

"Pack Rat" Pahs

Steve Pahs carried more stuff in his flight suit than anybody I knew. He was like a squirrel, getting ready for winter. Knives, spoons, matches, animal traps, food, a few well-placed liquid refreshments . . . you name it, he carried it. If he ever had to jump, he could have survived for months in any terrain, if he lived through the jump with all the extra weight.

CMSgt. Tom Linam



Rescue mission: Jack "Where's Jocko" Wilhite and Steve "Walking Army Surplus Store" Pahs enjoying survival training wildlife on the South Platt River near Deckers, 1963.

Follow me, men

Under the impression they were bound for Hill AFB, Utah to fly and evaluate the F-4 *Phantom* for possible use in the Air Guard, 25 gullible pilots boarded a bus in July 1963 . . . supposedly taking them to Stapleton Airport. Instead, they got a trip to the mountains and a surprise lesson in survival (and deception). After spending a summer night on the ground in the "wild brown yonder," the pilots began a nine-mile trek down the Buffalo Creek-Deckers road, where they were once again met by the bus.

Col. Bob Cherry

swimming, fishing or water skiing (the lake was far bigger then). Aside from water sports, the recreation area, managed by SMSgt. Les Waggoner, offered a golf-driving range, horse-shoe pits, skeet-shooting range, picnic area and playground facilities. Future plans included an archery range, go-cart track and an 18-hole golf course with clubhouse. These rather grandiose ideas never reached fruition due to funding limitations.

Devotion to duty, leadership, loyalty, civic participation and military achievements are the categories closely examined for the selection of the ANG's Outstanding Airman of the Year, an honor bestowed on SMSgt. Thomas W. Linam in 1962. Linam ran Buckley's simulator operations and was responsible for the conversion of an F-86D flight simulator to an F-100 type. In a



Sgt. Herman

Herman (above) lived in the hangar at Buckley in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Herman was a particularly gullible hangar dog who would repeatedly fall for the same trick. After dashing across the slippery floor upon hearing his name called out, he never quite figured out why the door at the end of the hangar kept closing on him. He'd slide into the same door time after time. Well, old Herman had his own type of subtle revenge. Many of the crew chiefs back then would check for coolant leakage by touching any suspicious liquid on their tires and tasting the fluid to see if it was coolant. Word has it that Sgt. Herman would occasionally add a little flavor of his own to the tires.

Anonymous

1988 interview with *Colorado Pride*, Maj. Gen. Moffitt commented, "I don't know of anybody who has contributed more to the Colorado ANG than Chief Linam. His training innovations and professionalism may well have been responsible for saving

Toby's story

When Harry Scott hired me in August 1965, he could only start me out as a WG-10. I wanted to work for the Guard so badly, I never questioned what a WG-10 was or what he was paid. My first paycheck actually tripled my previous earnings as an apprentice metal-spinner. I was a weapons mechanic until earning my commission (1974) and moving into management. When my mother saw me in nice clean clothes without any grit on my hands, she thought I lost my job. She still isn't sure about it. God Bless the Air Guard. It's given me a good life and helped me raise my family.

Maj. Pedro Tobias

Home again after Berlin Crisis call-up: F-100s and crew chiefs at Buckley Air National Guard Base, August 1962.



many pilots' lives. But more than that, he was a doer and an unsurpassed people organizer. He would have made, and probably should have been, a great general officer."

The 120th TFS was officially released from active service Aug. 24, 1962. There was no lack of fanfare as 18 F-100s flew the full length of Colfax Avenue in diamond formation as a salute to the Guardsmen unloading from five C-130 transports at Buckley.

Post-activation reorganization and deployments

Restructuring occurred again, Oct. 1, 1962. Headquarters, COANG was under the direction of Maj. Gen. Gregory and the 140th TFW remained under the command of Col. Williams. The fighter group in turn was made up of the following organizations and commanders: 120th TFS — Lt. Col. Barnwell; 140th

Walt Williams

Top Gun, *Minute Men* leader, driving force behind the modern COANG

What got you interested in flying?

Believe it or not, it was a radio program called, "Jimmy Allen." He had all kinds of escapades. That got me interested in flying, and I used to build models.

Why the military as a career?

I think flying fighters was the key. I tried airline flying twice in my life . . . first in 1946, with United Airlines; but, they had a big layoff. So, I went to flight instruction and joined the Air Guard. In 1953, when I came home from Korea, I went to work for Continental for about three months. I couldn't hack it. I couldn't just sit there in the right seat and let some old poop, with thousands of hours in the left seat of a *Gooneybird*, tell me how to fly.

What was your basic training like?

Pretty haphazard. We were training people so fast in those days, turning them out like Dick Tracy badges. We had no training compared to today. Today, you go through all the books, through the growing, through the simulator, your backseat ride, etc. But look at the high accident rate then, compared to what it is today . . . it was a philosophy of win a few, lose a few.

You were shot down in World War II, weren't you?

Yes, I was critically short of fuel and an FW-190 snuck up behind me. I got away, but had to land on a civilian airstrip near Mont Saint Michelle, an airstrip we weren't really sure was in our hands. Once I was on the ground, Frenchmen came running over a hill, throwing rocks and pushing pitchforks at me. They forced me right up on the nose of my bird. So, I pulled out an American flag and began waving it. About that time a red-haired, bearded guy — a war correspondent — came bouncing along in a jeep. He began speaking French with my civilian tormentors and

then, I was a big hero. The correspondent was Ernest Hemingway. He gave me a Nazi infantry badge and arm band as mementos, which I still have.

In your career, what accomplishment stands out?

I'd have to say the *Minute Men*. The reason I had to think about that for a while is that the Colorado Guard took some giant steps while I was commander — not necessarily due to my expertise. My philosophy was . . . if we couldn't do the Air Force's job, we were mispending Uncle Sam's money. Therefore, I promoted all the deployments I possibly could. We were pushing the Air Force quite a bit and I can remember General Disosway saying to his active duty commanders, "If you guys can't do it, I'll get old Walt Williams to do it." That made me sit up in my chair a little bit taller.

Obviously, the *Minute Men*, your inspiration, didn't just happen. How did it come about?

I went through jet upgrade training at Williams Field, in 1949. The *AcroJets*, the grand-daddies of the *Thunderbirds*, were down there. Four guys in P-80As came in and did a loop in formation off the initial, cut a couple of didos and put on a show. I thought that was the greatest thing I'd ever seen. When I came home, Satch Harvey, Dick Hubolt and I tried it in '51s. We found it wasn't all that difficult. We flew at local rodeos and fairs, putting together a reputation . . . added a fourth and, later on, a fifth — a solo man. We were invited all over the U.S. and, finally, the Guard Bureau made us their official air demonstration team.

You named your boat "Redeye VI"; where did "Redeye" begin for you?

Bob Sands, Gale Mehler, Mel Conine and I were sitting in the airport restaurant in

Casper, Wyo., trying to decide what kind of call sign we could use for the 1955 gunnery meet. We'd had a fairly rough night. Bob looked at me and said, "How about *Redeye*?" *Redeye* . . . distinctive, understandable . . . and it stuck.

So, you were able to pick your own call sign?

Yes, for the team. We used it for the *Minute Men*, too. Since then, the 120th has received permission to use it full time.

Other than the *Minute Men*, what are some of the other Walt Williams' "firsts"?

The first deployment to Alaska . . . first deployment to Puerto Rico . . . first ones combat ready in the A-7. The 1955 gunnery meet is kind of special, too. The first time a Guard "Sunday-soldier" outfit had shown the capability to match up with the regulars.

Going up against the regular Air Force, what kind of things went through your mind?

We were the poor cousins . . . we didn't have money or manpower. For instance, the crew chiefs were all volunteers; in most cases, they traveled without per diem, without extra pay or anything else.

Who stands out in your memory?

There were so many. Satch Harvey was a crazy man — a renegade who loved to fly airplanes. Then, Bob Cherry was probably the best left wingman for an acrobatic team that ever was.

What's critical about the left wingman?

When you do rolls, he has to push under. He gets negative "Gs" while everyone else is going positive, and that's tough.

Is there some person that stood out as an inspiration to your career?

Material Squadron — Lt. Col. Harry A. Beck; 140th CSS — Lt. Col. Edward F. Brown, Jr.; 140th Tactical Hospital — Col. Alvin L. Daywitt.

The Volk Field, Wis., population was increased by approximately 1,000 from June 15-29, 1963, as ANG units from Colorado, Iowa, Indiana and Alabama took part in summer field training there for the first time. Colorado's 140th and Sioux City, Iowa's 185th TFG flew a combined 40 sorties a day for the two-

week period.

The 140th TFW prepared to deploy to Puerto Rico Nov. 29 to Dec. 2, 1963, marking the first Air National Guard deployment outside the continental U.S. Refueled by ANG KC-97s, the F-100s flew nonstop to Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station. Support personnel arrived by C-97. Coloradans participated in air-to-air target practice and worked with a photo-reconnaissance unit from the Mississippi Air Guard for tactical experience.

Probably it was General Gabe Disosway, USAFE and, later, TAC commander. That's when he was my boss — a couple or three steps up. He was a man who led by example. A man of very few words, but when you heard those words, you jumped.

Having been involved in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, what are some of your thoughts about war?

It's a terrible thing; I really believe in SAC's motto: "Peace is our profession." I believe the bigger club you carry, the fewer people are going to take a swing at you. Of course, we don't want war. I doubt now that we would have the resolve to fight a war like World War II or even Korea. In Vietnam, our guys did their best, but they didn't have the support of the people. That was a terrible thing. Frankly, I'm afraid if we got into another hassle with millions of people under arms, there'd be a lot of "hell no, I won't go" people.

Speaking about our resolve to win, how do pilots differ today?

They have to be much more of a technician. They have to be so highly trained in so many systems . . . the avionics system, mechanical systems, etc. Procedures are so standardized and so well written, that you just *do it*. It doesn't leave very much to the raw, fighter pilot talent, which you used to have to depend on in our airplanes, when you didn't have all of today's equipment.

How about combat maneuvers? Have those changed much over the years?

No, not at all. The same principles still apply, although now you're talking about a rate of closure of 2,000 mph instead of 450 or 500. The turn radius today is in miles, instead of yards. You need radar to pick a guy up, because after he passes, he's so far out he's going to need help to get back into it.

As wing commander, what was your most difficult situation?

Getting all three states to head in the



Brig. Gen. Walter E. Williams served as commander of the 140th Air Defense Wing and 140th Tactical Fighter Wing from June 1960 until July 1974. Interview conducted by CMSgt. Joseph R. Ashby.

same direction. A deployment would come along, and I'd automatically slice it in three parts and tell them, "Here's what we've got . . . a deployment to Alaska . . . how many planes you going to provide?" You'd get a good feel about what you could get out of the other units, but a lot of it was just competition. They'd ask where they'd get the money, and I'd say, "Never mind, we'll do it." Then, it comes out in *The Guardsman*: "The Colorado Air National Guard, 140th TFW, did this or that." The next time it would come about, they'd say, "We'll go, count us in!"

Was taking someone out of the cockpit and putting them into a major administrative position, or worst yet firing them, difficult for you?

To fire anybody, that's difficult, but it's required sometimes. You get the right person in there, tell him what you want him to do and let him do it. Give him enough guidance as to what your policies are, let him do it, stand back and watch. That's what everybody always did with me. They'd say, "If you don't have a good outfit, Williams, I'll get somebody that *can*

make it a good outfit."

What would you like to see ahead for the Colorado ANG?

Hopefully, this Air Reserve Force standardization of the overall mission that we have now. What I see is the continuation of a real dependency by the DoD on the Air Guard, because we've proven, time and time again, that we are on the first team. We can pick up and go. Vietnam . . . as an example . . . bam! . . . pick up and go.

Sounds like you're a believer in the Total Force policy.

Oh, absolutely. It would be ridiculous to spend the amount of money we'd have to, if we were all active duty.

So much seems to be shifting toward the Guard. Do you think there's a point where they put too much reliance upon the Guard?

I haven't seen it. I know of no case in which the Guard has failed to do a mission that was required. Some outfits don't volunteer. They say, "Where's the per diem; where's the money?" But they still are capable of doing it. If the Air Force is going to tie a mission on a Reserve unit, they should provide the man-days and money, so it doesn't come out of our hide.

How important is the Guard family?

We've got to keep our Guard families involved and informed. We've had so many people go through our program; some dropped out, because of family problems. We had one good pilot that went through Vietnam, while his wife was here carrying placards against the war. That's how far apart they were. He told her, "I'll do what I want," and she said the same thing.

Is there something else about your career you'd like to mention?

The support that people gave me was fabulous. You just can't buy that. It has to be given of its own free will, and it's sincere . . . or it wouldn't be given in the first place. When they give you that kind of support, you can't help but reciprocate in every way you know how.

Maj. Gen. John C. Meyer, 12th Air Force commander, called "Operation Abbey Tower" the ideal way to use the Air Guard. Coming out of the exercise with a "world of knowledge," the 140th received the TAC Achievement Award for 1962, followed by the same award in 1963, as well as the ANG Flying Safety Award for the year.

On a sadder note, the new year began with the passing of two pioneer aviators within a few days of each other — Danny Kearns and Carlos L. Reavis. Both pilots were World War I veterans who came home with air-fever in their blood. By joining the Colorado National Guard's 120th Observation Squadron, they were afforded the opportunity to do what they loved . . . fly. In 1970, Kearns and Reavis, along with nine others, were inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society.

Korean War veteran and airline pilot Maj. Ron L. Jankovsky assumed command of the 120th TFS from Lt. Col. Barnwell in 1964. Members of the 140th TFW participated in three joint exercises with the Army that year. "Operation Desert Strike" was conducted May 7-30 in the arid regions of Arizona, California and Nevada. Then, in August came a most ambitious project — "Operation Ready Go" — the first Air Guard non-stop flight to Europe (in support of the U.S. 7th Army).

(continued on page 123).

Maintenance Troops

We had the greatest group of guys in the 1960s. During the early part of the decade the squadron established the Field Maintenance Branch to obtain better utilization of personnel and equipment.

The branch consisted of the engine shop under the guidance of Vince Hill, the hydraulic shop under Charley Eckert, the electric shop under Charley De Vesse, and the airframe shop was directed by Leo Cleaver, assisted by John Moore and Fred Brower. Ernie Nolds took care of the welding shop with Don Carlisle as the machinist. Ted Van Deese was our tire shop specialist until he moved to the electric shop and Billy Gallimore took over. Peter Triolo joined the unit as a fuel cell specialist. The instrument shop was the responsibility of Billy Hill. The ACE section was supervised by Frank Organ and upon his retirement Rodger Braley was its chief. Bill Bath and then Wayland Boyle were in charge of the EGRESS Section. The NDI shop was the responsibility of Bill Doty assisted by Ken Krumpelmann.

On the other side of the hangar, John Charles, assisted by Frank Stevens, was taking care of the parachute shop and doubling on firing-range duties. Ray Zorens was the personal equipment shop supervisor. They were responsible for the packing of drag chutes for the F-100s and all transient aircraft. After Homer Barnes left to take over maintenance control, I assumed responsibility as field maintenance superintendent. There are many others, but it does my heart good to remember some of the best maintenance people any unit ever had.

CMSgt. William Haggerty



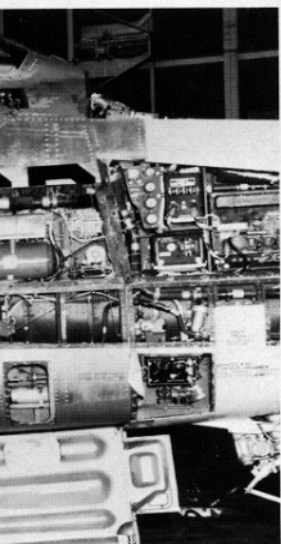
Volk Field: Aerial view of the Wisconsin Summer Camp in 1963 (above); F-86 static display welcoming Colorado and Texas Air National Guard units for "Guard Strike IV" (right). The permanent field training site near the Wisconsin Dells is a familiar site to many Colorado Air Guardsmen. It has frequently served as a deployment destination for Operational Readiness Inspections and other exercises through the 1980s. The "choice" destination has contributed significantly to the COANG's combat readiness.

Super Sabres: F-100C, the Air Guard's first century series fighter, with aerial target dart, launched from Hill AFB, Utah, bound for Wendover air-to-air range, Steve Pahs pilot, June 1964 (right).



In the maintenance bay: Bill Haggerty (on the ladder) and Bud Depry supervising F-100 maintenance activities (below).





Damage assessment: Examination of well-used dart to determine qualifying hits.



Bullet dipping: Slugs dipped in different paint colors (photo here from 1950s) helped identify dart target hits.

A Minute Men dart "shark"

During the years when the F-100 was still considered an air superiority fighter, we would fly air-to-air gunnery. The target, called a dart, was an oversized kite pulled on a nylon rope attached to a 1,500-foot cable behind and below another F-100. Designed to maneuver much like its tow ship, it was pulled in a figure-eight pattern. We would be cleared to fire when it was turning, descending or climbing.

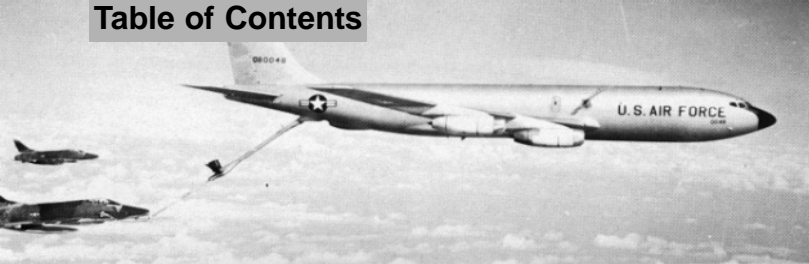
To eliminate doubt (would a fighter pilot claim a fake hit?), we each had our 20mm slugs dipped in a different color paint, leaving a discernible mark on any hole in the wood and paper dart. I think most of us used an estimated range for firing. Rumor had it that one of our top air-to-air scorers would use his expertise as an *ex-Minute Men* wingman: fly up to the dart, place his pitot boom on top of the dart and fire.

Col. Jack Wilhite

Yard sale

During gunnery practice at Volk Field in Wisconsin we had a tow target dropped because of a broken cable. The weighted part of the target hit dead center on a newly constructed steel silo in a farmer's barnyard. When we went out to retrieve the target I expected to meet a very irate individual. Instead we were met by a very pleasant, friendly housewife whose first words were, "Could I please have the target cloth?" It was good, white nylon material and she wanted it for making clothing.

Col. Sidney Webb



New respect for Lindbergh: Refining F-100 refueling techniques with KC-97s and KC-135s (top) was a high priority and major accomplishment of the 1960s, allowing the COANG to deploy "across the pond" to Puerto Rico, Vietnam and Turkey. Wilhite brought home the boom basket (above) on one mission.

"Ram" jet refueling

Inflight refueling in the F-100 had to be one of the most demanding of any of our missions. KC-97s, at top speed, were much too slow for our "C" models. We would be hanging on the thrust at a very high angle of attack — the bird quite unstable and response to power changes sluggish, at best. Combine this with a little turbulence, a ham-fisted tanker driver or a white-knuckled "Hun" driver, and trying to poke the boom into that bouncing basket was a little like a big horn ram trying to mate with his favorite ewe while bounding over a boulder field on a mountain-side. Add weather, darkness, jet (or prop) wash from the tanker engines, peer pressure from your heckling "buddies" sitting out there, or an over-water flight where failure to hook up and take fuel could mean an abort destination and you were more than ready for a few "Colorado Kool Aides" when you got back on the deck.

The refueling boom consisted of a long metal pipe, flyable by the "boomer." Attached to the boom was a flexible hose with a basket on the end. I recall an incident when the basket separated from the hose and many gallons of JP-4 spewed over the *Super Sabre*. Some went into the intake and made a momentary "Roman Rocket" out of that bird, with one hell of a bang and fire belching out of both ends. In the Wyoming night sky, it appeared to have a lit afterburner on both ends. The basket came back to Buckley (above), proudly capping the refueling probe.

Inflight refueling was one innovation, I feel, most of us "90-minute" rear-end fighter pilots could have done without.

Col. Jack Wilhite



Brass: Maj. Gen. Truesdell, 12th AF commander; Brig. Gen. Dunning, 831st AD commander; Lt. Col. Barnwell, 120th TFS commander; Col. Banburg and Col. Worley, 12th AF DCO.

Great leaders

It was a great organization with great leaders. Gen. Moffitt, Col. Williams and Col. France would give you a job to do and then stand back out of your way. If you ran into a problem, they would help out. You always knew exactly where you stood.

CMSgt. Tom Linam



White House meeting: President Kennedy; Maj. Gen. Cantwell, NGAUS president; and Colorado AG, Maj. Gen. Moffitt, 1963.

We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

John F. Kennedy



A man of letters

Ray Schmitt used to call himself "every other Schmitt." It had something to do with every other letter in his name.
Lt. Col. Bill Axton



Message to the troops

The Colorado Air Guard is a proud, razor-sharp outfit. We are a volunteer outfit. We believe in our mission and in our ability to fulfill that mission. We can pick up and move our entire striking force in a matter of hours — go anywhere in the world and be ready to fight. We work hard. Guardsmen train alongside veterans who have helped military aviation grow from 80 mph canvas *Jennies* to supersonic jet aircraft and nuclear weapons. For three centuries the Guard has been a tradition. We take pride in being a part of that tradition. The Guard's citizen-soldier concept is basic to this nation's ideals which hold that individual freedom and privilege go hand in hand with obligation and duty.

Brig. Gen. Walter E. Williams at the end of "Nearer the Sky," a brief history of the COANG written in the late 1960s



Commander: Col. Williams assumed command of the 140th in June 1960.

Roosevelt Roads NAS, P.R.: Roll call, Marooney and Mason at far right (top); TSgt. Braley (T-shirt) unloading dart (above); Maj. Pahs and Col. Williams in first F-100 down after non-stop flight (below), 1963.



"Billy Mitchell" vision

Brig. Gen. Walt Williams was a commander with "Billy Mitchell" vision. He led the *Minute Men* and also proposed the "corkscrew roll," the team's signature maneuver, which has never been duplicated by any other demonstration team. He developed the idea of using KC-97 refuelers for the Puerto Rico deployment. Walt also envisioned night training in weapons delivery, before it was authorized for ANG units. A total list of what he did for Colorado and the entire ANG could fill a book. His was the mark of a true visionary.

Col. Bob Cherry

The same "anywhere, anytime, can-do" attitude displayed in "Abbey Tower," also prevailed throughout "Operation Ready Go." Five pilots from the 140th — Col. Williams, Maj. Cherry and Capts. Fred Zimmat, Thomas Risan and Martin Mechling — joined the Composite Air Strike Force made up of men from 20 ANG units in 17 states, plus the District of Colum-

Puerto Rico: Eberhardt in No. 953, Ray Rendon in center F-100, weapons loader Tom Suprenant charging 20mm cannons, 1963.



bia.

"Ready Go," in some aspects, was vastly different than other deployments. Its length and complexity elevated it to a more sophisticated level. Pilots sat hunched in their cockpits for nearly 10 hours straight, flying a zigzag route northward to Newfoundland, southeasterly to the Azores, east to Spain, north again to England, then east once more into Hahn and Ramstein Air Bases in Germany — some 4,600 air miles from their starting point on the East Coast.

Along that difficult route, they rendezvoused three times with prepositioned Air Guard tankers. While no pilot had to go to an abort base due to inability to refuel enroute, bad weather over most of Germany forced some of the planes to set down in England. When the exhausting flight finally ended in Germany, fresh pilots from New York, Iowa and Missouri units, as well as other Colorado people, were waiting to step into the cockpits and fly practice missions under Army and Air Force commanders.



Point Barrow, Alaska: COANG side trip during "Operation Diamond Lil," 1964 (above) took Coloradans 330 miles north of the Arctic Circle; Inupiat Eskimos (right).

"We flew an ocean non-stop, and made ourselves immediately ready with no lost motion to fly combat missions," said the leader of the Atlantic crossing, Brig. Gen. Willard W. Millikan. The D.C. Air Guard general also said the trip symbolized the final demise of the once-prevalent belief that part-time fliers would have trouble mastering highly sophisticated weapons systems and the high-pressure time requirements of a first-line role in the era's fast-reaction Air Force.

"Operation Ready Go" was followed by another challenging deployment, dubbed "Diamond Lil," involving non-stop flying from a staging area at McChord AFB, Wash., to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, for a 15-day period (Sept. 27 to Oct. 11).

Once in Alaska, the wing's objective was to supplement the Alaskan Air Command with a tactical fighter unit in the joint theater of operations. In addition to "Diamond Lil," the 16-plane strike force, commanded by Lt. Col. Barnwell, provided Army field maneuvers "Denali Eagle I and II" with close ground support, interdiction, counter-air insurgency and reconnaissance.

The exercise and ensuing maneuvers marked the first time an ANG wing had participated in an operation of this magni-



Divine guidance: Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Heister and Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Leyden at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, 1964.

A divine shaggy dog story

Chaplain Richard Heister, now Monsignor Heister in the Denver Archdiocese, took his German shepherd, Sam, with him everywhere . . . he even jumped out of a plane with him over the Philippines. The dog was heavy and kicked him all the way down, but Heister never let go. To this day, Monsignor Heister has a gimpy knee because of that jump.

Chaplain (Col.) Victor Hoops

Authenticate: Brig. Gen. Williams and Col. Cherry, below in 1969, were in on the "accomplish the mission" deception.

Authenticate, authenticate

Walt Williams was always mission oriented. During "Diamond Lil," the commander of the Alaskan Air Command had recalled a special mission on two separate occasions. Walt thought it could be safely accomplished. As fighter director in the command post, I "misplaced" the command post authentication book under a seat cushion and when the recall was next ordered, as we knew it would be, Walt asked for code authentication. The director of operations at AAC, Col. Mark Allen, was in on the deception.

Anyway, nobody could find the book as he called again and a third time. His last transmission prior to dropping below radio reception altitude was "proceeding as planned due to lack of recall verification." The mission was accomplished beautifully.

Col. Bob Cherry



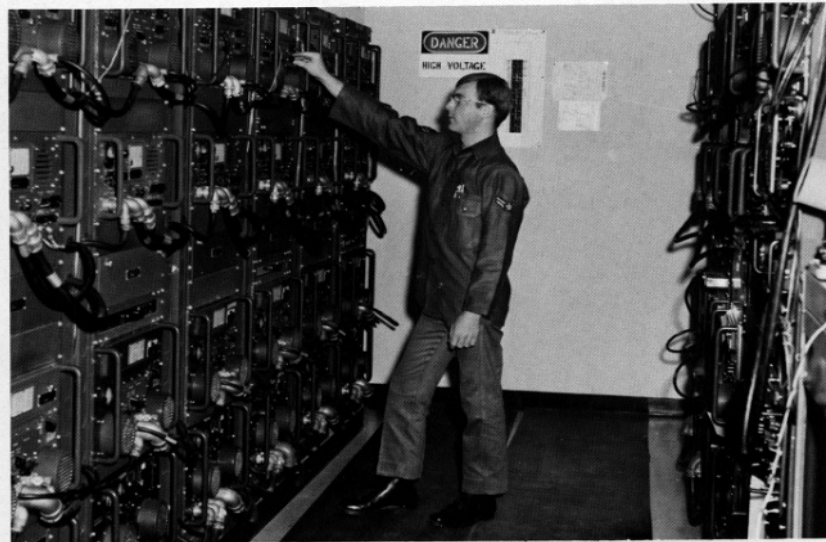
tude. By the time the last COANG plane had returned to its home base, nearly 300 Guardsmen had participated in the deployment.

138th AC&W Squadron comes of age

The 138th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron (ACWS), located in Greeley, also produced several big achievements during this period. The year 1961 climaxed with an overall second place finish in "William Tell," the Air Force worldwide interceptor weapons meet at Tyndall AFB, Fla. The high finish served as ample evidence that an Air Guard team, comprised of people from several states, could hold its own with active duty forces. Colorado's participants were Capt. Edmund Morrissey and TSgt. William Stombaugh, both assigned to the 138th ACWS. Their ground control intercept team was also joined by 1st Lt. Gary Hunt and SSgt. Joe Eastwood, both of the 130th ACWS, Utah ANG. Their combined efforts provided a perfect score for their segment of the meet.

In May 1963, two new radar towers, one 75 feet, the other 70 feet, were erected on a site three miles east of Greeley. They became operational the following month. With its increased capability, the 138th became the forerunner to the 154th Tactical Control Group (TCG).

The squadron won ADC's "A" Award in 1964. Every operational unit in the ADC was eligible for the "A" Award. But to win, a unit had to demonstrate an outstanding degree of mission effectiveness for a 12-month period. The 138th's 24-hour-a-day, 365-days-a-year radar surveillance fit the criteria. They became the first ANG ground environmental organization to receive the coveted command citation. After receiving an "outstanding" rating on their 1964 Operational Readiness Inspection, the 138th sent weapons directors to the 1965 ANG team competing in "William Tell." The ANG team emerged victorious over active duty competitors.

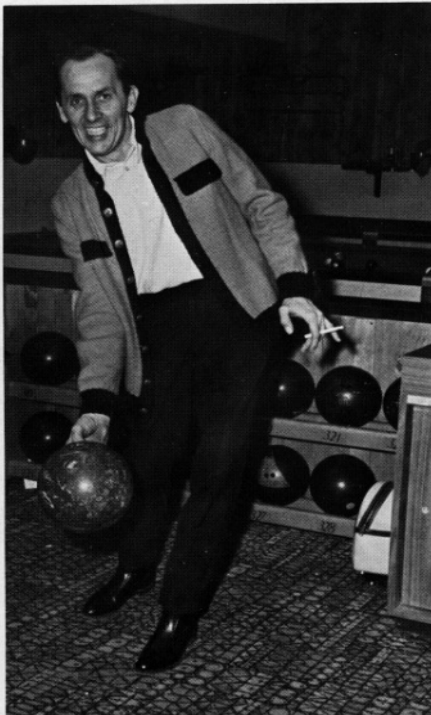


Radar masters: A2C Bill Walker, 138th AC&WS radio maintenance technician, adjusts a UHF transmitter used by aircraft interceptor controllers (top); 138th Commander, Maj. Richard Saltmarsh accepting Air Force Association "Citation of Honor" plaque for outstanding operational ability from Lt. Gen. Herbert Thatcher, March 1966; Air Defense Command "A Award" flag given to outstanding AC&W squadron, an ANG first. In 1967, the 138th became the first non-flying ANG unit to win the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

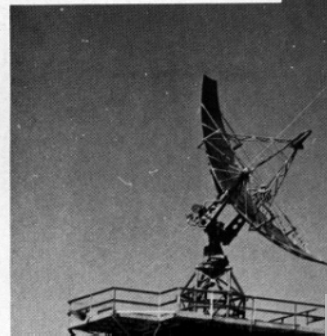
The bowling alley

We used to have a bowling alley on base. It was across from the old supply building near today's Det. 1 ramp and the Security Police building. Our leagues started right after work. When they tore down the building, Base Civil Engineering sold off 10 sections of the four lanes for \$2 each. I still have that section; it's part of my work bench at home.

Robert Herbst



Buckley Lanes: "Keg Pin Killer" Pete Velkers paid 25¢ a line in 1961.



Disaster assistance

Disaster struck Colorado Wednesday, June 16, 1965, as flood waters raged through metropolitan Denver and the eastern plains of the state. About 225 Air National Guardsmen joined many Army Guard units and civil authorities in disaster assistance duties.

Initial response troops were sent to Englewood and Littleton to direct traffic away from flooding Plum Creek and the Platte River. Working throughout the night, Guardsmen were relieved by a second shift whose primary job was patrolling the disaster areas to prevent looting.

The 233rd Mobile Communications Flight, credited with saving the eastern Colorado town of Deer Trail, set up communications facilities and helped the small community dig out. In one instance, A1C. Robert C. Smith rescued an elderly couple's motor home — their only possession. A co-worker described Airman Smith as "mud-soaked, bone-tired and flowing with pride knowing that he and his outfit had made a difference, lending a hand to those in need."

Assistance operations were controlled out of Colorado National Guard Headquarters, 300 Logan St., under the direction of the adjutant general. Providing Moffitt with yet another hat to wear, the state had selected him to head the newly created post of State Natural Disaster Coordinator.

Air Guard "beefs up" its combat readiness

In August 1965, the Colorado ANG was directed to increase manning to 100 percent of authorized strength, adding 147 people. This was the beginning of NGB's "Beef Broth" program, to meet USAF standards in manning, material and training. Nine ANG units were included in this manpower enhancement program. The 140th TFW and its associated groups, in Kansas, Iowa and New Mexico, all fell under the provisions of "Beef Broth." Moffitt interpreted the build-up as preparation for a possible call to active duty — a vision soon proved accurate.



Buckley ANGB: F-100C Super Sabre with full combat load prepared for Fort Carson gunnery range firepower mission.

Loyalty

General Joe always had his finger on the pulse beat of the organization and the loyalty of his people reflected it. After I retired from active duty, the general asked me to sign on at Buckley for a few months to help out. I was still there 11 years later.

MSgt. J.C. Parsons



Disaster assistance: Guardsman patrolling the Platte River area after devastating 1965 flood.

100-year flood

Nobody griped about working long hours to get the job done. I remember coming into work at 7:30 one morning and not getting home until three days later. That was the "100-Year Flood" in 1965. We had two feet of water on the runway. The old railroad tracks that connected Buckley with Lowry and Fitzsimons were washed out by Sand Creek.

MSgt. J.C. Parsons



Joe Moffitt: "Gen. Joe" congratulates Walt Williams on his promotion, October 1965 (top); The adjutant general and Buck Rennick (with beer) at COANG mountain picnic, mid-1960s.

In September 1965, the USAF Flying Safety Plaque was awarded to the 140th TFG, commanded by Col. Barnwell. The award was presented by Brig. Gen. I.G. Brown, assistant chief of air of the NGB for the group's 1964 accomplishment of flying more than 6,000 hours without an accident. The 140th won two consecutive USAF flying safety awards, a first for an ANG organization.

The possibility of Air Guard involvement in Vietnam loomed on the horizon as 1965 came to an end. In a December editorial, *Denver Post* staff writer Dan Partner (a great friend of the 140th TFW who accompanied the unit to Southeast Asia) wrote about numerous DoD studies on manpower and weapon requirements in Vietnam. According to Partner at the time, "These studies concern the possible need for more F-100 jet fighters in Southeast Asia as the tempo of the war increases and new jet landing strips become available."

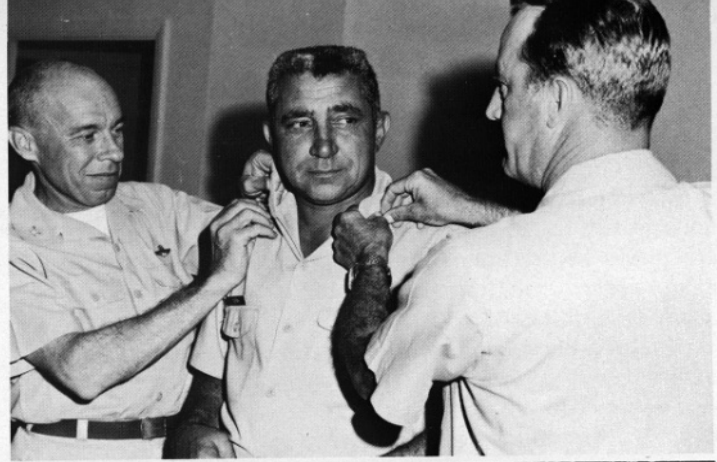
In the spring of 1966, the Colorado ANG took delivery of a C-54, its first four-engine aircraft. The military equivalent of a DC-4, the aircraft was transferred to Buckley from Kelly AFB, Texas.

The new airplane replaced a COANG C-47 support aircraft standby, dubiously dubbed *Flintstone I*. "Ole 161" (short for C47 J.N. 42-093161) provided 18 years faithful service to the unit — hauling personnel and cargo at a "comfortable" speed of about 150 mph. The aged *Gooneybird* was transferred to Florida with Moffitt at the controls on the final flight. Although records are sketchy, COANG photographer nonpareil (and semi-official base historian) SMSgt. Howard Belles learned that by the time the old bird lifted off Buckley's runway for the last time, she had flown about 1.5 million miles, a distance equal to nearly 60 trips around the world.

Surrounded by a rapidly increasing civilian population, Lowry AFB ceased all flying operations in the summer of 1966, making Buckley the key military transient aircraft center in the area. During the shift in operations, negotiations on a nationwide airline strike extended indefinitely. Military aircraft were pressed into service to provide "Operation Combat Leave" transportation for military personnel to or from Southeast Asia.

As the war in Vietnam continued to escalate, Buckley felt the brunt of Medevac traffic in the Rocky Mountain region, due to its proximity to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center. There was a great increase in passenger traffic. Most Medevac flights originated in Saigon, some 36 hours prior to landing at Buckley. Buses and ambulances awaited patients for the five-mile ride

Flightline leaders: Bob Huffman, Bob Gay, Paul Moya, Tom Suprenant and John Swenson.



Promotion: Cherry and Williams pin colonel's eagles on Harry Serra, who achieved brigadier general rank in 1976.

Gen. Serra and Prime BEEF

Col. Bill Deneke, the ANG's Chief Engineer, asked Harry Serra to help him put together an ANG engineering game plan. During the Vietnam era, Gen. Serra researched the Air Force's Korean "Red Horse" role and suggested a similar "Pink Pony" role for the ANG. Concepts like Prime BEEF followed. Today, Air Guard engineering units are among the best in the world at going into a bare base and setting up operations from ground zero.

Lt. Col. Norman Lundin

to "Fitz," and their first "homecoming" taste of America. Some 1,600 military passengers, including the wounded Vietnam veterans, passed through the base in July 1966; 983 aircraft were handled by Buckley the month before. Construction of a new north-south runway began in September, stopping most flying operations for about 60 days.

About this same time, Colorado F-100C fighters underwent depot modifications. As part of the program, the fighters were camouflaged with subdued markings, adding further "fuel to the fire" about their potential use in Southeast Asia.

In March 1967, two Colorado units achieved notable laurels: the 140th TFG, following a TAC Operational Readiness Inspection, was rated C-1, the highest combat readiness rating possible. Also, in March, the 138th ACWS under their new commander, Lt. Col. William G. Miller, received the USAF Outstanding Unit Award — the first non-flying unit in the ANG to receive this distinction.

Follow this road, then hang a right: Leesburg, Smith, Neuens and Risen planning an Armed Forces Day fly-over.



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The Colorado ANG's only remaining C-47, rigged for flare drops, with accompanying flights of four F-100s, participated in "Operation Night Owl" at Fort Carson during 1967's summer field training. At the *Goon's* controls for the first mission was Col. Philip W. Packer. The flare-launching crew consisted of MSgt. Robert Huffman, TSgt. Marvin Schissler, TSgt. Ray Zorens, TSgt. Michael Valient and Sgt. Amando Sanchez. All combat-ready pilots of the 140th received the indoctrination of at least one night weapons delivery mission. The same scenario was repeated at Fort Hood, Texas, later in the year, when TAC — overextended in Vietnam — asked the 140th to provide live-fire night missions for the Army. Lt. Col. Cherry, who had led the first night local training flight, was the mission commander along with his deputy, Maj. Dale Dodd.

In October, "Deep Furrow '67" marked the wing's first-of-several deployments to Turkey. The NATO exercise was comprised of elements from the Turkish Army and Air Force, the U.S. Army in Europe, the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet, and several TAC stateside units. It was the first time Air Guard fighters, participating in a NATO exercise, had used KC-135 tankers to refuel. The 140th had become tanker qualified due to the foresight of Col. Dale Sweat, commander of the 832nd Air Division, Cannon AFB, N.M., in allowing the Colorado wing to integrate with the



"Operation Night Owl": Staged over Fort Carson in mid-1967, every 120th TFS pilot was qualified current in night deliveries, an ANG first and important stepping stone to SEA readiness. Here, Sandy Sanchez, Ray Zorens, Bob Huffman and Dave Rubbeck prepare to drop a flare from their *Gooneybird*.

By any other name

Two terms that need to be explained are "FANGO" and "RAFSOB." FANGO means "Fine Air National Guard Officer" while RAFSOB means "Regular Air Force Super Officer-Brother," or something to that effect.

Anonymous

832nd and receive KC-135 refueling training. This non-ANG-sponsored training paved the way for a SAC/ANG agreement allowing all Air Guard units to become tanker qualified for worldwide deployment.

The purpose of the exercise was to determine how quickly air, sea and ground forces could be assembled and put into operation in an emergency. With USAF fighter units heavily involved in the war in Vietnam or training pilot replacements in the U.S., the COANG was asked to fill the void in the exercise.

Cherry and his deputy, Lt. Col. Jankovsky, led the two-week, 117-person, 7,000-mile deployment to Incirlik. Colorado pilots flew 12 F-100s non-stop from Loring AFB, Maine, to Torrejon AB, Spain. "We gained a new respect for Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight," Maj. Dodd said, as he pulled his travel-wearied body out of the cockpit. The unit performed in almost perfect manner and was lauded by all levels of command.

A bit of the "Old Guard" walked out the door with Maj. Gen. Stan Gregory on the last day of 1967, when the COANG chief of staff officially retired after 43 years of active and reserve service.

The following organizations and commanders comprised the Colorado ANG prior to the federal mobilization in 1968: Headquarters, COANG — Col. Philip W. Packer; Headquar-



Incirlik AB, Turkey: Capt. Larry "Sky" King checks his F-100 after the KC-135-refueled 7,000-mile deployment flight.

"Deep Furrow": The long COANG deployment to Turkey in 1967 paved the way for the unit's Vietnam availability.



One small landing for the lieutenant

An astounded Lt. David H. Reimer of Reese AFB, Texas, was rather awe-struck by the attention he received upon landing at Buckley Sept. 5, 1962. Col. Williams, 140th TFW commander, met Reimer as he stepped from the cockpit, shook his hand and presented him with an engraved cigarette lighter as a memento of his accomplishment . . . a simple landing for Reimer, but it was landing No. 10,000 for transient jet aircraft at Buckley. The pilot also received free lodging at a local luxury motel and a complimentary rental car.

Buckley Contrails



Pre-Vietnam flightline: By late 1967, the COANG had mastered aerial refueling and night gunnery missions, deployed to Puerto Rico and Turkey and proven itself as an important TAC component. In a word, the unit was . . . Ready.

Tote that barge, lift that bale

In the summer of 1962 we had a lot of guys who were rather overqualified for their jobs: I had a master's degree in journalism, some of my cohorts had law degrees. Anyway a bunch of us spent one entire day with sickles sprucing up the entrance to the base for some general. Of course, he flew in and left without ever coming near the front gate. So much for first impressions.

Clark Secrest, former Denver Post reporter



Contrails office: Capt. Payne, master photographer CMSgt. Bellis and the base newspaper staff, April 1968.



Preparing to seek out and destroy targets: Neary, Rich, King and Stevens flight planning in Tac Ops, 1967.



Communications shop: 140th TFW technicians Ron Carlson and Ray Johnson, 1966.

ters, 140th TFW — Brig. Gen. Williams; Headquarters, 140th TFG — Lt. Col. Cherry; 120th TFS — Lt. Col. Jankovsky; 140th Supply Squadron — Maj. Donald K. Goe; 140th CSS — Lt. Col. Benson G. Bates, Jr.; 140th Tactical Hospital — Col. Thomas A. Witten; 140th CAMS — Maj. Vern T. Marooney; 532nd Air Force Band — CWO Donald A. Kramer; 233rd MCF Flight — Capt. William R. Morris; 140th Communications Flight — Maj. Dale L. Wormus; 120th Weather Flight — Maj. Melvin C. Van Lewen; and the 138th ACWS — Lt. Col. William G. Miller.

Guess where we're going? Tom Ortega's all-expense-paid-tour orientation package. The SEA saga begins on page 130.

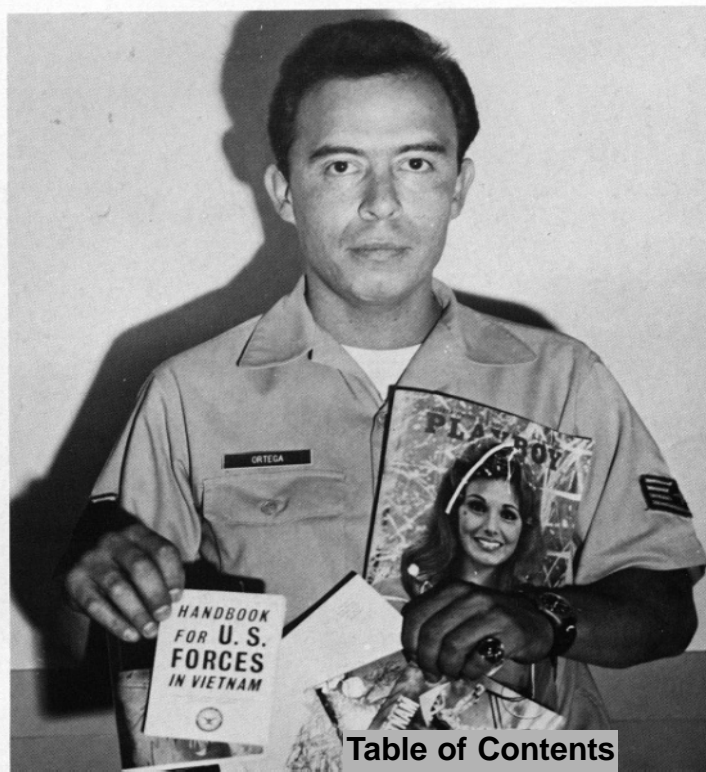
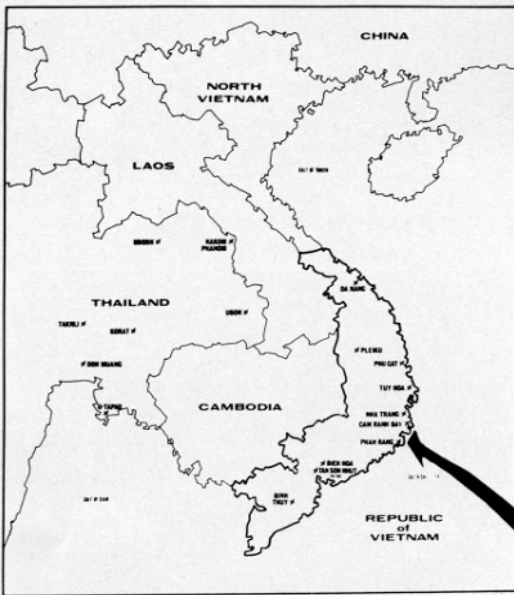


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Vietnam activation

On Jan. 26, 1968 (a Thursday morning, 9:45 a.m. Denver time), the world learned of the activation of "certain USAF Reserve, ANG and Naval Air Reserve units." A few moments later, national wire services were carrying information that the 140th TFW was included in President Johnson's call-up.

At 11 a.m., Wing Commander, Brig. Gen. Williams received official confirmation that the 140th was being activated, effective Jan. 26, in support of USAF requirements. Williams immediately called a news conference to confirm the fact to Colorado Air Guardsmen and the public. For some Guardsmen, this was their fourth call to active duty.

The call-up was in response to the USS Pueblo's capture by North Koreans earlier in the month. The president activated 14,600 Air Guardsmen and Navy Reservists to back up U.S. demands for the return of the Pueblo and its 83 men. Flying the F-100 *Super Saber*, the 120th TFS was the first ANG organization ever to be called to combat as a unit.

Combat preparations

The activation involved 900 personnel — 123 officers, 777 airmen — and included nine Colorado ANG units: Headquarters, 140th TFW; Headquarters, 140th TFG; 120th TFS; 140th CSS; 140th Supply Squadron; 140th CAMS; 140th Tac. Hospital; 140th Communications Flight; and the 120th Weather Flight. Lt. Col. Cherry took command of the 120th TFS and Lt. Col. Jankovsky was selected as operations officer.

During the period from recall to active duty to the actual deployment, the organization was faced with many USAF requirements. New identification cards had to be obtained for all personnel and their dependents. The processing was accomplished rapidly; CMSgt. Richard Burch and his people set up extra shifts and an around-the-clock operation. Additionally, all aircrews had to fill certain "squares," such as sea survival school and full-scale weapons delivery training at Cannon AFB, N.M. Command structure for the weapons training was furnished by the 140th TFW since all four states — Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas and Iowa — were involved.

The wing had, for all practical purposes, 100 percent man-



They gave a war and we went: Fighter pilots extraordinaire, international good guys . . . 120th TFS pilots and NCOs after activation; many deployed to Vietnam in April 1968. Front Row, left to right . . . Jack Wilhite, Mike Donnelly, Bill Wilson, Tom Emmett, Jim Carter, Wayne Sagar, Tom Risan, Ken Bowers, Buck Rennick, Ron Jankovsky, John Morris, Norm Cash, Larry King, Dud Bailey, Larry Keesen, John Candelaria, Barry Wolach, and Gerry Glade; Back Row, left to right . . . Stan Wood, Craig Iverson, Jim Barrow, Galen Smith, John Rickloff, Al Gardner, Bud Mechling, Jerry Rich, Glen Kowal, Bob Beabout, John France, Clyde Seiler, Perry Jefferson, Phil Ecklund, Jim Fletcher, George Sayre, Bill Neuens, John Houser, Ken Holm, Apolonio Estala, Sterling Hurst and Phil Armstrong.

VIETNAM

First ANG unit sent to combat sets highest standards

Editors Note: The Vietnam experience was a national trauma for practically all Americans; it remains so, for many. Each person — the GI, the war correspondent, the family member, certainly the politicians — saw Vietnam through different eyes. It would be impossible to tell the story, 20 years after, with just the facts. The personal memories of Colorado Guardsmen are the Vietnam experience and they appear frequently in this section. *Let us forget.*

ning and, with few exceptions, 100 percent materiel, making it a true C-1 combat-ready organization. Colorado had an overage in pilot strength: there were 47 pilots to choose from to fill the 26 slots involved in a squadron-strength combat deployment. Cherry selected only those who were certified flight leaders and, insofar as possible, those with prior combat experience.

The 120th soon learned about TAC personnel systems and procedures. A "nameless computer" performed manning selections, thus denying the commander and chief of maintenance the capability to deploy the optimum team of maintenance and weapons personnel. Some reclamations were successful, but still, some highly qualified individuals had to be left behind.

Many officers and airmen went on to fulfill significant roles in the war effort outside of Vietnam; they were deployed, either individually or in small groups, to Japan, South Korea, Greenland and to numerous CONUS bases. Before returning to civilian status, Colorado Air Guardsmen saw duty at 49 U.S. and 11 overseas bases, with some 140 deploying on July 22, 1968, to positions throughout South Korea. Most non-Vietnam-bound Guardsmen were deployed as individual replacements for USAF personnel, with many finding themselves in key unit slots by virtue of their experience and qualifications. The wing's former commander, Brig. Gen. Williams, was reassigned to Eglin AFB, Fla., as vice commander of the Tactical Air Warfare Center.

After the 120th TFS (sent to Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam), the next largest intact group of Colorado Air Guardsmen to be activated was the 140th TFW Headquarters, along with personnel from many of its subordinate units. Assigned to the 832nd Air Division at Cannon AFB, N.M., effective May 20, 1968, the 140th TFW's mission was to establish an organization for training pilots transitioning to air liaison and forward air controller (FAC) duties. (The war in Vietnam had created a severe shortage of these specialized pilots.)



Friends back home: Cannon AFB-based Sgts. Caldwell, Eickman, Simms, Catlin and Cpl. Fishkin examine a tongue-in-cheek "care package" from their cohorts in Vietnam.

Community support

I was Gen. Moffitt's executive when the unit deployed to Phan Rang. Community support was outstanding throughout our engagement. Whatever our men asked for, we did our darndest to get it to them. The problem was usually transportation rather than supply. When the request came in for a few cases of Rocky Mountain brew for the Phan Rang mountain chalet, Coors came through magnificently but we had to wrangle a deal with the Wyoming Guard to get it over . . . leaving a few cases in Cheyenne as I recall. The toughest request was for Bronco highlights. The Broncos referred me to a Charley Jones, who handled NFL films. He laughed it off, saying the NFL's highlight package cost was about \$35,000 a week . . . about \$34,995 more than we had to spend. When I got off the phone I thought that was the end of it. A few weeks later the first highlight package came into 300 Logan and they kept coming throughout the season. A lot of folks told me later that the films were one of the high points of their activation.

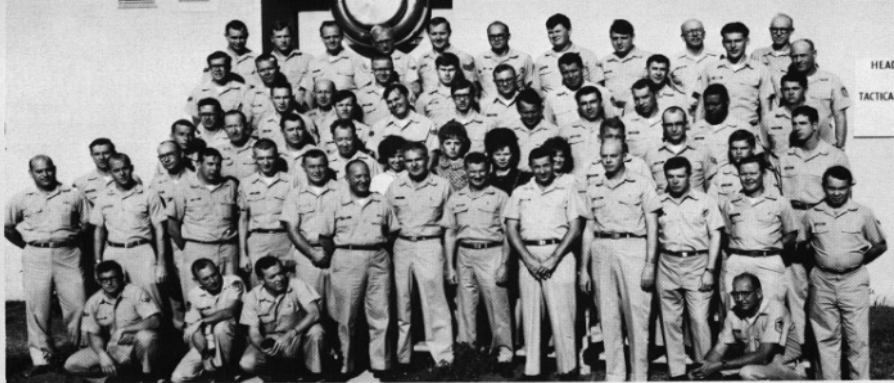
Brig. Gen. Donald David

Under the command of Col. Curtis J. Irwin of the 174th Tactical Fighter Group, Syracuse, N.Y., the newly formed wing at Cannon became the headquarters unit for the 174th, the 175th TFG of Baltimore, Md., the 4429th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), and the 4429th Field Maintenance Squadron.

The 174th and the 175th were equipped with the F-86H aircraft; the 4429th CCTS, equipped with AT-33 aircraft for FAC training, was formed with Guardsmen from Colorado, New York and Maryland, supplemented with USAF personnel. With the deactivation of Air Guardsmen the following year, Cannon AFB training continued with an expanded 4429th CCTS that transitioned from the program created by the 140th TFW. Although unheralded by comparison to Colorado's fighter squadron heroics in Vietnam, the many important missions fulfilled by other Colorado Air Guardsmen should be remembered as well.

Unit arrives at Phan Rang

120th TFS shipping orders for Phan Rang AB (near South Vietnam's eastern coast, south of Cam Ranh Bay) arrived April 22, 1968, and a small advance party departed April 27. Three days later, 20 squadron F-100s departed for Hickam AFB. May 1, they flew to Guam and the final leg of the 8,416 nautical-mile flight was completed the following day. The unit officially arrived at Phan Rang on May 3, since the international date line



Cannon AFB, N.M.: Activated 140th TFW personnel from Colorado in this photo include Linam, Schell, Scott, Rensvold, Coomer, Schreiber, Pahs, Armstrong, Mathias, Webb, Myler, Moore, Falagrad, Rausch, Thomas, Thompson, Haslep, Carlson and Sullivan, October 1968. More than 900 Colorado Air Guardsmen in all were activated; they saw duty at 49 U.S. and 11 overseas bases.

had been crossed. During the 19 hours, 35 minutes flight time, there were no problems with tactical aircraft, airlift or tankers. The entire squadron arrived exactly on time . . . a tribute to the Colorado maintenance men providing enroute support at each base.

Approximately two weeks later, Iowa's 174th TFS deployed to Phu Cat AB, Vietnam; followed by New Mexico's 188th TFS to Tuy Hoa AB, Vietnam. The 127th TFS from Kansas was assigned to Kunsan AB, Korea, in June 1968.

The first ground attack on Phan Rang occurred the night of the Colorado unit's arrival in Vietnam and the unit faced ground fire many times during their tour of duty. During redeployment one year later, the base was attacked several times; pilots launched for home at night during a "Red Alert."

Of 376 Colorado personnel at Phan Rang, only 152 were allowed in the fighter squadron; the remainder were assigned throughout the 35th TFW headquartered there. All Colorado Guardsmen attended 120th TFS meetings, the maintenance hangar becoming Colorado's Phan Rang "focal point" throughout the tour. The squadron joined the 352nd TFS, 614th TFS and the 615th TFS, plus the 85th Tactical Bombardment Squadron and the Royal Australian Air Force #2 Squadron, as part of the 35th TFW.

More training ensued. While Lt. Col. Marooney and his men were readying aircraft, administrative and life-support personnel were establishing an operations section. Pilots trained

Family thoughts:

Capt. Edgar Schaefer and his wife Aloha discuss the forthcoming activation (lower left). C-141 departing Buckley for Vietnam, April 30, 1968 (lower right).

Dad

Our dad's not here, he's gone to Nam,
He's serving his country with Uncle Sam.
Evidently Uncle Sam was in a fix
to take a man with dependents six.
My love for this man is a love so true
That I don't mind sharing him
— I love my country too
Helen McCabe





Across the pond: COANG F-100 Super Sabre enroute to Vietnam (left). After three days, 8,416 nautical miles, 11 tanker refuelings and nearly 20 flying hours, the squadron arrived at Phan Rang on May 3 during the concluding days of the second Viet Cong offensive of 1968. Maj. Don Neary and Bruce Hansen bid Brig. Gen. Walt Williams and Col. Gale Stevens, who commanded the deployment in an airborne command post, but did not land at Phan Rang AB, farewell in Guam (above).

FANG RAM Air Base

It was a storybook way to go to war, reminiscent of the knights of old. We said our farewells to our families and friends, mounted our trusty steeds, and three days, many refuelings and many tired posteriors later, we were in the combat zone with all 20 of our birds and jocks. Welcomed with pessimism by the regulars, we were the F.A.N.G.s or the R.A.M.s. The FANG and RAM acronyms fit nicely with Phan Rang and it wasn't long until the base was called FANG RAM Air Base, at least by the Militiamen. It also didn't take long for the RAFSOBs to recognize we were a bunch of pros. All of us had 1,000 hours or more in these very same aircraft, supported by maintenance troops with similar, lengthy experience. There were 22 airline pilots, three Air Guard technicians and one struggling lawyer — all there, because we wanted to be.

Col. Jack Wilhite



Welcome: The 120th TFS became the first ANG unit committed to combat as a unit, joining the 35th TFW, along with the Royal Australian AF and Republic of Korea and South Vietnamese security forces, at Phan Rang AB. Combat sorties began five days after arrival. USAF aircraft expended 6,162,000 tons of munitions in SEA through 1973, compared to 2,150,000 tons during WW II.



intensively in theater indoctrination, jungle survival, rules of engagement ("a fail-proof recipe for defeat," according to Cherry) and other administrative and medical requirements.

Living accommodations were basic, at best, giving everyone a taste of what 1940s-era troops experienced. Months passed before pilots and support personnel had anything close to satisfactory living conditions.

Combat operations began on May 8. Cherry and Maj. France flew the first sortie by the first ANG squadron ever committed to combat as a unit. The first missions during the end of the "Tet" offensive were so successful that they made the 7th Air Force's daily news broadcast. By June 1, all pilots were certified as qualified, combat-flight leaders. Maintenance and weapons sections gave Phan Rang active duty squadrons some excellent lessons in low aircraft-abort and high munitions-reliability rates.

Typical mission

In an extensive interview with *Colorado Pride* Col. Jack Wilhite provided a detailed account of Vietnam F-100 combat missions:

Wolf's restaurant

Wolf's Restaurant on Colfax Avenue has been an institution to the Air Guard. While we were in Vietnam, Al Wolf went to the trouble to supply us with some of his great steaks, boosting our morale measurably.

Col. Don Neary

When you're hot, you're hot

Going into Phan Rang, the tower told us "Alpha," "Bravo," "Hotel" and "Golf" were hot. Not having the foggiest notion what that meant, we pitched out and landed. We only learned later that those were artillery fire areas around the base and we had flown through all four of them.

Vietnam was hot in another way, too. The weather was so warm everyone's metabolism changed after a period of time. I remember going back in my room and putting on my flight jacket some nights, because I'd be cold sitting out there in the dark. I'd look at the thermometer and it would be 90 degrees. Still, that was 50 degrees less than it had been seven or eight hours before on the flight line.

Maj. Gen. John L. France

"A typical mission started with an intelligence briefing on the 'Big Picture' — the political and military status of the war. A more detailed account followed of the proposed target, weather, enemy and friendly forces in the area, divert bases, safe bail-out area, code words for recall, possible MiG threat, the FAC's call sign and location, coordinates or TACAN fixes, aircraft assignment and location, armament and some delivery considerations. Unless we were flying with wing 'weenies' or an attached pilot, our flight briefings would be very brief — we had



Happy Valley: Phan Rang AB overlooking the South China Sea seven miles to the east.

Four-star accommodations

There weren't any permanent quarters when we first got to Phan Rang, so for the first three months they moved us into some beat-up buildings with screen-wire sides and galvanized metal roofs. Some of us went to work at 2300 hours and finally hit the hay about 0800 hours the next morning. Those buildings were so hot it was almost impossible to sleep past 1100. The floors got pretty wet; we had to scrounge wooden pallets to put our shoes on to keep them from rotting due to the humidity — or floating away during rainstorms.

SMSgt. Frank Mullins

flown with each other for so many years we knew what to expect of our wingmen.

"At Sgt. Ray Zorens' shop, we would suit up in G suits, survival vest and parachute; load our trusty .38 revolvers; pick up our frozen-water bottles and helmets; and head out to our F-100s, simmering in the tropic sunlight or soaked in a welcome monsoon-season cloudburst.

"We had the greatest crew chiefs and loaders ever, so our preflights were minimal and we used the time to catch up on the latest from home. Then we would mount up, crank up and taxi to the end of the runway, where they armed the guns, pulled the safety pins on the ordnance and made a final check of the bird before takeoff.

"We usually flew in flights of two, but made single-ship take-offs, because of heavy loads and the possibility of a double catastrophe if we lost a bomb on the roll.

"After the always-exciting sound of the J-57 afterburner exploding in the humid air, off we went to an altitude where we could crank up the air conditioner and cool off. Joined up in loose combat formation, we checked each other over and headed for the FAC rendezvous. We would contact one of the

Ready or not

There's a Vietnam story that's been told many times about the readiness of Colorado's "Raggedy-Ass-Militia," and it's certainly worth retelling. We were the first Air National Guard unit to deploy to Vietnam and there were questions about our ability to hit the ground running and pull our fair load. We were *just* settling in at Phan Rang when Gen. Westmoreland paid the 120th a visit and met with Lt. Col. Cherry. After a few informal exchanges and greetings, the general asked Cherry when the squadron would be combat ready. Cherry looked out the window and pointed to one of our F-100s that had just landed and said, "That's mission No. 172 taxiing in, sir."

TSgt. Harry Byma

APPY VALLEY THEATER PHAN RANG A.



Not the Beatles: But welcome entertainment, nevertheless, at Phan Rang's Happy Valley Theater.

ground control intercept (GCI) sites, receive vectors and more information. On long missions into IV Corps (in the Mekong Delta), it was necessary to tap a KC-135 tanker for some extra gas.

(Editor's note: please see artist Jim Potter's interpretation of a IV Corps mission ... page 15 of *Colorado Pride*.)

"Once in the target area, the GCI handed us off to the FAC. I think the FAC was the most underrated pilot in combat. Flying an O-1, O-2A or OV-10 — constantly in range of ground fire — he talked on four or five radios simultaneously, flew his bird.



F-100 on the ramp: One thoroughbred airplane above all others defines man's mastery of the sky ... **the fighter.**

Lengthy relationship

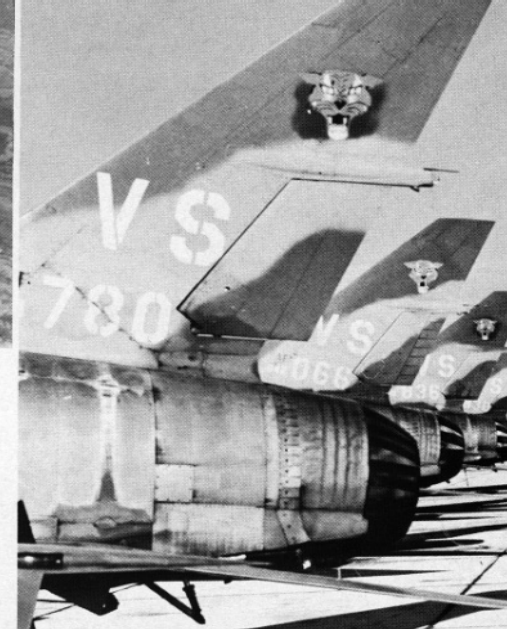
While at the retirement party of Maj. Gen. John Pesch, Air Guard director, I was told the story of a three-star regular Air Force general and his brief encounter with a COANG F-100 crew chief in Vietnam. The general asked the chief how many combat sorties his F-100 had flown and how long he had worked on that particular aircraft. "It's flown 122 straight combat sorties," the crew chief said, "and I've been working on her for 12 years." Caught by surprise, the general saluted him and said, "Yes sir, chief!"

Joe Engal, LTV Aerospace & Defense Co.

World's best "gun fixers": 120th TFS weapons section in front of their flightline weapons shack. Back Row, left to right ... John Wolken, Bob Ledbetter, Pedro Tobias, Bob Huffman, Gordon Williams, Bob Miller, Larry Curtis, Jim Soltis, Jesse Beasley, Don Zinko, Lonnie Talbot, Rick Arnold, Paul Moya, Tim Fenwick, Grant Dalton, Jim Osberg, Mike Rathbone, Frank Niehus, Sid Hubbard, Larry Jacobson, Jack Pelon and "Scotty" Cook; Front Row, left to right ... Jim Patsey, Terrell Goldman, John Haley, Jerry Roose, Louis Wieder, Frank Mullins, Al Conger, Orville "Joe" Olsen, Mike Wittstock, Wayne Sater, Dick Quinn, Wilbur Laulo, Bill Lee and Ken Ranum; Missing ... Ron Toles, David Hatch and John Swenson.



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Enroute to target: COANG *Super Sabres'* main role in SEA was close air support and ground attack against an elusive enemy. Shown above: No. 956 carrying 500-pound bombs and napalm departing Phan Rang enroute to target. F-100 weapons versatility was a key to air strike missions.

What's our first target? Capt. Bill Wilson welcomed to Vietnam by 7th AF Commander Gen. William "Spike" Mommyer (left). Colorado F-100s carrying the cougar emblem (right).

Puff the Magic Dragon: C-47 gunship handling defense of Phan Rang Air Base's 32-mile perimeter (below).



The rockets blue glare

We'd get up on the bunker outside our quarters and watch the fireworks every night. The spookies (C-47 and C-130 gunships) would come in and hose down the perimeter of the base with mini-guns. You'd see this solid sheet of fire hitting and bouncing all over the ground. Then, there was the Korean artillery, booming and banging with a big flame flying out of them.

Also, sometimes with incoming, you'd see the rocket (the motors burn kind of blue): Boom! It would hit someplace on the base. But, we became so blasé that no one ever went inside the shelter. We just sat on top of it and watched the show.

Maj. Gen. John L. France

located the target and friendly forces, translated Army lingo to pilot talk, controlled the strike, marked the target, stayed out of our way and assessed the battle damage. He had to have had four heads and eight hands!

"Once in contact with the FAC, we picked each other up

Traveling man

Buck Rennick was one of our more outrageous individuals — and one of our most respected pilots. Prior to joining the Guard, he testified before Congress on the adaptability of the F-100 for SEA use. I remember him best for showing up for the Vietnam deployment with his personal gear stashed in several paper bags, the same "luggage" he used on R&R trips out of theater. When he retired, D.O. Neary presented Buck with a brand new set of luggage — four heavy-duty Safeway bags.

SMSgt. Jim Sanford

Pussycats

The Phan Rang base commander didn't want us to put the cougar emblem on our aircraft, even though we carried huge "VS" tail numbers identifying us to all observers, friend or foe. We got happy one night and went out and painted the squadron emblem on a few planes. The next morning you could hear the commander shouting at Col. Cherry, "Some SOB put those frickin' pussycats on those damn RAM planes. Get those !*@X*X! pussycats off those planes, NOW!". He was a pretty excitable fellow.

Col. Jack Wilhite

visually, went into trail formation and received an inflight briefing. It was a more specific description of the target, run-in headings, pull-offs, safe area, etc. When we were ready, he fired a "willy pete" (white phosphorus) rocket at the target. If he was good, he told us to "hit my smoke" or gave us directions and distances to aim from the smoke.

"We turned up the heat in the cockpit until we were frying to keep the canopy from fogging up, armed the ordnance and called in, just like at the range back home . . . except the range officers didn't shoot back. Like all fighter pilots, we felt invincible, ignoring the threat until we hit the target. We pulled on the pole, faked some turns and jinked our way back to set up for another run.

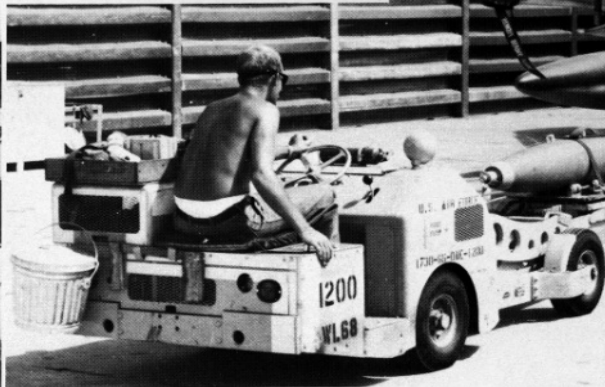
"The good missions were where we saw the target blow, caused a secondary explosion or the FAC got excited about

Jack and Buck: "Jock" Wilhite and Rennick at the alert shack. Many squadron pilots left civilian airline jobs back home. Brig. Gen. (ret) Robin Olds once characterized the fighter pilot mystique as "an attitude . . . of cockiness, aggressiveness, self confidence, competitiveness . . . and a streak of rebelliousness."





Built to last: Bob Huffman inspects one of Ernie Nold's creations.



Preparations for "Charlie": TSgt. Ray "Zorro" Zorens checks and maintains fighter pilot "brain buckets" (left). John Candelaria, Bob Hart and Henry McCarley discussing RAM strategy (top). David Hatch (on jammer) and Terral Goldman loading 500-pound Mark 82 "slicks" (right).

Phan Rang Chalet plaque

A 120 TFS plaque graced the wooden bar in the FANG RAM chalet. When the base was closed in January 1972, the bar stayed behind, but the plaque was recovered and moved to Tan Son Nhut AB with the 310th TAS. When the war ended, the plaque returned to the United States, spending a chilly tour in North Dakota until its return to the 120th TFS, Aug. 4, 1977. Today the plaque is on the wall in the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron Operations Lounge. It reads:

**THIS BAR IS DEDICATED TO ALL
FIGHTER PILOTS
BY
THE 120TH TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRON
COLORADO AIR NATIONAL GUARD
PHAN RANG A.B., VIETNAM
APRIL 1968-APRIL 1969**

- L/C BOB CHERRY
- MAJ. VERN MAROONEY
- MAJ. JACK WILHITE
- MAJ. STAN WOOD
- CAPT. AL GARDNER
- CAPT. BILL WILSON
- CAPT. CRAIG IVERSON
- CAPT. GALEN SMITH
- MAJ. BUD MECHLING
- MAJ. GLENN KOWAL
- MAJ. DON NEARY
- CAPT. BOB BEABOUT
- CAPT. BOB FLICK
- CAPT. TOM EMMETT

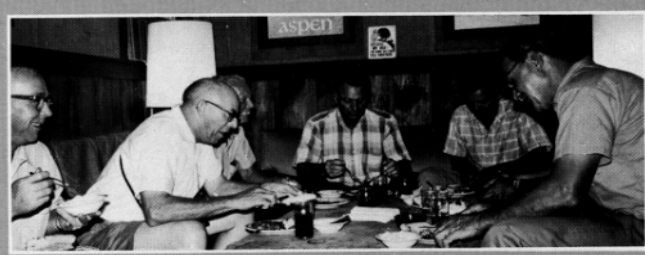
- L/C RON JANKOVSKY
- CAPT. PERRY JEFFERSON
- MAJ. JOHN FRANCE
- MAJ. CLYDE SEILER
- CAPT. TOM RISAN
- CAPT. JIM FLETCHER
- CAPT. WAYNE SAGAR
- CAPT. JOE O'NEILL
- MAJ. BILL NEUENS
- MAJ. GEORGE SAYRE
- CAPT. BRUCE HANSEN
- CAPT. DUD BAILEY
- CAPT. JOHN HOUSER
- CAPT. BUCK RENNICK



House of Iron

Ernie Nold's welding shop had a sign: "Ernie's House of Iron. If you can't lift it, you can't break it." He made everything heavy, including a bomb rack tester that barely got out the door. We made it in Nam, but it was too heavy to bring back home.

TSgt. Jim Deyo

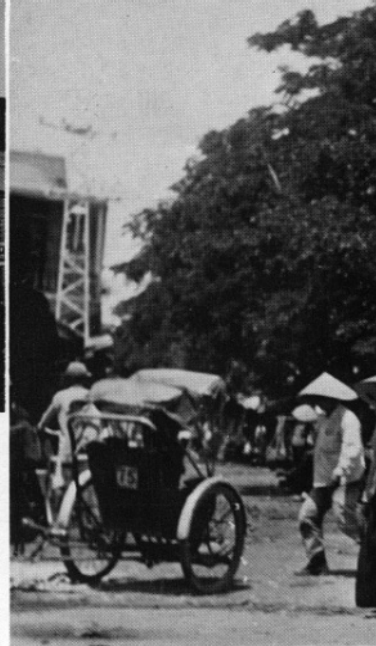
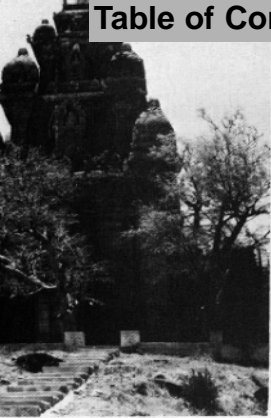


Sure beats water buffalo! Sgts. Huffman, Campbell, Hart, Langfelder, Eckert and Organ enjoy a steak dinner at the "Fang Ram Inn's" Colorado flagstone table.

FANG RAM Inn

We converted the lounge in one of our barracks to an officers club, called it the "FANG RAM Inn," and redecorated it to look like a mountain chalet. Hunter Stone painted our sign. The name fit and so did the club. It was the talk of the base and folks came from all over the theater to enjoy a little Colorado hospitality. We even built a great entrance through some timbers but the base commander had us tear it down. He was pretty particular about a lot of things; we just stored it and put it back up about ten minutes after he departed PCS.

Col. Jack Wilhite



the results. Our targets were anything of use to the enemy: hootches, buildings, roads, trails, caves, fortifications, troops, tunnels, base camps, storage areas, vehicles, bikes, water buffalo, rice fields, command posts, sampans, monkeys and trees. The last two seemed the most prevalent confirmed hits, because through the triple-canopy jungle only the ground troops or FACs could actually see the targets.

"In the dense, humid air the shock waves were quite spectacular. After we had expended, we climbed to a safe orbit altitude, opened our bottle of ice (long since melted) and replenished some of the lost moisture that was soaking our flying suit. The FAC reported our BDA (battle damage assessment) to us. We recorded the information for the intelligence debriefing and returned to base. After leaving the target we would climb to a safe altitude and visually check each other for any damage from ground fire. If any was noted we would land at the closest fighter base.

"If we were close to the ocean, we flew "feet wet" along the scenic South China seacoast. Or, if we came back by another route, we did some reconnaissance (sightseeing) or said hello to our ground brothers at some remote fire-base camp.

"In the landing pattern, we made high, steep approaches to make it tougher for the rice farmers to get a lucky shot at us; taxied to the de-arming area, then to the refueling area or the parking revetment. With our crew chiefs, we checked for extra holes in the bird. The flight lasted from one to two hours, depending on the target location. Then we went to ops, got out of our sweaty, smelly gear, grabbed a cold beer and headed for

Vietnamese images: Eight-hundred-year-old Thap Cham Buddhist Temple near the base (upper left). Dog day afternoon in the off-base strip (above). Life goes on in Phan Rang village (right). Vietnamese women (below) picking up errant propaganda leaflet drops near departing COANG F-100s.



debriefing."

Col. Wilhite continues with his description of 120th TFS missions, drawn from several additional interviews with *Colorado Pride*.

Full metal trousers

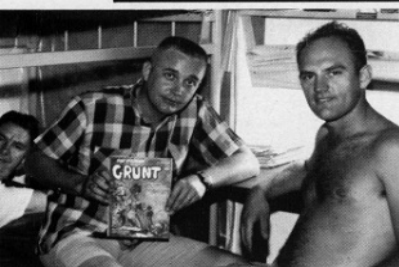
I was in the cockpit, working on an F-100 radio at Phan Rang. A chock didn't hold on a bomb trailer and about 15 bombs came rolling off, banging against the concrete. I thought I was a goner, but the unarmed bombs failed to blow. Par for the course, I was later told. But, I had to change my pants anyway.

SSgt. Ray Johnson

Tiny Town promotional campaign (We don't get mad, we get even)

Jim Fisher brought some Tiny Town, Colorado bumper stickers with him to Phan Rang. Those stickers were designed to get your attention — fluorescent green, orange, red, etc. They ended up everywhere at Phan Rang, and stuck out like sore thumbs. The base commander, Col. H. Williams, didn't like those bumper stickers a bit and told us to "get every one of the damn things off his base." It took a few days to scrape and clean them off. Williams transferred to Torrejon Air Base in Spain a few weeks after going ballistic over our bumper stickers. When he arrived at Torrejon, he saw "Tiny Town" stickers everywhere . . . including the jeep that picked him up. Fisher had sent a bunch to one of his buddies in Spain with special placement instructions.

Sgt. Jim Patsey



Inspirational reading: Sgts. Carlson, Spainhower and Johnson.



Phan Rang Hilton: Joe Olsen and Jim Patsey in their hootch.