnel and the professional skill of the aircrews."



Boot and Ladders (*Seventh Air Force News, January 29, 1969*)

What happens when an individual decides to climb down from the cockpit of an F-100 aircraft without a ladder? If the individual is wearing the ribbed sole jungle boots, he is liable to find himself falling backwards to the hard concrete below.

You say no? Well, recently a pilot discovered these facts to his misfortune and only quick action prevented injury. The pilot fell backwards head first, but tucked his head and put out his arm to break his fall. He hit the concrete with his arm, hip and back, resulting in five days lost time.

Think what could have happened. Is your life worth the few extra seconds saved by not using a ladder?

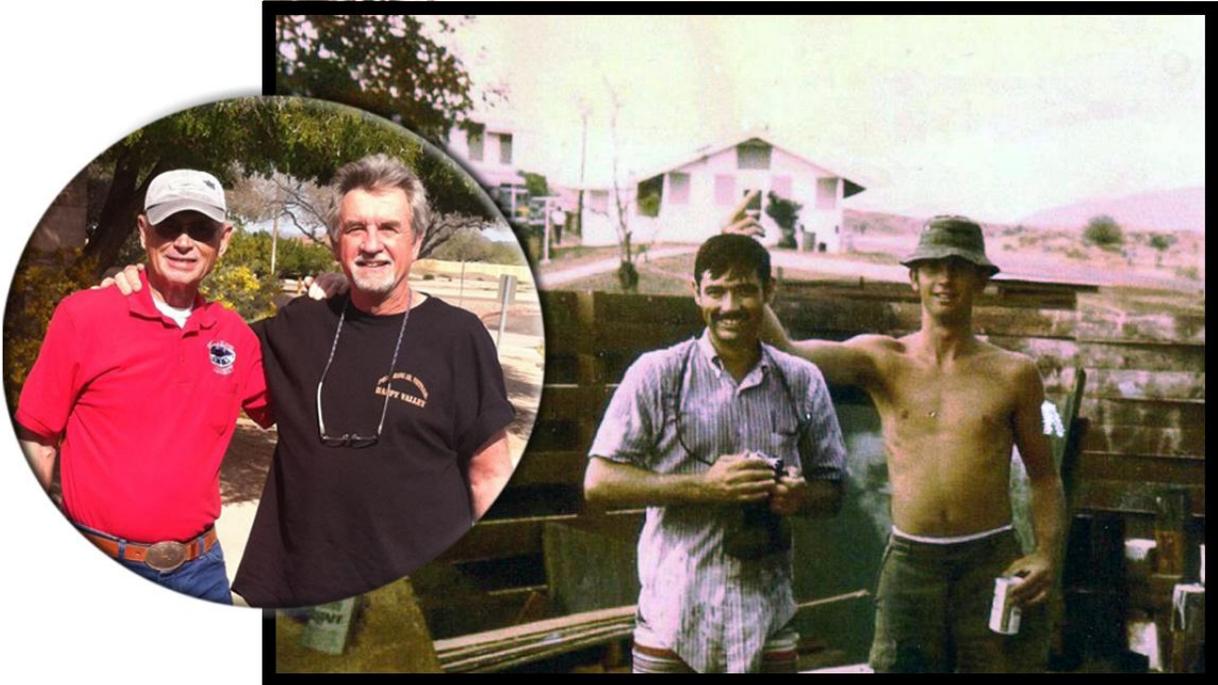
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Reunion

After 45 years, pilot (**Lee Howard**) and crew chief (**Charlie Cafarelli**) meet again in Gila Bend, Arizona. **A heartwarming story that is worth telling!**



Lee sent Charlie this email in 2008. Charlie, I just about fell off my chair last night when I ... (was on the web and saw contributions from you.) You realize, of course, that you're supposed to be dead. I was told that you were on the Bookie bird that hit the only hill between Phan Rang and Cam Rahn Bay on the way to the Freedom Bird. Jon King, 615th Charlie Kollemburg 352nd and another guy from the 612th were all on it and lost. I felt badly that you thought I had forgotten you according to what was written on the website. **Hell! I thought you were dead!!!!!!** We toasted many rounds for you and Jon at the bar. **You darn near turned me into a drunk!**

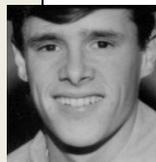
Ironically, after Phan Rang both Lee and Charlie were stationed at Davis-Monthan AFB at the same time. Lee was a flight Safety Officer and Charlie was in the 355 OMS. Neither one of them knew the other was there! Then in 2008 Charlie received the email that is reproduced above.

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George Carrie: I'll always remember when a few pilots would come down to the 615th barracks after hours for a fun night of partying at the bar. Only a few pilots would venture into such turmoil, but there were smiles all around! Happy for you two guys to remember chaotic times! The original picture is awesome!



Charlie Cafarelli: Lee got in trouble for fraternizing with us but he didn't give a shit! He liked our beer and company better!



Jim Kucipeck: The O-1s & O-2s were our age 21, 22, 23. We had much in common music, booze, chicks, single, away from home (maybe for the 1st time) that's why we could relate with each other. The higher grade officers worried about fraternization and careers!



AF Assigns Twins To Phan Rang

PHAN RANG - Twin brothers, Airmen First Class Jerry E. and Terry A. Rosine were recently reunited here through the efforts of the Air Force.

The airmen took advantage of an assignments manual's paragraph outlining procedures and requirements for having twin brothers assigned to the same base.

Jerry, a material facilities specialist, was previously stationed at Pleiku AB. Now assigned to the tool issue section of the 35th Supply Squadron, he had advised his brother, a passenger service representative (Specialist) at the Detachment 8, 14th Aerial Port Squadron of the manual's provisions.

"Because of our manning problems, I couldn't go to Pleiku," Terry stated, "So I wrote a letter endorsed by my commander requesting Jerry be stationed at Phan Rang."

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The pair spend much of their off-duty time together, mostly playing cards, reading and getting together with friends, “It is really great, having my twin brother stationed with me. Terry concluded, “it makes the time go much faster.”

Pennsylvanian ‘Top Gun’ (*Seventh Air Force News, March 19, 1969*)

PHAN RANG - Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., New Castle, Pa., has been selected "Top Gun" for January in the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here.

An F-100 Supersabre pilot with the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron "Yellowjackets," Captain Pirkkala earned the honor in 'Competition with other fighter pilots within the wing, for his weapons accuracy and effectiveness against the enemy for that month.

Top Gun is a program conducted on a monthly basis with the fighter squadrons maintaining a listing of their pilots' battle damage assessment (BDA) as provided by daily intelligence summary sheets.

Pilots receive points on all BDA on each mission flown with each item destroyed or damaged having varying point values.

"I had a pretty good month with quite a few missions in the Mekong Delta area where most of the action was," commented the captain. "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

The Top Gun graduated from pilot training in June 1967 and arrived here in April 1968. Since that time he has logged more than 230 combat missions. His next assignment will be as a T-38 instructor pilot at Webb AFB, Tex.

J found another article about Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.

Pirkkala Promoted (*New Castle News, Wednesday, May 19, 1971*)

BIG SPRING, Tex. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Ave., has been promoted to captain in the Air Force.

Capt. Pirkkala is a T-38 Talon jet trainer flight commander at Webb AFB, Tex.

He was commissioned in 1960 through the aviation cadet program and has served in the Republic of Vietnam. He is a 1958 graduate of Union High School, and received his bachelor's degree in history in 1964 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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Capt. Pirkkala's wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hink of 1104 Miller Road.

...and here's another older article about Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.

Henry J. Pirkkala Selected For College *(New Castel, Pa., News, Wednesday, October 21, 1964)*

First Lt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Ave., has been selected for college training under (he U.S. Air Force's "Operation Bootstrap" education program.

Pirkkala, a radar intercept officer at Kingsley Field, Ore., will attend the University of Omaha to work toward a degree.

A graduate of Union Area High School, he has attended Southern Oregon College extension branch at Klamath Falls, Ore., during off - duty hours.

He entered the Air Force in December 1959 and was commissioned through the aviation cadet program. His wife, Carol, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hink of 1104 Miller Rd.

Capt. Pirkkala Wins Silver Pilot Wings

Capt. Henry Pirkkala Wins Silver Pilot Wings at Laredo Base *(New Castle, Pa., News, Wednesday, July 26, 1967)*

Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala of 280 Atlantic Ave., was named outstanding graduate when he received his U.S. Air Force silver pilot wings upon graduation at Laredo Air Force Base, Tex.

He was also recipient of a flying training award.

Captain Pirkkala is married to the former Carolyn Hinks, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hinks of 1104 Miller Rd. The couple has two children.

While Captain Pirkkala is stationed at Cannon AFB. N. M. for flying duty with Tactical Air Command, his family is visiting Mr. and Mrs. Hinks.

Pirkkala flies 200 Combat Missions

U.S. Combat Air Forces Vietnam. *(New Castle News, Thursday, March 17, 1969)*

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U.S. Air Force Captain Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala Sr., 280 Atlantic Ave., New Castle, Pa., recently completed his 200th combat mission in Southeast Asia.

Captain Pirkkala, an F-100 Super Sabre pilot, flies with the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam.

The captain, a 1958 graduate of Union Township High School, received his B.G.E. degree in 1964 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

His wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hink, 1104 Miller Road, New Castle.

Capt. Pirkkala participated in a successful strike mission in the Mekong Delta

(New Castle News, Wednesday, January 22, 1968) U.S. Air Force Capt. Henry J. Pirkkala Jr., New Castle, Pa., recently participated in a successful strike mission in the Mekong Delta area of Vietnam.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Pirkkala Sr., 280 Atlantic Ave. New Castle, Pirkkala and a fellow F-100 Super Sabre pilot from the 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Phan Ran AB, Vietnam, destroyed or damaged 14 enemy fortifications, 5 sampans and 4 bunkers.

"The target was located about 70 miles southwest of Bien Thuy," the captain recalled. "We contacted the forward air controller and he put in a mark for us immediately."

The captain is married to the former Carolyn Hink. Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hink, 1104 Miller Rd.. New Castle.

The Pirkkalas have two daughters, Lisa, 5 and Sonja, 2.

Here's a story about Carolyn Hink Pirkkala

Ex-resident honored as federal employee *(New Castle News, Wednesday, June 11, 1997)*

Carolyn “Carrie” Hink Pirkkala, a 1959 graduate of Union High School, was honored at the Federal Executive Association’s sixth annual awards luncheon in Spokane, Wash.

Pirkkala was selected as the Federal Employee of the Year for the 336th training support squadron and 336th training group of the U.S. Air Force Survival School, Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash.



Carolyn Hink Pirkkala

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She was also selected as ‘Civilian of the Quarter’ for January through March 1997 and honored at a luncheon at Club Fairchild on the base.

For the federal employee of the year award, clerical category, Pirkkala was recognized for taking a substandard administrative program and molding it into a model organization for the Air Force Survival Training Group.

As commander’s secretary, she is the focal point for all squadron correspondence, evaluations, and recognition programs.

Pirkkala developed administrative procedures to ensure quality and timeliness of correspondence and established flow charts detailing the processes and making them easier to understand.

She is an active supporter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Voice of Democracy, Combined Federal Campaign, Air Force Assistance Fund, Savings Bond Campaign, as well as squadron organizations.

Her husband is Henry J. Pirkkala Jr.



A1C Christopher Boles, 600th Photo Squadron was along to photograph events that occurred during a massive relocation of Vietnamese civilians. Christopher’s notes from that period of time were destroyed but the photographs survived. Additional notes by Robert Chappellear, C-123 pilot.

C-123s from Phan Rang AB were used to relocate civilians.

All comments by Robert Chappellear unless otherwise noted.



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Waiting on the tarmac for a flight. The location looks to be Ben Hoa AB because of the F-100s taking off in the background and all of the sand.



“Yes, we packed them in like that” ...Robert Chapple.

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Robert Chapplelear: This looks like a movement I participated in. If I remember correctly it was a move from Dalat to Ban Me Thout.

A different funny story about that move involves the attempt of one of our pilots to set a record for number of people moved. He packed about 112 ARVN troops and families on board for one sortie but when he got to the destination he had 113. One of the Vietnamese ladies was quite pregnant when she boarded but no longer pregnant when she got there. Baby boy as I remember. That AC and crew flew 14 sorties that day. He was dedicated to the mission while others of us flew only one sortie in this move and then went to other locations. (Me included.)



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Robert Chappellear wrote in his book “Tales of Phan Rang”: ... the loadmaster laid four nylon cargo "tie down straps" across each pallet. He then explained to me that this was for “combat loading” of Vietnamese Army troops (ARVN). He explained that he would have five Vietnamese soldiers sit at the front of the first pallet, cross their legs and then he would use the cargo strap as a “seat belt” for all five. Then five more, then five more, and finally fourth row of five more would be lined up and strapped down to each pallet. Thus there could be 20 ARVN soldiers strapped to each pallet. So when you added it all together we could “combat load” 85 Vietnamese, with 60 strapped to the three cargo pallets and 25 more in the canvas strap seats along the side. The LM told me that we could “combat load” only 73 American troops because they were bigger and you could only get four across each row not five. Typically officers and NCOs would get the canvas seats and the privates got the cargo pallets with tie down straps. **Note: The procedures for moving the ARVN would be the same for civilians.**

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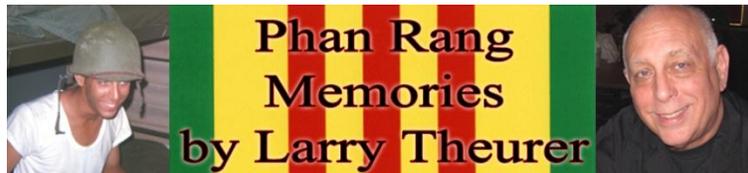
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This carry-on basket is a good representation of what the average family brought along with them. Along with food stuff the bag looks like it also contain several game birds or chickens. Robert Chappelle wrote from his book “Tales of Phan Rang”: We transported troops, both live and dead, ammunition, ice, mail, ice cream, jeeps, trucks, cows, chickens, pigs, goats, and so on or so forth.

Robert Chappelle is the author of the best selling series “Tales of Phan Rang” and “Tales of Bien Hoa”. He’s working on a rewrite, but if you would like to buy either of these great books, click [here](#).



UNDER PRESSURE

I’m sitting in the flight line Quonset hut.

There is a huge BOOM from somewhere out in the revetments.

I thought a bomb went off. I go running looking for smoke or fire trying to find the scene. I found it.

Two “tire-kicker” guys are lying on the ground. Other people are already on the scene aiding them. The nose gear tires on the B-57 were shredded and the steel nose gear itself is twisted 180 degrees backward. The nose gear doors are missing, one is lying in the back of the

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revetment and the other incredibly put a hole right through one of the thick steel revetment walls.

The men were using a machine to fill the tire with air. The machine had two hoses on it. One was labeled low pressure for filling tires and had a certain air pressure, like up to 120 lbs. The other hose was labeled high pressure for filling the oxygen bottles and went up to 1000lbs.

The low pressure hose was broken so they decided they would just give the tire a small quick squirt with the high pressure hose.

I heard one man had cuts on his arms, don't know about the other. They were incredibly lucky they weren't killed.

*(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. **If you like Larry's stories, please let me know and I'll pass it on to Larry.***

A Reunion with a Twist ...another story worth telling



James Hardy, Michael Henningsen and Darryl Anderson

This reunion was the first time all three of us were together since Jan 28, 1968.

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This was taken July 15, 2014 in Appleton, Wis. From left to right is James Hardy, Michael Henningsen and Darryl Anderson. We were all stationed at Phan Rang AB in the power production shop of 35th CES. Mike Henningsen had been in the VA hospital in Milwaukee with little desire to live any longer.

James Hardy left Jacksonville, Fl., picked up Darryl in Charleston, S. C. and we drove all the way to Wisconsin just to give Mike a gift of renewed spirit and share the gift of life with a Bible.

Many could not understand the spirit of friendship that would take us that far to help a veteran friend in need. It's a bond only those like us in this group can fully understand. You can see from this photo that Mike perked up within a few days and now he is doing quite well.

GAF Flying Begins (*The Sheppard Senator, Wichita Falls, Texas, Thursday, September 22, 1966*)



Ensign Joerg-Peter Linde of the German Air Force. (Right) and Col. Frank L. Gailer Jr. commander of 3630th Flying Training Wing, prepare for the initial flight in the German Air Force pilot training program at Sheppard. Colonel Gailer was the instructor-pilot for this flight Thursday morning. Ensign Linde was the first of 27 German Air Force pilots now in training to “go up.” (USAF PHOTO)

Note: This was before Col. Gailer Jr. took command of the 35th TFW. I wonder if the German officer knew that the Colonel was a German POW?

Doug’s Note: I have to thank everyone who has contributed so much to this newsletter. It’s not just me putting this thing together. Without the likes of Larry Theurer, Jim Mattison, Robert Chappellear and Ken Swickard and others who have allowed me to print their stories I would only have old newspaper articles. The first contributor and inspiration for this newsletter was Kirk Minert who shared with me all of his precious files and papers. I say precious because much of what Kirk has saved, like the old issues of Seventh Air Force

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newspapers are getting awful fragile and won't last long. And then along comes Christopher Boles who's submitted at least a hundred articles from the papers of the day and countless pictures of his own that gives us a unique view of war torn Vietnam that many of us never had the opportunity to see firsthand, but thanks to Christopher we now can. We will be enjoying Christopher's work for a long time. **Thanks guys for help keeping the memories alive, I couldn't do this without you!**



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

[Click here to make your reservations](#)

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

Who's Who at Phan Rang

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

Christopher Boles: Photographer

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS

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

...and the 780 members (and counting) of the “Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB Facebook group.