

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 76

“Stories worth telling”

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 <p>NINE RULES FOR PERSONNEL OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM</p> <p>The Vietnamese have paid a heavy price in suffering for their long fight against the communists. We military men are in Vietnam now because their government has asked us to help its soldiers and people in winning their struggle. The Viet Cong will attempt to turn the Vietnamese people against you. You can defeat them at every turn by the strength, understanding, and generosity you display with the people. Here are nine simple rules:</p> <p>DISTRIBUTION — 1 to each member of the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam USARV GTA NO. 21-2 (SEPTEMBER 1967)</p>	<p>NINE RULES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Remember we are guests here: We make no demands and seek no special treatment.2 Join with the people! Understand their life, use phrases from their language and honor their customs and laws.3 Treat women with politeness and respect.4 Make personal friends among the soldiers and common people.5 Always give the Vietnamese the right of way.6 Be alert to security and ready to react with your military skill.7 Don't attract attention by loud, rude or unusual behavior.8 Avoid separating yourself from the people by a display of wealth or privilege.9 Above all else you are members of the U S Military Forces on a difficult mission, responsible for all your official and personal actions. Reflect honor upon yourself and the United States of America. <p>PPC-Japan</p>
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Outgoing RAAF Chief Visits Phan Rang (Release # PR-10-69-4 By Major John Tabor)

PHAN RANG AB, Republic of Vietnam (7AF)

Air Marshal Sir Alister Murdoch (left) chief of staff, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) is presented the wing plaque by Colonel Walter T. Galligan, 44 Bronx, N.Y., commander of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing here. Air Marshal Murdoch was paying a farewell visit to the Number Two Squadron, RAAF stationed here under the operational control of the 35th TFW. The Air Marshal is scheduled to retire in December. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Det. 5, 600th Photo Squadron)



Army Lauds F-100 Pilot (Seventh Air Force News, November 27, 1968)

PHAN RANG — Capt. Ronald G. Swanson, Grand Rapids, Mich., an F-100 Supersabre pilot with the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron here, was recently commended by U.S. Army Col. Frederick C. Krause, commanding, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

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The commendation was for "the superb air support received by one of my battalions during the battle of Loc Ninh," Colonel Krause said in the letter of commendation.

"On that date," the letter continued, "1/2 Infantry became heavily engaged with a battalion-size enemy force. Despite the extreme close contact, the ground commander requested immediate deployment of tactical air."

The commander of the 1st Infantry Division, indorsed the letter of commendation with "Your professionalism while supporting the Big Red One was a significant factor in the successful operation ... during the battle of Loc Ninh...."

Forgotten Greatness (*Published in the Douglas Budget, Douglas Wyoming. Written by Shelahy Wuff Wisdom*)

Writers are supposed to have all the right words to describe everything that the six senses present. We have the responsibility to place readers in situations, locations, and time, and be the machine that transports the reader where they should be.

As my husband and I stood on the arena floor of the Casper Events Center on Friday at the Welcome Home Ceremony for Wyoming's Vietnam Veterans, I realized there were no words to describe my emotions, or that of any of the veterans attending. There was no way to transport anybody anywhere with mere words.

We were standing among forgotten greatness.

Richard has patiently and kindly supported my rabid advocacy of the Vietnam Veteran. He has listened to my concerns and tolerated my excessive fervor to somehow make a difference for our nation's forgotten heroes. I realized that he, too, had become part of this endless mission as I saw him wipe tears from his face as he handed me his handkerchief. We were overwhelmed with the unexplainable range of emotions around us as the speakers and presenters talked through the slideshows and photographers flashed cameras throughout the veterans, families, and guests seated at tables draped in red, white and blue.

Four days had been scheduled to welcome home Wyoming's Vietnam Veterans. Fifty years have passed since the 'official' beginning of the Vietnam War and forty years have passed since the 'official' end of the same. During that time, America's Vietnam warriors returned from the inexplicable carnage that was war, and they knew neither if they had won or why they were there.

Looking into the faces of those warriors, I saw pain, sadness, pride and yes - vacancy. Some had

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come unwillingly, some out of curiosity; some in the hopes of finding some closure, maybe an old comrade or two, or they had come to view the Vietnam War displays and memorabilia - to touch the things familiar from long ago - to travel back in time. To maybe get the answers to many questions.

They had come to revisit Vietnam.

I witnessed several veterans touch - reverently - the thin skin of the Huey helicopter outside the entryway to the events center. One mentioned lying in a downed Huey in Khe Sahn for three days, pretending to be dead while firefights raged nearby. The other occupants of the chopper didn't need to play dead - their names are engraved on a black wall in Washington, D.C. Questions like "Whatever happened to that guy from Australia?" or "Do you know if that bull rider from Texas we called 'Cowboy' made it back?" drifted back and forth over the tables, in the halls, at the displays. Gentle teasing about lighter moments eased the heaviness of the years past.

The Vietnam War changed nothing - and it changed everything. It robbed thousands of young men of their youth and innocence. It robbed thousands more of their very lives. But betrayal by this nation met them at their return to the country that they had been willing to sacrifice their lives for. Instead of a hero's welcome they were plunged into another battle of a different kind; a battle to fit back into society, receive the benefits they had earned, and be treated with respect.

Our soldiers were drawn into guerilla warfare in order to survive. The brutality of guerilla warfare was the specialty of their enemy, who tossed aside laws of warfare and used inhuman, savage tactics against U.S. forces. They attacked quickly and disappeared into the mountains or jungle and hundreds of miles of under-ground tunnels. They were experts at sabotage, assassination, hit-and-run attacks and terrorism.

Our often ill-prepared soldiers were thrown into merciless, vicious battles where they were always outnumbered by the enemy. A regular army must outnumber a guerrilla force by ten to one before it can hope for victory ... our brave men were subjected to the terrors of a depraved and evil army. But on this day, the faces intently watching the slide show as it brought to life images from fifty years ago became transformed from seasoned, drawn veterans to young, strong, proud soldiers. There were tears. There were smiles. There was even laughter. There were those who were so overcome with emotion that they cupped their heads in trembling hands, or nodded knowingly at one another. These were brothers; brothers that experienced a place and time like no other has ever been, nor ever will be again.

Yes, it may have come too little, too late. The fifty years that have passed since the onset of the 'official' war has left behind a legacy of forgotten heroes that have silently lived their lives as best they could. Most are scarred by wounds, both visible and hidden. But perhaps - just perhaps - a small number can feel a small surge of pride for what they have endured in Vietnam

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and their homeland. Maybe now those Americans that turned away in disgust from soldiers returning from foreign soil realize that the causes and plight of the Vietnam Veteran is a very real and warranted issue.

The preservation of the history of the Vietnam War - the stories, memorabilia, letters and photos - serve to remind us all of the one thing that is universal among Vietnam Veterans. Their passionate plea that never again another Vietnam shadows our nation and cripples the lives of brave and honorable men.



Ranch Hands Bring Charlie Into the Open (*Seventh Air Force News, November 27, 1968*)

DA NANG—"We sure cut a wide swath on that mission", exclaimed Maj. Fredrick T. Bell, Jr., Great Falls, Mont. "Nine Ranch Hands information on the deck must have had Charlie looking for a new tree to hide under."

That mission consisted of a formation of nine UC-123 Providers of the 12th Special Operations "Ranch Hands" Squadron that had just completed a defoliation sortie just east of Phu Cat, stripping over from a stretch of jungled hills a half mile wide and 12 miles long.

"With a nine-ship formation, we had to carefully plan the elevation of each aircraft because of the hilly terrain", said Maj. Thomas O. Duff., Pittsburgh, Pa., aircraft commander in the lead aircraft. "We had to break the formation down to element leaders, and our altitude for each element had to be exact," he said.

"We had to plot the contour of each individual aircraft", commented Major Bell, "because our formation spread was so wide, the ground elevation varied much more than on a routine three-ship formation".

Major Duff had high praise for his pilots, navigators, and flight engineers, and was particularly happy with the pilots controlling the heavily-laden Providers.

"These C-123s don't handle like jet fighters, and it takes a highly skilled pilot to hold his aircraft at precisely the proper altitude and in tight formation", he explained. "Our pilots held them in like the professionals they are."

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The unusual size of the formation created some additional navigational problems too, especially for Capt. Harry W. Nehrig, Jr., Bethel Park, Pa., navigator in the lead aircraft.

"A flight like this just multiplies a navigator's problem", he said. "Normally we must plot a path for about three aircraft. Plotting a path for nine planes—in this hilly country—calls for our best efforts, and we worked long and hard on it. I'm proud to have been selected as lead navigator."



The mission provided a "first for SSgt. Raymond E. Lemare, San Antonio. "This was my biggest mission since joining the 12th", he explained, "especially since it was my first mission as solo flight engineer. I was really happy to be a part of that big job."

Ranch Hand C-123s-Bringing Charlie into the Open

The Ranch Hands had been blocked out of some scheduled targets due to weather during the three days previous to the milestone mission. When they got the green light on the high-priority mission, they went in full force.

"A formation of this unusual size requires greater coordination between our fighter cover and the ground troops involved", added Major Bell, who was flying his first mission as lead pilot. We also have to be 'in tight' with our forward air controllers (FACs)."

"I was extremely pleased that this special mission went off exactly as planned", added Major Duff. "We planned our best, and didn't have a delay or abort. It was a great team effort and everyone involved was right with us and the mission was highly successful. I figure we got three days work done with that one strike."

"That's one strip of jungle and ridge line that Charlie won't be able to hide in" he concluded.

‘Scatback’ Shuffle Whisks People, Cargo With Ease
(Seventh Air Force News, November 27, 1968)

SAIGON — The 7th Air Force airplane fleet that takes the most important people and packages in Vietnam where they want to go — fast! — has undergone a significant change that officials expect



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to make the transports even quicker and administratively more effective.

Better known by the pseudonym "Scatback," the 7th Air Force Flight Operations unit is now organizationally placed in a direct link to Brig. Gen. Robert L. Petit, chief of staff. This means that instead of the Scatback pilots receiving mission requests through the 6250th Combat Support Group, orders now are zipped directly from the office of the chief of staff.

If blood is desperately needed at an area of combat operations, the Scatback T-39 Sabreliner jets are ready to rush it there on a minute's notice. When dignitaries need to be somewhere in Southeast Asia immediately, supersonic Scatback chauffeurs are the men they call.

The unit does not have a commander as such. The operations officer directs Scatback flights. Lt. Col. Roger D. Harrington, Covington, Ga., recently assumed that post. Colonel Harrington said the organizational shift has proved "a great help in eliminating communication problems and slowups in getting the job done. After all," he added, "the biggest necessity in our mission is speed."

The Scatback chief, who refers to his T-39s as " `The Model A' of the jet age" because of their lesser sophistication as compared to other Air Force jet aircraft, noted that the fleet routinely shuttles everything from human eyes to downed fighter pilots all over SEA.

Day Begins Early For Crew Chief, Ends After Dark *(Seventh Air Force News, November 27, 1968)*

DA NANG — The day begins early for A1C Francis Hopta, Gibbsboro, N.J. The C-123 crew chief arrives at his duty station at the 311th Special Operations Squadron Detachment at 5:30 a.m. and doesn't leave until long after the sun has set at Da Nang AB.

"I get out to the aircraft around 5:30 in the morning so I can do my preflight inspection before the rest of the crew gets there," began Airman Hopta. "I check the aircraft from top to bottom. . .system after system, to make sure it will be ready for the mission.

This inspection takes me about an hour."

The check begins in the cockpit where the crew chief makes a power systems check. Next he inspects the interior of the C-123 Provider for leaks and frayed wires. Finally he does a walk-around check of the exterior of the cargo aircraft, looking for damage such as holes or cuts in the tires.

"Once the crew comes out and pulls their preflight check, we are ready to fly," he continued. "After we land at our next stop, I pull a thorough flight inspection looking for engine leaks or damaged tires."

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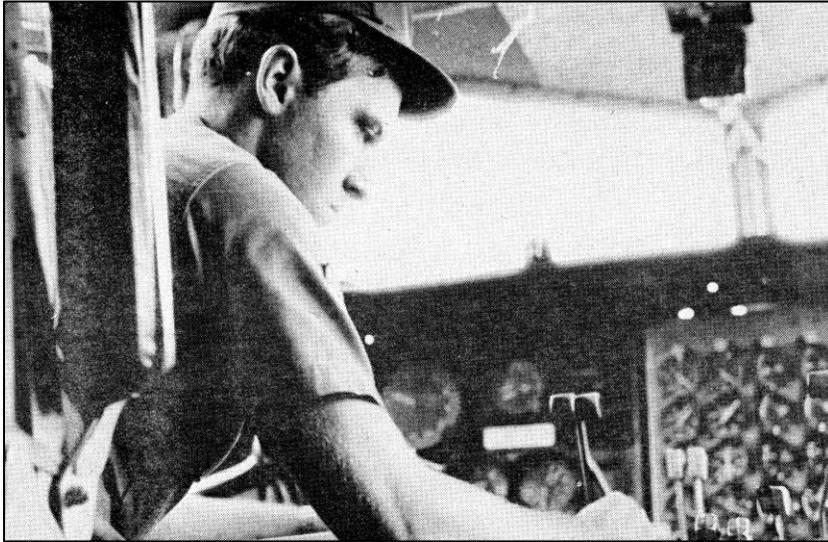
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While in flight, the crew chief keeps a constant lookout for any maintenance problems which may arise such as faulty systems or rough running engines.

END OF DAY

After the day's missions are finished, he gives the aircraft a complete inspection to insure that it is ready for the next day's schedule.



"The time I spend depends on the conditions under which we completed the day's job," noted Airman Hopta. "Like the one mission I flew into Khe Sanh during the big battle there. We took small arms fire going in, while we were on the ground unloading cargo, and more when coming out. All in all we had had over 200 bullet holes in the Provider and two of the crewmen were wounded."

Pre-Flight Inspection. A1C Francis Hopta, Gibbsboro, N.J., a crew chief assigned to the 311th Special Operations Squadron detachment at Da Nang AB, goes through a power systems check prior to certifying the aircraft ready for a mission. Airman Hopta spends approximately an hour before each flight, checking the aircraft inside and outside, to make sure the plane is airworthy.

"I ended up doing most of the loadmaster's work and some of the flight engineer's tasks since the loadmaster and the co-pilot were both wounded. Because the pilot

needed someone to help him, the flight engineer went up in the cockpit and I was left with the tasks of both the flight engineer and loadmaster.

"But normally I finish the post flight inspection and get back to my living quarters around 8 p.m.," he said.

Proof of the professional maintenance work performed by Airman Hopta and the other crew chiefs assigned to the 311th Special Operations Squadron detachment at Da Nang is the letter received recently from **Col. John W. Pauly, commander of Phan Rang AB**. The colonel praised the unit for their excellency in flying 1,825 combat sorties with only one sortie lost due to maintenance problems. . . a record that should stand for a long time to come.

War Zone Reports

VNAF Gets 8th SOS Jets

War Zone Reports: Last Fighter Unit Leaves Vietnam (Air Force Times, 26 October 1972)
BIEN HOA AB, Vietnam — The Air Force 8th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) flew its last combat mission of the Vietnam war Oct. 1.

The last USAF fighter squadron in Vietnam, the 8th SOS will begin standdown Oct. 1, 1972 to prepare its A-37 aircraft for transfer to the Republic of Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) later in the month as part of the VNAF Improvement and Modernization Program.

The 8th SOS designation will be transferred, without personnel or equipment, to Clark AB in the Philippines.

Organized May 3, 1917 at Kelly Field, the 8th SOS is the oldest special operations squadron in the Air Force. The squadron was nicknamed the "Liberty Squadron" after the Liberty engines which propelled their DAH-4 aircraft. The 8th SOS flew in England and France in WWI, from Australia to Okinawa in WWII, and from Japan during the Korean conflict.

First assigned to Bien Hoa AB, Vietnam in 1964, the 8th later moved to Da Nang AB, and from there flew B-57 night strikes on enemy supply routes in North Vietnam. In November 1969 the squadron returned to Bien Hoa to be equipped with the new A-37B "Dragonfly" twin-jet attack fighter.

Since that time, 8th SOS pilots have flown around-the-clock missions on both pre-planned strikes and immediate air requests. Whenever a forward air controller observed signs of enemy activity, 8th SOS pilots were ready to respond with rockets, bombs and machine guns.

Commenting on the transfer of the unit's A-37 aircraft to the VNAF, the 8th SOS Commander, Lt. Col. Donald J. Loosley, called it the ideal weapon for Vietnamese close air support. "The simplicity of the aircraft system makes the bird easy to fly, hard to knock down, and a dream for the maintenance shops. The A-37 is also a very accurate weapon delivery system," he said.

The 8th SOS has been recommended for the Presidential Unit Citation for its performance in southeast Asia.

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Crews ‘Commute’ To War From Clark (*Air Force Times, December 17, 1969*)

By Sgt. Ralph Saenz

CAM RANH BAY AB—C-130 aircrews here have an unusual arrangement with the Air Force. They fly missions in Vietnam for two weeks at a time and return to Clark AB in the Philippines.

The men belong to the 463d Tactical Airlift Wg. at Clark AB, and they "commute" back and forth to Cam Ranh Bay.

"It is rather an unusual arrangement," said Col. John R. Geyer, vice-commander of the 463d TAW, "since 90 to 95 percent of our missions are flown in support of airlift operations in Vietnam."

"There are four squadrons in the 463d," the colonel continued, "and we comprise one-third of the C-130 -fleet in the Pacific.

"All heavy maintenance is done at Clark and the maintenance men, unlike the aircrews, have to spend about two months' temporary duty at Cam Ranh Bay," the colonel concluded.

A lot of flying is crammed into the two weeks the crews are in Vietnam. To maintain a smoother running operation, the men are kept in the same crews as much as possible.

"We spend 16 straight days here," commented Capt. Richard W. Temple, a navigator on one of the crews, "and fly 10 to 12 hours a day, 15 of those days.

"But when we get back to Clark," the captain slid, "we're given three days' crew rest and, depending on available aircrews and aircraft, may stay at Clark for as long as three weeks. While there, we usually fly in country shuttles, local training flights and other missions to Naha AB, Okinawa. Then we go back to Cam Ranh, and the routine starts all over again."

The missions they fly out of Cam Ranh Bay include delivering U.S. Army replacements, airlifting wounded out of the field to Cam Ranh Bay for hospitalization and evacuation, and resupplying forward airfields.

"Often we fly passenger runs and they aren't very exciting," explained a flight engineer, SSgt. Gary S. Gell. "We maintain a regular schedule, stopping several times during the mission to drop off and pick up passengers.

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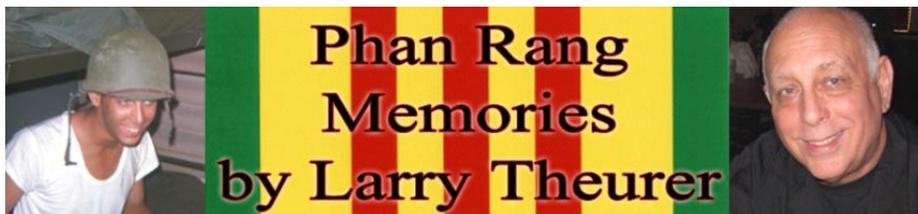
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Original Spooky (*Air Force Times*,
December 17, 1969)

"ORIGINAL SPOOKY" he was called by other pilots of the 14th Special Operations Wg., Da Nang AB, Vietnam. Capt., Merle F. Andrews has logged 2600 hours in 675 AC-47 combat missions over Vietnam. He first flew Spookies in SEA more than four years ago, earning his nickname, and has served a total of 31 months there. Captain Andrews was recently reassigned to England AFB, La. Can any AC-47 pilot boast more missions or hours in combat?



Photo by A1C Johnnie Jackson



FUN AT THE END OF THE RUNWAY

I spent many days at the end of the runways doing arm/de-arm. Many of those days were with Sam Boone. We would talk for hours about everything. We had a small shack, just some boards; a seat and a black plastic sheet for a roof. I have a picture of me sitting in it. Later the Air Force built white wood sheds at each end. They had tables inside them with checker boards but we never had any checkers.

“...We were terrified to see a big German shepherd...running loose across the runway.”

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One day we looked down the runway and were terrified to see a big German shepherd guard dog running loose across the runway. Fortunately he didn't see us as we had nowhere to hide. The area was barren with no trees to climb and the little shed only six feet tall with a plastic sheet roof. We had no weapons or radio to call for help. All I could have done was say “Nice Doggie” or have been able to outrun Sam.

Another day an F-100 came in and left his drag chute in our area so we were messing with it. The wind was blowing about 25MPH. We laid the chute out flat with the top pointed downwind, grabbed the steel cable and gave one of the risers a tug up and the chute would inflate. Wow was that strong. I could not hold it. It would drag you down the runway on your face.

“What a blast.”

We had great fun with un-fired .50cal High Explosive Incendiary rounds we would accumulate from de-arming the B-57s. We would pull the heads off the round, pour the HEI powder from them into a small pit, then we would pour a line of the slower burning gunpowder out of the tail of the shell case, connecting the pit to our shack and light it the end of the line. What a blast.

Vietnam Communique (*Air Force Times, January 17, 1968*)



SAIGON—Poor flying weather covered much of North Vietnam during the week December 21-27 as Air Force tactical fighter aircraft concentrated on enemy resupply routes, truck parks and storage areas along the country's southern panhandle.

A total of 236 armed reconnaissance and strike missions were flown north of the 17th parallel. There were no flights over the North from 6 p.m. December 24 to 6 p.m. December 25 because of the 24-hour Christmas truce.

Pilots reported 26 secondary explosions and 75 sustained fires during the week. Roads were cut in 49 locations. Four bridges, five anti-aircraft artillery sites, 34 barges, 33 trucks, 49 military supply structures and six bunkers were destroyed or damaged.

AF tactical fighter-bomber aircraft were airborne 2111 times throughout the week, hitting enemy base camps, fortified positions, bunkers, troop concentrations, water traffic and

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gun emplacements in South Vietnam. An average of more than 301 aircraft each day bombed and strafed enemy positions.

Air Force pilots and crews were credited with causing 107 secondary explosions and 59 sustained fires. They also destroyed or damaged 127 sampans and numerous fortifications and bunkers.

Throughout the week, AC-47 Dragon-ship crews, assigned to the 14th Air Commando Wg., were airborne 95 times, providing flarelight and firing more than 612,200 rounds of mini-gun ammunition into enemy positions in South Vietnam.

AF tactical airlift crews, under the direction of the 834th Air Div., were airborne 7572 times during the week, delivering 75,164 troops and other passengers and 16,821 tons of mail, supplies and equipment throughout South Vietnam.

Psychological warfare crews, assigned to the 14th Air Commando Wg., dropped more than 100 million leaflets urging the enemy to return to the side of the South Vietnamese government. The crews also broadcast more than 318 hours of tape recorded messages over their aircrafts' loudspeaker systems as they flew over suspected enemy locations.

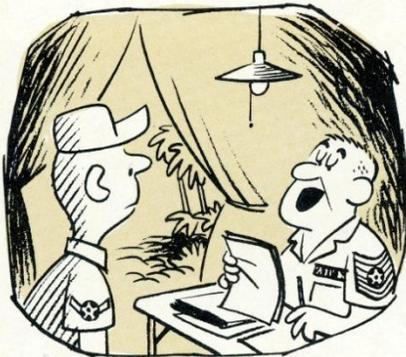
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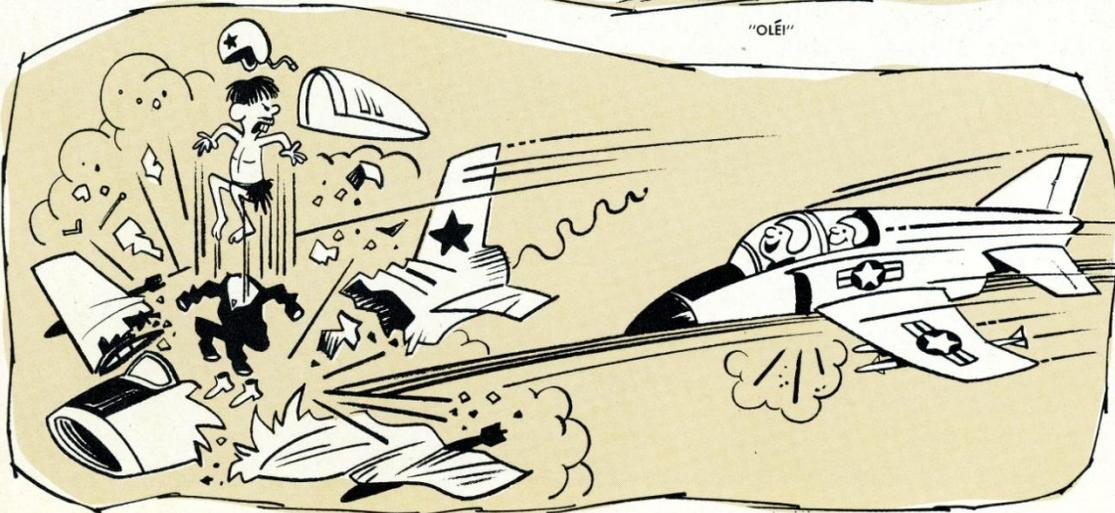
"D'ya think we stumbled out of the D-Zone into the Twilight Zone, Lt.?"



"No, Perkins... Nacogdoches, Texas isn't an authorized R&R leave area yet, and I doubt seriously if it ever will be!"



"OLÉ!"



"Sorry 'bout that, Charlie baby!"

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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

Bob Tucker: Keeper of the Rolls

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS

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



Click on the logo to make your hotel reservations.

Note: I’ve created a reunion slideshow from pictures from all of the previous reunions. The show will be shown in Charleston and will also be available on DVD. It’s really a trip down memory lane!

This 4th Annual Reunion is shaping up to be the best ever and one of the largest. I have to add a caveat because nothing can beat the very first reunion when many of us met for the very first time and some had not seen each other since leaving Vietnam. We are also going to have some very interesting speakers. You will not be disappointed...make your reservations now!

This newsletter was compiled by Douglas Severt.