

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 79

“Stories worth telling”

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Red Horse, the Base Builders (*Jet Journal, July 5. 1968*)

Phan Rang AB -The 554th Civil Engineering Squadron, Rapid Engineer Development, Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineering (RED HORSE), is called on when the job is too big for local Civil Engineering squadrons.

The 554th, a 400-man unit commanded by Col. William T. Meredith, played a major role in transforming Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, from a base with an unimproved runway and a few tents, into a modern complex that this year was named "Best Base in Vietnam."

Current projects include building an air passenger and freight terminal, and several new barracks and aircraft maintenance buildings.

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All RED HORSE projects at Phan Rang AB are coordinated through the 554th CES Engineering/Operations section.

Logistical support includes food service, supply units and vehicle and construction equipment maintenance personnel.

Prior to coming to their RED HORSE squadrons, personnel are sent to the 560th Civil Engineering Squadron at Eglin AFB, Fla., for 60 days of combat training.

Red Horse Building Phan Rang AB a pictorial



Photo by Christopher Boles

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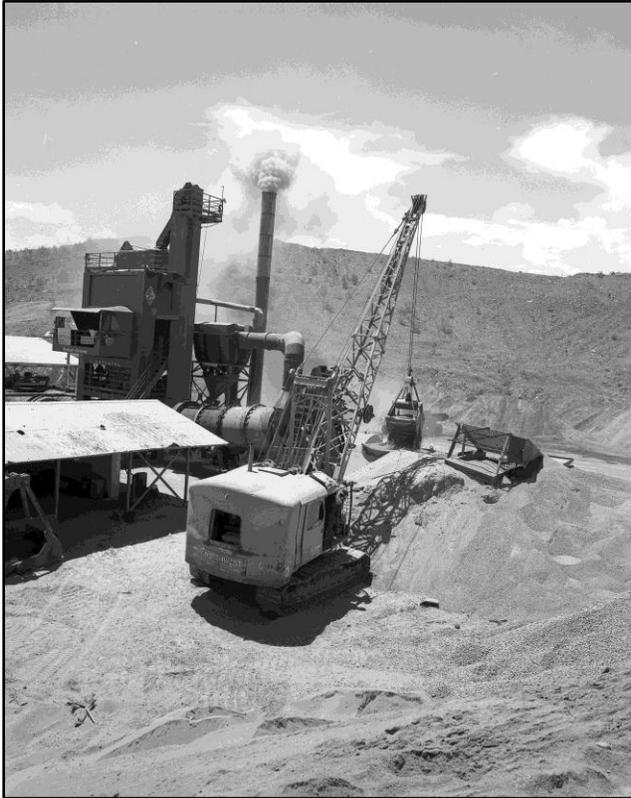
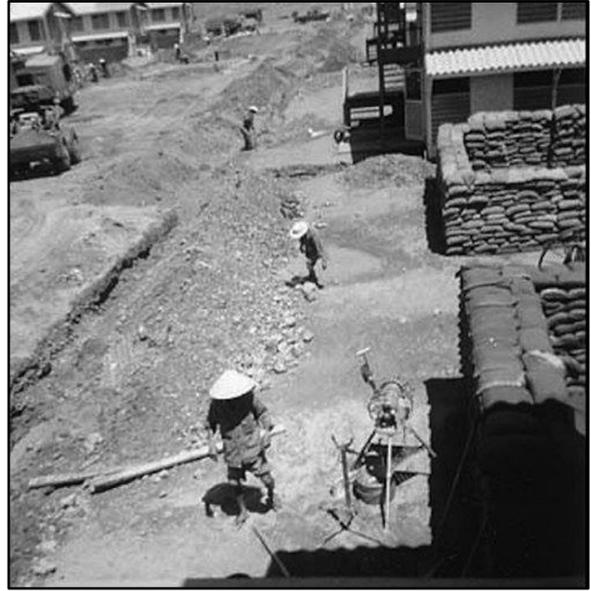


Photo by Christopher Boles



Picture posted to Facebook by James R. Cummings.



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Photo by Christopher Boles



Photo by Christopher Boles

“Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB Discussion

Dave Miller: ... we sure kept that plant busy erecting the "Concrete Sky" shelters on the flight line in '68-'69.

Joseph Carter: Dave Miller and Frank Square when we trying to build the concrete shelters in Da Nang, we tried to use concrete pumps with not much success, I have seen pictures of crews using concrete buckets and cranes. Do you guys know what method they settled on?

Joseph Carter: Dave, thanks for the info, I ended up working for over 30 years in construction testing, and I found out the "squeeze-crete" pumps were fairly primitive and the mix had to be just so-so or it was difficult to pump the concrete. In later years (in the United States), concrete pumps were brought over from Germany that would pump about any mix just like water.

Men of 554th CES from the Phan Rang AB Roll Call

Alvin Bolden	Michael Stockton	Lawrence Walker	Jim Brown
Dave Miller	Millard R. Vieno	Albert A. Clark	Danny L. Bamber
Dan W. Bateman	Robert H. Denman	Williams D. Bowdre	Joseph D. Breihof
Gary L. Brown	Albert A. Clark	David F. Dixon	Charles E. Felt
Gregirt E, Guivubi	Jess E. Gregory	Palmer P. Jenkins	Albert F. Jesse
Robert W. Long	William H. Messler	James R. Metcalf	Harry W. Morse
Ronald J. Ovely	Ramiro L. Pazos	William A. Pinto	Charles R. Rice
K. A. Romanelli	Rich Rowe	Vernon E. Schwarz	William Smith
Ronald E. Stephens	Dennis H. Takaki	Robert C. Tucker	Melvin C. Waddell
Robert E. Walters	Earl T. Williams	Richard R. Wise	Danny R. Young
James Braun	Richard G. Fowler	Williams T. Meredith	Jay Baird
Joseph D. Carter	Lanny Curtis	Paul Fillman	Donald McLean

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David S. Miller

Mike Faile

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Terry Pierce

Ronald Ward

Ricardo Leal Jr.

Phan Rang F-100 Pilots Win High Army Praises *(Seventh Air Force News, November 12, 1968)*

PHAN RANG—Air Force F100 Supersabre pilots from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing received high praise recently from the 2nd Brigade, 9th U.S. Infantry Division for outstanding air support.

In a letter to the 35th TFW commander, the 2d Bdg, 9th Inf Div Air Liaison Officer (ALO) praised the Phan Rang AB pilots for their support during an operation some 10 miles north of Vinh Long.

The ALO indicated that one of the Division battalions had been airlifted into an open rice paddy. Their mission was to assault, overrun and destroy a large bunker complex.

"The friendly forces," the letter indicated, "were immediately pinned down by intense automatic weapons fire from a dug in Viet Cong force. The enemy was too well fortified for the use of helicopter gunships and artillery was not available. So the Air Force was called on to eliminate the opposition."

Five air strikes from the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing were used in support of our people," the letter continued. "Realizing the urgency of the situation and totally disregarding heavy ground fire, each pilot precisely placed his ordnance on the Viet Cong positions. Each strike, in turn, was placed within 200 meters of friendly positions. Finally the enemy positions were totally silenced."

"There is no doubt," the ALO wrote the 35th TFW commander, "that the contribution of your pilots saved countless U.S. lives."

Pilots from Phan Rang who flew in support of the Army included Majors William H. Neuens, Aurora, Colo., 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron; Gregory J. Butler, Phoenix, Ariz., and Capt. Dale C. Tabor, Clyde, Texas, both from the 35th TFW.

From the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron were Maj. Michael F. Connolly, Jersey Shore, Pa.; Captains Roger W. Carroll Jr, Kansas City, Mo., and Clyde E. O'Baker Jr, Cumberland, Md.; and 1st Lt's Roland C. Richards. Kalamazoo, Mich., Milton R. Sanders, Washington, D.C.

Pilots' Work Increases FAC's Job *(Seventh Air Force News, 13 November 1968)*

PHAN RANG—"The forward air controller was frantic down there!" said 1st Lt. Rowland D. Stanley, La Mesa, California, as he described a recent mission over South Vietnam.

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The 352nd Tactical Fighter Squadron F-100 Supersabre pilot was wing man in a flight of two Phan Rang F-100s. "The FAC said, 'you destroyed three bunkers down there, but you uncovered about ten more' " Lieutenant Stanley continued, "and it seemed to go on like that for just about every bomb we had."

On one of his passes, Stanley saw a secondary explosion caused by his lead pilot. "I was right over the target when it occurred," said the lieutenant, "and there was no question in my mind that it was a secondary explosion. It went off about half a second after the bombs did, and it just threw debris about the same height a bomb would."

The FAC did an outstanding job, according to Lieutenant Stanley. "He directed us in and did an excellent performance with his marking rockets.

"There was only one minor problem—even though we destroyed quite a few bunkers, after we left the FAC had more to be destroyed than when we started because we uncovered so many."

35th CES Dredges River...Insures Water Supply *(Seventh Air Force News)*

PHAN RANG-With the arrival of the dry season in mid-autumn; the Kinh Dinh River becomes little more than a shallow stream, presenting a yearly problem at the Wells, the primary source of water for Phan Rang AB, a mile away.

The Wells are a small compound of guard bunkers, four 500-gallon-per-minute pumps and a structure housing several generators.

"When the dry season comes, not enough water can be pumped unless we take corrective action," stated MSgt. Charles R. Schrall, superintendent of the base water system, operated by the 35th Civil Engineering Squadron.

Recently, earth moving equipment from the 35th CES made minor alterations to the riverbed.

"The pumps are encased in wooden cribs sunk 15 feet into the river bottom. These contain gravel to filter out debris," Sergeant Schrall explained. "We used a diesel shovel to remove from the sides of the cribs sand which had accumulated there. This exposed more of each crib to the water current."

Meanwhile, a bulldozer fashioned a 100 yard-long channel to divert the river water directly to the cribs. "We had to deepen the riverbed, which was only about a foot deep, so a greater volume of water would hit the cribs with more force, causing faster penetration," the sergeant said.

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"With the trough beginning at the far end of a bend in the river," he commented, "we can be sure the Wells will get enough water for the base, even if the river level drops."

Fighter pilots do it best..but what? (*Overseas Weekly, Pacific Edition, October 16, 1972*)

FIGHTER PILOTS do it better! That's the silly, if somewhat mysterious slogan that is appearing on auto bumpers around the country these days. Over at the Pentagon, especially up on those fourth and fifth floor levels reserved for Air Force offices, the silly bumper stickers are plastered everywhere — on desks, bulletin boards, and hallways.

The strange banner brings an instant question to the minds of perplexed car drivers: Do what better?

To answer that logical inquiry, a batch of Air Force types down in Texas has come out with a newer version of the sticker. More explicit, it explains boldly: **FIGHTER PILOTS MAKE LOVE BETTER.**

While not in a position to verify the truth of that particular statement, The Weekly made an effort last week to get to the bottom of the meaning of the more widespread cryptic slogan.

"It means that fighter pilots screw up better," explained one laughing, Pentagon-based Air Force officer who understandably wished not to be identified. "But it's their navigators that show 'em how :"

An Air Force information spokesman, after some fast research, offered a more logical genesis for the motto. "It was all started by the Marines," said Capt Ed Robertson. "They had the slogan in 'Nam' Marine Pilots do It Better."

Then attack fighter pilots, it seems, began printing their version of the slogan. It read, "A-7 Pilots Do It Better." Then F-4 fighter bomber weapons operators, who sit in tandem behind the F-4 pilot and are thus called "GIBS" for 'guys-in-the-backseat came out with their own motto in one-upmanship: GIB s Do It Best!

Finally, according to Robertson, Marine, Navy and Air Force flyboys decided to hell with all this competition and settled on the more friendly, if less specific boast, Fighter Pilots Do It Better.

But while the slogan gimmick is primarily a method of promoting esprit de corps among the jet jockey set, it may also be a subtle dig at the slower, lumbering bomber pilots of Strategic Air Command, according to some insiders.

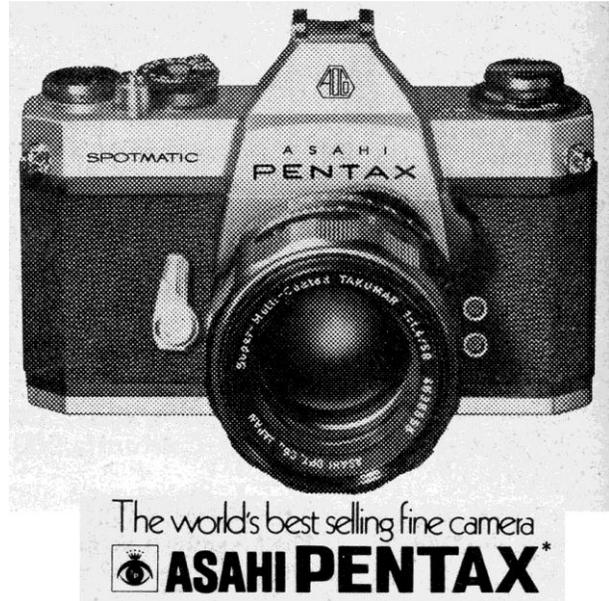
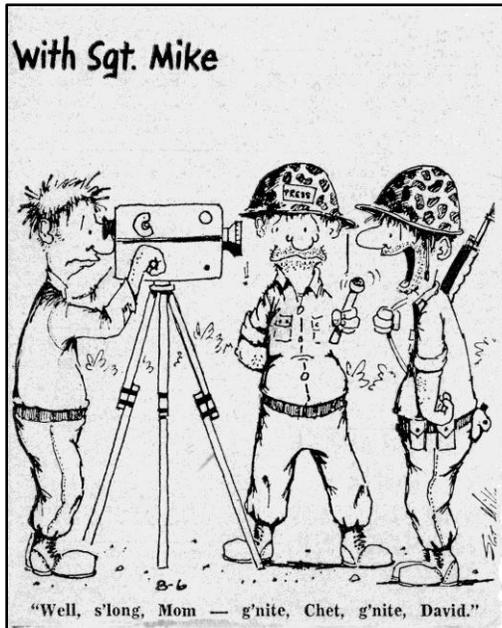
"What it really means though, all kidding aside," said a pair of jet pilots temporarily on ground duty, in the Pentagon, "is that we are a neat, elite, unique group of individuals."

Does that answer the question?

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War Zone Reports

USAF Crew Came Back On One-and-a-Half Wing (*The Stars and Stripes*, Monday August 2, 1971)
WASHINGTON (Special) —The crew of an AC119K attack aircraft has been named winner of the 1970 Mackay Trophy for the "most meritorious flight of the year," Air Force officials announced here.



The Crippled Ship...C119K 537826

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Led by Capt. Alan D. Milacek, now assigned to the 443rd Military Airlift Wing, Altus AFB, Okla., the crew was returning to its home base (Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base) in Southeast Asia after an armed reconnaissance-strike mission (over Laos on 8 May 1970) when half of the plane's right wing was shot away by anti-aircraft fire.

After regaining partial control of the craft, Milacek ordered the crew to jettison ammunition and other equipment to lighten the aircraft. It was then discovered that the fuel tanks would be empty approximately 30 miles short of the base.

"I pulled off power which put the aircraft in a slow descent," Milacek said. "This increased the air speed getting us home more rapidly. The reduced power also meant that less fuel would be consumed.

"The landing was routine," he continued, "but looking over the right wing, we discovered 14 feet of its leading edge and nearly 17 feet of the trailing shot away."

While the "most meritorious flight of the year" remains the criterion for awarding the trophy, careful attention is given to personal gallantry and unusual presence of mind under combat or noncombat conditions.

Other members of the AC119K crew and their present duty stations are Capt. James A. Russell, Yokota AB, Japan; Capt. Ronald C. Jones Kincheloe AFB, Mich.; Capt. Brent C. O'Brien, separated from the Air Force and living in Galveston, Tex.; Capt. Roger E. Clancy, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; T.Sgt. Albert A. Nash, McGuire AFB N.J.; S.Sgt. Kenneth E. Firestone, Dover AFB, Del.; S.Sgt. Ronald R. Wilson McConnell AFB, Kan.; S.Sgt Adolfo Lopez Jr., Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, and Sgt. Donnell H. Cofer, Lowry AFB, Col.



Capt. Alan D. Milacek



The crew poses for a picture after being awarded the MacKay Trophy

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Previous winners of the trophy, awarded annually since 1912, include Henry H. (Hap) Arnold, Eddie Rickenbacker and Jimmy Doolittle.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen John D. Ryan will present the award to the crew in ceremonies here Aug. 5.

(This article was fact checked by our Phan Rang Aircraft Historian, Kirk Minert and additional information supplied by him.)

Marine General Hise Praises ‘Magnificent Work of Spooky’ *(Seventh Air Force News, November 13, 1969)*

DA NANG — "I am very impressed with the accuracy and reliability of firepower provided by Spooky," stated Brig. Gen. Henry W. Hise, deputy commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing at Da Nang.

"Spooky has done a magnificent job of supporting Marines throughout I Corps," General Hise continued. The occasion was a ceremony in which the general presented a III Marine Amphibious Force plaque to "A" Flight, 4th Special Operations Squadron, Da Nang AB.

The presentation was made on behalf of Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Commanding General of III MAF, in appreciation for support given to the Marines in I Corps by Spooky gunships from Da Nang.

The plaque was accompanied by a letter which read in part: "Ground commanders and troops alike have consistently expressed high esteem for "Spooky". Marines and soldiers have come to count heavily on the predictable, sustained firepower that Spooky represents during times of close combat at night, Spooky's rain of bullets has proven the great equalizer during many firefights when our forces found themselves isolated, outnumbered and outgunned. Your dedicated service in the cause of freedom reflects creditably upon yourselves and the United States Air Force."

Hise presented the plaque to Colonel Conrad S. Allman, commander of the 14th Special Operations Wing, who in turn presented it to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Lentine, commander of the 4th Special Operation Squadron (SOS) at Nha Trang Air Base.

"A" Flight, 4th SOS here at Da Nang is responsible for Spooky operations throughout I Corps and is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wallace J McKenzie, 42, Austin, Tex.

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Moonshine Plane Drops 287 Flares In a Night’s Work (*Seventh Air Force News, November 13, 1968*)

NHA TRANG—Five C-47 crewmen of the 5th Special Operations Squadron "Moonshine" mission here did considerable "elbow-bending" recently, ejecting nearly three hundred 27-pound flares in one night, supporting Republic of Korea (ROK) forces.

Action centered on an area four miles southwest of Nha Trang in the Truong Son mountain range. The 29th and 30th ROK "White Horse" Division regiments called for the first illumination at 7 p.m. to continue a highly-fruitful search-and-destroy operation.

To prevent the elusive Viet Cong from escaping in the dark, a Moonshine-flare-dropping C-47 Skytrain was dispatched from Nha Trang AB. Maj. Charles McNallen, Odessa, Tex., aircraft commander, landed twice during the night to restock flares and refuel while an AC-47 Dragon-ship continued the flare support.

First Lieutenants John Pettenger, Patterson, N.J., the pilot, and Frank Campbell, Stamford, Conn., navigator, together with Staff Sergeants Bobbie Carter, Brighton, Tenn., flight mechanic, and Garry Bishop, Roseville, Mich., loadmaster, all took turns at tossing out the Mark IV flares.

"It was a long, long night," Lieutenant Campbell Commented. "But we felt like we had accomplished something."

The crew had the opportunity to watch small arms fire and grenade blasts from their lofty position above the scene. At one time, Lieutenant Campbell, on the air-to-ground radio, noted that neither he nor American radio operator on the ground wanted to trade positions. The man on the ground watched the slow, vulnerable orbit of the C-47 as enemy fired at it; the lieutenant watched tracers fly in all directions among the enemy and friendly forces below him.



Light Up for Lights Out Charlie

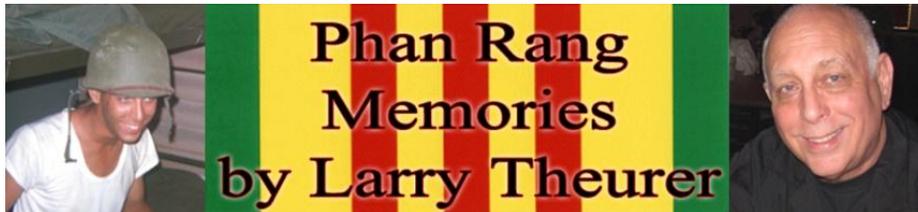
Sgt. Versie W. Anding, Jackson, Miss., a flight mechanic assigned to the 4th Special Operations Squadron, Pleiku AB, assists the loadmaster of an AC-47 Dragonship by taking the one-million candle power flares from its box prior to dropping it on a target for illumination.

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Back at the air base, maintenance crews averaged a record turn-around time of 40 minutes for the flare ship. By final touchdown at 6:45 the next morning, spokesmen noted, both ground and air crews were ready for a celebration — and badly needed rest.



FUN WITH FIRE ANTS

I found the fire ants fascinating and was always messing with them. Being from New York I had never seen a fire ant. At the North end of the runway near the de-arm area they had a huge network of nests. It extended over 300 feet. The main nests were about 50 feet apart, all connected by trails that were a half inch wide and a quarter inch deep, streaming both ways with worker ants. About every 15 feet there were little semi-circular indentations in the side of the trail that looked like rest areas on a turnpike. Standing guard up on the wall of the trail every four feet were big soldier ants with large jaws.

“...those big soldiers, from very long distances away would instantly react within seconds and come rushing toward that spot looking for you.”

It was uncanny how, if you took a stick and disrupted the highway at any point, those big soldiers, from very long distances away would instantly react within seconds and come rushing toward that spot looking for you. And within more seconds many more soldiers from the main nests far away would arrive on scene. How could they do that? They could not possibly see that far and the worker ants weren't traveling that fast to carry a message. They say ants are telepathic. I believed it.

Back near our barracks there was another nest. One day a group of us are sitting on the front steps and nearby there was a swampy ditch. About twenty weird, ugly, two inch long green worms were crawling out of the ditch toward the barracks. They were attacked by the red ants. It was a fascinating battle. A group of 7 to 10 ants would climb on the back of a worm and begin biting him. Each time they did, the worm would convulse and jump almost 2 feet in the

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air shaking the ants off his back and land in the grass 2 feet away. Usually one ant would manage to hang on.

The weeds were a foot high and thick, I thought there was no way those ants could see where that worm landed, but incredibly they would all instantly turn toward the direction where the worm was and immediately find him. The worms would jump 6 or 7 times before dying. How could those ants know where that worm landed, unless the guy hanging on his back somehow signaled?

I was so engrossed in the ant-worm war that I didn't see the one who crawled up on me. He bypassed various tougher areas of my body to go directly to the tenderest part of my hand, the web right between my fingers. I found out why they were called fire ants.

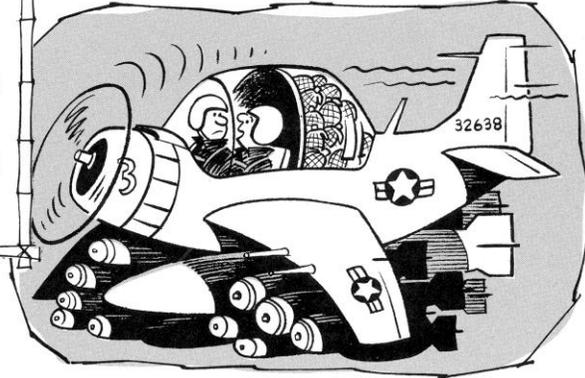
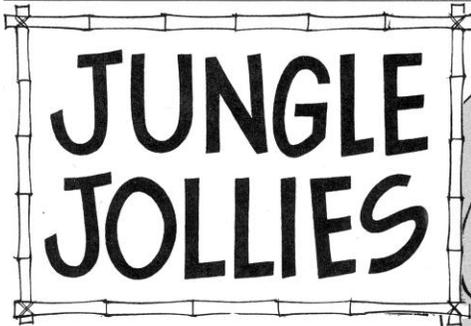


Photo by Jay Ploof

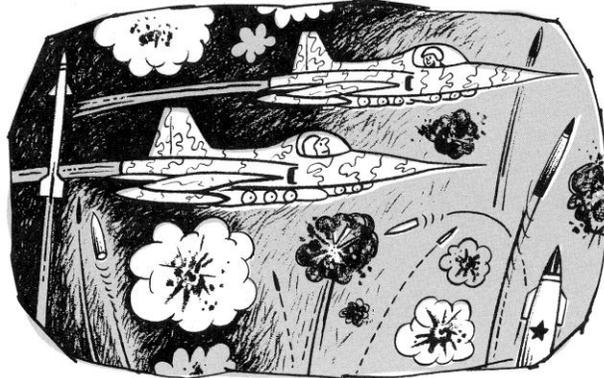
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“When they said this mission was a MAXIMUM EFFORT, they weren’t kidding!”



“I think Charlie is trying to get our attention.”



“Good afternoon, Bluebirds One and Two, this is The Baron, your NUMBER ONE Forward Air Controller. Me show you beaucoup VC. You like?”

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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN...by a VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANT

On Saturday, July 24th, 2010 the town of Prescott Valley, AZ, hosted a Freedom Rally. Quang Nguyen was asked to speak on his experience of coming to America and what it means.

He spoke the following in dedication to all Vietnam Veterans.

35 years ago, if you were to tell me that I am going to stand up here speaking to a couple thousand patriots, in English, I'd laugh at you. Man, every morning I wake up thanking God for putting me and my family in the greatest country on earth.

I just want you all to know that the American dream does exist and I am living the American dream. I was asked to speak to you about my experience as a first generation Vietnamese-American, but I'd rather speak to you as an American.

If you hadn't noticed, I am not white and I feel pretty comfortable with my people.

I am a proud U.S. citizen and here is my proof. It took me 8 years to get it, waiting in endless lines, but I got it, and I am very proud of it.

I still remember the images of the Tet offensive in 1968, I was six years old. Now you might want to question how a 6-year-old boy could remember anything. Trust me, those images can never be erased. I can't even imagine what it was like for young American soldiers, 10,000 miles away from home, fighting on my behalf.

35 years ago, I left South Vietnam for political asylum. The war had ended. At the age of 13, I left with the understanding that I may or may not ever get to see my siblings or parents again. I was one of the first lucky 100,000 Vietnamese allowed to come to the U.S. Somehow, my family and I were reunited 5 months later, amazingly, in California. It was a miracle from God.

If you haven't heard lately that this is the greatest country on earth, I am telling you that right now. It was the freedom and the opportunities presented to me that put me here with all of you tonight. I also remember the barriers that I had to overcome every step of the way.

My high school counselor told me that I cannot make it to college due to my poor communication skills. I proved him wrong. I finished college. You see, all you have to do is to give this little boy an opportunity and encourage him to take and run with it. Well, I took the opportunity and here I am.

This person standing tonight in front of you could not exist under a socialist/communist environment. By the way, if you think socialism is the way to go, I am sure many people here

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will chip in to get you a one-way ticket out of here. And if you didn't know, the only difference between socialism and communism is an AK-47 aimed at your head.

That was my experience.

In 1982, I stood with a thousand new immigrants, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and listening to the National Anthem for the first time as an American. To this day, I can't remember anything sweeter and more patriotic than that moment in my life.

Fast forwarding, somehow I finished high school, finished college, and like any other goofball 21 year old kid, I was having a great time with my life. I had a nice job and a nice apartment in Southern California. In some way and somehow, I had forgotten how I got here and why I was here.

One day I was at a gas station, I saw a veteran pumping gas on the other side of the island. I don't know what made me do it, but I walked over and asked if he had served in Vietnam . He smiled and said yes. I shook and held his hand. The grown man began to well up. I walked away as fast as I could and at that very moment, I was emotionally rocked. This was a profound moment in my life. I knew something had to change in my life. It was time for me to learn how to be a good citizen. It was time for me to give back.

You see, America is not just a place on the map, it isn't just a physical location. It is an ideal, a concept. And if you are an American, you must understand the concept, you must accept this concept, and most importantly, you have to fight and defend this concept. This is about Freedom and not free stuff. And that is why I am standing up here.

Brothers and sisters, to be a real American, the very least you must do is to learn English and understand it well. In my humble opinion, you cannot be a faithful patriotic citizen if you can't speak the language of the country you live in. Take this document of 46 pages - last I looked on the Internet, there wasn't a Vietnamese translation of the U.S. Constitution. It took me a long time to get to the point of being able to converse and until this day, I still struggle to come up with the right words. It's not easy, but if it's too easy, it's not worth doing.

Before I knew this 46-page document, I learned of the 500,000 Americans who fought for this little boy. I learned of the 58,000 names scribed on the black wall at the Vietnam Memorial. You are my heroes. You are my founders.

At this time, I would like to ask all the Vietnam veterans to please stand. I thank you for my life. I thank you for your sacrifices, and I thank you for giving me the freedom and liberty I have today. I now ask all veterans, firefighters, and police officers, to please stand. On behalf of all first generation immigrants, I thank you for your services and may God bless you all.

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Quang Nguyen

Creative Director/Founder

Caddis Advertising, LLC

"God Bless America "

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

Kirk Minert: Aircraft Historian

Christopher Boles: Photographer

Bob Tucker: Keeper of the Rolls

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS



Click on the logo to make your hotel reservations.

Reunion shirts continue to be available on-line, as well as Phan Rang Hats and other paraphernalia from Design-Apparel.com. Arnett and Terri Gill from Design-apparel will be at the reunion with reunion shirts and all of their hats and badges. The Gill's are some of the most veteran friendly people you will ever meet and many of you already know them as they (Terri) were at our reunion in San Antonio and Tucson.

This newsletter was compiled by Douglas Severt.