

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

Phan Rang AB News No. 97

“Stories worth telling”

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REPORT FROM VIETNAM

BY Sandy Alderson

Trip to Dad’s ‘Office’ Leaves Him Breathless (*The Hutchinson News, Thursday, September 14, 1967*)

*(This is the sixth in a series of special reports to The News by Sandy Alderson of Hutchinson who is visiting his father, Maj. John L. Alderson, at Phan Rang Air Base in South Vietnam. Four other dispatches appear in **Phan Rang Newsletter 39**; Clark: A Crucial Air Field in War; Saigon: Passengers Motley Group; Phan Rang Once Used by Japanese and He Goes to Barbecue Near Viet Cong Area.)*

PHAN RANG AIR BASE - —Most kids, at one time or another during their childhood, get the urge to follow Dad to the office, to see just exactly what he does while they're at school. It took me exactly nineteen birthdays and two years of college to finally find out what it's all about. In this case the office is the cockpit of a B-57 Canberra and I had to follow Dad 8,000 miles.

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This was the big day. I was going up for an hour's worth of experience that it had taken me a lifetime to find. I had been up in a Jet before, an F-9 Cougar last June, but this was different that was my old man up front.

Headed North

We took off about 1500 hours, and headed north up the coast to Cam Rahn Bay, the major supply depot for goods coming into South Vietnam by sea. The acres of pre fab warehouses, the ships anchored in the bay, and the mountains in the back ground, formed an Impressive sight at 10,000 feet. After circling over Cam Rahn we again headed north up the coast and I was introduced to some of the tactics used by the fighter bomber squadrons in Southeast Asia.

The 13th Bomb Squadron flies missions all over Vietnam. During the day it sends out two plane sorties to act as close air support for our ground forces in the South. At night they range far north to attack lines of communication in North Vietnam . In both cases they are led in by a Forward Air Controller who picks out, and in some cases marks the target.

Determines Type

The particular target determines the type of ordnance carried on the strike. The B-57 carries anywhere from eight 1000 pound bombs, to over twenty 250 "frag" bombs, which act like large anti-personnd mines. A typical load will consist of three 750 pound "cluster" bombs (At a predetermined altitude they break open like a shotgun shell.) in the bombay, and four 250 pounders under the wings. The Canberra's also carry four 20 millimeter canons and 1200 rounds of ammunition. Only the F-4 Phantom carries a bigger payload.

The basic methods of bombing used in Vietnam have not changed much since Korea or world War 11. There are still only three basic approaches; level, swoop, and dive.

Level bombing is the easiest, but least accurate. It merely consists of approaching the target at a level Attitude, and "pickling" (bombs away) over the target, This method is used only when the weather prohibits the pilot from getting closer to the target.

"Swoop" and "dive" bombing differ only In the angle with the ground the plane makes during the attack. In both cases the target is marked and the pilot swings around to the point where he wants to begin his dive. When he reaches this point the pilot "pitches out" (turns the aircraft on its side and makes a hard turn, usually to the left), and then falls through into a dive.

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Shallow Dive

Swoop bombing is merely a shallow dive, one of less than 45 degrees. Dive bombing can be done anywhere from 45 degrees to perpendicular to the ground. The "pitch out" is usually made between 7,000 and 8,000 feet. This allows about five seconds for the pilot to lock onto the target. As the plane reaches 4,000 feet the navigator begins his countdown, "Five- four- three- two- one - pickle!" and at 3500 feet the bombs are away and the pilot pulls the plane out of the dive. At this point the forces of gravity become as high as seven times normal.

Dad and I made two practice dives on a small island along the coast. As we reached 3500 feet we made a shallow recovery and only pulled four G's, but not being used to it, it was just about my limit. It was like a gray window shade being pulled down over my eyes. Things got a little clearer when we leveled off.

Attack Wave

While we didn't carry any ordinance, we did have 1200 rounds of 20 millimeter, so we headed out to sea and made a few passes at a hostile-looking wave. Twelve-hundred rounds will only last about seven seconds so each pass consists of a two-second burst. With each volley the plane shudders violently as the guns fire and kick. As we pulled out of our final pass, I felt as though I had been dribbled the length of a baseball court. It was the closest I had ever come to regurgitating in an airplane.

Back on the ground I was tired and wet. But that hour in the sky over South Vietnam with Major John L. Alderson USAF, is something I'll never forget.

Saigon

Pearl Loses Luster

(This is the third in a series of special reports to The News from Sandy Alderson who flew to Vietnam to visit his father, Maj. John L. Alderson. Dispatch appeared in the Hutchinson News, Thursday, September 7, 1967.)

SAIGON - Landed at Saigon Airport, more commonly known as Tan Son Nhut Air Base, at 11 a.m. I was met there by Lt. Colonel Ed Elite, of Falls Church, Virginia, an old friend of the family, and my baseball coach back in Babe Ruth League. I checked through immigration, and with the help of Col. Ellis, cleared customs in a matter of seconds. We were met outside by Mr. Senih, the Colonel's "number one driver", and I was given a quick tour of the base.

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Tan Son Nhut is the most active air facility in the world. Every 45 seconds, 24 hours a day, a plane lands or takes off. Except for the huge B-52's stationed in Okinawa and Thailand, every type of U.S. owned aircraft can be seen here, from the F-4C Phantom to the O-1 Bird Dog.

Pentagon East

But Tan Son Nhut is not strictly an air base. Headquarters for the Military Allied Command, Vietnam (MACV), that's General Westmoreland and his boys, is now located here. When their new building (affectionately called "Pentagon East") is finished, the entire MACV staff will be located under one roof.

Also located here is 7th Air Force headquarters. 7th Air Force is responsible for all Air Force operations in Vietnam and Thailand.

Guided Tour

After eating lunch and loading my cameras, I was treated to a guided tour of Saigon by Col. Ellis and Mr. Senh. Driving in Saigon is quite an experience. It's like broken field running in football. You keep moving, change directions continuously, and hope you don't hit anything.

From your first view of the city, the French influence is immediately obvious. The city itself is laid out in a typically French manner with wide boulevards and tree lined avenues, few of which are parallel or perpendicular.

Like D. C.



It reminds me of Washington, D.C., which was also surveyed by a Frenchman. The architecture is also drawn heavily from the French. Many of the larger office buildings, concrete in composition and square in design, reflect the European architecture of the 1920's and 30's.

Saigon, the "Pearl of the East", could be a very beautiful city. But after years of war, poverty, and foreign control, the pearl has lost much of its luster. Perhaps a few more garbage cans and fewer guns and the country might be much better off. But then again the same is true in Detroit.

*"The next morning I was on a C47 heading north for
Phan Rang."*

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While in Saigon I made a fruitless trip to see MACV My application for accreditation as a reporter was turned down largely because of poor liaison between Saigon and Washington. At any rate, what this meant was that after coming 8,000 miles I would be allowed to go no farther than Saigon.

My doom seemed quite complete, but later proved to be only temporary. The next morning I was on a c47 heading north for Phan Rang.



Happy Valley Oxygen Company (HVOC)

FROM VIETNAM (*Playground Sunday News, Sunday Morning, August 17, 1969*)

Phan Rang Air Base is considered to be one of the best bases in Vietnam. The Cryogenics Fluids Production section (where I work) was rated number one in Vietnam. I believe this was accomplished

by the high moral displayed in our shop. We don't look at our area as just another Lox plant, but as one **Happy Valley Oxygen Company**. Here is a little ad we made up especially for our section. It would make all of us stationed here at H.V.O.C. very happy if you were to print this ad and show the people back home just how high our moral is over here. Sincerely

A-1C Jeffrey Ball

35th Supply Squadron CMR 8971

APO San Francisco 98321

HAPPY VALLEY OXYGEN COMPANY

Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam, home of the Happy Valley Oxygen Company. Producers of air for all occasions. Are you sneezing more and breathing less, if so, try our clean, dry, pollen free air. We accept special orders to include glue vapors for those who really enjoy breathing. Manufactured daily with Mom's homemade smell or can be ordered with the flavor of the month, "Creme de Menthe." No order too small or too big, after all the sky's the limit. Our special introductory offer as advertised in the Moscow Herald includes:

1. One cumulonimbus cloud (altitude 2,000 ft.)
2. One bolt of lightning, with nut, rated at 30,000 volts;
3. Twenty drops of rain;
4. Three feet of wind NNE at 10 mph (specify direction);
5. One box kite
6. One gallon of smog, for L. A. residents.

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Also oxygen for rocketry, welding and if you have got loss of volume in your voice you might try our special Hi-Fi air. Special jumbo size box of air for flying (wings not included) can also be ordered. Major U. S. clients include Pan American Blue Birds, United Sky Lines. Go by air its the only way to fly. Foreign clients include such well known people as: Domingo Pasternack Rubinstein and many others. You may have been selected to receive one of our free samples, if not do check your mail box anyway there is probably some of our air in right now.

**Remember: If you don't like the air your breathing send it to us and we'll rebuild it for you.
The Management.**

Missing Albuquerque Pilots Are Sought (*The Albuquerque Tribune, New Mexico, Monday, January 6, 1969*)

Big Search at Phan Rang Helicopter and planes ranged the country around Phan Rang, South Vietnam today in a search for two missing Albuquerque Air National Guard fighter pilots.

Missing are Maj. Bobby Gene Neeld of 812 Quincy NE and 1st Lt. Mitchell Lane, formerly of 1200 Madeira SE.

“Routine” Mission



Maj. Bobby G. Neeld

1st Lt. Mitchell Lane

The two were returning from a “routine” mission in their F-100 Supersabre jet fighters when their plane disappeared from the radar scope.

Headed for their home base at Tuy Hoa, the fliers were diverted because of bad weather and directed to land at Phan Rang about 100 miles to the south.

Near S. China Sea

Like Tuy Hoa, Phan Rang is near the coast of the South China Sea.

The Air Force immediately launched an extensive search for the two pilots, who are members of the 188th Tactical Fighter Squadron commanded by Lt. Col. Fred J. Fink of Albuquerque. Practically all members of the 188th are New Mexico Air Guardsmen called to duty at the time of the Pueblo incident.

Search Difficult

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Heavy jungle areas around Phan Rang may make the search difficult. And if weather is bad the hunt would be more complicated.

Phan Rang is about 50 miles south of the city of Nha Trang.

Notified Saturday

The Air Force did not disclose when radar contact with the two men was lost. Col Robert Sands, Albuquerque, commander of the New Mexico Air National Guard said he was notified Saturday.

Lt. Lane is single. Maj. Neeld is married. Lane, before he was called to duty worked as an estimator with Bradbury and Stamm Construction Co.

The Air Force said it is possible that the pilots might have been captured by the Viet Cong and if so are required to give their name, rank, serial number and date of birth. Publication of additional family background might imperil the men's safety if they are in enemy hands, the Air Force said.

This is the first incident of this type reported since about 350 member of the Air National Guard from New Mexico were sent to Tuy Hoa last June.

Exceptional Record



Since that time the 188th Tactical Fighter Squadron has compiled an exceptional record in its strikes against the Viet Cong.

The squadron has frequently been the top squadron among the five stationed at Tuy Hoa as part of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing.

Not all member of the guard unit sent to Tuy Hoa were assigned to the 188th. Many other airmen and non commissioned officers were assigned to key positions in support squadrons and other units at the air base.

Both Neeld and Lane are popular among their comrades in the 188th.

I found some additional information about this incident in another article in The Albuquerque Tribune, Monday May 5, 1969 in this article “Air Guard Pilot Killed in Vietnam” - Capt. Adams Was Due Home In 2 Weeks.

Near the end of the article was this...Several months ago two other New Mexico Air National Guard pilots disappeared while returning to their base. They were Maj. Robert (Bobby) Neeld and Lt. Mitchell Layne (Spelling for the Lt. in this article had a ‘y’ in his name).

The Face of Viet-Nam - The Land & the People (Part 2)

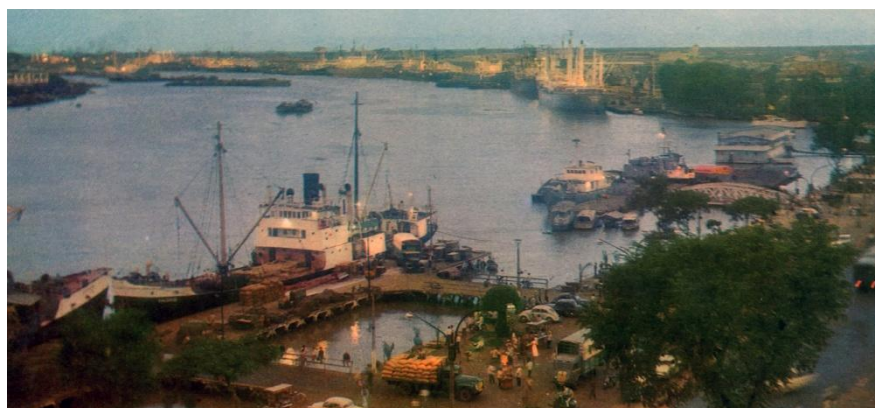
SOUTH VIET-NAM

Land of Contracts



SAIGON - The Paris of the Orient

Two hundred years ago Saigon was a fishermen's village on the banks of the River of Saigon. Today its broad boulevards and handsome buildings make it one of the world's most attractive cities.



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Cargo ships of considerable size dock at Saigon, but time of war many other unloading facilities must be used and the cargoes transported in smaller craft or by road.

Saigon's Catholic Cathedral, with the John F. Kennedy Memorial in front of it. Ten percent of the Vietnamese are Catholics.

Part of Saigon's shopping district, with a modern department store fronting on a broad boulevard.



Saigon City of Wheels

Half a million bicycles give Saigon the title "City of Wheels".
Right picture — Bicycles, bicycles, and more bicycles, and not a parking-meter in sight! Don't be surprised if the elegant lady, with Ao Dai and parasol, flies home on a bicycle when her shopping is completed.

Bottom left—This sturdy-legged farmer has two distinctions — his all-purpose tricycle with space even for his good wife, and his Western-style straw hat.

Bottom right — Definitely a surrey, even if it has only three wheels and no fringe on top! Relaxed passengers are sightseeing near the Xa Loi Pagoda on their tour of Saigon's boulevards. The motive-power, like that of good sports cars, has a very low weight-to-horsepower ratio.



VARIETY in the City Streets

There are automobiles parked before this very modern building, but the street traffic is person-powered. Notice the signs — "Chi Hong" has a decidedly Chinese influence, but "Pole Nord" is direct from the broad French influence derived from the many years of French control.



High School girls, wearing their Ao Dai and straw hats to cover their long, straight hair, flood the streets as they come from their classes.



These young ladies are entering the Memorial which commemorates the memory of General Le Van Duyet, a renowned military man of the 19th century.



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SHEPPARD AFB, TEXAS— The five Air Force Commendation Medals was awarded to Sgt. Karpel of Sheppard's 3750th Maintenance and Supply Group February 3. Presenting the decorations was Col. Joseph W. Smith, group commander. Sgt. **Arnold R. Karpel** earned the Commendation Medal for meritorious service as noncommissioned officer in charge of accessory repair section, Electric Shop, 315th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 315th Tactical Airlift Wing, Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, from Sept. 25, 1969, to Sept. 22, 1970. (*Burkburnett Informer/Star, Thursday, February 11, 1971.*)

Sgt. Franklin L. Suffecool

EDWARDS. Calif. — Sgt. **Franklin L. Suffecool**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter D. Suffecool New Pairs, has received the Air Force Commendation Medal at Edwards AFB, Calif. Sgt. Suffecool, a construction equipment repairman, was decorated for meritorious service at Phan Rung AB, Viet-nam. He was cited for professional skill, knowledge and initiative. He is now at Edwards in a unit of the Air Force Systems Command. The sergeant is a graduate of Mesa High School. His wife, Mary, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. O. S. Humble of Tucson, Ariz. (*The Altoona Mirror, Altoona, PA., Tuesday, October 8, 1968*)

VIETNAM — Air Force Airman I. C. **Richard J. Vassas**, son of Mrs. Marie A. Vassas of 314 Craig St., Gallitzin, has arrived in Vietnam for duty and will be stationed at Phan Rang Air Base. Airman Vassas is a member of the 821st Combat Security Police Squadron, an elite unit that has been specially trained to repel enemy aggression and provide air base security. The Phan Rang unit will be held in constant readiness to supplement the defense forces of any U. S. air base in the combat zone which might come under an enemy attack. The airman is a graduate of Greater Gallitzin Join High School. (*The Altoona Mirror, Altoona, PA., Tuesday, October 8, 1968*)

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(*Courier News, Blytheville (Ark.), Monday, December 14, 1970*) Col. Bruce Brown Assumes BAFB Post. Col. **Bruce K. Brown** has assumed duties as Vice Commander of the 97th Bombardment Wing at Blytheville Air Force Base, according to an announcement from the Air Base. A native of St. Paul, Minn., who now calls Lubbock his home, Brown served as Deputy Commander for Operations for the 14th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang Air Base, Vietnam, prior to his BAFB assignment.



Col. Brown A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Brown was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force in 1952. Receiving pilot training at Columbus AFB, Miss., and Webb AFB, Tex., he graduated to advanced pilot training at the USAF ALL-Weather Interceptor School, Tyndall AFB, Fla.

He then spent 11 years in Air Defense operations including tours at McGuire AFB, N. J., Hahn AB, Germany and Air Defense Headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo. After graduating from the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Va., Brown served two years in the Pentagon as a strategic defense planner.

During 1967 and 1968, he served as executive assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs; Phil Giulding

After attending the National War College, Fort McNair, Wash., the colonel was assigned to Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam.

A command pilot, he has flown approximately 4,500 hours, with more than 400 hours in combat as aircraft commander of the AC-119K Stinger and AC-119G Shadow Gunships in-Vietnam.

In addition to a Bachelor of Science degree obtained at Annapolis, Brown has received a Master of Arts degree, graduating from George Washington University, Washington, in 1969.

Christmas Cards To Viet Nam: A2C **William C. Rogers**, Det. 8, 14th Aerial Port Sq., Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, APO San Francisco, California 96321 (*The Daily News, Huntingdon and Mount Union, Pa., Tuesday, November 29, 1966.*)

Operation Christmas, Pacific Area: Sgt. **Charles T. Grose**, FR 268-50-4234, Box 7172, Det. 8, 14th Aerial Port Sq., APO San Francisco, 96321. Sgt. Grose is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Grose of Laylin Road, Norwalk. He is stationed in Phan Rang, Vietnam with the United States Air Force. (*Norwalk Reflector, Thursday, October 28, 1971.*)

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Phan Rang AB Challenge Coin

Side one depicts the country, Phan Rang, Happy Valley, the dates of the base and most importantly all the nations that served there. Side two remembers all who served there, and stresses the fact we did indeed return with honor. The dragon and the palm trees signify the country of Vietnam. And finally the ribbons demonstrate that were earned with honor! The image is just a rendering and the process has begun to have them manufactured and available by at least by July 2016.



Protect & Serve: One Man’s Journey From Vietnam to Law Enforcement

A True Life Story by Joe Kaupa

Vietnam

Part 1

May 26, 1968 to May 26, 1969

After 45 years of holding my Vietnam experience inside of me I have decided to tell my story. The fears, the anger at our government, the way the news media portrayed the Vietnam War,

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the protesters, and how we were treated as returning Vietnam Vets: These feelings still remain with me today, as I am sure they do with all Vietnam Vets. As the years went by, the American government and public has tried to make up for this treatment that was shown to returning Vietnam Vets, but it was a little to late, and the damage had been done, as least in my eyes.

My story begins on March 20, 1968, when I received my orders to go to Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. At the time, I was stationed at Bossier Base in Shreveport, Louisiana with the 95th Security Police Squadron. My wife of 2 - ½ years and two children lived on base with me. My son Scott was 22 months old and my daughter Debra was 4 months old.

After getting my orders for Vietnam I was to report to McCord AFB, Washington, on May 26, 1968, to depart for Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. My wife Nancy and I had decided that it was best if she would move home to Wabasha, Minnesota with the kids and stay at her mother's while I was gone. There she'd also be near my family who lived just five miles from Wabasha on the Mississippi River. On April 26, 1968, after saying good-bye to all our friends and co-workers, on base, we headed back to Minnesota for a 30 day leave before shipping out to Vietnam.

I got Nancy and the kids settled in for what was going to be a very long year away from my family. At this point we had never been apart.

On May 26, 1968, the day for me to leave for Vietnam. My son Scott turned two years old. I remember the last two to three days before leaving, it was extremely difficult for me knowing that I was leaving my wife and two small children, not knowing if I will come back alive or wounded or whether my kids would remember me. There were a lot of things going on in my mind, but I kept it all inside me. I remember very clearly giving Scott and Debra a kiss as they were still sleeping; they didn't understand that their dad was leaving them for a year. This was one of the hardest things that I have ever done. The night before I had said my good-bye's to Nancy's family and mine.

My Dad, Mother, Nancy and I headed up to Minneapolis to the airport where I would fly out to Seattle, Washington and then on to McCord AFB to depart for Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. I said good-bye to my parents and then to my wife. I remember hugging her and giving her a number of kisses and inside of me saying, "I don't want to leave her." I remember walking to the door to get onto the plane and looking back. Nancy had tears coming down her cheeks, as did my mother. I also had tears running down my cheeks, as I didn't know if this would be the last time I would see them. I remember the flight to Seattle seemed so long and all the while I wondered what was ahead of me in the next thirty hours. When I landed in Seattle, I took a taxi to McCord AFB. I don't remember how long it took, but then I remember boarding the FREEDOM BIRD, a commercial airline, (we called it Freedom Bird because when you finish your

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tour this plane would bring you back home to Freedom). Once on the plane, which was full with Army, Marines, and Airman, we lifted off the ground for our twenty-one hour flight to Vietnam. I remember looking out the window and seeing the landscape of Seattle as we left the States.

Our first stop for fuel was at Anchorage, Alaska. From there we went to Yakota AFB in Japan where we again fueled. We were able to get off the plane and stretch for about forty-five minutes before boarding again for the last leg of our trip to South Vietnam.

As we started our decent into Vietnam I looked out the airplane window and could see the landscape of the country. I remember all the talking that had been going on inside the plane, but as we approached Vietnam, the cabin was totally quiet. You could hear a pin drop. I am sure everyone on the plane was thinking, what the hell did we all get into and would we come home on a Freedom Bird or on a C-141 in a casket. We landed at Cam Rhan Bay, South Vietnam, I will never forget when they opened the door of the plane. It was unbelievably hot, and the smell was just terrible. As we all debarked from the plane we were loaded on a two ton truck and driven to a hanger where we went through check in and had to turn all of our U.S. Greenback in for MPC, (Military Payment Certificate). The men were separated, depending upon where they were going to be stationed in country.

The Marines went one way, the Army troops another, and the Airmen another. I was the only Airman going to Phan Rang so a Sgt. loaded me up in a jeep, after getting my duffel bag, and drove me back out to the flight line. By this time my Khakis were ringing wet from the heat. He took me to the helicopter pad and told me to get on this Huey chopper, to fly me to Phan Rang. I had never been on a helicopter before. Phan Rang was about fifty miles, I think, from Cam Rhan Bay. We flew low, and the chopper seemed like it shook up and down while flying. We finally arrived at Phan Rang in the middle of the afternoon.

Once on the ground, there was a Security Police jeep waiting for me on the flight line. I loaded my gear in the jeep and was taken to the Security Police Squadron area. I met with the First Sgt. who welcomed me to Phan Rang. I also met Col. Don Reeves, our Squadron Commander. I then was told that since my promotion to E-5 (SSGT) would not be effective until July 1, 1968, I would have to move into the airman's barracks for about a month, and then once July 1 came, I would move out of there into the NCO Barracks. By this time, I was ringing wet from sweat and the smell of Vietnam did not get any better. I remember seeing momma son, (Vietnamese ladies) walking around the barracks area in black pajama's, wondering what they were doing there. I was told they were cleaning ladies and everyone paid them a small amount of MPC weekly. I called it monopoly money. Once inside the barracks I was told to grab a empty bunk and locker. It was a open bay barracks and had a shower and toilet. The airman that helped me

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out told me that he would be back in about an hour and I could get myself settled in. He said that we needed to go to the supply building to get my gear. About a hour later he returned and drove me to the other side of the base where I was issued, my Cameo fatigues, steel helmet, flack jacket, jungle boots, web gear and holster, poncho and whatever. By the time we got back to the squadron area, I was so hot and tired all I wanted to do was sleep. I felt like I had not slept for two days. Back at the barracks a number of guys came up and welcomed me to Phan Rang and said they would show me around. We went to the Chow Hall and had supper and they filled me in on what I needed to know. I was told by the First Sgt. that I should report to the Orderly Room at 0800 hrs. the next day. It was about 2100 hrs. when I finally was able to lie down and to get some sleep. I just could not believe the heat and smell but did finally fall asleep. Everyone told me that I would get used to both the smell and heat.

About midnight I was awakened by loud explosions and sirens. We were being attacked with incoming 122 rockets and mortars. Each barracks had a sand bag bunker outside, and everyone moved inside of that until the shelling was over, about an hour later. I thought to myself, "WHAT THE HELL DID I GET INTO?" One of the rounds hit damm close to our bunker as would you hear shit hit the bunker. During the attack I'm saying to myself also, "Less than thirty hours ago I was with my wife and two kids in a safe and quiet area, and now I'm wondering if I will ever see them again". I missed them greatly already, and it had only been about one day. A couple more mortar rounds hit the barracks area, but no one got hurt..I guess the VC, (Viet Cong) or NVA (North Vietnamese Army), were welcoming me to Vietnam.

The next morning I went to the orderly room and met with the First Sgt. He told me that everyone that comes in country spends their first two days on detail and that I should go with this E-4. There were three other guys and we went out and got on this duce and a half truck and took off. He drove us out to the base perimeter near a large tower where there was some rolled concertina wire spread out all along it. Our job was to put more wire out and set up claymore mines. It was hot as hell, and we rolled out this razor edge wire two to three rolls thick and tied some cans on it. I will never forget that when we took a break, I went to get a drink of water; it was just like drinking mud water, brown and warm and dirty. It sure as hell did not taste like water at home. We were driven around the perimeter so we could see how big the area was. I have no idea how many miles it was around the base. There were about forty to fifty guard towers that surrounded the base; in some of the towers the guards had mounted 50 caliber machine guns, others were armed with M-60 machine guns, and others had M-16's. Each tower had hand grenades and slap flares. The flares were a tube, about fourteen inches long and had a cap on the top. You took the cap off the top and slapped it on the bottom of the tube to activate the flare at night if needed. It would illuminate the area for about two minutes.

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Each tower was manned by at least one security policeman. He was out in no man's land. Along the whole perimeter at the edge of the concertina wire were brush, tall grass etc. I thought to myself, this is scary as hell. The towers were about fifty to hundred yards apart, I think. By the time you got done with your detail for the day you were so damn hot, sweaty, and tired. After completing my two days of stringing wire and claymore mines I was told to report to the orderly room, where the First Sgt. told me that I was going to be assigned to Panther Flight and would be working from 1800 hours to 0600 hours. (night shift), six days a week with one day off. This is going to be a very long and hard year, I thought. I was told to report to guard mount at CSC, (Central Security Control) that night. CSC was the nerve center for the entire base security operations.

My first night of duty was about to begin. I went to the armory and a M-16, and a .38 caliber handgun was issued to me, as well as ammunition and grenades. When guard mount (Note: Guard mount was a formation where we stood in ranks and information was relayed to you on intelligence of enemy activity in the area.) was over, we were loaded up on trucks and headed for posting on the perimeter. The first night I was paired with another airman in the Hotel area to learn the ropes. I was told as a rule the VC do not probe the perimeter when the moon is out, but when there is no moon, be especially watchful. As I said earlier we had slap flares in the towers, and in some towers, airman had starlight scopes on the M-16, along with grenade launchers. The starlight scopes were really nice because you could look out into the darkness, and if there was any light from the moon or bright stars, you could see movement in the bush almost as well as daylight, but a little fuzzy. On post it was very dark and very quiet. Suddenly, at about 0100 hours I heard explosions and whistling overhead. I turned to the airman and said, "What the hell was that?" He said that it was our people firing H&I fire, (Harassment and Interdiction). They were firing mortar rounds, and a 105 gun, out into the night. He said it keeps Charlie (VC) on his toes. They did this every night, at a different time and at a different area outside the base.

I was told that they have the MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam), Rules of engagement which means that you cannot shoot unless fired upon; all this was set up by the higher ups. I thought what the hell is this? I couldn't believe that. I was further told that there were Koreans and Aussies stationed on this base who go out every night outside the wire on ambush teams. You needed to know where they were. The entire perimeter area had K-9 and handlers out on the wire so to be very mindful of them. Each K-9 handler and tower guard had radio communication with CSC (Central Security Control) which was the nerve center of the entire base security operations which was responsible for all the communications and deployments for the entire Security Police Operations. We also had a Heavy Weapons Unit which had mortar tubes, 50 caliber machine guns, and APC (Armored Personal Carrier), as well

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

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as a jeep that had a battery operated mini gun mounted on the back of it which fired 10,000 rounds a minute. I could not get over how quiet and still it was out in the bush, and I wondered to myself what I would do or how I would react, if I saw someone trying to get through the wire.

Finally daylight came, the day crew came on. You never left your post until your relief came up the tower to relieve you. Once we got back to the armory and turned in our weapons, I was met by my Flight Sergeant who told me that he knew I was being promoted to a SSGT, but until July 1 (the effective date), I would be working the towers and spend some time on a SAT Team (Security Alert Team.) The SAT team consisted of a SSGT and two airmen who responded to any probe on the wire or to K-9 Alerts as well as to back up the tower guards. He said to me that once I had my stripes sewed on, that I would be in charge of a SAT Team.

You can get an autographed copy directly from the author. Call Joe at 507-534-3303 and arrange to have one shipped directly to you. He sells them for his cost, but they are also available on Amazon by clicking [here](#).

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

Kirk Minert: Aircraft Historian

Mike Maleski: Chaplain

Jim Erixson: Associate Chaplain

FACEBOOK GROUP ADMINISTRATORS

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



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.

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.](#)**