

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

In this issue:

35th USAF Dispensary Wins AFOUA

C-47 Gooney Bird Corner

Air Commando Pilot Flies 500th Combat Sortie in C-123

Major Sings Out the Praises of ‘Puff, the Magic Dagon’

Question: Did We Make the World a Better Place for Someone?

Named Crew chief of the Month, September

Phan Rang Scuba Diving Club ‘Sea Serpents’ Part 1

Phan Rang Memories by Larry Theurer: Coke Can Mortar

Joe Kaupa “Protect & Serve”: Introduction

More pictures from the 2015 PRAB Charleston Reunion

Authors in Our Midst

Phan Rang AB Staff Members

Plane Lost Over Nui Dat

35th USAF Dispensary Wins AFOUA *(Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, March 27, 1968)*

In ceremonies held last Saturday afternoon, the 35th TFW Dispensary was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

Col. Herndon F. Williams, 35th TFW commander, tied the official pennant in the Dispensary Squadron guideon, as the dispensary staff stood in formation.

The award was for exceptionally meritorious service from December 12, 1965 to June 12, 1967. During this period the 35th USAF Dispensary contributed exceptional medical service to the base and also carried out an extensive building program. Also the Medical Civic Action Program for the squadron was outstanding.

The dispensary handles the medical needs for this base plus supporting the medical program of the famed ‘White Horse’ Division of the Republic of Korea to treat and aid the members of that famed unit, whenever their medical needs go beyond their own field dispensary.

The 35th Dispensary also has a very close working relationship with the 101st Airborne Division and the Number 2 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force.

Maj. Charles R. O’Briant, dispensary commander, commented “I am certainly pleased and honored to receive the award for all the people who are here now and especially on behalf of

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

those who have departed. It was the efforts of many who have now returned home that went into the winning of this award.

I can only say that those of us here now will continue to serve and support in the same manner as those before.

C-47 Gooney Bird Corner



Welcome to the C-47 Goony bird corner where we try and answer all your questions. Road Runner Airlines had two in 1968-68. The white topped was serial 43-15325 and went to Clark AB for MAP to The Philippine Air Force and was scrapped in 1980. The CAMO C-47D 43-48579 was flying out of Da Nang as a trash hauler and sent to Bien Hoa to have 4 mini-gun pods installed. The airplane was the original “SPOOKY”. When we got it, 579 it had been converted back to a trash hauler. 579 was sent back at Davis Monthan in 69-70. This is where the trail goes cold.

Remember that they took low time C-47D's to make them AC-47D.

One of the good things about the way the Gulf War ended in 1991 is, you'd see the Vietnam veterans marching with the Gulf War veterans. *George H. W. Bush*

Air Commando Pilot Flies 500th Combat Sortie in C-123 (*Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, March 27, 1968*)

Air Force Maj. Carl B. Hilland recently carried out his 500th combat sortie in Vietnam as a C-123 transport pilot in the 310th Air Commando Squadron here.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

“We haul practically everything that exists in material form,” said the combat veteran, noting that he has delivered food, livestock, ammunition and petroleum products to Free World Forces, particularly Army Special Forces camps, throughout South Vietnam.

Carrying out an average of eight combat sorties per-day, the C-123 aircraft commander has carried passengers as well as cargo. On medical evacuation missions, he has landed near battlegrounds to pick up casualties and delivered them to military hospitals. His passengers have included Vietnamese civilians as well as members of Free World Forces.

Hilland’s closest call came on February 3, while delivering ammunition to friendly forces at Kon Thum. A recent enemy attack had left obstacles on the runway. These weren’t spotted until the C-123 crew made its final landing approach.

The landing was reconfigured at the last minute, and the crew succeeded in making a “minimum run” landing.

Once on the ground, the crew members found themselves in the middle of a mortar attack.

They decided to speed-off-load their explosive cargo by shoving it off the rear ramp of the C-123, then wasted no time getting the huge transport airborne again.



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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

"Stories worth telling"

Major Sings Out the Praises of 'Puff, the Magic Dragon' (*The Air Force Times*, March 29, 1967)



Aircraft commander of an AC-47, Maj. Robert P. Knopf of Det. 3, 4th Air Commando Sq., at Bien Hoa AB pauses before a mission to play his version of "Puff, the Magic Dragon."

Bien Hoa AB - Maj. Robert P. Knopf is aircraft commander on a bird that has more aliases than the FBI's "most wanted" list. Originally his flying machine was designated the "Skytrain"; later it became affectionately known as the "Gooney Bird" and now airmen speak of it as "Spooky." None of these titles have caught the men's fancy like the handle it received as a combat veteran in Vietnam - "Puff, the Magic Dragon."

Major Knopf has added new lyrics to this famous character's song"

*"Puff, the Magic Dragon, a bird of days long gone.
Come to fly the evening sky in a land called Vietnam.
Puff, the Magic Dragon, came across the sea
To write its name with tongues of flames in the hearts of all VC."*

When Bob Knopf first sat down with his guitar to tell his version of the legend of Puff. Bob Knopf strums it this way:

*"When grunts are deep in trouble, and
Charlie's all around,
The Fox Mike cries in to the skies, we need
fire on the ground.
The VC's mortal terror starts when the
minis cry*

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

*And Their dragon’s breath of sudden death
comes streaming from the sky.
Yes, Puff will still be flying from I Corp down
to Four Till Charlie’s gone and the evening
calm is like the year before,
But I’ll remember always the ground troops
grateful cry
When fire streamed and Charlie screamed
at that dragon in the sky.”*

Knopf closes with the lament of all airmen who are finishing their year of combat in this dragon of many names:

*“Now dragons live forever, and Puff is just
the same.
The Gooney Bird will still be heard when
Grandpa is my name.
But it will have to roam these skies with
new friends - not with me.
I’m going home, no more to roam in that
land across the sea.”*

Buddy King: While we done our time in Phan Rang, did we make the world any better for some one.
--

Jim Erixson: While at Phan Rang I felt like we were moving freight and passengers round and round and not getting anywhere, but I know now when the C-123 or C-130 landed at their destinations those who received the equipment were glad to receive fresh supplies. So, yes I think we made a difference. I hear it every day from the Marines and Army guys at the 40 et 8 who say that when these aircraft arrived it a site for sore eyes. I too also receive thanks for our service from many people when they find out that I served in Nam.
--

Alexander Zion: I’m proud of the fact that as a K-9 Handler on the perimeter of Phan Rang, along with about 60 other handlers and security Flight personnel every night, that we saved lives by not allowing ‘Charlie’ to ever successfully penetrate us and

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

attack the base from May 66-67.

John Ryan: It was pointed out a while back on this page that the Security Police were pretty much forgotten. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the people and dogs that provided a safe and secure environment for the rest of us to do whatever our job was. Everyone performed their own part with professionalism and dignity.

Joe Kaupa: Your right the security police that worked the perimeter were somewhat forgotten. From the guys working the wire during the day to the night guys but you know what we are all BROTHERS and no matter where you worked we all did our job and as far as the security policeman goes our job was to protect the lives of the men and women on the base along with the aircraft and everything else. No matter what your job was there you did it and it was a combined effort. I am so very proud of all my brothers who served in Vietnam, especially all my Phan Rang Brothers.

Sam Lewis: Amen SP Brothers!

Doug Severt: The guys working at the Aerial Ports were responsible for the movement of all passengers and cargo in-country. Cargo included everything from POL in bladders, food supplies and a lot of that was fresh flown in from Dalat. Ammunition, vehicles, live stock and anything else needed to sustain the war fighting machine. For many locations that we serviced from Phan Rang airlift was their only means of resupply while others may have had roads, but travel on them was often very risky so airlift was preferred. Thousands of Vietnamese troops and their families along with their household goods and live stock were airlifted in and out of Phan Rang and most importantly the first leg of your journey to that freedom bird was made from the passenger terminal at the Aerial Port Squadron.

“Safety is every bit as important here as it is in the United States.” ...Col. James A. Wilson commander, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing

Named Crew chief of the Month, September (*Phan Fare, The Phan Rang Weekly, November 1, 1967*)

The 35th Tactical Fighter Squadron selected the Crew Chief of the Month of September (1967) recently.

Named to the position was Sergeant David A. Grandstaff.

Sergeant Grandstaff has been at Phan Rang since May of 1967.

Along with the honor goes a \$25 United States Savings Bond.

Phan Rang Scuba Diving Club



Phan Rang AB Scuba Club members pose for a group picture. All are unidentified except Jimmy L. Jenkins second from the right with his jacket on.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

"Stories worth telling"



The club house of the Phan Rang AB Scuba Diving Club.



Jimmy L. Jenkins with other Phan Rang AB Scuba Diving club members stands on the deck of a South Vietnamese river boat while out on a dive to a reef.



Members of the Phan Rang Scuba Diving Club diving around a pier in the South China Sea.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

(Note: Jimmy L. Jenkins shared with me more pictures and tales of the Phan Rang AB Scuba Diving Club and I will share them with you in a subsequent issue. Doug)



COKE CAN MORTAR

One day I and another guy arrived at the new white arm/de-arm shack at the North end of the runway to find two things, a fellow from the F-100 squadron out there to arm those aircraft and an empty 2.75in rocket pod on the ground.

Finding the rocket pod was very odd because it normally would have gone back to the revetments with the aircraft after de-arm to be reloaded and not detached from the plane.

“Did you know a Coke can fits perfectly inside a rocket tube?”

The bomb pylons on a swept wing F-100 contain a plunger. When the bomb is dropped, a small explosive cartridge atop the plunger fires and kicks the bomb away from the plane so that it won't contact and damage the swept wing. The F-100 weapons guy at the shed with us possessed a bucket of those cartridges. The straight wing B-57s did not need them.

Did you know a Coke can fits perfectly inside a rocket tube? Well it does!

We propped the rocket pod vertically up against the shack.

We cut open the F-100 pylon cartridges and poured the black cylindrical pellets inside them into the top of a Coke can.

Then we inserted a lit cigarette into the can and dropped the can upside down into a rocket tube.

After repeating this process numerous times, increasing the number of pellets in the Coke can each time, we got nervous and decided to stop our fun because we were firing those cans so astonishingly high we felt sure the control tower could see them and we would be getting a visit by the Air Police.



Introduction

A Family Perspective

Nancy: The Wife of a Police Officer

I was surprised that Joe asked me to write my thoughts and feelings in his book. It caught me off guard, but here are just a few that come to mind.

While Joe was in the military, I was very happy. We made many good, lifelong friends. Because no one had family in the surrounding area at holiday times, etc., we would get together with friends, who, at times were like family. Remember, this was back when there were no cell phones, I-pods or computers with Skyping. If we called home, it was an expensive, long distance phone call so that was a once-a-month luxury. My mother would only stay on the line for three minutes because rates went up after that amount of time. We were stationed at Bossier Base in Louisiana and Whiteman AFB in Missouri. Life was very good for Joe, me, Scott and Debra until Joe received orders to go to Vietnam.

Joe helped the kids and me move into my mother's house where my grandfather also lived. So we had four generations living under one roof. I know we all had a hard time adjusting, but I was very thankful to be with loved ones during this difficult time. Joe's parents and two brothers lived about five miles away, and I was welcome there anytime, and every once in a while I would spend a week-end with them. It gave everyone a break. I seldom watched the news on TV because the news media always showed scenes of Americans being wounded or killed in Vietnam. Too often viewers would see their loved one being injured or killed on TV. I lived everyday with the thought that Joe could be killed, and I did not want to witness it on TV. During Joe's tour in Vietnam there was a young local girl whose husband was killed in Vietnam. I felt so sorry for her, but there was nothing anyone could say or do, other than sit with her at the mortuary those long days and nights. So that is what I did. I kept thinking that could be Joe in that casket.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

During the summer, Joe's older brother Dave would invite me to go out in his boat on the Mississippi River for a day of sun and fun. It was a very nice change of pace, and, for a few hours, Vietnam was not on my mind.

Joe called me a couple of times from Vietnam and as much as I enjoyed hearing his voice, it was that much harder when we hung up. I was so excited when Joe wrote me that I should meet him in Hawaii for R&R (rest and relaxation) in December. What a Christmas present! In fact, on our first date we talked about honeymooning in Hawaii. After three years we were going to have our honeymoon! It was worth the wait. It was so nice to hold him and be held in his arms again. But it was extremely hard to go our separate ways again. I could hardly wait until May when our family could be together again. In May when Joe returned, life was good, and we returned to being a family again.

However, at Whiteman Air Force Base, Joe's Security Police duties were out at a Missile site. He would be gone three days/nights and home two days/nights. It was hard when he was gone, but I knew he was safe where he was. After being the only person to make family decisions for a year, I had a hard time adjusting to Joe taking over the reins now that we were both together again. However, Joe took control, contacted the base chaplain, and brought me back to reality. Life was back to normal, and we were once more, a happy family.

When Joe got out of the Air Force and landed a job with the Wabasha County Sheriff's Office in Wabasha, I was so' happy for him. That was his lifelong dream. I opened a licensed day care in our home which I operated for fifteen years. I was not out in the public which made it easier for me because I wasn't confronted by people about the case or cases Joe was working on at the time. I was very happy and proud to be a police officer's wife, a mother, and a day care mom.

Nevertheless, it wasn't always easy being a cop's wife. Not everyone's spouse goes to work wearing a gun. There was always that thought in the back of my mind that Joe would be injured or worse, would not be coming home after his shift. Many nights when he was late coming home, I would worry that something awful had happened to him. It was such a relief when I would see or hear him pull into our driveway. I could then relax and sleep soundly.

I always tried to be there for Joe to vent his anger and frustrations. But then if people asked about things that Joe was involved with, I would always say I knew nothing about it. God forgive me, I guess I became a good liar. I learned from the beginning of our marriage that a security police/cops wife should never discuss what they are told or happened to hear outside the law enforcement family.

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

Most people were very nice, but there were some who sneered at me, but the way I looked at it was they did what they did and that was their choice. I have nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, it made me that much prouder of Joe and his fellow officers.

It also was good to get together with other police officers wives, and now and then we would have our own house parties. At first it was very hard for me to understand why Joe didn't want to join any organizations or groups or later quit them. We both joined the American Legion, but due to his job and being a Vietnam Vet, Joe never wanted to go there to socialize. If we did go out, it was with our neighbors who were the best friends and understood Joe's job. We would always go out of town so Joe would not be harassed for arresting this guy or for giving so and so a ticket.

When Joe was working for the sheriff's office, more times than not he would be scheduled to work holidays. The kids and I would go to either my mother's or his parents' house for the holiday dinner. Since they both lived in Wabasha County, Joe would come to eat with the family if all was quite. When he was Chief of Police of Plainview, I would fix the holiday meal and have both his family and mine for the meal. That way we would all be together. Joe felt since he was the Chief and our kids were getting older, he would take the duty for the day, giving his younger officers the day at home with their kids. However, they all knew if Joe needed assistance, he would call them, and they were ready to be there for him any time, day or night.

I will always remember one particular night. The family was asleep, when Joe jumped out of bed, grabbed his gun and told me to stay in bed. He searched through the house. When he came back to the bedroom, he explained that a person he sent to prison, who had threatened to kill him, was just released. When he heard something in our basement, he thought about the threat immediately. I always worried about that, but I guess that is part of being a police officer's wife. I put a lot of faith and hope in God, and he has been there for us through our entire lives.

During our forty-eight years of marriage I have always been so very proud of Joe and of our children. He has always been fair to everyone. No matter if they were a drunk, on drugs, a thief or an outstanding citizen of the community, he was always fair. He also has a lot of compassion for everyone, no matter the circumstances. I could not have married a better person. Looking back at the time we were separated during Joe's tour in Vietnam, we became closer and more in love. I guess the old saying "Distance makes the heart grow fonder" was very true for us.

Joe, Thank You for putting up with me all these years and I hope, many more. I have loved you since our first date and always will. You are a wonderful man,

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

"Stories worth telling"

partner and father. I am proud to be your wife and mother of our children. I love you very much and look forward to growing older with you.



More pictures from the 2015 PRAB Charleston Reunion



From left to right: Elizandro and Lillie De Los Santos, Linda and Danny Navey, Lisa Amador and Robert Kellington. Photo by Elizandro De Los Santos

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”



Barbara Brandt preparing the POW/MIA table. Photo by Elizandro De Los Santos



Lou and Annette Ruggiero talking to the pilot of the C-17, Capt. Joshua Bohun. Photo by John Henniger.

Authors in Our Midst *(If anyone knows of any other authors from our group please let me know and I will add them.)*

Jack Anderson: [Vietnam Remembrances](#)

Joe Kaupa: [Protect and Serve: One Man's Journey from Vietnam to Law Enforcement](#)

Robert Chapple: [Tales of Bien Hoa](#) and [Tales of Phan Rang](#)

Margorie Hanson: [Brave Warriors, Humble Heroes: A Vietnam War Story](#)

Vic Markle: [Forgotten Moments Forgotten People](#)

Mike Trahan: [The Gift: The Air Force Years](#); [The Gift Part Two - The Air Force Years](#); and [Home Again: Short Story](#)

Rob Morris: [Untold Valor](#); [Marinell](#); [The Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond: The 95th Bomb Group in War and Peace](#); [Prisoner of the Swiss](#); [I'll Be Seeing You](#) and [Combat Bombardier: Memoirs of Two Combat Tour in the Skies Over Europe in World War Two](#)

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

“Stories worth telling”

Robert Kellington: ‘Bob’ is a man of many talents. Besides being an ‘Old Chief’ he is an author, artist, actor and cowboy. I don’t believe any of his writings have been published, but I have a few of them and will feature them in future issues of the Phan Rang News.

PHAN RANG STAFF MEMBERS

Joseph Burkhart: Master of Ceremonies

Robert Kellington: Tour Coordinator

Jack Anderson: Treasure

Lou Ruggerio: Site coordinator/Contract negotiator

Douglas Severt: Reunion Coordinator

Ed Downey/Barbara Brandt: Ceremonies

Christopher Boles: Photographer

Bob Tucker: Keeper of the Rolls

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

Jim Erixson: Associate Chaplain (**New**)

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS

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

**“We expected nuthin’ in Vietnam when we got home-nuthin’s what
we got”**

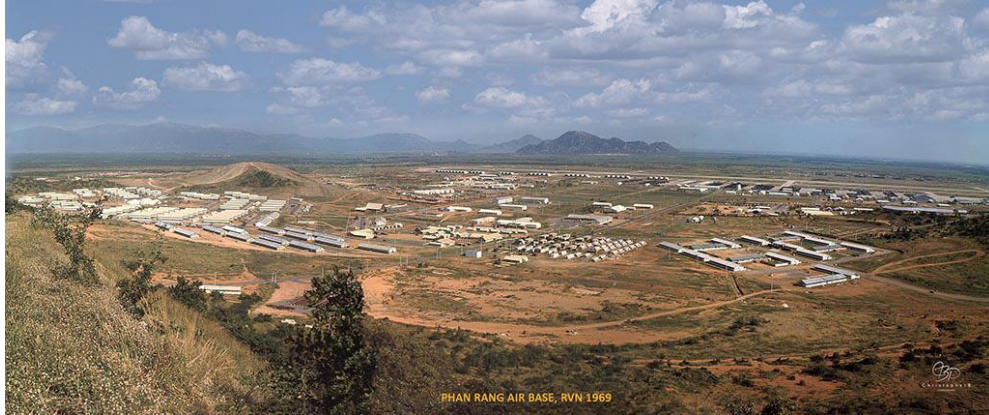
Now we have each other!

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 89

"Stories worth telling"

PHAN RANG AB PANORAMA 1969



POST CONVENTION SPECIAL ONLY

(Offer extended to November 15, 2015)

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS AVAILABLE, INCLUDES TAX AND SHIPPING DIRECT (USA ONLY)

16 x 48 \$125 (\$180 value) Mounting add \$65

12 X 36* \$75 (\$100 value) Mounting add \$25

8 x 24 \$40 (\$55 value) Mounting add \$18

5 x 15 \$20 (\$35 value) Mounting add \$12

Border: YES NO ¼" white border for matt framing (no charge)

Finish: LUSTRE GLOSSY (no charge) circle one

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE NUMBER () _____

EMAIL: _____

CREDIT CARD: MASTER CARD VISA DISCOVERY (CIRCLE ONE)

NUMBER: _____

NAME ON CARD: _____

EXP DATE _____ SECURITY CODE _____

CHECKS MADE OUT TO: CHRISTOPHER B PHOTOGRAPHY, 3235 Meadow Oak Drive,
Cottonwood, CA 96022

Telephone orders: **530-410-4866**

Plane Lost Over Nui Dat (*Phan Fare, 27 March 1968*)

The engine burst into life. The plane roared to the end of the runway and soared into the expanse of sky. Higher and higher the sleek-winged craft winged. Suddenly strong updrafts caught the craft. The pilot and crew fought the controls to keep the winged monitor in flight.



Still stronger currents arose, carrying the plane toward the peaks of the mountains. As last-ditch attempts were made to save the plane, it disappeared from sight, never to be seen again at its beloved base.

The lone engines drone grew more and more faint...if anyone sees LAC Brian Grebert's radio-controlled model plane, which soared over the microwave tower on Sunday, please call Kangaroo Switch.

This newsletter was compiled and published by [Douglas Severt](#).

