

THAILAND REVISITED 2001

Who says "you can't go back"? There is considerable truth in that old saying - if you expect things to remain as you remember them. Things continually change and memory clouds over time. But, for a week in February, the writer did go back to some places where more than twenty-five years ago a protracted conflict played out.

During the Southeast Asia War, major air operations were staged from many locations within the Pacific Air Forces area of operation. From relatively safe bases in Thailand, aircraft of all description and vintage conducted twenty-four hour per day operations against targets throughout the area to include North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. From the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's Thailand was a buzz with air activities. SAC operated B52's and tankers flew missions from Utapao, located on the Gulf of Siam in Southern Thailand and from Anderson AFB, Guam. From widely dispersed locations such as Don Muang Air Base, Thailand; Clark Air Base, Philippines; CCK Air Base, Taiwan; and many other bases, MAC supported major airlift operations throughout SEA. Air reconnaissance missions, both strategic and tactical, were conducted from several locations within the Pacific theater.

Tactical resources were operated from five major air fields in Thailand as well as clandestine locations in out of the way places. To state that things were humming would be a major understatement. For most any red blooded American boy, it was a very exciting time to be part of the forces engaged in these vast air operations.

While traveling with the SAC Inspector General Team from 1970 to 1972, I had a first hand opportunity to sample the tempo at several bases throughout the Pacific where SAC resources were deployed. Longing for a chance to get involved in the war effort, I made my desires known to the Palace Badge Team at Military Personnel Center. In early 1972, after I completed Armed Forces Staff College, I was assigned to Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand (NKP) to serve as the squadron commander of the 56th Security Police Squadron. I went first to 13AF Headquarters located at Clark Air Base where I was given intensive briefings on operations in Thailand and given the opportunity to meet all of the key players at that level.

I arrived at Nakhon Phanom in early March 1973 at the height of the dry season. All of the rice fields were being burned in anticipation of the coming wet season. Smoke and haze were in the air and pink eye was the order of the day. I will not attempt to chronicle in this article the many events of that year. There was much joy in seeing the 56th

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DISMOUNT

Once again we have lost two of our members to the Guardmount in the great beyond.

Lt. Col. Roger P. Fox, USAF (Ret.), author of the book *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam 1961-1973* answered the call to that great Guardmount.

Charles Steel, K9 TSN – 68/69 has also joined that Eternal call to duty. Our prayers go out to their families.

TRAVELING WALL

Here is the schedule for the traveling walls. If you have not seen it, it is worth a visit. Check and see if it is in your area.

Schedule "A" 2001 (Schedule C is below)

05/11-05/17 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 05/25-05/31 Herrin, Illinois 06/02-06/08 Kennet, Missouri 06/12-06/18 Greencastle, Indiana 06/23-06/29 Clinton, Missouri 07/02-07/08 Indianapolis, Indiana 07/12-07/18 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 07/21-07/27 Clarion, Pennsylvania 07/30-08/05 Norwood, New York 08/08-08/14 Fulton, New York 08/17-08/23 Bronx, New York 08/25-08/31 North Wildwood, New Jersey 09/02-09/08 West Haven, Connecticut 09/10-09/16 Suffern, New York 09/22-09/28 Joliet, Illinois 10/02-10/08 DeSoto Kansas 10/10-10/16 Linn Creek, Missouri 10/21-10/27 Fulton, Mississippi 11/01-11/07 Hattiesburg, Mississippi 11/08-11/14 Gonzales, Louisiana

Schedule "C" 2001

05/08-05/12 Sanborn, New York 05/17-05/23 Chouteau, Oklahoma 05/26-06/01 Mountain Home, Arkansas 06/05-06/09 Elko, Nevada 06/12-06/18 Travis AFB, California 06/25-07/01 Esmond, North Dakota 07/04-07/10 Judith Gap, Montana 07/14-07/20 Sandpoint, Idaho 07/24-07/30 Raymond, Washhington 08/06-08/12 Metlakatla, Alaska 08/16-08/24 Fairbanks, Alaska 09/04-09/10 Florence, Oregon 09/14-09/20 Towacc, Colorado 09/24-09/30 Grove, Oklahoma 10/04-10/10 Wichita, Kansas 10/22-10/27 Ellensburg, Washington 10/31-11/05 Santa Barbara, California 11/08-11/14 Laughlin, Nevada



President's Corner



April - Tax Time - time to enjoy a refund or as is my case - pay government. Either way - is gone for this year at least. On a happier note, I was very happy that our Navy airmen, especially the pilot, handled themselves so professionally - happier still that they are home. We can relate to their sentiments. The difference is that they (gratefully) returned to a country that expressed it's gratitude to them and honored their efforts. Doing what they are supposed to do - Duty With Honor.

To be honest I have had a very rough time of it myself since January. I've had some healthy scares and thanks to the great depression I'm on meds. Things are better; however, I was either unaware or in denial. If things get rough for me I tend to withdraw and isolate so while I was encouraging Vets to open up for their own good I was not using my own advise. I only mention this because it is common for Vietnam Vets and for Security Police to express this - - - if you experience anything like this you are not alone!! I've been asked to help by writing an article or small book - I chose the title "My Biggest Battles" - a good subtitle would be - "Were Not Fought in Nam". I will keep you posted.

Well it is spring in the south - that means warm days rain and more sun light, flowers and the ability to get out and about. I hope you all enjoy this season of renewal and new birth. Please remember our brother Charles Steel who passed. Charles' nephew Mark Nickelson notified me of his uncle's death. Mark's number is 425-864-2706, if you wish to leave a message. Speaking as a member of VSPA - our motto, "We Take Care of Our Own," gets me through the rough times and keeps me motivated to continue to try and fight so government does the right thing where we and other veterans are concerned!

Have a great Memorial Day - fun and safe - I'll talk to you in July.

Kevin J. Fitzgerald President

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORT

Welcome to all our new members, and thanks to all members who sent in their renewals.

This is my first article in Guardmount since I became the Secretary/Treasurer. First let me say Hi to Frank in Upper Darby.

Second, this has been a non stop year so far. 1 just moved from Dallas TX to San Diego CA. What a task. Listing and selling our house in Dallas, then pack everything and move to San Diego. Wow, sticker shock, the price of houses here is twice what it was in Dallas.

I have posted all of the expenses and receipts on Quickens. And it is paying off now. Easier and faster to do reports with the click of a button.

We (Don Poss and I) are working on setting up an account on line so members can pay their dues either by credit card or by a charge to your checking account. You will be able to go to the VSPA web page and find the option there. There will be a slight fee, but less than a stamp. Hope to have that finished in a few weeks.

The treasury looks like this:

Ralance

October 1, 2000 \$3,885.02 Income 7,122.25 Expenses 3,905.55

March 31, 2001 \$7,101.72

A special thanks to the following for donations to the VSPA (I hope I did not miss anyone) John Sharpe, Robert Fuller, Alvin Bailey, Stephen Stefonowicz, Danney Williams, Craig Lord, Donald Budne, George Maag, Albert Balliet, Howard Pugh, Jerry Pritt, William Whitehead, Stephen Janke, Frederick Krisch, Luther Davis Alan Hendry, Jessie Ybarbo, F McGarth, John Henninger, Gary Colbert, Daniel Barnhrt, Kelly Dyer, David Dunn, James Shaefer.

Next we need to gear up for the reunion, which means I'll have to travel back the the east coast, but I wouldn't pass it up. The reunion in SA was great. And the plans for the next reunion look even better. If you never went to a reunion you should give it a try, just ask any member who has attended one.

Den Cook Secretary/Treasurer (Continued from page 1)

SPS selected as the best in PACAF, among other honors. There was great sadness in seeing so many fine young men bite the bullet in air operations and accidents of various kinds. My friend, the governor of Nakhon Phanom, was also killed in a helicopter accident. Crisis management was far more prevalent than routine. NKP was fitted with every king of aircraft imaginable, from propeller to rotor type, to jets both large and small. The wings mission was special air operation, and the aircraft were tailored accordingly. The base was defended by 1,000 plus airmen and Thai guard personnel. It was "fortress America" and none dared to take us on, although there were reports and probes from time to time.

Twenty-five plus years have passed since I left Thailand. I have often wanted to go back and discover things as they are today. In the next few paragraphs, I hope to give the readers who served in Thailand some appreciation of today's condition and perhaps provide a history lesson for those of you too young to have been part of that noble effort.

With a rented Toyota van and a driver named Noi, my wife and I along with a couple of her family members and one of my old retired Air Force buddies, set out to see what time had done to our Thailand base. Due to the distances involved, we did not try to visit Ko Kha, a communication site located near Chang Mai in the far north. Nor did we try to find Ubon which I knew to have been carried off almost in its entirety as the American forces were leaving. All other former American bases were on the list, although we ran out of time before we could get to Thakli.

From my wife's family home in the state of Petchabun in central Thailand, we drove first to Udon Thani. Udon Thani is located just south of Vientiane, the capital of Laos. Due to this proximity, much of the air operations conducted in Laos were staged from Udorn Air Base. Udorn AB was a major air base with F-4 aircraft assigned as well

as all sorts of WW II vintage and other propeller types operated by the CIA under the name Air America. The yellow bird lounge at the Charon Hotel was a favorite watering hole for some of the wildest and wackiest folkes that I have ever known, then or since. So, I figured I had best stay at the Charon and check out the yellow bird lounge. To my great joy both the hotel and the bar were basically unchanged. The bubble burst though when I stayed in the lounge until 10:00 p.m. and was not joined by a single rowdy American. In fact, the only evidence of our past American presence on the streets was a few burned out dopers who appeared to be children of the sixty's flower power age. Early the next morning I headed out to where Udorn Air Base was located. It is now the commercial airport for the city of Udon Thani as well as the home of the 23rd Wing of the Royal Thai Air Force. The main gate is located where the old American gate was. All of the temporary wooden buildings in that area had been razed. Unfortunately, due to the arrival of ranking visitors from the Thai government, we were unable to enter the base. But, the Air Police on duty at the gate section and at the Visitor Control were very cordial to us and told us to come back the next day for a guided tour. Having seen all of Udorn Air Base we were going to, I thanked them kindly and took some photos at the gate before setting out for that day's destination-my old stomping grounds at Nakhon Phanom.

We arrived at NKP late in the afternoon after a lengthy drive from Udon Thani. I had not idea what to expect. Had the gate not been marked with an airport sign, we would have never found what was once one of the largest operational bases in Thailand. The entire base had grown up in jungle except for the flight line, taxi ways, streets and slabs where buildings once stood. After some driving around in an attempt to orient myself, things began to come back. I sat outside the airport and remembered, as if it was yesterday, my departure. I could easily imagine the noises created by the den of so many varied aircraft engines. Across the runway I could still see small mounds of dirt where bunkers, towers and

(Continued on page 7)

Vietnam Security Police Association Reunion!

October 4-7, 2001 ~ Hampton, Virginia

To be held at the Historic Chamberlin Hotel overlooking the majestic Chesapeake Bay.

Hotel rates are \$69 per night, single or double occupancy, plus tax

Registration is \$100 per person and will include the following:

- Welcoming Package with name button, itinerary, List of attendees, & local information
- * Hospitality Room stocked everyday with snacks & beverages
 - Welcoming Reception Dinner on Thursday, October 4
 - Tour of Langley Air Force Base on Friday, October 5
 - Banquet Dinner on Friday, October 5
- * Business Meeting with Refreshments on Saturday Morning, October 6
 - Memorial Service on Sunday Morning with Refreshments
 - All associated taxes and gratuities

An optional full day tour of Colonial Williamsburg (with transportation) is being offered on Saturday after the business meeting for only \$44 per person!

Call the Chamberlin Hotel at (800) 416-1045 no later than September 4 to make your hotel reservations. Make sure to tell them you are with the Vietnam Security Police Association Reunion to receive the group rate of \$69 per night. Group Airfare is available by calling Kennewick Travel at 1-800-323-8728. This is guaranteed to be the lowest available rate!

COME JOIN US AS WE SHARE MEMORIES AND FIND OLD FRIENDS!! "WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN."

For More Information Contact:

Steve Gattis (Cam Ranh Bay 68-69)

Phone: (909) 986-6991

Email: gattis@gte.net

- or -

The Reunion BRAT Phone: 509-582-9304

Email: BratEmail@aol.com

VIETNAM SECURITY POLICE ASSOCIATION "WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN!" REUNION REGISTRATION FORM OCTOBER 4-7, 2001 HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

YES! SIGN ME UP FOR OUR REUNION!!!

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Confirmation of Registration and Itinerary will be sent out by September 15, 2001. A \$20 per person cancellation fee will apply to all cancellations within 30 days of the reunion. Cancellations received within 10 days of the event will be non-refundable. Call The Chamberlin Hotel at 757-723-6511 or 1-800-582-8975 no later than September 4, 2001 to make your hotel reservations. Be sure to mention you are with Vietnam Security Police Reunion to receive your group rate of \$69 per night, plus tax. These prices are available 3 days prior to and after your event should you choose to extend your stay. Call 1-800-323-8728 for your Group Airfare, guaranteed to be the lowest available rate!! We'll see you soon in beautiful Hampton, Virginia!

4005 S. IONE KENNEWICK, WA 99337 (509)582-9304 drive-in bunkers once stood. To the north I could make out the remnants of our northern most mortar pits. As the memories flooded back, for a brief moment it was almost as if I had never left. Unfortunately, my arthritic back had flared up and it harshly brought me back to reality. The concrete loading ramps at the base supply and the concrete structure at the POL area were about the only base structure recognizable. As I turned the corner in front of where the old 56th Combat Support Group Headquarters building once stood, there were the only wooden hutches that I observed anywhere in Thailand.

For those of you who were stationed at NKP, the town has grown to the point where you would scarcely recognize it. The area along the Mekong River particularly the restaurants near the Ho Chi Minh clock, remain basically unchanged. Although, today, all restaurants denied serving live monkey brains. New market areas have sprung up as well as new hotels, etc. For the sake of nostal-gia, we stayed at the old NKP hotel.

The next day we headed south along the Mekong River toward Ubon Ratkhanthani, the former site of one of our large air bases. Since I had been told that nothing remained at Ubon, we skirted around the city and headed for Khorat, or as it is formally known, Nakhon Ratchasima.

We arrived at Khorat Air Base late in the afternoon. The confusion of the army augmentee gate guard was evident. He didn't know anything and was uninterested in learning anything. His attitude was that we were on the outside and that was just fine with him. After listening to much of my belly aching in his own language, he reluctantly agreed to call another equally understanding troop on his hot line. Getting no where fast and getting considerably more agitated by the minute, I finally just left. I'll get some form of Visitor Authorization from RTAF Headquarters before I visit Khorat again. Like all Thailand cities, Khorat has greatly grown. We stayed in one of many hotels in the Lady Mo. Square area.

Utapao was the final destination and like Ubon and NKP, very little remains. The Thai navy sentry at the main gate was very courteous and admitted me to the base after viewing my military I.D. card. While the main gate is rather impressive, much grandeur than the one that sat on that same location a quarter of a century earlier, the base was even more grown up than others. All wooden structures, excepting one of the old transportation buildings near the flight line, were gone. Only the concrete slabs and roadways remained of the old cantonment area. The SAC concrete barracks and the chapel also remained and are being used to some extent. The former MAC terminal was only recently replaced by a more permanent structure. Cobra Gold, a major JCS exercise, is supported out of Utapao and some American presence is found there from time to time. Of all the bases, this is the one where the contrasts is perhaps most pronounced. As many as 10,000 troops were assigned there or rotated thru there at any given time. The size of the bomb dump, one designed to hold enough bombs to support B52 missions (over 100 bombs per mission), was enormous. The number of B52's and tankers that occupied the parking ramps was mind Yet, on my visit, the whistle of the boggling. Gaowaou, a small Thai bird, was the only sound observed. After 20 minutes on the base, I exited and saw only the lonesome sentry at the main gate. No other vehicles or personnel were in evidence. It was eerily quiet.

So, there it is. You can go back. But, where 50,000 plus Airmen once engaged in life and death air operation, our former air bases have fell hushed. Only in memory can you hear and feel reminders of the war. Let's hope these bases never have to be reactivated for their original purpose.

Gary G. Allison, Col. USAF (Ret)

Terry received a phone call from Charles Steel's nephew that Charles had passed away. Charles was a K9 handler at TSN in 68-69. He was looking for a patch and or pictures. His nephew can be reached at 425-787-6217 if anyone can help him.



CHAPLAIN 'S CORNER



1 Corinthians 1:8,9 says" For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch, that we dispaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. The Bible truly can speak to us if we will listen. Share a personal story with the Editor for the next edition. We have been silent too long. God bless you and all our families!

Chaplain Steve Janke

A DIFFERENT KIND OF A WAR STORY

In 1975, I was assigned to the South East Asia Kingdom of Thailand. I was shot at several times by communist machine gun and automatic weapons fire (NKP fire fight - 15 Sep 1975). Bandits were also a constant problem. I never got wounded, God was with me, but I didn't know it then.

Thailand is a mysterious country and surrounded by it's strangely exotic culture and Buddhist religion, my own Christian faith was weakened. I had a score of nightmares and bad luck. There were eighteen cops that died on the Mayaquez rescue mission, I often asked myself, "Why them and not me?" Guilt ate away at me for years.

Back in the states I got involved in the occult, you see a spiritual war had raged within me ever since I got off the plane in Thailand. According to an ex-Buddhist priest turned Christian, an entire sect of Vietnamese Buddhist monks spent years heaping specific curses upon all Americans that came to fight in their country (this curse spilled over into Thailand). These specific curses were:

1. That the American warriors would become wandering men and women for the rest of

their lives.

- 2. That they would never find peace.
- 3. That they would be angry men and women for the rest of their lives.

The spirits and curses of the land and pagan religions attached themselves to me to torment me mentally through flashbacks, nightmares, attempted suicide, alcohol, alienation, isolation, anger, rade, depression and numbing of feelings. I was a wounded soul and brought this torment back to live with me in my home, in my family and in my social relationships. How can I forget seeing the bodies of executed bodies floating down the MeKong?

The Bible says in Ephesians 6:12, "For we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

While stationed at Holloman AFB, NM in 1978 I held a loaded M-16 rifle under my chin on 'full auto' and contemplated blowing myself away. God allowed me to see a vision of my family after my death, the world doesn't stop but my family who loved me would be destroyed. I removed the magazine from my weapon and switched it to 'Safe'. Then a voice said, "Go ahead put it on 'Semi' and pull the trigger. Listen to it click - there's no bullet in it." I flipped the fire selector to 'semi' and eased my finger down to the trigger when another strange voice said to me, "Check the weapon first." I switched the weapon to 'Safe' and pulled back the charging handle ... a round popped out. The voice said to me, "I will be with you always until the end of the world."

It was not until I got "Saved" and became a Christian in 1992 that I first read those same words. Jesus Christ said them in Matthew 28:20.

I have peace now and hope. A wonderful relationship with my wife and I sleep well at night. "God Bless the SP's"

> David Scott, T. Sgt USAF (Ret) NKP 1975 U-Tapao 1975 - 76

(T.Sgt Scott was with C Flight 6908th Security Service at NKP, Thailand 1975 and Dragon Flight, 635th Security Police Squadron (Air Base Defense) at U-Tapao, Thailand 1975 - 76.)



VSPA BX PRODUCT SALES

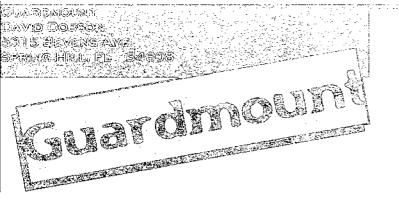


Pat	ches:	Stickers:	
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ĥ,	QC Back Patch (9") \$15.6	a. VSPA Association	
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	. , ,	h. Belt Buckels (Vietnam Veteran with Service and	
		Campaign Ribbons)\$12.0	
		(U.S. Air Force Generic) \$12.0	

Please add \$3.00 shipping and handling for all orders under \$50.00, orders over that are only \$4.50 for Shipping and Handling. Please make checks for merchandise payable to Vietnam Security Police Association (VSPA). Sorry no Credit Card Orders. Send checks and orders to Mike Daoust, 401 N. Kiesel St., Bay City, MI 48706

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