

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 83

“Stories worth telling”

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Stinger Sinks 26 Sampans

PHAN RANG - An AC-119 Stinger gunship crew from the 14th Special Operations Wing here recently struck a large target area along a river bank 16 miles south-southeast of Saigon.

A forward air controller credited the gunship crew with destroying 26 enemy sampans.

Upon arrival over the target, the navigator, Maj. Eugene D. Miller, made radio contact with the FAC who briefed him on the situation and pointed out the target area.

After the FAC marked the target with smoke bombs, Maj. Richard A. Matzen, aircraft commander of the 18th Special Operations Squadron gunship, was cleared to open fire. The gunships minigun fire hit the sampans, causing many of them to sink.

315th SOW ‘Jet Set’ Now (*Seventh Air Force News, April 30, 1969*)

PHAN RANG - Although air travelers in South Vietnam may not have been aware of it, a new travel era was silently ushered in recently. When, the last non-jet C-123 “Provider” departed here for modernization in the States, the 31st Special Operations Wing became a completely jet-augmented airlift and defoliation unit.

The 315th SOW, operators of the “Provider,” received the first of the redesignated “K” models

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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.

As the conflict intensified, an aircraft with increased capability was deemed necessary to satisfy 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 resupply missions because of the extra power. Just as important, the jets afford steep climb capability to elude hostile ground fire when flying out of forward operating locations.

During the ceremony releasing the last "OLD" C-123, Col. John W. Pauly, Albany, N.Y., commander, 315th Wing, remarked "the response of the jet assisted version has dramatically improved the mission capability of the airlift and defoliation squadrons of this wing."



Firepower and Flarelight. As a flare lights up the perimeter of Phan Rang AB, Security policemen of the 35th Security Police Squadron fire their M-60 machine guns into suspected enemy positions. (*Seventh Air Force News, 30 July 1969*)

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Sabres Hit Bunkers (*Seventh Air Force News, April 30, 1969*)

PHAN RANG - "Our target was a group of booby-trapped bunkers the Army wanted cleared out before they moved into the area." were the words of Maj. Donald L. Pope, Columbus, Miss., describing a recent strike 16 miles west-southwest of Cai Lay in Dinh Tuong Province.

Flying with Pope, a member the 615th Tactical Fighter Squadron "Bobcats", was Capt. Alan E. Walker, Pittsburgh, weapons officer for the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing at Phan Rang AB.

"While the Army forces waited about a mile and a half away," continued Major Pope, we went in and hit the bunkers with our bombs. We then strafed two fortifications that were out in the open. They were pretty good Sized, at least fifty feet square. We got a secondary fire from one of the fortifications, I don't know what was in there, but it burned pretty good."

The forward air controller credited the two pilots with destroying ten enemy bunkers two fortifications and lighting a secondary fire. They also damaged five bunkers.

RAAF Unit Receives Award For World War II Service (*Seventh Air Force News, July, 30 1969*)

By TSgt. John Mahony

PHAN RANG—The U.S. Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation was presented recently to the Royal Australian Air Force Number 2 Squadron here.

The citation was awarded to Australia's Number 2 Squadron for its many successful attacks against Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific at the outbreak of World War II.

At a flightline ceremony at Phan Rang Gen. George S. Brown, U.S. Seventh Air Force commander, made the presentation.

R. L. Harry, Australian Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam; Maj. Gen. R. A. Hay,



(USAF PHOTO BY SGT. WILLIAM F. DIEBOLD)

General Brown and Commander Whitehead
Inspecting the Honor Guard

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commander, Australian Forces, Vietnam; and Air Commodore F. S. Robey, Royal Australian Air Force commander, Vietnam; made up the official Australian delegation at the ceremony.

The 27-year delay in the presentation was due to several factors such as the disbanding of the squadron after World War II and the Australian requirement that a unit be in continuous existence for 25 years before it can get its own standard or banner, an RAAF spokesman explained.

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, who was then Supreme Commander of all Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific area, recommended the Number 2 Squadron for the award for the period April 18, 1942, to August 25, 1942.

On January 4, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved a U.S. War Department order making the award official. King George VI approved acceptance of the citation April 20, 1943.

In April 1967 the squadron arrived for duty at Phan Rang AB. Since then the 300-man unit has flown more than 8,000 combat sorties against enemy forces. Wing Commander John A. Whitehead, Canberra, Australia Capital Territory, is the current squadron commander.

Two members of the RAAF who were in Number 2 Squadron during the citation period are still serving with the RAAF in Australia.

The men, Warrant Officers E. J. Lee, and C. P. Bolger, were flown to Phan Rang to take part in the ceremony. General Brown presented the individual citation ribbon to them.

Blue Berets Help Move Ammunition (*Seventh Air Force News, July, 30 1969*)

PHAN RANG — Blue Beret Combat Controllers of the 834th Air Division, work closely with 315th Special Operations Wing C-123 Provider and C-7 Caribou crews to "pass the ammunition" throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

The controllers, headquarters at Tan Son Nhut AB, are on call 24-hours-a-day to answer any tactical emergency or situation requiring their talents.

Primarily, these control teams exist to provide air traffic control at forward locations including jungle airstrips and drop zones.

Additionally, they handle long range communications to keep the commander, 834th AD and his staff, continuously informed on the progress of operations at their base camps. Air crews utilizing control team assistance follow their advice and direction to complete their missions.

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To maintain the communications link, a four-man team proceeds to the operations area aboard a C-123, accompanied by a jeep loaded with communications equipment.

The teams can stay in the field indefinitely. However, a normal tour in the field will last seven days. The men then return to Tan Son Nhut for supplies and once again return to the forward base.



A Trip to Thap Cham to Remember by Theodore Youwer

Sometime in 1967, last half of the year I believe, two of my buddies and I (SSgt. Bob Miles and SSgt. 'Andy' Andreola) left the base to visit a friend stationed at the MACV compound.

None of us checked out weapons (too much trouble, I guess).

We hitched a ride into Thap Cham and walked the rest of the way. As I remember while we were walking out of a road surrounded by thick growth into a clearing; a village (huts as I recall) on the left side and on the right is the MACV compound.

It seems that as soon as we entered the clearing the whole world lit up and suddenly the village on the left was engulfed in flames. Villagers were running everywhere, many on fire. One young boy ran onto the road and collapsed right in front of us.

Bob or Andy, both trained medics (all of us were assigned to the TAC Dispensary) tried to help, but the kid was beyond help. For me everything was moving in slow motion. I remember all the MACV troops rescuing villagers, loading them into trucks, and driving off. I don't know if I ever moved; seems like I was paralyzed.

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At any rate, the three of us eventually found ourselves standing alone in the road. A gathering of angry villagers started to throw stones at us, probably blamed us for whatever had happened. At that point, some Korean Marines ran out of the compound, set up a machine gun in the road and motioned us into the compound.

The last things I remember is the sound of helicopters, plumes of smoke, and a having a brief conversation with the compound commander. I can't recall how we got back to base. I don't remember ever leaving the base again!

Note: Both Donald Chatterton and Theodore Youwer believe the locals were collecting JP4 from a leak in the pipe line that ran from the beach to the base and supplied JP4 to the base. Speculation was that an incendiary device was thrown in the middle of them. It was right across from Civil Action Group. Normally you could throw a match in JP4 and it would not ignite, however a lot of people used it as lighter fluid for their lighters. If anyone has more facts, please let me know and I will share. Also, Ted will be attending the Charleston Reunion so we can discuss it there.

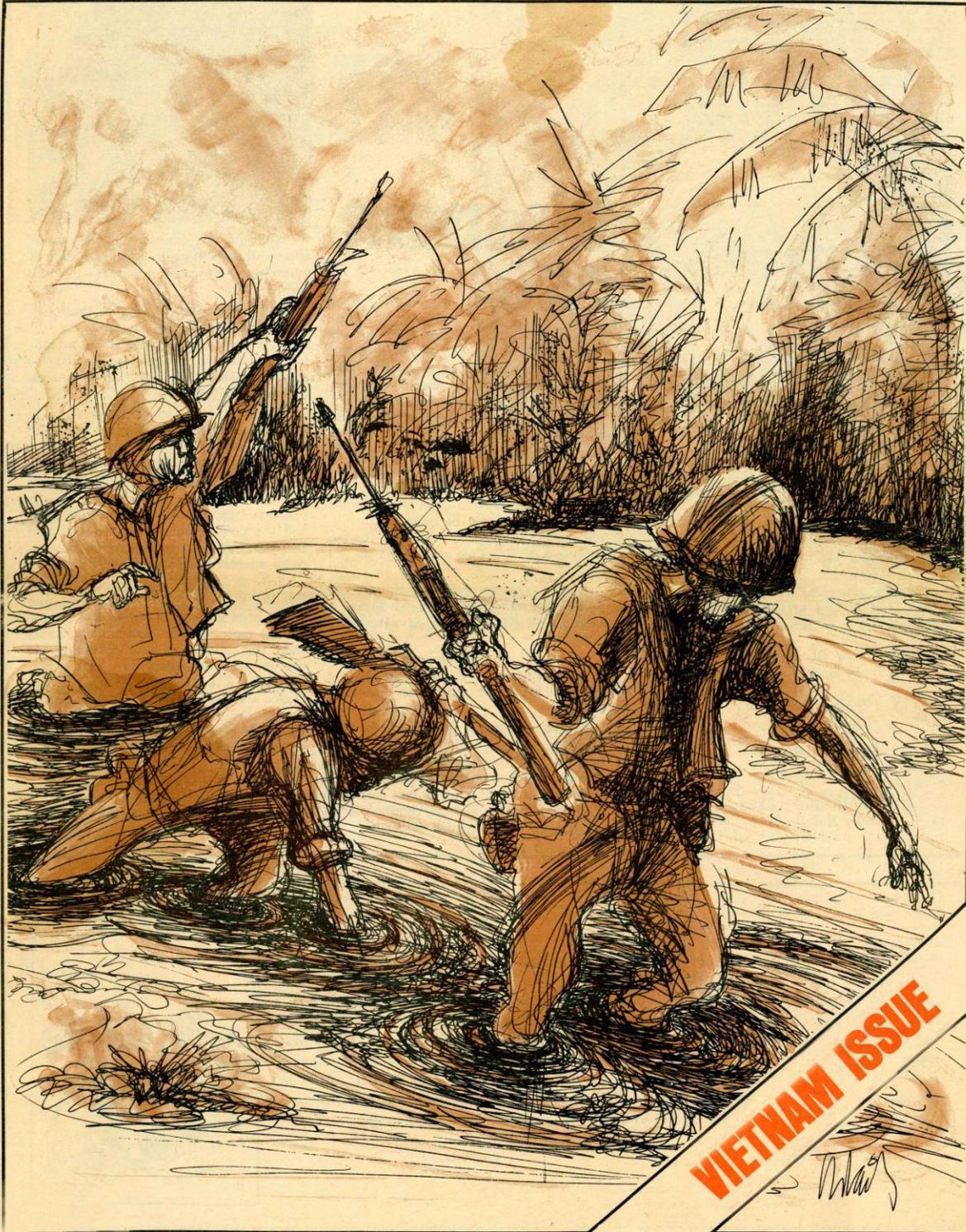
Donald E. Chatterton on Facebook wrote: I came on the same scene and I helped load burn victims on a flat bed truck that went to the local hospital, did what we could do there, then flew on the helicopter taking some patients to Cam Rahn Bay. I have never before or since seen such bad burns. Out of 40 only 2 survived. I recently found a letter of commendation for my actions that day. I still have nightmares over this but now I have a dog that wakes me up.

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PACIFIC STARS AND STRIPES
SUNDAY MAGAZINE • 13 JULY 1969



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by hal drake

STARS AND STRIPES STAFF WRITER

LEGIONNAIRES!" THE FRENCH general shouted at the tough, bearded outcasts for hire who stood before him, "you have come here to die! I shall now take you to where one dies!"

So the Foreign Legionnaires plodded into the dense, swampy Red River delta. Many dutifully died. Before that year of 1884 was over, two of Vietnam's richest provinces were securely in French hands and they were grasping for all the wealth in vast Indochina. It would all be theirs, for the last of the 19th century and half of the next — a long rule that would end both gallantly and ingloriously at Dienhienphu, a name as synonymous with disaster as Waterloo.

Eighty-five years after the general dispatched his mercenaries, Vietnam is still a land of death and pain. Once a rich prize for ambitious colonizers, it today is an arena of ideologies. Divided for centuries by provincial strife, it is today cleanly halved — broken into two parts by political differences that are clear, sharp and critical.

Above the 17th parallel stands North Vietnam, created by a Communist victory in 1954. Ho Chi Minh, its 79-year-old president, has sworn he will occupy and dominate the Republic of Vietnam, an infant country that has struggled through unbelievably hard times — not the least of these caused by Communist insurgents and an invasion by troops from the north.

The United States, one of six countries committed in a long struggle, has thrown 500,000 troops into a country slightly smaller than Washington state — for a purpose that might seem strange and puzzling to practical-minded political scientists. The U.S. seeks no territorial gain or commercial foothold — no machiavellian manipulation of heads of state.

"Our purpose in Vietnam is to prevent the success of aggression," said former President Lyndon B. Johnson in mid-1965, when thousands of American troops began pouring into mountain and valley to turn aside what appeared to be a certain Communist victory.

The Communists have since been battered to a standstill; their best forces have been ground down on the millstone of American firepower. They are hurting terribly, but still fighting hard — at the conference table as well as on the battlefield.

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What brought two contending powers here in a critical test of wills? In Vietnam, as well as the rest of the Orient, one chaotic event tumbled into another. Vietnam was locked on a collision course with political disaster centuries ago.

For a thousand years, ancient Vietnam was an unwilling vassal of China. About half a century before the years were marked in four numerals, the Chinese were thrown out. But for Vietnam, geographically checkered into Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China, there were no long centuries of peaceful and isolated sleep. It fought to survive; it fought to expand. It threw back invaders and invaded in turn.

The Chinese were always a menacing influence and presence. The great powers of Europe were just beginning to discover that the East, besides being wealthy, was soft and pliable. Its leaders could be manipulated by flattery or force. The British controlled India by playing jealous and unworldly potentates against one another.

The French, in 1787, signed a treaty with the king of Cochin-China and helped him, with French military aid, to solidify his hold on the throne. This began the long reign of Gia Long, who gratefully handed over a port and an island to the French.

The island, Con Son, was to become a penal colony as grimly notorious as Devils' Island. The port, rechristened Tourane, was not until 150 years later to recover its actual name on world maps — Da Nang.

"Like a snake swallowing an egg," as one historian puts it, the French gradually engulfed Vietnam, adding a gallant defense in an epic, year-long siege of Saigon to their military annals. The Legionnaires, coarse of manner, piratical in appearance, swept Chinese troops from the delta forts.

Vietnam was the keystone of southeast Asia. The rest of the Southeast Asian Archway, Laos and Cambodia, fell easily into receptive French hands. Only Thailand, whose shrewd leaders convinced France and Britain that they best be left an independent buffer state, escaped the Anglo-European scramble for commercial and military footholds in the East.

The French, in eight years of war, killed 500,000 of the enemy, and won only a stalemate.

Many historians agree — the French could have been the best or worst of colonial administrators, but they would have never been accepted by the aloof,, intenselynationalistic Vietnamese.

As it was, the French were both benevolent and abusive. They made great cities of sprawling villages. But the average French trader or rubber plantation owner regarded Vietnamese as inferior beings — much the same way a Georgia slave owner might consider the Negro an

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indolent, buck-dancing clown. Vietnamese were worked hard, paid little and pushed off sidewalks. The Frenchman was king. Indochina, to France, was what India was to Britain - her greatest source of wealth, power and prestige in Asia.

What jarred the Vietnamese most was the very way they were addressed. A Frenchman considered it demeaning to call a Vietnamese by name. He or she was "tu," an insulting familiarity comparable with "boy" or "hey, you."

A Vietnamese named Nguyen Tat Tan, born in 1890 in an Annam village, was to recall that he was never called "monsieur" until he went to France near the end of World War I. A frail youth, he hardened his wiry frame by working on the docks. His benign appearance and manner belied the fact that, at the age of nine, he had begun carrying messages for anti-French dissidents.

He well knew the. Asian ways of subtlety and containment, but was given to flamboyant and unpredictable gestures — such as renaming himself Nguyen Ai Quoc (Friend of the People) in 1919, a year before he joined the French Communist Party.

It was one of the most fortunate choices the Communists ever made.

Tan — or Quoc — went to Moscow in 1924, adding the domes and spires of the Kremlin to other skylines he had seen. He knew London — he had once worked in the kitchen at the plush Carlton Hotel. He claims to have visited the United States and was to write a fiery tract about what he allegedly saw in Harlem. As a kitchen boy on a French steamship, he knew the squalid docks and the dingy little African ports.

It was hard to trace just what he was in those early years — revolutionary or roustabout. From Moscow, he went to Canton, China, to make his role in history more definite. He was a dedicated and efficient Communist. Working with the Soviet consul, he helped incite the revolt at Whampoa Military Academy and attracted the unwelcome attention of police—to see, for the first of many times, the inside of a jail.

It would have been unwise for the young man to stay in Canton after that. He returned to Moscow, to be assigned the mission that would shape his life — to incite rebellion in his homeland and all of Indochina. He did this from the safety of a remote, mountain-locked corner of Thailand; organized a union that was banned after a series of disruptive, well-planned strikes.

Continuing his work in Hong Kong, Nguyen Ai Quoc was again arrested — and a shrewd court fight by a young British lawyer saved him from deportation to Vietnam. Disguising himself as a Chinese merchant, he slipped past watchful French agents and next turned up in Amoy, Chinese island off Fukien Province. A clandestine revolutionary, constantly on the move to carry out party orders or save his life, he could be a sudden presence in Moscow, Shanghai or various

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parts of Thailand. He could not return to Vietnam. Tried in absentia by the French he had been found guilty of anti-state activities and sentenced to death.

These were difficult years — years of Stalinist purges, constant police surveillance, imprisonment of party leaders in most Asian countries.

He spent most of World War II in mountainous north China, stronghold of the Chinese Communists, as they made a brief and temporary alliance with the nationalists against the Japanese. For a time he even worked with the American Office of Strategic Services — and his future enemies considered him a trustworthy and invaluable agent.

By this time, he had organized an anti-French but Communist-oriented movement that was to take the name of a non-Communist one —the Viet Minh. He had once more changed his name, now calling himself the Brilliant One — Ho Chi Minh.

After France fell in 1940, the military governor general in Hanoi was replaced by an admiral sympathetic to the Vichy collaborationist regime. The Japanese, in 1941, forced the French to tolerate their presence — and in March, 1945, killed or imprisoned the French officials and took over the government. It was a briefly-held prize of war; they fled Hanoi in panic and disorder just a few months later.

A one-time history teacher and close confidant of Ho, Vo Nguyen Giap, had organized a powerful, well-trained guerrilla army under a thick canopy of jungle. Far from being an effective force against the Japanese, it fought very little — only to stock its larder and arsenal. After the Japanese departure, the Viet Minh made a triumphal entry and declared the country independent. The emperor, Bao Dai, was shouldered aside as an insignificant figurehead.

Ho came home in tumult and triumph. The French, seeking to block Allied plans to split the occupation of Vietnam between the British and Chinese, gave the nod to Ho's regime and said they would negotiate with him. Talks at Fontainebleau produced nothing. Actual French intentions became clearer when troops landed at Haiphong and reoccupied Hanoi. A French cruiser shelled the city, killing thousands.

There were just a few months of uneasy peace. French had already been attacked and killed in the streets when shots were exchanged between French and Viet Minh forces on Nov. 23, 1946. On Dec. 19, the Viet Minh mounted a major attack on the French garrison and were repulsed with terrible loss. They took to their old sanctuary, the jungle. The French followed them out. A long war began.

The French, in eight years of war, were to be swept away in a tidal wave of nationalism. They were to kill more than 500,000 enemy, to achieve nothing better than stalemate and uneasy control of some areas. Only one general, Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, ever handed the wily Giap a decisive beating — and the French effort foundered after he left. When mainland China fell to the Communists in 1949, the fate of the French was sealed. Ho and Giap received, along an

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untouchable supply line, enough firepower to equal and even surpass the French in some areas. Motley guerrilla bands became tough, well-equipped battalions.

The French made one last go-for-broke try. They built a great fortress on the lowlands of Dienbienphu, confident that it could never be breached and that Viet Minh would be slaughtered as they poured off the mountains. They were likewise confident that the Viet Minh could never get heavy artillery up the steep highlands to shoot down on them.

They reckoned without two men 'who had waited for long decades. The guns, including American howitzers that had been captured from Chiang Kai-shek, did get up the mountains. Every man in a huge assault force, including Giap, put back and shoulder to the effort of hauling the guns up, to the rhythm of atonal work songs. A French general committed suicide the day the first shells fell on the fortress' long airstrip.

On May 7, 1954, the French works had been pounded to rubble and the Viet Minh had dug long trenches that thrust right into their positions. Fighting with incredible bravery, the French were engulfed by a human landslide. The Viet Minh exultantly waved their flag from Gen. Christian de Castries' shattered command post.

By July 20, it was all over for the French. They agreed, at Geneva, Switzerland, to pull out of Indochina — to cede the northern part of Vietnam to Ho Chi Minh and allow the southern part, below the 17th parallel, to become an independent republic.

South Vietnam's fight for life is well known to the world. What of North Vietnam? What of the man unrealistic romantics call "a nationalist first, a Communist second."

This myth was effectively laid to rest by the late French writer Bernard Fall, who wrote a tracery of Ho's life in his book, "The Two Vietnams."

"In actual fact, he has always been a dedicated Communist with Vietnamese reactions, just as Gomulka is a Polish Communist or Khrushchev a Russian Communist, . . . Thus, all his life, Ho has used the nationalist catch phrases, the references to traditional heroes and values — just as Khrushchev invokes God in almost every one of his public utterances — but without ever losing sight of his party's goals.

"The fact that this was not understood by naive outsiders was certainly not his fault; his career as a Communist has been on record since 1920."

And it is aged Ho Chi Minh who has clearly declared that South Vietnam will fall under his domination and the Communist orbit — even if it takes another long war and thousands more of his people to do it.

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THE MASSACRE AT HUE



THIS IS THE GRUESOME STORY of the worst atrocity of the Vietnam war.

It is a story told by Horst Faas, Associated Press Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer and reporter. Faas has covered the Vietnam war since June, 1962, and has photographed countless battles and was himself severely wounded while photographing American soldiers in one of those battles.

"Nothing I have seen in this war has left me as shocked and angered as the massacre of the battle of Hue," Faas said.

During their Tet offensive of 1968, communists gained temporary control of a large part of the city of Hue.

It was during this period they perpetrated one of the worst atrocities of this or any war.

Communist soldiers systematically went from door to door in the battered and terrorized city rounding up civilians.

By the time allied forces had regained Hue, some 2,000 residents of the city were unaccounted for—most of them feared to have fallen into the clutches of the Communists.

By the spring of this year there was no doubt what had happened to them.

South Vietnamese officials and soldiers had discovered and were uncovering mass graves on the outskirts of Hue containing the bullet-shattered bodies of innocent civilians who had been executed by Communist soldiers.

"This atrocity is the reason I say that no matter how you feel about the Vietnam war it is impossible to have any sympathy for the Viet Cong," Faas stated.

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Here is Faas' story on the massacre of Hue.

DIEN BAI, VIETNAM — "A few hours after dark they told us that we will go to wash in the river and then meet with a cadre for a political lecture. The Viet Cong leader said we should give him all valuable belongings and our bundles because we would not need them for this walk.

"We were among thirty prisoners of the Viet Cong. They had captured me and the others on the first day of Tet and marched to the Dong Son pagoda, two hours walk east of Hue.

"Then they tied us up with strips of rattan. My hands were free, but the arms behind my back were hurting because the bands were so tight. We were tied together with a rope, one behind the other. I was the last in line.

"Five guards led us from the pagoda to a jungle near the cemetery. Then they pulled the first man out into the sand and into a trench. We all had to follow because we were tied to him.

"I opened the knot at the end of the rope and suddenly knew that I could run away.

"The guards stopped near the trench with machine guns and the Viet Cong who had led us in it jumped out and ordered all to kneel down.

"When everybody got down I ran, right and left behind the tombs till I reached the woods. They were shooting after me.

"When I could not breathe anymore, I hid under the brush. I heard the shooting and the cries. They had murdered the other prisoners."

Militiaman Phan Duy, 26, of Dong-Di hamlet in Phu Thu District, who thus survived the massacres committed by Communist troops, watched as workmen slowly uncovered yard after yard of the execution trenches.

Fifteen trenches have been discovered in desolate sand flats eight miles east of Hue, where Phan Duy ran for his life around midnight of February 18, 1968.

In the five trenches opened so far, 248 dead have been found and it is estimated that about 750 prisoners were executed here.

The sand flats of Dien Bai Village, dotted with the monuments and tombs of an old Buddhist cemetery, are only one area in three districts east and southeast of Hue where mass graves were located recently.

There are grave trenches in at least three other locations and it is feared that most of the 2,000 persons missing in Hue since the 1968 Tet fighting may have been murdered.

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Since March 26 — interrupted only by the Holy Week — mass graves have been opened almost daily.

The grim job of excavating all of the mass graves will take at least 30 more days, officials say.

The mass graves of Dien Bai are in what allied officials say is now a "pacified" area. After years of Viet Cong control and terror over this region, allied troops drove the enemy off into the mountains to the west.

At dawn, old women and children, carrying baskets of fruit and vegetables swinging from carrying poles now trip toward the Hue markets along the same narrow dirt roads over which the victims of the massacres stumbled to their deaths.

Also in the procession are hundreds of relatives hoping — yet fearful that the fate of their loved ones might at last be resolved.

The trucks halt at the edge of low, gray dunes stretching between paddies and the sea.

The women and old men squat sullenly on the ground.

Rusty cartridges of a Russian submachine gun lie in the white sand at the bottom of one trench, apparently from bullets fired by the executioners.

The trenches — each about 50 feet long and straight — are a stone's throw apart.

Between them are old foxholes, rusty C-ration cans and other debris of war telling of battles fought across the graves between American soldiers and the Communists.

A bullet-pierced American helmet is half-covered by the sand. A tank track, churning over one of the execution trenches, has left a deep depression.

The trench to be excavated is clearly recognizable: a long, three foot wide depression overgrown with bright green grass standing out amid the coarse scrub of the dunes.

Women distribute surgical gloves and face masks. From a bottle they pour alcohol over the gauze.

Eight grave-diggers, mostly barefoot and wearing shorts, begin to open the length of the trench.

Three feet down, they find the corpses, stacked against each other in a straight line. With small shovels, sand is removed right and left of the line.

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With their hands, the workers lift the bodies from the graves onto plastic sheets.

The grave-diggers lift the skull of everybody out first, gently brushing away the sand.

Two men check the dental structure and the length and color of the hair. They report the results through their facemasks to four young men and girls registering all identifications in pads. A number for future identifications is put on each skull.

One unidentified victim is found to have a plastic image of Buddha on a silver chain clenched between the teeth.

The torsoes of the corpses, with arms and legs huddled in the crouching, kneeling position in which the victims were killed, are lifted out by grave-diggers.

In monotonous voices, officials announce to the waiting men and women what they find as they rip clothing apart, search pockets for identification papers and military tags.

Militiaman Nguyen My, who has stood beside the trench for two hours, suddenly falls to his knees, howling like a wounded animal. Then his voice becomes a whimper and he touches a piece of uniform with the name tag of his brother Nguyen Duc. With trembling hands he pulls his dead brother's picture from his wallet, showing it around.

The brother's remains are wrapped in a plastic sheet. The package looks like the mummy of a child.

Two black-clad militiamen carry the corpse away on a makeshift bamboo stretcher. Soldier Nguyen My, crying, stumbles behind.

The day before he had found his other brother, Nguyen Doan, in another mass grave. All three had been captured during the Tet offensive. Only Nguyen My escaped.

As the hot day wears on, almost every yard of trench yields a body.

The grave-diggers run short of plastic sheets and bodies are laid out in the sand.

A woman, digging with her fingers through a heap of bones, shrieks and collapses, tears streaming down her face. She wails and beats her hands on the ground, rocking back and forth. After her husband's body is wrapped, she embraces the bundle. Other women drag her away and support her as she follows the stretcherbearers.

Some of the women return after burying one relative, looking for others. One peasant woman found her husband and two sons within two days in different execution trenches.

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Such scenes are repeated along the road, to which the bodies are carried and again at the schoolhouse where they are laid out and lists of identification marks are tacked to the walls.

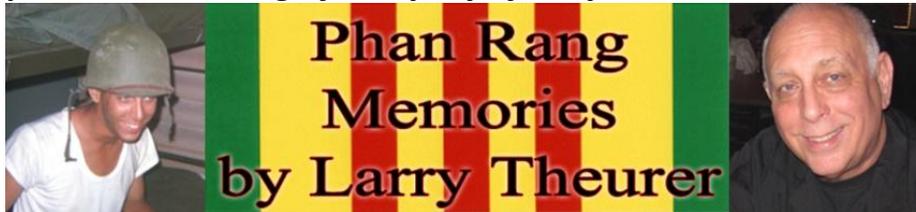
More than 300 unknown victims await a mass funeral unless relatives can identify and bury them in family plots.

The number of persons waiting at the graves has become larger each day.

Many citizens of Hue have tried to believe their relatives were taken away by the Viet Cong to serve as soldiers, laborers or just to be indoctrinated for the Communist cause. Now they know that the Viet Cong meant death.

...continued in Phan Rang News 84.

“Thanks Larry, you’ve invented a literary time machine that takes us back to our time spent at Phan Rang of everyday life beyond the headlines.” ...Doug



F4 PHANTOM - SHOW OFF

One day it was sunny blue sky at Phan Rang, but we could see big black storm hanging over Cam Rahn Bay 25 miles to the North. That base was totally socked in, no planes could land. A F4 Phantom, unable to land there, came to land on our runway. It was a beautiful aircraft.

“He must have noticed all the people watching him from the ramp and wanted to put on a show.”

He stayed overnight. The next day I’m at the line shack and he is going home. The F-4 was completely clean, no fuels tanks, bombs or even bomb racks. He must have noticed all the people watching him from the ramp and wanted to put on a show.

He pulls out on the runway and just like the F-100’s did, stood on the brake, revved the engine way up, released the brakes, started rolling and kicked on the afterburner. Unlike the F-100s and B-57s which took a lot of the 10,000 foot runway to get off the ground, the F-4 lurched forward and from where I was standing looked like it had gone only 30 feet before the nose gear was off the ground.

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Another 300 feet and the rear wheels were off the ground and the pilot just stood the plane straight up like a missile at Cape Kennedy. He climbed up about 1000 feet and lay the plane over on its back upside down, horizontal to the ground. He flew a short ways upside down then rolled it right-side up and took off as fast as it could go east toward the ocean, with the twin engine afterburners roaring.

It was a spectacular show. That guy must have had a big grin on his face.

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’)

To download any of the previous issues of the Phan Rang AB News, just click the hyperlink of the desired issue. I’ve redone all the links and now anyone can access them. These documents are viewable on your Kindle, Ipad in IBooks or on your tablet. Download them and read them at your leisure on your mobile device. If anyone would like any of these newsletters in Word format, just let [me](#) know.

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Click on the logo to make your hotel reservations.

This year’s “Happy Valley” Phan Rang AB reunion is fast approaching. I almost said that it was shaping up to be the best ever, but how do you judge one from the other when really what makes the reunions so special are the people that attend. Naturally not everyone can make it every year and considering we are all getting older things happen to interfere with our plans. There are several notables that I had really hoped to attend; John Rowston had planned on attending our very first reunion in Dayton and now was planning on going to Charleston, but health issues interfered again; John DeCillo was also planning as well and had to cancel at the last minute. Chaplain Mike Mileski’s wife had medical procedures and couldn’t make it. It was Chief Vincent Joseph Miller’s, the creator of the “Happy Valley” Facebook group, vision that we

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should have a reunion, but he never lived long enough to see the fulfillment of his vision, but it would be nice if one of this children could attend.

What is going to make this event so special are the presence of these wonderful people: Tom & Marcia Parsons, Lou & Annette Ruggiero (Ask Lou how to pronounce ‘Pasta Fagioli’.), Laurence & Jan Pace, Ed Downey, Barbara Brandt, Michael & Carla Reed, Ray & Mary Benson, Michangelo Rodriguez, Tom & Susie Affriacano, Lou & Sue Mathern, Skip & Candy Ruedeman, Russell & Sharon Huggins, John & Linda Shrank, David Albright, Rayanne Ginck, Archie & Laurie Irwin-Pinkley (Archie and Doug will be the only Aerial Porters.), Ted & Carol Youwer, Jim & Betsy Kucipeck, David Litke, John & Pat Ploof, Paul Minert, Wayne Rodgers, Gene Pellon and his wife, Jim & Margaret Greenleaf, Delbert & Sharon Ping, Randy & Cindy Weber, Roger & Ina Burchett, Douglas & Joyce Severt, Elizandro & Lillie De Los Santos, Joe & Nancy Kaupa, Bill & Sumire Martin, Fred Ciesla, Henry & Susan Milnark, Bob & Marcia Tucker and don’t forget Warren Schultz, & Dr. Charles & Bonnie Simmons, Tony & Linda Kozumplik, Tom & Mary Strait, Jim & Barbara Burden. Wow, what an impressive bunch of people, but wait I’m not finished yet.

We will also get to meet Joe Schwarzer for the first time. Actually we all know each other even though we’ve never met before. The list goes on: David & Jeremy McGaughey (don’t talk cars with them...you’ll never get away), Frank & Cynthia Square, Kirk & Kathleen Minert (I notice they are not bringing their son Wayne with them this year.), Bob & Marie Agrifoglio, Neil & Patsy Pillar, Patrick & Gwen Ferris, Ron & Robert Starrett, Robert & Sandy Spence, Larry Martino, Bob Kellington (You might want to ask Bob for his autograph, this guy has appeared in more movies than any other Oklahoman since Gene Autry.), Jack Bachman, Ken & Jessica Creasy, George & Pat Varney, Dennis Hawley (He’s had such a fascinating life, he should write a book...oh wait, I think Jack might have covered part of their Phan Rang adventures in his book.) George & Kathleen Haskett, Sam & Ruth Lewis (Sam, has gone above and beyond, what anyone would expect to honor our fallen heroes.) Jack & Judy Anderson (if you have one of Jack’s books and you want an autograph, bring it along with you) and certainly not the last...but the last one I know of as I write this is Joseph Burkhart and hopefully his wife will also be able to make it. Now you can add all of these people to your best friends list because after the reunion **we will all be best friends.**

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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

Kirk Minert: Aircraft Historian

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

(This newsletter was compiled by [Douglas Severt](#), unattributed graphics and photographs by Douglas Severt. I try very hard not to repeat a story and if I do it might be from a different perspective or news source I will always site where that story has previously appeared.)