

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 96

“Stories worth telling”

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Serving Our Country

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2016 Reunion Information

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Telephone: 271-8000

Phoenix, Arizona, Thursday, December 18, 1969

(Six Sections, 110 Pages)

Phan Rang Reflects Reality of War (*The Arizona Republic, December 18, 1969*)

Move out, and leave all that concrete and manicured grass? Another in a series about Barry Goldwater's inspection of the war in Vietnam describes his visit to a big airfield and to Cam Ranh Bay.

PHAN RANG—The stunning yet unwritten reality of America's current posture in the Vietnam war is the permanency of its bases.

"My God" said Sen. Barry Goldwater on seeing Phan Rang, 150 miles northeast of Saigon. "If we started to bug out of here as fast as we could, it would take us 18 months to undo what we've built."

As he was given a tour of this major airdrome, time and again Goldwater exclaimed, "You can't find any military base as good as this in the states!"

Barracks of brick have replaced the canvas shelters. Streets are paved around well-trimmed lawns. Squadrons of Phantom fighters and other late-type aircraft crouch under concrete hangars, each of which cost \$30,000. Air conditioning is beginning to relieve the tropic climate. Jeeps are giving way to sedans and buses. Without exaggeration, Luke and Williams bases in Arizona are less comfortable and less attractive than spic-span, modern Phan Rang.

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This is not to say the troops and airmen on and around the Phan Rang airfield are removed from the war.

Before last Jan. 26, the enemy was called "Charlie." That was the night of the first rocket attack. Since then, the enemy has been respectfully nicknamed "Mr. Charles." Some 30 times the base has been struck by heavy rockets—one even blowing up the latrine of the 615th Bobcats fighter squadron led by Lt. Col. Allan Aaronson of Phoenix.

Mr. Charles has four base camps as close to Phan Rang as Camelback Mountain is to downtown Phoenix. His rocketeers are deeply entrenched in caves. Mr. Charles spreads leaflets promising \$40,000 American for the capture of an American colonel. Mr. Charles periodically creeps to within 4 miles of the runway and potshoots at traffic in the Phan Rang pattern.

On missions to such hostile targets as Bu Prang and Due Lap pilots encounter curtains of massed small-arms fire and possibly radar-guided machine guns. And the squadrons have taken their losses.

Yet operating rules are such that not a shot can be fired by an American airman until approved by a friendly (it is assumed) province chief. No bomb can be dropped without the chief's permission, and then only under the direction of a forward air control plane to mark the target.

"If we were in the air and spotted a Viet cong parade complete with flags, and they were shooting at us we could not expend our ordnance," Goldwater was told by a high-ranking Phan Rang officer. "We would have to gain clearance from the province chief."

The insecurity of the countryside confines Phan Rang's population behind bristling perimeters of barbed wire and mines. The loneliness of Phan Rang duty adds to the importance of the base MARS station, through which American servicemen and civilians can radio-telephone home at low cost.



Republic Photos by Don Dodera

Sen. Barry Goldwater with some of 60 Arizona GI's at lunch at Phan Rang base.

Word was passed of Goldwater's visit and about 60 men from Arizona joined the senator for lunch — a feast of fried chicken and ice cream.

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"I thought I'd lose weight on this trip," Goldwater told the men. "But you guys eat so well, I'm going on a diet when I get home." Goldwater also provoked much laughter with his comment, "I know a new way the President can end the war. Just bring back all the Arizona boys, and there wouldn't be anybody left to do the job here."

Thirty miles north of Phan Rang on the coast of the South China Sea is the base of all American bases: Cam Ranh Bay.

On a 70 - square - mile sand peninsula (The Texas Cat Box) America has facilities and stores worth \$6 billion. That is, repeat, \$6 billion.

The ammo dump alone is 7 square miles: enough to sustain three times the firepower of the Korean War. Onto new piers seagoing ships discharged their "beans, bullets and black oil," the motto of the quartermasters. Runways of concrete 18 inches thick and 2 miles long have replaced the first aluminum strip, and today Cam Ranh airfield is so busy, said the base commander, "On the few days weather closes our field, air traffic backs up all the way to Dover, Delaware."

At Cam Ranh, statistics are like typographical lice in mating season: for the 30,000 Americans in the area, there are laundries, movies, barracks and mess halls — and even across the unstable dunes of Cam Ranh, the highways are of asphalt. Through Cam Ranh's aerial port are processed 5,000 passengers per day.

Here again, the enemy seems to have drawn closer in the four years of massive American effort in Vietnam. The night before Sen. Goldwater's arrival at Cam Ranh, 6 rockets struck the air field, frightening the Christy Minstrels USO tour, and killing a sailor as he sprinted for his duty post.

For all the power of Cam Ranh, the coastal roads south and north are less secure than they were in 1966. Daytime is bad news. After dark nobody ventures into the land of Mr. Charles. On a little mountain within sight of the Cam Ranh tower is a 1,000-man North Vietnamese Army sapper regiment. From this base camp came the demolition teams who early this year ran through 6th Convalescent Hospital, rolling satchel charges into the wards, killing 2 Americans and wounding 57.

It is at Cam Ranh that the enormity of America's expenditure in Vietnam is most apparent, and on his first visit to "America's Singapore," Sen. Goldwater's impression was typical: "Staying in this war may be unpleasant to some people at home, but I can't see us just walking away, and leaving this. Ever."

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Comments from Facebook:

Bob Tucker: I was there when Goldwater came in 69 or 70. I didn't see him. They took him to eat at the Provider chow hall I think. They should have taken him to Baston to see what the majority of us were eating! Typical politics by the Air Force. I believe he came to look at the MARS station as he was very involved in that.

Lee Moore: Whenever a call home thru a MARS station it was relayed by Sen. Goldwater's ham radio station, he paid for the long distance telephone call from there to the calls destination.

Gary Stone: One call I made thru MARS the ham operator making the call was Goldwater and the reason I know was the MARS operator told me the call was paid for by him.

Ted Trojanowski: Sen Goldwater's station call sign was AFA7UGA. I will never forget it. I ran a bunch of calls for guys thru his station when I was at Phan Rang.

Douglas Farmer: I made one call to Alabama while I was there, and he paid for my call also. I always liked him

Chris Kleckner: I like the headline proclaiming "Barry Goldwater is amazed at seeing Phan Rang" and wonder what he thought when the country was overrun a few years later allowing the enemy to take possession. All that happened pretty fast in April of '75 and I'm sure a lot of heads were spinning.

366th Loves Angels *(Alamogordo (N.M.) Daily News, Sunday, June 12, 1966)*

By LT. BILL SPENCER

PHAN RANG AB, Viet Nam Air Force men of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing at the Phan Rang air base in Viet Nam are in love with a special band of Angels.



Living up to promises to provide “ the ‘necessities’ of a combat tour such as fruit cake and home-baked cookies,” the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps Angel Flight at New Mexico State University sent a seven-cubic foot box of home-baked cookies. The men are “eating it up” quite literally.

The cookies, baked in all sizes, shapes and flavors, made the long

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journey intact from campus ovens in Las Cruces, N.M., to the sun-baked tents at Phan Rang. In less than an hour after the cookies arrived, Col. George Weart, wing vice-commander, distributed them on the flight-line to pilots, maintenance men and support personnel.

The promise, which the Angels made as their primary service project for 1966, began with formal adoption of the 366th Wing at Holloman before it was deployed to Viet Nam.

While at Holloman, Jeanie Sturtz, Angel Flight commander, proclaimed that since the Angels at NMSU “ feel a particular closeness to the fighting men the 366th, as adopted sons our state.... we do resolve support the men of the fighting squadrons of the 366th TFW and create a special place in our hearts and minds for these defenders of our opportunity to receive to receive an education in the state of New Mexico.

Terms of the “adoption” also include sending warm letters of encouragement and aid and assistance in civic action projects undertaken by the wing.

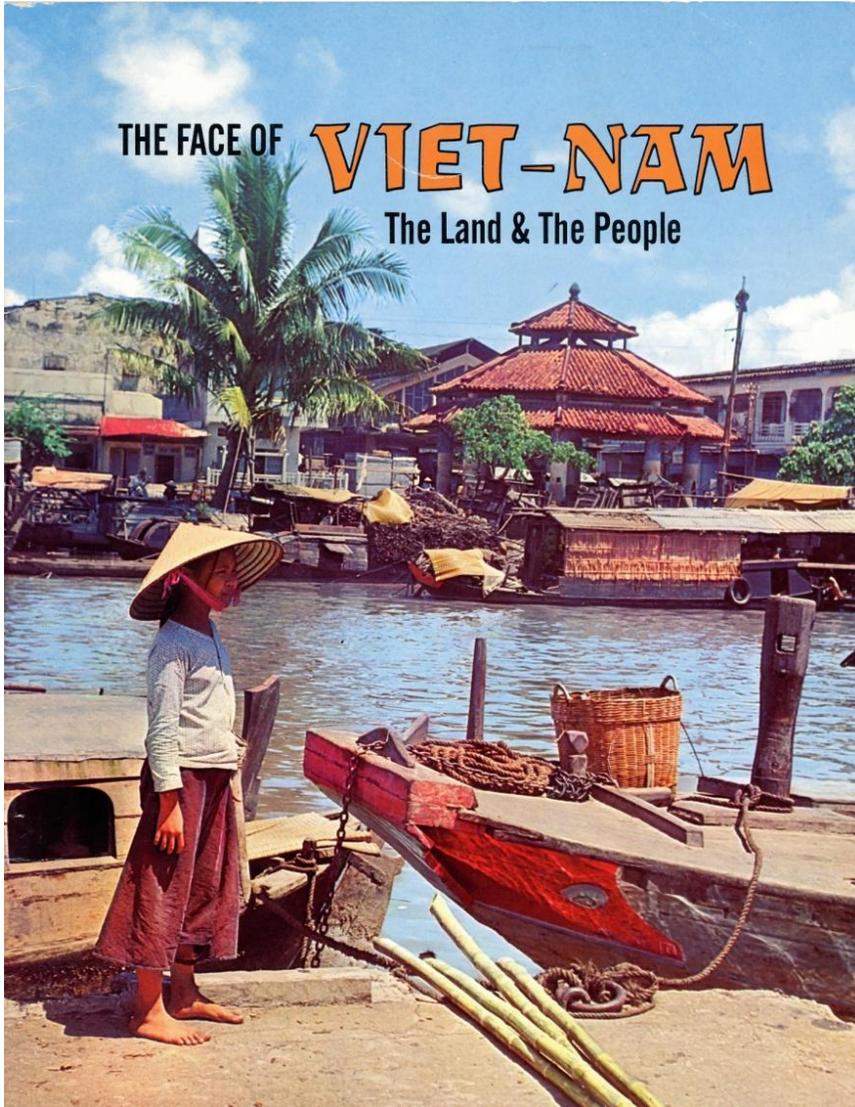


COOKIE BREAK— Air Force Col. George S. Weart, 366th Tactical Fighter Wing commander, passes out bags of cookies and cakes to 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron pilots and maintenance and support men at Phan Rang Air Base, Viet Nam. The cookies came from Angel Flight members at New Mexico State University. Shown receiving goodies are Copt. Jimmie A. McKensie, 33, of Holloman, at center, and Capt. Jimmy G. Martin, 31, of Commerce, Tex., at right, while two unidentified non-coms who already have received gifts watch the distribution. (USAF Photo)

The Face of Viet-Nam - The Land & the People (Part 1)

SOUTH VIET-NAM

Land of Contracts



South Viet-Nam — a thousand miles long; its greatest width a seventh of that. Sub-tropical heat; and the bitter nights of mile-high mountains.

Sophisticated citizens of Saigon, the Paris of the Orient"; hardy farmers of the lowlands; mountain tribes called "savages" by city-dwellers. 800,000 Confucian Chinese and more than a million Catholics; Buddhists, Taoists, Mohammedans, and a "new" religion embracing them all. These are its people.

Villagers distrust central government yet fight vigorously for their country; there is compulsory education of

children but mountain tribes may not understand the language of a tribe ten miles away; tigers and elephants are hunted on high plateaus, and the white sand beaches welcome sunbathers.

City restaurants with French cuisine also serve coagulated pork blood with chopped heart, liver, and intestines; French wines and rice wine compete on equal terms. City streets are used to

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Western clothing and colorful monks' robes; and black or blue loose cotton shirts and trousers brush against white satin tunics, split to the waist, and satin trousers.

Countrymen carry their produce to market in wicker baskets, suspended from a bamboo pole across the shoulders; but there are aircraft everywhere. Railroad lines have rusted away, but oxen pull heavy loads.

South Viet-Nam — land of contrasts and variety . . . melting-pot of old and new, of many faiths and customs, of towering mountains and warm beaches. A land of terror and hope. A battleground for the Free World's fight against the tyranny of Communism.

Here is a country with a thousand miles of coastline on the South China Sea, and its other border thirty to 130 miles away. Here is a sub-tropical climate in most of its area, and bitter cold nights in its mile-high highlands.

Here are diverse peoples: the sophisticated city-dwellers of Saigon, "the Paris of the Orient"; simple, hard-working farmers; highland Montagnards with their own languages and customs; eight hundred thousand Chinese, largely concentrated in Saigon's suburb of Cholon.

Here are Confucians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Catholics, Taoists, Christian Protestants, and a religion called Cao Dai which is composed of many of the others.

Here are village governments, each composed of numerous tiny hamlets, for many years almost untouched by any central government and inclined to be opposed to central authority of any kind — government or Viet Cong.

Here is a country with its railroads inoperative because of guerrilla action, its highways useable only by armed convoys, depending upon airlifts (and oxen) for vital transport.

Here is South Viet-Nam, a land of gentle, peaceful people -- but the battleground where the destiny of hundreds of millions will be determined in the war of Communism against the Free World.

THE PEOPLE



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Vietnamese are a reserved and courteous people, small in stature but well proportioned, of many religions and occupations — but all intensely loyal to family and respectful of the aged.

The busy upper scene shows many manners of dress, from the women's traditional "Ao Dai" of long trousers under a long-sleeved tunic slit from hem to waist, to the working people and farmers in their loose black trousers and conical straw hats.

The smiling girls look and dress much like school-girls anywhere, but at high school age they will wear the "Ao Dai" and become young ladies of the great middle class.

The market scene has, in the foreground, a farm woman with her "Don Ganh" — two wicker baskets suspended from a pole which she carries across her shoulders. The small boy, striding so purposefully, could be a small boy anywhere engaged in his own important affairs.

City people are much more sophisticated than the farmers and villagers, due largely to their long association with the French. All schools teach French or English as a "second language", and compulsory education for the first three grades is generally observed except in the remote highland areas.

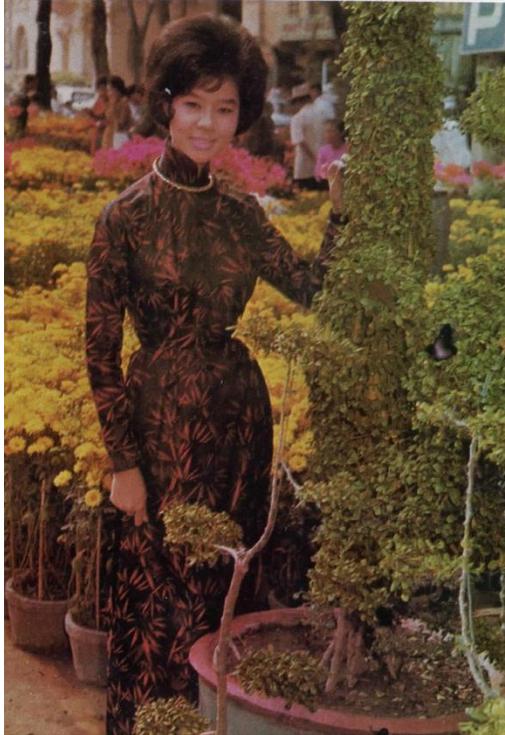
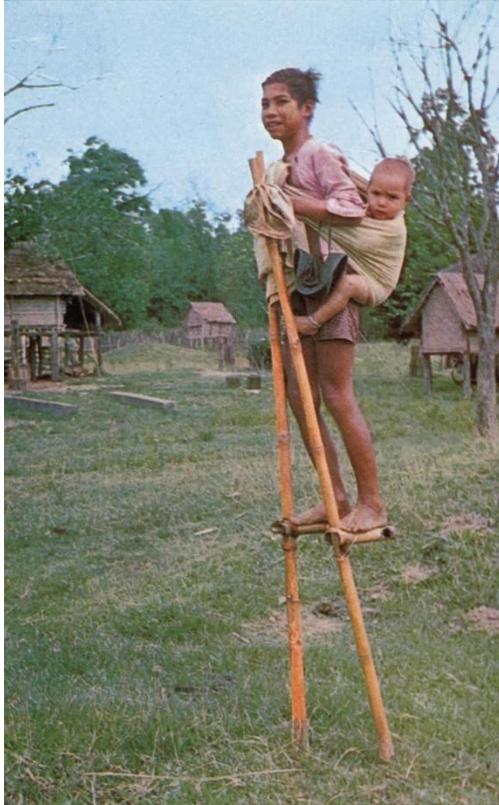
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A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Vietnamese are not all the same, as these pictures indicate.

Top right is a fairly prosperous farm couple, bringing produce into the city with a horse-drawn cart. Since vegetables are a very important part of the diet, there are many truck-gardeners around the urban areas.

Top left is a Montagnard lad, giving his small brother a thrilling ride on stilts. The Montagnard tribes are called "mois", meaning savages, by the city dwellers and inhabit the central mountainous region. They are composed of many tribes with tribal languages of their own.

Quite different from the people above is the young lady in a Saigon flower market, wearing the traditional Ao Dai costume in figured silk. No doubt her home is a house of French style, and she probably speaks both French and English as well as Vietnamese.

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Airman 1/C **Charles E. Floyd** To Vietnam (*The Burnet Bulletin, Thursday, July 6, 1967*) A1/C Charles E. Floyd, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Floyd Route 1, Burnet, has been home on 30 day leave. He reported to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina for three weeks school before going to Phan Rang Air Force Base, Viet Nam. Airman Floyd a graduate of Marble Falls High School has been in the US Air Force since October 31, 1964.

(*The Messenger, Athens, Ohio, Thursday October 10, 1968*) S. Sgt. **David C. Ward**, son Mr. and Mrs. Jesse J. Ward Middleport Route I, is on duty Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. Sergeant Ward is an ejection systems technician. He attended Rutland High School. Before his arrival in Vietnam, he was assigned at Tyndall AFB, Fla.

(*The Messenger, Athens, Ohio, Thursday October 10, 1968*) S. Sgt. **Joseph D. Spaulding**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Spaulding of Saco, Maine, has been named Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer in his unit at Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam. Sergeant Spaulding is aircraft maintenance technician. His wife, Maxine, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Bailey of Nelsonville Route I.

(*The Altoona Mirror, Altoona Pennsylvania, Friday, March 12, 1971*) S.Sgt **Clinton J. Eckenrode** Vietnam - S.Sgt Clinton J. Eckenrode, son of Mrs. Grace Eckenrode of Ebensburg, RD 1, has received the Air Force Commendation Medal at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sgt. Eckenrode, an aircraft engine maintenance technician, was cited for meritorious service at Eglin AFB, Fla. He is

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now assigned at Phan Rang with a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. The sergeant is a 1954 graduate of Ebensburn Cambria High School. His wife, Joyce is the daughter of Mrs. Catherine Brown of Conemaugh Rd 1.

(The Mountain Democrat-Times, Placerville, California, Thursday, January 23, 1969) Pacific Air Forces sergeant sees duty at Phan Rang base Staff sergeant **Vernon W. Lichtenberg**, son of Walt Lichtenberg of Shingle Springs, is on duty at Phan Rang Air base, Vietnam. Sergeant Lichtenberg, an aircraft instrument technician is a member of the Pacific Air Forces. Before his arrival in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to Nellis Air Force base, Nevada.

Sergeant Housman receives the Air Force Outstanding Unit award. On duty with the 1964th Communications group at Phan Rang Air Base, South Viet Nam, Sergeant **John A. Housman**, son of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Housman of 16426 University Court, South Holland. Sgt Housman is a radio operator. *(The Tribune, Thursday, March 7, 1968)*

Air Force S.Sgt **Thomas R. Calhoun**, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Calhoun of Oak Grove, is on duty at Phan Rang AB, Vietnam. Sgt Calhoun is an aircraft mechanic with a unit of the Pacific Air Forces. His wife, Reba is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pat Richards of Benton, Ark. *(Monroe News-Star, Thursday, April 15, 1971)*

Rhett O. Webber at Phan Rang AB. The safe takeoff and landing of aircraft using either of the two runways at Phan Rang Air Base in Vietnam, is the job of S.Sgt. Rhett O. Webber of Knoxville. Situated in a glass walled room atop a five-story tower resembling a lighthouse, Sergeant Webber works to keep in communication with aircraft landing, taxiing, or taking off. If an aircraft is unable to land visually due to darkness or bad weather, he brings it in by radar with the aid of the Ground Control Approach system. The 24-year-old air traffic controller, son of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Webber of Knoxville is assigned to the 1882nd Communications Squadron at Phan Rang. A graduate of Brunswick High School, Sergeant Webber attended Louisiana State University at Alexandria, La. *(The News, Frederick, Maryland, Wednesday, March 15, 1967.)*

PHAN RANG. South Vietnam— U. S. Air Force doctor Capt. **John J. Jacisin**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank A Jacisin, 110 N. Mansfield, St., Ironwood, has received the Bronze Star Medal at Phan Rang Air Base. South Vietnam. Dr. Jacisin was cited for meritorious service with the 35th USAF Dispensary at Phan Rang. A 1960 graduate of Luther L. Wright High School, he received his B. S. and M. D. degree from the University of Michigan. His wife is the former Huynh Thi Hoa from Vietnam. Colonel Gregg P. Nolan Jr., commander of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, made the presentation. *(Ironwood Daily Globe, Monday, August 2, 1971)*



“Protect & Serve” A True Life Story by Joe Kaupa

The Making of a Soldier

June 10, 1963, came around fast for me. The Air Force recruiter and two other guys, one from Lake City and one from Kenyon, rode together with me to the Induction Center in Minneapolis, about 100 miles away. The next morning we three recruits were scheduled for our physicals. After bending over for the doctor, we were put through a shot line and then went to another room where we took the oath to defend our country. I was told that my AFC (Air Force Classification), or job, after basic training would be Air Policeman. I was really excited about that because I wanted to be a police officer.

It was about 9:00 p.m. when a number of us guys boarded a civilian plane heading for Texas to Lakeland AFB to begin our eight weeks of basic training. I remember arriving at the airport about 3:00 a.m. or 4:00 a.m. in the morning, wondering what was ahead for and for the next eight weeks. We got off the plane and were met by a DI (Drill Instructor). He was very polite in the airport terminal, but once we got to the bus that took us to the airbase everything changed. His attitude changed, and he started yelling, swearing, and calling us names. I thought to myself, "What the Hell did I just get into." Once we arrived at the base we were taken to the barracks area and told to get into formation. I thought, what does that mean. I learned very quickly what that means. We were assigned to an open bay barracks and our bunks. Our few belongings were marked and taken from us, underwear and all, except the clothes on our back. We again got into formation and we marched to the base supply area where we were issued combat boots, fatigues, green underwear, socks, bedding and dust covers, just everything. We would no longer wear any civilian clothes. From there we marched to the barber shop and we all had our heads shaved. Some of the guys had really long and wavy hair and the DI would make fun of them as they were having their head shaved. The barbers would also make comments and laugh as they were shaving heads. It was about 10:00 a.m. in the morning by this time and everyone was very tired. We had no sleep since the day before.

The next stop was to the medics to get shots.

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The next stop was to the medics to get shots. When we arrived, we were told to get into a single line. I remember the DI telling us that when we go through the shot line DO NOT move your arms. There were medics on each side of the person, and the shots were given not by a needle but by an air gun. The guy in front of me moved his right arm as the medics hit him with the shot gun. The pressure coming out of the gun slit his arm open about 5 inches long. He yelled and started screaming. There was blood everywhere; he had a wide open wound. The medics treated him and called for a base ambulance. I remember the DI yelling at him and the rest of us, "Didn't I tell you fuck heads, not to move." He really liked that four letter word.

It was around noon time when we were done and got back into formation ready to march again. The DI came up to me and said, "Boy, you're going to be my Road Guard because you asshole, are so short." I will never forget that. A road guard's job was to go ahead of the marching troops and stop traffic at each intersection. We marched over to the chow hall and got in a single line and were told to look straight ahead and keep moving, facing the servers. You could not even see what they were giving us; they would just slap it on your plate. Then we were told to stand at a long table at attention. Once everyone got their food, we were told to sit. We all started to eat. All of a sudden the DI yelled at us at the top of his lungs, swearing and screaming that he did not tell us we could start eating yet. "You all will look straight ahead and use only one hand to eat." We couldn't see what we were eating until we brought the fork up to our mouths. After the first bite, the DI yelled, "ALL YOU FUCKHEADS GET DOWN AND GIVE ME 50" (this was 50 pushups). We were aloud 10 minutes to eat. If we were not done, too bad. I thought at the time "Welcome to the United States Air Force and Basic Training." They really got into our heads. It was then, that I realized that basic training was all a mind game.

This is my house, and you damm well better keep it clean."

After lunch we marched back to the barracks and were shown how to make our bunk, and how to arrange our foot lockers. It was imperative that no toothpaste be left on the inside of your cap after using it, nor on the cap of our shaving cream. All your clothes in the foot locker has to be folded a certain way. After making your bunk the DI would take a quarter, throw it on the bunk and it had to bounce off the bunk onto the floor or he would tear your bed apart and you started over. Once the bunks were made we were told to rip off our dust covers, (wool blankets), and grab our toothbrushes, and hit the floor. The DI ordered us to wax the barracks floor with our toothbrushes and use our dust covers to polish the floor. He would say, "This is my house, and you damm well better keep it clean." (Note: For the next 8 weeks most of us never slept on our bunks. We slept on the floor. We were told that we would shower, shave and brush our teeth every morning. I don't even remember what time we were able to go to

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bed but the next morning at 5:00 a.m. we were awakened by the DI who came in yelling, "Get your asses up! "You have thirty minutes to square your area away, shit, shower and shave." Talk about a mad rush! We had to spit shine our boots and we would use black paste shoe polish, cotton ball, water and alcohol. When I was done polishing my boots, I would take Johnson's liquid Floor wax and put a coat of it on my boots with a cotton ball. It would make them sparkle.

I remember standing at attention in formation that morning. A young Jewish airman was next to me, and as the DI came past checking uniforms and shined boots, he stopped at this Jewish kid. He had not shaven. The DI just let him have it yelling at the top of his lungs. He told him he had one minute to break formation, hit the barracks and bring back his razor. After getting his razor he got back into formation. He had very light peach fuzz hair on his face. The DI came up to him, took his razor and started dry shaving him. The young man ended up having a lot of cuts on his face, which bled a little and also a lot of razor burn. The kid looked like he'd been in a street fight. He lasted in basic for about a week and was discharged.

As time went on, we would get Sundays off to do as we wished. I remember being in formation many times when the DI would say, "At Ease. The smoking lamp is lit." This meant that he was allowing us to smoke. At the time there were no filters on the cigarettes, and most guys smoked Pall Mall, Lucky Strikes, or Camels. When we were done with smoke break, we had to field strip the butts. Therefore there were never butts on the ground. On many occasions during these smoke breaks, the DI would come around to see what brand each person smoked. If it was Paul Mall, he would take the pack from you, whether they were full packs or a partial pack. He apparently didn't have to buy them himself then. This happened a couple of time until us guys that smoked Pall Mall got smart. Whenever we would open a full pack we would empty half the pack before formation and hide them in the barracks so when he took our smokes he would never get a full pack. This went on all through basic. I don't think he ever figured out what we did.

About a week before graduation the DI started to let up on us. Graduation Day arrived, and we were all given orders for our new assignments. My orders were to go to Fairchild AFB, Spokane, Washington, where I was assigned to the 92nd Strategic Air Command, (SAC) Air Police Squadron. Fairchild was a B-52 bomber base, along with KC-135 refueling tankers which supported the bombers. The B-52's that were on alert were loaded with Nuke weapons.

I left Lackland AFB after graduation and headed home for a short leave before going to Washington. I spent most of my time with Nancy. After a couple of weeks I flew to Spokane.

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Upon arriving at Fairchild AFB, I went to the orderly room and met with the First Sergeant. He told me that I would be assigned to the Security Police Section and would be pulling security duty on the flight line. At the time there were 3 Sections in the Air Police: the K-9 Section, Base Police (duties were the same as a civilian Police officer only on base), and Security Policeman whose job was to guard B-52 Bombers and KC 135 refueling tankers. The bombers were loaded with nuclear bombs, ready to go to war at any moment. Each bomber had a crew that was required to stay in a barracks type building on the Alert Pad. Response time was less than two minutes to their aircraft. We were on alert 24/7, guarding the B-52's and KC 135's, through heat, rain, sleet, or snow. There were four flights of guards; I was assigned to "D" Flight. We worked five days a week with two days off, eight hour shifts.

Each flight would rotate from dayshift to evening shift to the graveyard shift. It was terribly hot in the summer and in the winter when the snow and sleet came, it was damm cold. The job consisted of walking around the airplane. No one would be allowed near the plane unless he was cleared first. Those were some mighty long days and nights. Planes were taking off all hours of the day and night. We didn't have ear plugs so it was really hard on the ears.

After working the flight line for about a year guarding aircraft, I was promoted to A2C (E-3) and assigned to the Base Police Section. Our duties there were to man all entrances into the base, making sure people had proper military ID and a base vehicle sticker to get onto base. If they didn't, they had to go to the Air Police Headquarters and get a pass before entering the base. The radio communications for the base police were in that building, which was located right next to the main gate entrance.

We handled traffic control, patrolling, traffic accidents and criminal investigation. In addition, we were required to raise the flag at reveille and lower the flag at base headquarters. Maybe twice a week we were called off base to perform color guard and firing squad duty at funerals of military personnel, either active duty military men, women, or vets. We provided this service for fallen veterans within a 150 mile radius of Fairchild AFB who had served in the United States Air Force.

During my time at Fairchild AFB, I decided that I was going to take instructions to become a Catholic and get baptized since my family was not church going people. I thought that would make Nancy's mother happy and besides I wanted to do it. I went to meet with the Catholic Chaplain and he was just a super priests. When I first saw him I thought he was President John F. Kennedy. He could have been his twin and he also was from Massachusetts. After my instructions were completed I got baptized and confirmed all at the same time. (Note: This same priest was stationed with me at Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam in 1968 to 1969.)

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I remember one time in the early spring I had worked the graveyard shift and couldn't sleep because of the heat. There was a good breeze outside so I decided to climb up on the flat roof of the barracks and just relax. At the time it was cloudy outside and the sun was not shining. I had my pillow and blanket to use for a pad. This was a very stupid thing to do, as I later found out. At the time I was just wearing my shorts and nothing else. Well, I fell asleep and woke up about six hours later. The sun was shining very brightly, and I felt a lot of burning pain on the entire front of my body, from the top of my head, to my face, chest, arms and legs; even the tops of my feet were extremely sunburned. I was to work the midnight shift again, and I was wondering how in the heck am I going to handle this. To make things worse we were still wearing our wool dress blues and had not changed over to our summer uniforms. I knew I could not go to the hospital to get something for the burn because we had been told if we got sunburned so bad that we cannot work it would be a court marshal offense. I couldn't let this happen. I went to work and worked the main gate. It was the most painful eight hour shift I have ever experienced. The wool pants and shirt would rub on the sunburn and it felt like you could fry an egg on my body. It probably was a third degree burn. Fortunately, I was eventually moved into the office to be a dispatcher for the base police flight. I guess they liked how I did my job and felt I could handle about anything. It was like a promotion, but no change in rank. Even so, this was very good duty. No more inclement weather for me!

After working Base Police for about a year, I received orders to be reassigned to the 1095th Security Police Squadron at Bossier Base, in Bossier City, Louisiana. This was a Defense Atomic Energy base and required a Top Secret Security Clearance. The base was located on the back side of Barksdale AFB, and the only access to Bossier Base was by going through Barksdale AFB. But before going to Louisiana, I went home on leave for a couple of weeks. I had been saving my money up for the past two years, and before leaving Spokane, Washington, I bought Nancy's engagement ring and wedding band. I flew into Minneapolis, where my brother Dave and Nancy picked me up at the airport. On the way home, in the back seat of the car, I proposed to my childhood sweetheart and she accepted. I had a great leave and because I made A2/C, Nancy and I went ahead and set a date to get married: July 10, 1965. Because I would be gone, I put her in charge of all the wedding plans.

When I arrived at the Shreveport, Louisiana, airport I was told to call the base so someone could come to take me to Bossier Base. Once at the base, I was taken to the orderly room where I met the First Sergeant who checked me in, assigned me a room in the barracks for the Air Police Squadron. After dropping my bags, I was shown around the base. Because it was a very small base it probably only took fifteen minutes to tour. In addition to the barracks, there was a dental office, chow hall, an airman's club, and an NCO Club. The BX or Commissary, doctor, and hospital were at Barksdale. There was one entrance to the base which was guarded

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24/7. There was no more being out in inclement weather. This was going to be choice duty and I would be here for three years if I decided to re-enlist before being transferred again.

The base was a Nuclear Bomb Storage Dump. The "Nukes" were stored in large cement igloos with walls about two feet thick covered with dirt and grass. There were approximately twenty-five igloos each with about thirty nuclear weapons in it. I was assigned to "C" Flight and on my first day of duty, I was shown around and told what my duties would be. Response teams patrolled inside five rolls of razor wire; between the igloos and the razor wire was another high chain link fence, also hot. We had our own dispatcher and a secured bunker where two airmen handled the control panels for each igloo. The monitors would detect any type of movement around the igloo or attempts of entry. The response teams would immediately respond. We carried, .45 caliber handguns and M-16 rifles. I worked all the areas including being a guard at the main gate.

I had talked to my First Sergeant about taking leave and going home to get married and he immediately approved my leave. The wedding was four months away. In the mean time, I looked for a place to rent that we would be able to afford. Armory S.SGT Gainey said that he had a one bedroom apartment that we could rent. The rent would be \$175.00 a month plus utilities. At the time I was still a A2C and only made \$500.00 a month. I took it.

July finally arrived and I couldn't wait to head home to marry Nancy. I was flying high. My good buddy Lowell Higdon, who was from the South came home with me as he had never been to Minnesota before. He was just going to stay for the wedding and then return to Louisiana. On July 3, Lowell and I got on a plane and headed to Minnesota. My brother Dave picked us up at the Minneapolis airport again. Once we got home Dave, my mother and dad made Lowell feel like he was part of the family. We stopped at Nancy's mother's house and went through the introductions with Lowell. We had a great week leading up to the wedding. My dad and mother took us out in the boat, and we swam in the Mississippi and did some boating and partying. Lowell could not believe how clean the Mississippi was. He called the hills of Minnesota and Wisconsin mountains! The week went by fast, and before we knew it, it was July 10th, the big day.

*“...the church steeple was struck by lightning and the church
caught on fire...”*

Nancy and I got married at St. Felix Catholic Church in Wabasha, MN. By Father Leroy Eikens, and she was given away by her grandfather William Mars because Nancy's father had passed away in 1960 of an apparent heart attack. She was sure a pretty bride. She was nineteen and I

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was twenty years old. We almost were not able to get married at the church because on Wednesday before our wedding day, the church steeple was struck by lightning and the church caught on fire but Nancy's mother was bound and determined that this wedding was going to happen. She got a group of ladies together to clean up the church, and the wedding was on. The insurance company was not very happy though as the church was cleaned up before the insurance adjuster was able to get there. It was a little trying time.

After the wedding, the reception was held at the Terrace Supper Club in Lake City, and afterwards we headed out for a very short honeymoon. We had planned on heading back to Louisiana on Monday. We came back to Wabasha on Sunday and lined things up to pack in the morning to leave. However, Monday morning came and Nancy had a tooth problem and was in a lot of pain. Here she had an abscessed tooth! We were lucky enough to get in to see her family dentist, Dr. Kasper, and he pulled it. We decided that we would not leave until Tuesday morning.

I owned a 1953 Chrysler, 2 door with dyno flow. It was a pretty big car for that time. I had spit shined the car and my dad had new recapped tires put on it. I had portable whitewalls on the tires, and it looked pretty neat. By the time we got all of Nancy's things and the wedding presents in the car, there wasn't room for anything more. The trunk was packed full. The back seat and floor was full, and we even had to put a suitcase on the floor by Nancy's feet. I remember it was so damn hot, and my car had no A/C, plus the heater was stuck in the on position all the time. I remember Nancy coming out of the house with a couple boxes of shoes, and we had to take them out of the boxes and stuff them in any place we could. I remember saying, "I hope we don't have a flat tire because we can't get to the spare tire." We finally got the car loaded and were ready to say our good-byes to my parents, my brothers, Nancy's mother, and her grandfather. We had to wait for her mother who had made us a bag lunch, including her homemade rolls. They were the best! After a few tears were shed, off we went, heading for Louisiana.

We got as far as Ames, Iowa and I blew a tire. One of the recaps came off. Luckily, we were only about a mile from Ames so I nursed the car to a gas station. There was no way I was going to be able to get to the spare tire as loaded as the trunk was. We ended up buying four new tires, and we were back on the road again after about a two hour delay. We made it as far as Lee Summit, Missouri, and stayed the night. The next morning we headed out early. We were both excited to get to our new home and start our lives together. We got into Arkansas and were driving in the mountains and Nancy needed to use a restroom. We were in hillbilly country. We stopped at a little gas station in the top of the mountains and asked the man if we could use his restroom. He said, "Sure it's outback." When Nancy came back, from the outhouse, she said the Sears catalog was kind of rough. We sure laughed over that.

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We finally arrived at Bossier City, Louisiana. Our apartment was just off the Bossier City Strip. The Strip as it was called, was a number of night clubs on a main highway, and the apartment was less than half a block from it. I pulled into the driveway, and we walked up to the door of the apartment. It was dark outside, and I unlocked the door and hit the light switch. There on the floor in the living room were a number of very large cockroaches that scattered. Nancy turned to me and said, "I'm not staying here tonight." I think she wanted to get on a train and go back home but she didn't know where the train station was. We did stay in a motel that night. The next morning, we went back to the apartment and sprayed everywhere to try to get rid of the roach problem. Sgt. Gainey also came and sprayed inside and out. The apartment was furnished, and I had moved a small black and white TV, a clock radio, and all my other things out of the barracks before heading home to get married. The living room was very small, with a old couch and chair in it. There was nothing else in it and you would walk right into the kitchen and into the bedroom. The bathroom was very small and only had a tub, no shower. It was right off the living room. There was no overflow cover for the tub, but it was the best we could afford at the time. Nancy was a good trooper and made the best of what we had.

I remember when she went to wash the front living room window, the glass fell right out of the pane. We had no A/C and only one fan. It sure didn't cool the apartment down very well. One night Nancy was taking a bath in the tub, and all of a sudden I heard this blood curdling scream. I started to jump up, and she came running out of the bathroom stark naked yelling that a big cockroach had just came out where the overflow cover of the tub was supposed to be. I kept telling her that once I made E-4 (A1C) that we would be able to move on base; the housing is all furnished and it will be great. I don't know if she believed me or not.

Times were tough for us. After we got paid and paid our rent, the normal bills, and the food at the commissary, we had \$5.00 to play with. We never used a charge card and were never in debt so it wasn't a case of spending money wildly. Nancy was a licensed beautician in the State of Minnesota but we had to drive to New Orleans for her to take her Louisiana State Boards before she could work as a beautician here. Thank God we had cash left from our wedding in order to go there. She did get her license and landed a job right on the strip a block from our apartment. All our money went to rent, gas, lights, phone and food.

One day in October, 1965, I came home from work and Nancy had a nice supper waiting for me. It was "Chicken Pot Pies" from the commissary which cost 13 cents apiece. She told me that she was pregnant. We were both extremely excited and happy. We could not wait to call our parents. My mother and dad were very excited as they had not been grandparents yet. My dad said he will buy the first two dresses if it is a girl (He always wanted a daughter). Nancy's mother was also excited about the news.

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On May 26, 1966, our son, Scott was born at Sheppard Hospital in Shreveport. He was a handsome baby boy. We were both so excited. We took him home after a week in the hospital, and Nancy quit her job to care for him.

We still lived off the Bossier Strip. One night after working the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 shift, I was coming home from the base and just prior to my turn off to get to the apartment, a car forced me off the road into the ditch, causing a lot of damage to my old Chrysler. The police were called, and they ended up catching the other driver. He was drunk and had no insurance. Down South you were not required to have insurance on your car like in Minnesota. We did not have collision on the car because it was too old and could not afford it. It was hard enough being twenty-one to get insurance on your car, let alone being in the military service. No one wanted to insure you. The car was totaled so Nancy and I had to take out a loan to replace the car. We ended up buying a Chevrolet 2 door Corvair coupe, white in color.

“... I can still feel that pee running down the back of my neck!”

I remember us going home on leave around July 1, 1966 when Scott was about two months old. We loaded up the car and left after my 3-11 shift was over and headed home. Nancy had picked me up at the gate, and we drove nonstop to Minnesota, except to use the restroom or gas up. It was about a 21 hour drive. We had padded a small cardboard box with blankets and laid Scott in it for the trip. The box was right behind me in the back seat. At the time there wasn't such a thing as a child's car seat. While traveling through Missouri, I felt water running over the top of my head and down the back of my neck. I said to Nancy, "What the hell is that?" She looked into the back seat and started laughing to the point I thought she was going to roll off the seat. She had taken Scott's diaper off him and just let him lay in the box without covering him. He was smiling and urinating all down the back of my neck. I had to pull over to the side of the road and wipe myself off and the car seat as well. We both laughed pretty hard then. Even after forty-seven years, I can still feel that pee running down the back of my neck!

We made it home and had a great thirty day leave. Everyone enjoyed their new grandson. While in Minnesota we did make a trip to visit my mother's sister in Morristown. It was hot and my mother was holding Scott without a diaper on sitting on the couch. I told her she should cover him, but she said he would be all right. I said all right. My mother had a glass of beer sitting on the coffee table. Scott had to urinate, and guess what? It went right into my mother's glass of beer. We really laughed at that one. Our leave came to an end to soon, so we headed back to Louisiana. It was a long drive back, and we were sad to have to leave our family.

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I really wanted to be promoted so we could move out of this bad apartment, but we had no choice. In August, 1966, I finally received word that I had been promoted to E-4 (Note: Sometime during this time they changed the title A1C , to a Buck Sgt). Wow! Were we excited to know we would be moving on base! We were assigned to 745 Mary Kay St. and were told we could move into base housing in about a week.

When we went to check the duplex out before moving in, we were in heaven. There was a cement driveway and a front and back door. Inside the back door was a clothes washer and dryer (sure beat going to the laundry mat). The kitchen had plenty of cabinets and a double sink and garbage disposal as well as a nice big new refrigerator and stove. We walked through the kitchen into a big dining area that had a large walnut table and six wooden chairs. Off to the left was the living room furnished with a big couch and a stuffed chair, two end tables and a coffee table. The dining and living rooms, hallway and two bedrooms were all carpeted. From the living room we walked down the hallway to a good size bedroom with a twin bed, dresser and closet. Off to the right was a large bathroom with a tub and shower. We continued down the hallway into the master bedroom where there was a big double bed with a maple headboard with a box spring and heavy mattress, as well as a large walnut dresser and a smaller one. There was a large walk-in closet. We had air conditioning and even a TV antenna on the roof. We were so excited to get moved in! The week couldn't go fast enough! The great thing about all this was the only bill we had to pay was our phone bill. Things were going really good for us, and work was great. I had really good officers and NCOs' to work with. The guys I worked with were like family.

On February 1967 Nancy had become pregnant again. On November 24, 1967 Nancy gave birth to a beautiful little girl we named Debra. She was born in Bossier General Hospital. The same doctor delivered both the kids, Dr. Mishoto. I remember calling home with the news. Dad was so excited and promised there would be two dresses sent to us before the end of the week. I told dad she was just a baby but he didn't care; they would be in the mail.

After Debra was born, we knew we had to upgrade to a larger vehicle. We had outgrown the Corvair, so we went into Shreveport and bought a 1965 Chevrolet Impala Convertible with a 327 V-8. This doesn't mean anything to you ladies out there but to us guys, this was a hot vehicle. It was a sharp and very clean car. I remember driving home from work one day heading to base housing with the top down. All of a sudden I felt this wetness running down my forehead. A bird, flying overhead, took a dump on my head. What are the odds of that happening to a person?

Since my enlistment was coming to an end in June, Nancy and I talked about what we were going to do. Scott was a getting ready to turn a year old. We loved where we lived. We had

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super neighbors. Just about every night we got together with Fred and Amelia Loughner, who lived on the other half of the duplex and we played Pinochle. (Fred was a SSgt and they had four kids.) So on June 10, 1967, I re-enlist for another four years. I got \$1,500.00 to re-enlist, and they paid me in \$100.00 dollar bills. When I walked into the house that day, I started throwing \$100.00 bills at Nancy. We both thought that we were on top of the world. Neither of us had ever seen that much money before and the good thing about it; it was ours.

In February 1968 I was working alone on Patrol. We would always check on the main gate guard during the earlier morning hours or take him coffee in order to keep him awake. When working the graveyard shift, the nights get really long, especially when you are alone on post. I remember driving up to the main gate about 2 or 3 a.m. in the morning. I didn't see the guard inside the shack. I thought that was very strange. I got out of my truck, walked up to the shack, and looked in. I couldn't believe what I saw! The airman on duty was lying on the floor of the shack and there was blood all over. His face was half gone. I checked for a pulse. There was none. I called for the Lieutenant and the Flight Sgt. The airman had taken his .45 caliber handgun out, put it under his chin, and pulled the trigger. He apparently committed suicide. His pistol was lying on the floor next to his hand where it ended up after he fell to the floor. I found out later that the airman was having mental issues and no one knew about it.

“...I received my orders to Phan Rang AB, Republic of South Vietnam.”

A couple of weeks after the suicide, I was called into my Flight Sgt's office. He informed me that effective, July 1, 1968, I will be promoted to SSGT (E-5). I was so excited and I could not wait to get off duty, go home and tell Nancy. That meant a good pay raise. I had worked very hard to get promoted to this rank. In the Air Force, no one made rank as quickly as in the Army. It always seemed like you had to have so much time and grade before you were even eligible for promotion. Looking back, I had been promoted each time at the earliest possible time of eligibility.

About a month later, I received my orders to Phan Rang AB, Republic of South Vietnam.

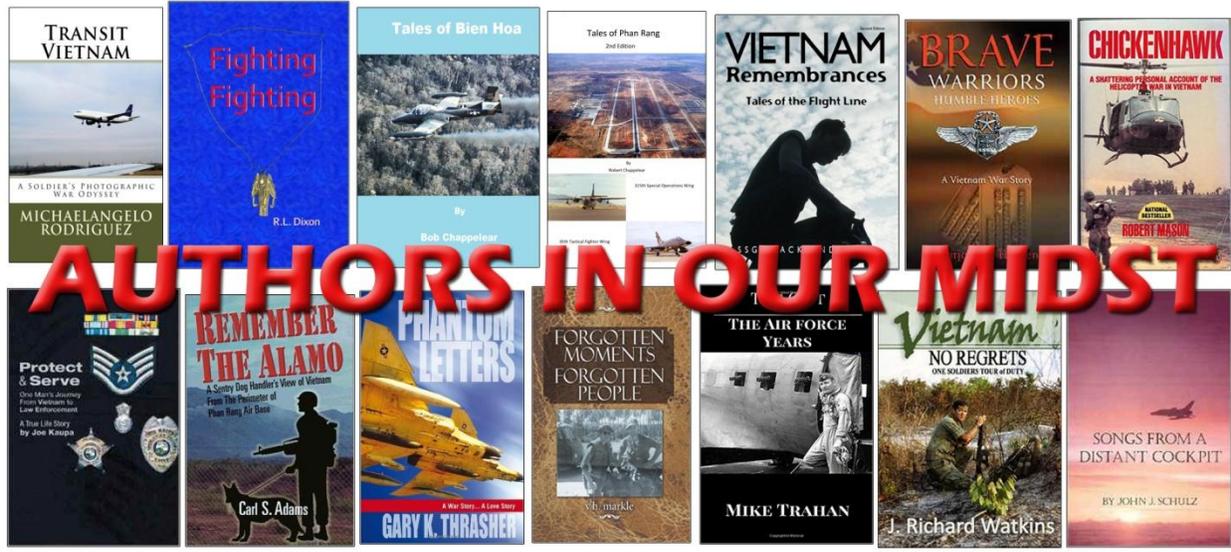
You can get an autographed copy directly from the author. Call Joe at 507-534-3303 and arrange to have

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one shipped directly to you. He sells them for his cost, but they are also available on Amazon by clicking [here](#).



We have a new author, **Joel Richard Watkins** and he writes “Why I love what I do”.

Let me start out by saying thank you to the service men and women. I know it is not easy leaving friends and loved ones at home and travelling half-way around the world to serve your country.

In 1969, I left everything I held dear to me in order to fight for my country in Vietnam. It was a trying time for America. When I returned home, there were no parades and no welcome home parties in my home town. We were met, instead, by protesters and sideways stares. There were comments under the breath by those who despised the war and the soldiers who fought in it.

I tried to forget the war and sometimes even pretended I wasn't part of it, or that it wasn't a part of me. But in the end, I couldn't avoid the truth. So almost 40 years after my time in Vietnam, I embarked on a four-year journey to right my memories of my time at war, and to tell the world what the Vietnam War meant to me.

My journey culminated in an autobiography entitled "Vietnam, No Regrets - One Soldiers Tour of Duty" which was first published in 2005.

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After I published the book, my truest journey through this War began. I started traveling around promoting and selling my memoir. In my travels I met fellow Vietnam soldiers. They would share their stories with me, stories about how the war had affected them. Often times, they would thank me explaining that, by reading about my experiences, it helped them to start a conversation with their loved ones about their own personal journeys through the War. It made me proud to be part of something much bigger than myself.

It was then that I got the idea that if I was proud of my time in Vietnam, then maybe others were proud of their time too. So in addition to the books, I began to sell T-shirts and hats. Soon my T-shirt sales were far outpacing my book sales. I started getting request from across the country. Because of that demand I launched this [website](#) to help spread the word that I, and hundreds of thousands like me, truly have No Regrets.



When I think of reunions, I’m reminded of a recent news story that made the national news and it was about these two young boys that were avid Battleship game players and somehow that got them interested in the WW II era and they got connected with several old Navy veterans that served on the USS Yorktown. Over a period of time they became very close to these veterans and visited a few times and the boys were even invited to their reunion which was held on the Yorktown. They were the “stars of the show” and proof that there is a connection between generations. In our local news there was a report of an Afghanistan Veteran and a WW II veteran that met at the local IHOP and they became fast friends meeting at least once a week at the IHOP and more frequently the young veteran visited with the old guy at his home. They said they have grown to love one another! Then there was a personal account from our first reunion in Dayton at the Hope Hotel. Most of us had gathered in “Packys” the bar in the reunion hotel and somehow **Jack Anderson**, author of “Vietnam Remembrances - Tales of the Flight Line” met this family with a young boy who was very interested in the Vietnam era. I think the boy was enthralled with Jack and his stories and the fact that he was an author and as luck would have it; Jack had an extra copy of his book that he was able to autograph and give to the boy. I’m sure the boy or his parents will never forget that encounter! The reason I mention any of this at all is if you have an opportunity to connect with people like this, maybe even your children, seize the moment as it probably will be a very rewarding experience for everyone

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concerned. If you have an opportunity to bring your children to the reunion or at the very least the banquet, do it!

Here’s some basic information about our reunion for those that haven’t had the pleasure of attending one before: The dates for the 2016 reunion are **6 through 9 October**. Most people arrive on Thursday afternoon 6 Oct. Over the years we’ve seen more and more people arriving earlier and we usually have get-togethers with each other and I know that many are already planning on an early arrival. On Friday, 7 Oct. we traditionally have a group tour and this year we are planning on going to Tinker AFB, but that planning process hasn’t started yet. Also we may plan another activity in conjunction with the tour. On Saturday, 8 Oct. usually is a free day where you can explore the local area and in the evening we have our gala banquet. The hospitality suite is open all of the time, except during the tour and banquet. Most people check out Sunday morning, 9 October. I hope this brief overview will give you some idea as to what to expect.

Here’s more information about the Sheraton Oklahoma Downtown Hotel

- **Guestroom rates do not include the current city/state occupancy tax**
- **Room rates are \$129 single and double, triple rate \$159 and quad rate \$189**
- **Included are two full breakfast buffets, a \$32 value**
- **Check in time: 3:00 pm; Checkout time: 12:00 pm**
- **Individual cancellations without liability: 5 days prior to arrival**
- **24-hour Sheraton Fitness by Core Performance (NBA certified)**
- **Free WiFi in all guest rooms and lobby**

[**Click here to make your hotel reservation.**](#)

Please make your hotel reservations now!

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