



PHAN RANG AIR BASE

1 April 1966

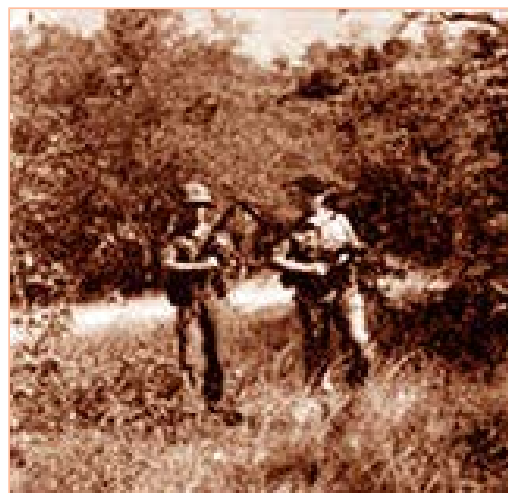
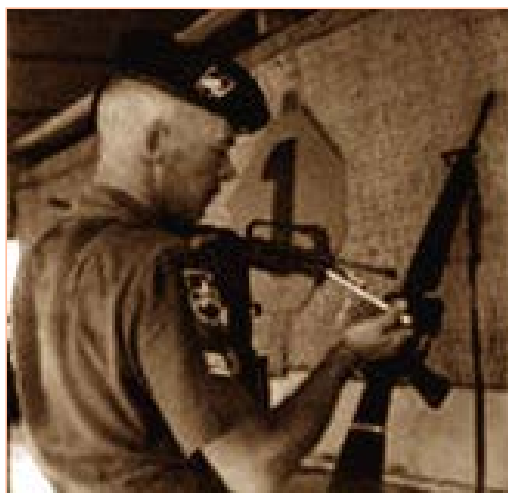
Portrait of a Hero

Photos submitted by Bruce Pritchett
PC, 37th APS; PR, 35th SPS

I was stationed with an A1C Clarence J. Schofield (LM 821) at Phan Rang AB in early 1966, until I was transferred to Phù Cát. There was a big write-up [see below] in The Air Division Advisor and the *Stars and Stripes* about an incident having to do with a grenade being dropped accidentally by an Airborne guy. Airman Scofield picked it up and quickly disposed of it. There were about fifty civilians and military standing inside the pavilion at the time, and tragedy was avoided by Schofield's quick action. The article in S&S was titled, "Portrait of a Hero," 1 April 1966.

Below are photos of A1C Schofield taken by a S&S Photog. A1C Schofield was nominated for at least two medals: the *Airman's Medal* and the Bronze Star. I think he's from Georgia -- have tried to find him on a web search without luck. I believe he was in his mid-30's in 1966; that would make him sixty-something now. He was one of the four or five of us at Phan Rang that guarded the Buu-Son terminal where *Air Vietnam* flew out of; also, 101st Airborne flew out of Buu-Son (it was an old French pavilion, PSP matting runway, before the base runway was finished).

[In late 1965-early 1966, Phan Rang AB was fairly primitive. The closest active runway was about two miles away at Buu-Song Air Field. There were about 300 Air Force personnel at the airfield then.]





United States Air Force aerospace power for peace

The Air Division Advisor

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Airman Grabs Live Grenade, Gets Rid of IT, Saves Crowd

PHANG RANG — People concerned with the urgent business of war crowded the tiny airport of Bong Son (Buu-Son)

Brightly-clad Vietnamese civilians mingled with battle-stained U.S. troops returning from action at Tuy Hoa. Big-eyed children, caught in a sea of uniforms, watched open-mouthed as weary men trudged by, unslung packs and carbines, to clamber aboard a waiting line of dusty trucks.

The tools of war were evident everywhere.

Bandollers of shells thrown around military shoulders flashed in the sun. Automatic pistols slapped muscular thighs, and deadly M-16 rifles hung against faded uniforms.

Replacement troops — fresh, polished, chests hung heavily with dangling grenades — milled expectantly as they waited for planes to take them to battle.

By Maj. Richard Hill

Suddenly, the usual hum of a crowd was cut by the metallic clatter of a grenade striking, bouncing on the concrete floor and the rattle of its handle flying off and spinning across the room.

It was a brief moment before a voice screamed in the shocked stillness, "Live grenade!"

Some stared, uncomprehending.

Others pushed and scrambled frantically for cover.

Kids, frightened by the melee, clutched fiercely at their mother's skirts.

Then Air Force AIC Clarence J. Schofield of Riverdale, Ga., raced across the open space, scooped up the live grenade and looked for a place to throw it.

"About 50 or 60 people were there. I didn't see any place to

pitch it without hurting somebody so I ran to an old concrete bunker the French had left behind and tossed the grenade inside. It exploded immediately; threw me on the ground and just about blew off the top of the bunker," he recalls with a grin.

Schofield is a member of the 366th Air Police Squadron at the Phan Rang air base.

In recognition of his courageous act, Phan Rang base commander Col. Ben Matlick of Glendale, Calif., recommended Schofield be awarded the Airman's Medal "for heroism involving voluntary risk of life."

When questioned later, Schofield replied, "When I picked up the grenade I pushed the plunger back in. If I had known at the time that this won't stop a grenade from going off, I would have really hurried to get rid of it."



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