

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 78

“Stories worth telling”

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315th Starts In New Era (*The Happy Valley Weekly, April 10, 1969*)

Although air travels in RVN may not have been aware of it, a new travel era was silently ushered in on April 2.

On that date, the last non-jet C-123 departed Phan Rang for modernization in the States. The 315th Special Operations Wing thus became a completely jet-augmented airlift and defoliation unit.

In four months this aircraft will return from the Fairchild Aircraft plant in Maryland, wearing two jets and sporting a new coat of camouflage colors.

The 315th, operators of the “Provider”, received the first of the re-designated “K” models in May 1967. The improved performance gained by the addition of the jet pods has meant a great deal since then in terms of safety and aircraft capability.

Initial deployment of the conventional twin engined “B” model C-123 to Vietnam started back in 1962. At that time it was the only light intra-theater transport (LIT) operated by the Air Force and was considered adequate for the airlift mission as it existed then.

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As the conflict intensified, an aircraft with increased capability was deemed necessary to satisfy user requirements. “We just couldn’t deliver the amount of needed supplies fast enough nor could we carry substantial loads of cargo and passengers out of small unimproved strips”, stated airlift managers.

In 1963 a prototype, that had been proposed to alter the existing airframe with the addition of two General Electric J-85 engines, proved so successful the Air Force initiated action to modify the entire “Provider” fleet.

Augmentation with the J-85’s provides an additional lift capability of 6000 pounds.

It also affords a considerable margin of safety to aircrews on aerial re-supply runs and spray missions because of the extra power available in the event an engine receives battle damage and must be shut down. Just as important, the jets afford a steep climb capability to elude hostile ground fire when flying out of forward operating locations.

It was recently reported that the tonnage hauled by the squat “Providers” virtually equals its larger counterpart in the daily delivery of mission essential supplies.

During the ceremony releasing the last un-modernized C-123 Col. John W. Pauly, 315th Commander, remarked “the response of the jet assisted version has dramatically improved the mission capability of the airlift and defoliation squadrons of this wing.

“This has been demonstrated on numerous occasions, in the heat of battle, during emergency evacuations and in delivering combat essential supplies throughout Vietnam to ground forces in contact with the enemy.

“The increased capability we now enjoy has not only offered us greater flexibility in the jobs we can ‘tackle’ but has also provided us an increased margin of safety in an already hazardous aerial environment. The C-123 “K” is now one of the most valued assets in tactical air operations.”

Officers Reunited After 17 Years (*Jet Journal, July 5, 1968*)

It isn't unusual to find two people from the same hometown stationed on one base. However, Maj. Gerald B. Youmans, and Maj. Robert W. Shane Jr., have expanded on the similarities.

The Florence, S.C. majors were graduated from the same high school and attended church together in Florence before entering the Air Force.

Seventeen years ago they parted company and didn't see each other until both were assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing's 8th Bomb Squadron, flying B-57 Canberra bombers. Appropriately enough, Major Shane's first mission with the 8th was flown with Major Youmans.

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Pedro’s Important Role...a conversation *(Facebook comments)*



Photo by Christopher Boles

<p>Randy Radar: Sic em Pedro!! This lil guy was a WELCOME site to many an aircraft crew!!</p>	<p>Bruce Barstis: I saw Pedro go down one night, killed the pilot. I was a crane operator in the 554th Red Horse Sq. and I was tasked with loading the downed pedro on to a low-boy {tractor trailer}. Happened sometime in 1968</p>
<p>George Haskett: Well, Pedro is credited with more rescues in Vietnam than any other aircraft. This photo sequence is a local base rescue (LBR) operation since the aircraft made it back, but with significant problems. For the LBR there are two airborne firemen and a rescue medic aboard. There is a fire supression kit (FSK) hanging below Pedro.</p>	<p>George Haskett: One reason she was so effective in rescue was those counter rotating blades. Extremely quiet compared to anything else.</p> <p>George Haskett: If we were doing a local base rescue (LBR) the rescue medic would deplane with the airborne firemen, but wait at the FSK.</p>

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<p>An off base rescue had a flight engineer and rescue medic (Some bases used Para Rescuemen) aboard. These missions generally were because the pilot punched out. If Pedro couldn't land in order to rescue or recover the pilot, then the flight engineer lowered the rescue medic to the ground to round up the pilot/crew.</p> <p>Pedro was also scrambled for rescue of injured airmen and troops, such as the two Air Police who were wounded at 'The Wells' the summer of '68.</p>	<p>The firemen would bring any rescued aircrew to the rescue medic.</p> <p>John Pitts: I was there that night of the crash. I was gunner of alert crew Spooky 62 that night. AC47,s Spooky,s ops building was next to Pedro,s. When their alert horn went off they took off, went up about 500 feet,there was a loud breaking up noise, and they fell strait down. This accident occurred just days after the Pedro crew changed roder blades. I have always suspected that had something to do with the accident.</p>
<p>John Dean: Dan, I was working on the flight line the night in Oct. when the Pedro went down. Last fall I visited the Wall in DC and found Angel Luna's name. He was one of the five who died. I'm not sure but I believe he was the medic. It was a sad night.</p>	
The Accident Report	
<p>On 10 October 1968, an HH-43B helicopter (Call Sign Pedro 44), assigned to Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam, crashed and burned while on an emergency intercept mission. During the landing of the emergency aircraft, Pedro 44 entered a left hand climbing turn as if departing the area for return to the alert pad. The helicopter, without any radio transmission, crashed and burned inflicting fatal injuries to all five aircrew members. Firefighting equipment and medical assistance, already on hand for the landing aircraft emergency, responded immediately to the scene, extinguishing the fire within 15 seconds and immediately removed the crew members from the aircraft. The primary cause of this accident was material failure which resulted in loss of aircraft control. Aircrew lost in the incident: MAJ. Donald Ray Brooks (pilot) SSG. Milard Luther Bledsoe (crew chief) CPT. Von Miles Liebernecht (co-pilot) TSG. Angel Luna (medic) TSG. Emmett Somers Orr.</p>	

VC Rocket Attack Gets Quick Response...Shadow on The Spot (*The Happy Valley Weekly, July 3, 1969*)

The evening started casually enough. Shadow 63's mission following a 6:30 p.m. briefing was to preflight their AC-119 and stand-by on alert until the scheduled takeoff time after midnight.

Part of the crew was in the aircraft with me assisting in the preflight checks,” related the Shadow pilot Capt. William R. Casey.

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Then suddenly like a clap of thunder, the first incoming rocket exploded without warning barely forty yards in front of our aircraft. There was a Large ball of flame and lots of sparks where it hit the steel planking and a cloud of dense black smoke swelled up immediately.

“The aircraft offered little protection, so as soon as we were sure no following rounds were going to land in the same area, we slid out of the plane and ran in a crouch over to the revetment wall just as the siren started.

“Within a short time, the rest of our crew came roaring up in a truck to announce that we were ‘scrambled’ for base defense, so we piled back into the gunship and seven minutes later were on our takeoff roll.

“The tower advised of damaged to the runway by another rocket impact, so I held to the right side for takeoff:, explained Capt. Casey.



“The suspected enemy firing position was less than four miles from the base, so we were over it almost immediately and Capt. Leo Basten our night observation sight operator located what we thought to be the target right away.

“We hadn’t received clearance to fire at that moment, but I was actually looking through the gunsight at their position when the enemy opened up with their second barrage. We advised the base immediately to expect more incoming and returned on the mini-guns as firing clearance came through almost simultaneously.

“We were sure we had Charlie cold this time and were pouring the lead on him when base defense artillery opened up again also. The artillery stuff splashing all around us and we had to pull out because it was being fired through our altitude, but we put 3,800 rounds in the felt we’d made it very hot for the lads who had touched off the early evening attack against Phan Rang.”

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“To my knowledge, no report of damage was ever received on our strike against those positions;”, commented Capt. Paul Cherenzis, instructor navigator.

Capt. Cherenzis continued, “So we don’t know for sure that we got any of them. But we sure put our rounds into where they were firing from”!

Shadow patrolled the base perimeter with their “big white light” for an hour then landed to regenerate for their regular mission. It didn’t come off on schedule. Just after midnight, they were again scrambled to a troop in contact situation 30 miles south of Phan Rang.

However casual the evening may have started, it certainly didn’t end that way! But then if you fly with Shadow...

46 Governors Care About the 1882nd (Release # PR-10-69-32, By 1Lt. David H. Albert)
(Related article in Phan Rang News 46: **46 Governors Can’t Be Wrong; Send Mementos to Prove It**)

PHAN RANG AB, Republic of Vietnam
(7AF)

THOUGHTS OF STATESIDE

After helping complete a project of acquiring emblems, crests and flags from various states, Technical Sergeant Owen J. Healy, 32, Dearborn Michigan, adds his signature to a long list of airman from Michigan. Sergeant Healy was one of three members of the 1882nd Communications Squadron here to gather the material for display in the hallway of the base communications center.

(U.S. Air Force Photo by A1C
Christopher P. Boles, Det. 5, 600
Photo Squadron)



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Crew Chief Readies 1,200 Missions (Jet Journal, July 5, 1968)

Phan Rang AB - Sgt. Dennis C. Lippl, an O-1 Bird Dog crew chief at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, who extended his tour in Vietnam by six months, has readied 1,200 combat missions flown by forward air controllers of the 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron. He readies an average of four such missions a day.

"You may have only five or ten minutes to get the aircraft refueled, oil in it and back in the air again," he commented. Getting the O-1 ready, includes installation of smoke rockets used for marking enemy targets and a check on the aircraft engine.

As a volunteer, Sergeant Lippl has flown 30 combat missions with the FACs, whom he described as "a great bunch of people." Their mission is to direct air strikes by combat aircraft against enemy targets.

'Bug Birds' on Target (*Air Force Times*, 9 December 1970)

PHAN RANG AB,
Vietnam — An AF unit nicknamed the "Bug Birds," of the 315th Tactical Airlift Wg. here helps control malaria by spraying a Malathion insecticide from specially equipped UC-123 Provider aircraft.



'We spray from one end of the country to the other," reports Maj. Gene B.

Patches

Basden, head of the insect control. "Our operations start seven miles south of the DMZ and extend south to the tip of the Mekong Delta," The Bug Birds have about 15 "targets" in-country. They try to spray each one every seven to nine days, depending on weather and maintenance.

The Bug Birds operation, which began two years ago, frequently has O-2 Super Skymasters from the 9th Special Operations Sq. fly over the target area before the spraying begins, using aerial loudspeakers to tell the people the spray won't hurt them, and it's just for mosquito control and prevention of malaria.

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How effective is the spraying? "A Navy entomology team, formerly assigned at Da Nang, kept charts on the mosquito population," says Major Basden. "They told us there was a 96 percent kill rate on the adult mosquitoes from the spray. I'd hate to be over here without it."

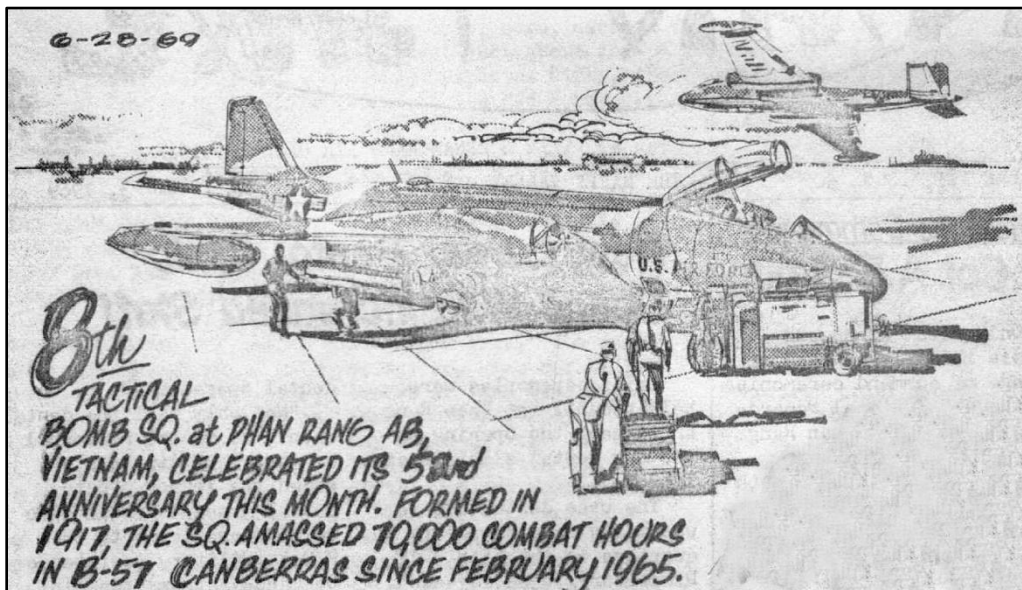
Although the Bug Birds — two UC-123s — do their spraying from 150 feet above the target, Major Basden said they rarely receive hostile fire because their targets are usually low threat areas. "But we did take some hits at a Marine landing zone near Da Nang last April," Major Basden notes.

The aircraft normally take about one hour to spray a target area. "We spray at a very slow rate, putting the Malathion out in a very fine mist."

One of the UC-123s which the Bug Birds use is an ex-Ranch Hand aircraft called "Patches" because of over 500 bullet hits during its tour in Vietnam.



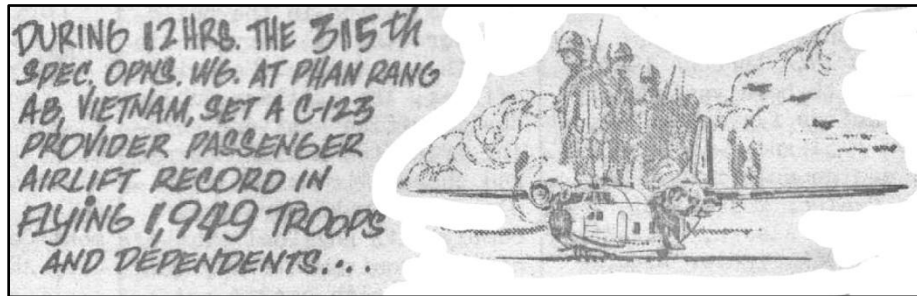
Source: The Happy Valley Weekly, July 3, 1969



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War Zone Reports

A-37As Fly Last Sorties (*Air Force Times (Europe)*, July 22, 1970)

By SSgt. Bert Elliott

BIEN HOA AB—Another era in aviation history drew to a close recently when one of the last remaining A-37 "A" models returned to the 604th Special Operations Sq. here following its final combat sortie in Southeast Asia.

The last flight of the "A" model, piloted by Maj. Darrell D. Whitaker, was a successful strike against suspected enemy bunkers and fortifications in the Parrot's Beak area of Cambodia.

The "A" models will be shipped back to the States, where they will be inspected and repaired as necessary, and reassigned to Air National Guard units. They are to be replaced in Vietnam by the newer, faster and slightly more maneuverable A-37 "B" models.

The "A" model A-37 was primarily a jet trainer, which was used in the Air Force's pilot training program, and was then converted to a fighter-bomber. The "B" model was built as an attack fighter aircraft.

Arriving in Vietnam under the code name "Combat Dragon" in July 1967, the "A" model and its pilots were tested under combat conditions.

The first 26 A-37s sported two different paint jobs. Both had the standard grayish-white underbellies; but some had a mottled green upper section while others blue. The idea was to see which color provided the best camouflage for the small aircraft. But at the end of the testing period in December 1967, only 12 enemy hits had been scored on the planes, and all were singles—one hit to one aircraft. The paint jobs were made the standard Southeast Asia camouflage green. The hits, or rather lack of them, could very well be due to the tremendous flight characteristics of the bird.

"I've never talked to an A-37 pilot who didn't love the aircraft," recalled Major Whitaker. "I flew F-4s before I came over here with 'Combat Dragon.' After I rotated, I- flew F-111s out of

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Nellis AFB, Nev. I volunteered to come back here and fly the A37." Whitaker is the only one of the original A-37 pilots still in SEA.

Built by Cessna, the T-37 trainer was selected for conversion to a fighter-bomber because of its inherent flight characteristics. The ease with which it can be flown, its maneuverability and ability to fly at relatively low speeds are all features retained in both fighter models.

"The 'A' model was a one-of-a-kind sort of thing," explained Whitaker. "When they decided to convert it to a fighter-bomber, they pulled these 26 T-37s out of mothballs, beefed the wings up so they could carry ordnance, and put in more powerful engines."

The A-37 engine is basically a T-38 Talon engine without the afterburner. Total thrust was increased to 2750 pounds from the trainer's 2050 pounds. Modifications in the "B" model raised the thrust again to 5700 pounds.

"Flying the A-37 is like driving a small and responsive sports car," Whitaker said. "The 'A' model is really 'fat' on power. It has a very short take-off distance, tight turning radius, and can fly very tight patterns to stay close to troops on the ground. The 'B' model is just more so," stated Whitaker, who has flown both models.

While the "A" model was a converted trainer, the "B" model is specifically a fighter and designed to have the pilot in the left seat. All controls are accessible to him there. In the "A" model some were in the righthand position. "The 'B' model also has a greatly improved armament control panel," continued Whitaker.

"The 'A' model was a remarkable aircraft," Whitaker said proudly. "It did more than anyone had suspected, and now it's outlived its usefulness. It proved that a small, rather uncomplicated and inexpensive aircraft could provide excellent close air support for troops engaged in guerrilla warfare.

‘Big John’ Oversees Vietnam Withdrawal *(Air Force Times, (Europe) November 17, 1971)*

TAN SON NHUT AB, Vietnam - Big John, Uncle Sam's management-minded nephew, has come to Vietnam.

The purpose of his visit is to help the Air Force in base closures, inactivation's, base turnovers, deployments and phased downs.

With recent developments in Southeast Asia withdrawal planning, it has become increasingly evident that existing base closure or phase down plans are not adequate to respond to possible redeployment or inactivation orders and associated base closure directives.

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The combat and combat support forces at 7th AF bases may be required to deploy between bases within the Vietnam, to another overseas country, or to redeploy to the ConUS on - extremely short notice.

Lt. Col. Herbert Johnson, Big John project officer, said, "If any units in Vietnam have any excess equipment in their inventory, they should begin packing it up for shipment back to the United States. That would cut down on some of the rush should their unit be suddenly inactivated or redeployed."

Base closure options in Vietnam also will vary and include turnover to the Vietnamese Air Force, phase down to caretaker status, phase down to complete closure, or, in an extreme case, abandonment of remaining assets.

The number of options and the probable compression of future time-phased events dictates that each unit or base in 7th AF be prepared to react immediately to assure optimum support of redeployments and base -closures under a variety of circumstances and times constraints.

"The way to prepare," said Colonel Johnson, "is to pack up what is not needed. In this way, much time can be saved by having some of the work done when it comes time to leave."

And that's what Big John is committed to do — to help the U.S. Air Force in its withdrawal from Vietnam.

Vietnamese Receive ‘Bird Dog’ (*Air Force Times*, July 23, 1969)

TAN SON NHUT AB — USAF officials recently turned over 10 O-1 "Bird Dog" aircraft to the Vietnamese Air Force. In the unarmed, light observation aircraft, VNAF forward air controllers (FACs) will fly strike control, visual reconnaissance, convoy escort and combat observation missions.

The turnover, according to an AF spokesman, is part of a program begun several months ago to bring VNAF FAC units to full strength and will significantly increase. VNAF's ability to provide close air support to Vietnamese Army forces.

VNAF liaison squadrons receiving the O-1s are the 110th at Da Nang, 112th at Bien Hoa, 114th at Nha Trang and the 116th at Binh Thuy.

The newly-acquired planes will form a key element of the VNAF-managed Tactical Air Control System (TACS). Receipt of the O-1s will permit VNAF to extend its Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and FAC support for Vietnamese Army units to division, special zone, special sector and sector operations levels.

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Tactical air control parties will operate within the four Corps Tactical Zones and provide the TACS a greater capability in establishing and coordinating operational plans for Vietnamese AF and Army units, as well as directly controlling all VNAF close air support missions.

Turnover of the O-1s from USAF resources within Vietnam will not diminish USAF capability, Air Force officials said.

Vietnam Communique



(Air Force Times, April 3, 1968)

SAIGON — Overcast skies covered much of North Vietnam during the week March 7-13, as Air Force tactical fighter-bomber aircraft concentrated on enemy supply routes, truck parks and storage areas along the country's southern panhandle. The pilots and crews also hit army barracks, airfields and railroad yards in the northern regions.

A total of 260 armed reconnaissance and strike missions were flown north of the 17th parallel.

AF pilots and crews reported causing 13 secondary explosions and 15 sustained fires. Roads were cut in six places. Two bridges, 13 cargo craft, 40 trucks, five military storage structures and three bunkers were destroyed or damaged. The pilots and crews also silenced six radar sites, one SAM site and one AAA position.

Air Force tactical fighter-bombers were airborne 2433 times throughout the week in South Vietnam hitting enemy base camps, fortified positions, bunkers, troop concentrations, sampans and gun emplacements. Of this total, 880 tactical air strikes supported Operation Scotland in the western portion of Quang Tri Province. An average of more than 347 air strikes were made each day in bombing and strafing enemy positions.

AF pilots and crews were credited by forward air controllers With killing 212 of the enemy and causing 147 secondary explosions - and 78 sustained fires. They also destroyed or damaged 138 sampans and numerous fortifications and bunkers.

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AC-47 Dragonship crews, assigned to the 14th Air Commando Wg., were airborne more than 149 times throughout the week, providing flare light and fire support for friendly ground forces. An AC-47 crew from Bien Hoa AB provided flare light and fired into rocket positions of the enemy hitting Bien Hoa on March 12.

AC-47 crews from Binh Thuy AB were airborne throughout the night of March 13-14, supporting their installation, four outposts and a district town under enemy attack and ARVN forces in contact with enemy troops. The crews received enemy automatic weapons ground fire while firing their mini-guns into the enemy recoilless rifle positions.

B-52 crews struck enemy base camps, storage, supply and bivouac areas, trenches, bunker complexes and weapons positions during 49 bombing missions during the week. All of the missions were carried out in South Vietnam.

AF psychological warfare crews assigned to the 14th Air Commando Wg. dropped about 83 million leaflets urging the enemy to return to the side of the government of South Vietnam. The crews also broadcast nearly 222 hours of tape-recorded messages over their aircrafts' loudspeaker systems as they flew over suspected enemy positions.

Tactical airlift crews, under the direction of the 834th Air Div., and Royal Australian Air Force airlift crews made 8928 stops as they delivered 81,668 troops and other passengers and 21,479 tons of mail, supplies and equipment throughout -South Vietnam.



MORE END OF THE RUNWAY

Arm/de-arm at the end of the runway at night was fascinating. Because we were in the dark far away from the lights of the revetment area, we had great view of the sky, especially The Southern Cross constellation. I could watch the Army helicopter gunships outside the perimeter circling and firing at something on the ground. They always seemed to be in the same spot South of the runway. I could not hear any sound from that distance. The red tracers they fired every so many rounds looked like laser beams. Parachute flares dropping at the same time would light up the area so bright I could read a book by them. I always wondered what they were shooting at. I have been told it was infiltrators on the river.

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"How would I fight them off with only my 12 inch screw driver?"

I would wonder what I would do if the enemy got in the perimeter. How would I fight them off with only my 12 inch screw driver? I was never at Da Nang but I resented the man there who the older guys said caused the Air Force to take away our M-16s. The story was the alert sirens went off signaling an attack. He jumped into a bunker and was so scared he raised his M-16 over his head and began blindly firing while other men were running toward the bunker. The men beat him and took his rifle away. The Commander next day took them all away from everyone.

"nuts, the excitement happens on my day off and I missed it".

One night I had the night off. The next morning the guys are telling me some VC got through the perimeter and into the South end arm/de-arm area and our people had to be pulled back to the ramp. The Air Police and Army cleared the area before dawn. I thought "nuts, the excitement happens on my day off and I missed it".

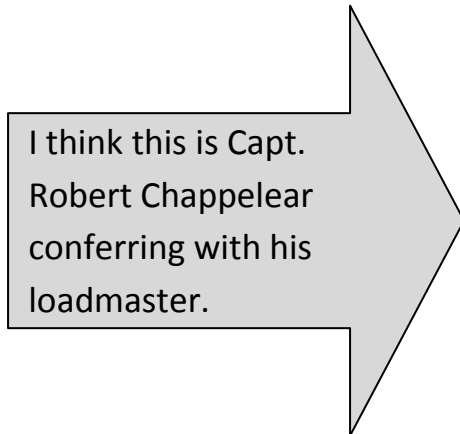
Another night I'm on the North end of the runway. An F-100 is taking off. As he goes over the shed he is lower than they usually are. He is only a few hundred feet in the air. He passes by a short ways and suddenly what looked like a flaming red beer can shoots up off the ground and goes by his left wing. It missed him by a good ways. I go "Holy (I think he might have said something other than just 'Holy'.), that looked like someone fired something at that plane". I wait expecting to see flares and alerts go off and helicopter gunships arrive. I wait and wait.

Nothing happened. I don't think anybody saw it except me. It was so bright just like a firework launch I felt sure someone would have seen it. I had no radio to report it. I don't think the pilot saw it. It went behind his plane. I reported it to the line shack in the morning. The Sergeant just shrugged it off like he thought I was nuts.

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PHAN RANG AB LIBRARY

PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE PHAN RANG AB NEWS

(The Phan Rang AB News is a newsletter compiled from various sources by Douglas Severt to heighten the awareness of Phan Rang AB and to keep interested personnel informed about the annual Happy Valley, Phan Rang AB reunion...'keeping the memories alive')

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Click on the logo to make your hotel reservations.

Lately we’ve been having a lot of request for reunion information so I will add a few new comments to this letter and keep the other information as it is still pertinent. For whatever reason you’ve decided to attend, we are delighted that you’ve made that decision and we look forward to seeing you in Charleston. You are what make this event so special!

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Here in a nutshell is what you need to do:

1. You need to make reservations at the Crowne Plaza. The Crowne Plaza is just our reunion hotel, if you wish to make reservations somewhere else, staying with friends or at an RV park, that of course is your choice. The convenience of staying at the reunion hotel is that you will be surrounded by all of your friends and you won't miss out on any of the pop-up meetings that are constantly occurring as friends gather. The buses for the base tour will be leaving from the hotel so you can just fall out of bed and get on the bus without having to worry about getting to the departure point from another location. Also for late night gatherings it's always nice to be so close to your bed. It's like the bars (they may have been called 'dayrooms') we all had at one end of our barracks; it didn't take much effort to make it to your bunk or even if you couldn't there was usually someone there to help you. Oh, one last thing, the cost is \$124.00 per room, per day. Includes 2 full breakfast buffets.

2. Here are the other costs: Banquet \$55 per person, bus to Joint Base Charleston \$20 per person, Lunch at the Charleston Club \$21 per person and the reunion fee of \$10 per family. Add up what you want and send a check made payable to JACK ANDERSON, 826 72ND St. SE, Auburn, WA 98092.

We still don't have a main speaker for our banquet. I have asked Charlie Harr (Sabre driver) and Robert Chappelle (Provider and Dragonfly driver), but I haven't heard anything definitive from them. Maybe BGen. Frank F. Gailer Jr. could be convinced to come. I remember him telling us in San Antonio that he would see us in Tucson, but he didn't make it, so we could say all is forgiven if he comes to Charleston. Wouldn't that be an honor? One person that we can count on is Marjorie Hansen (Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story). I haven't asked her yet, but I'm sure she would be willing to do it.

One last thing...this reunion is shaping up to be the best ever! That's a pretty bold statement, considering all the others were pretty memorable.

This newsletter was compiled by Douglas Severt.