

## RUSTIC NEWS

25 Apr 97

Fellow Rustics,

It's been 5 months since the last newsletter and there's been a lot of reunion activity, so I'll get started on bringing you up-to-date. Recommend you save this newsletter for future reference; it will provide a good road map of what to expect between now and the reunion (The delay in getting out this newsletter is entirely mine. I was in training in Atlanta for the entire month of March.)

**REUNION DATES:** 18-21 Sep 97.

**RUSTIC SEARCH:** Over 130 Rustics have been located to date (and approx 25 Rustic 'friends'). Great work everyone! (See roster enclosed) Please check the roster to see if your information is correct, and notify be of any required corrections, additions, etc. Kudos to the O-2 Rustics who have put on a full court press and have located over 50 O-2 pilots since we belatedly tapped into their group. Keep up the good work. I challenge each Rustic to try to locate at least one of our 'Missing Rustics.' (Get creative, all the easy finds have been located.) It would be a shame if someone would have come, if only they had known we were getting together. Thanks to everyone who has helped 'dig' people out of the woodwork. There are still a number of others we need to find. If you can help us locate any of the remaining 'Missing Rustics,' your help would be greatly appreciated. The next roster update will be published in Sep and will be available at the reunion. [Note: due to mailing costs, roster and Rustic History Outline will only be mailed to Rustics. 'Friends' of Rustics may receive same upon request.]

**NEWSLETTERS:** Only 5 months till the reunion. To facilitate the flow of information, newsletters will be sent out frequently in the next few months. There will be a June and August update. Each will include a list of who plans to attend the reunion (so does this newsletter.) The June newsletter will also include *REUNION REGISTRATION* forms. The August newsletter will include both *REUNION REGISTRATION* forms and an abbreviated 'draft' of the Rustic History book. (More on Rustic History later.)

**REUNION PLANNING:** Two very productive and enjoyable reunion planning meetings were held this past week. *Jim and Marcia Reese* hosted a meeting in Atlanta on Sat., 12 Apr, for the Rustics who live in and around the Atlanta area. In attendance were: The Reeses, Sy Gaskill, Doug Aitken, Claude and Tona Newland, Mick and Mary Gibbar, Jess and Sherry Jessup, and Waldo Dodd. Jim and Marcia were great hosts. They fixed a great lunch for the group. We looked through a few old photo albums, got acquainted (or reacquainted as the case may be) brought each other up-to-date on what's been happening in our lives, conducted some reunion business, and generally had a great afternoon visiting with one another. That night some of us went out together for a few margaritas, tacos and frijoles.

The *second planning meeting* was held here in Ft Walton Beach on Monday evening, 14 Apr. Ray Stratton Rustic/CC at Ubon) had come into town to do some business at Eglin AFB, so this was great opportunity to gather some of the local Rustics to meet him and discuss our reunion plans. In attendance were Jim and Barbara Lester (Jim was the first Rustic/CC), Claude and Tona Newland, Bill Sleight, and Ray. (Lendy Edwards and Don Echelberger live in the local area as well, but Lendy had a previous engagement he couldn't break and Don unfortunately got 'under the weather' that day.) At 6 pm, we met at the Ramada Beach Resort (site of our reunion), toured the facility, checked out the Oasis Hospitality Suite which we have reserved (Nice!!) and the Forum Room (site of the Sat pm Rustic banquet, located on the 6<sup>th</sup> /top floor of the towers building, with balconies on both sides of the room—one overlooking the emerald waters of the gulf and the other looks out over Okaloosa Island and the Choctahatchee Bay. A very scenic setting for our banquet), conducted some reunion business, and then had dinner at the Old Bay Steamer restaurant located across the street from the hotel.

*As a result of these two meeting*, we: 1) Selected our menus for the Friday lunch at the Hurlburt Club (pasta buffet--this lunch is in conjunction with our tour of the base) and the Sat. Rustic Banquet (seafood buffet with barbequed chicken.) 2.) Intentionally left Sat morning completely free on the reunion schedule for visiting or optional activities. Sign-up sheets for optional activities will be at the hospitality suite when you arrive at the hotel.) There will be a lot of choices, or just relax on the beach or around the pool. 3.) Established a reunion registration fee of \$10.00 per person. We have attempted to keep this fee as low as possible. This fee will be used to cover necessary reunion costs such as name tags, protocol invitations, hospitality suite cleanup fee, ice and set-ups for hospitality suite (BYOB), and other misc. reunion expenses.

**BUSINESS MEETING:** There are a number of subjects that need to be discussed and several reports to be made, so we have added a business meeting to the reunion schedule on Sat. at 1430. Some of the items to be covered include:

- Financial report—Claude Newland
- Rustic History Project Report (This book is going to be awesome.)—Jim Reese
- Presentation by the Pres. of the Air Commando Assoc.(ACA)---Charlie Jones
- Information on return trip to Cambodia/Thailand/Vietnam—Don Mercer
- Discussion on Do we form a Rustic FAC Assoc? Benefits, costs, another reunion?

Are there other agenda items that need to be added?

**WHO'S COMMING?** My suspicions are confirmed—most of us hated paper work 25 years ago and we haven't change. So not surprising, many of you have not returned the blue 'Feedback' form that was included in the Dec newsletter. If we didn't get one back from you, I'm sending you another one with this letter, in hopes you will respond, even if you know you can't attend (at least we'll know we are communicating successfully with you.) Here's who I've heard from so far:

**DEFINITELY ATTENDING** (respondees): Aitken, Baker, Calvanelli, Cantor, Cross, Davenport, Dekoker, R. Dodd, W. Dodd, Echelberger, Edwards, Eklund, Ellis, Ernst, Friedhofen, Gabel, Gibson, Hawker, J.R. Heatherington, Hellwig, Hopkins, Jessup Kimbell, Lester, Mercer, Newland, Polk, Pierson (Nail 01), Reese, Seibold, Sleigh, Stratton, Walinski

**PLAN TO COME, IF ABLE** (respondees): Brooks, Brower, Dandeneau, Engleman, Hull, Ross, Wood

**MIGHT BE DIFFICULT:** (respondees) Haller, Keese

**DEFINITELY CAN'T COME:** (respondees) Lancaster, Spencer,

The initial response indicates the percentage of Rustics planning to attend is high. If your name is not on one of the above lists, it's because I haven't heard from you, or I've made a mistake. Either way, let me hear from you—use the blue Feedback form.(enclosed.) Informally, I've heard of many others who are planning to attend, but this was mostly second-hand information, so I won't add your name till I hear from you.

The majority of those planning to attend, say their spouse will accompany them—'should be a good turnout.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Thanks to everyone who has made a contribution to defray our reunion administrative/postage expenses. I am well aware that a great many Rustics are supporting this reunion effort in a multitude of different ways and that your voluntary efforts have resulted in long distance telephone bills and other out-of pocket expenses, etc., so a check to me (as unofficial treasurer) is not an accurate barometer of one's support of our reunion efforts. Some of you, however, have been particularly generous. From all the Rustics, our thanks to all who have helped financially in this effort and a special thanks to the following for their generous contribution:

Lendy Edwards	\$ 50.00	Ray Stratton	\$50.00
Hank Keese	70.00	Howie Pierson	76.00 (Nail 01-Friend of Rustics)
Don Mercer	100.00	Noel Baker	100.00
Chris Polk	200.00		

Received: \$1231.00 (from 35 contributions)

Expenses: 473.17

Balance: 757.83 (Note: balance does not include the mailing/printing cost of this newsletter which will be significant due to the large amount of items included)

It is expected that postage expenses between now and the reunion will be quite high due to increased mailing frequency of newsletters. If you have not yet contributed, and would like to do so, please make check payable to: Claude Newland (Recommended donation is: Rustics -- \$20.00; Rustic 'Friends'-- \$10.00.)

**ARRIVING BY AIR?:** Airlines serving Okaloosa County Airport (Eglin AFB): Northwest, Atlantic Southeast Airlines (ASA--Delta Connection Carrier), Valujet, US Express. Airlines serving Pensacola Regional Airport (approx. 1:15 hrs. drive to Ft Walton Beach): Delta, Continental, NWA, US Air, ASA. Check with your travel agent.



**GROUND TRANSPORTATION:** If you fly into the local Okaloosa County Airport at Eglin AFB, local Rustics will try to assist you with ground transportation to and from the terminal. This could save you the expense of a rental car or taxi fare. The Ramada does not provide a shuttle service. Once you are at the Ramada, there will hopefully be enough POV's to meet our transportation needs. When you register, I'll ask to see who plans to drive to the reunion. By August, we'll know where we stand on this subject. Hurlburt Field is providing buses for the tour of the base. If you plan to fly into Pensacola Regional Airport (50 miles west of Ft Walton Beach), you should plan to make your own transportation arrangements.

**REUNION SCHEDULE (Abbreviated):**

18 Sep 97, **Thurs.**

- 1300-till Hospitality Suite Open (Oasis Room—pool side). Get acquainted. Drinks and snacks provided by local Rustics. Dinner at your leisure.
- 1500 Ramada rooms may not be ready until this time. Check in at front desk to get room key.
- 2000 Reunion Welcome (Oasis Room)—Informal. Announcements about reunion activities.
- 2200 Moonlight walk on the beach—meet at the Oasis Hospitality Suite.

19 Sep 97, **Fri.**

- 0830-1345 Bus tour of Hurlburt Field, AC-30 Gunship static display, visit air park (FAC aircraft), visit AGOS with short briefings by 16<sup>th</sup> Spec. Ops Wing, AGOS, and AF Spec Ops School (update on SEA, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam), lunch at Hurlburt Club.
- 1345-till Return to Ramada Beach Resort. Free time. Hospitality Suite open. Optional activities.
- 1600-1900 Sunset Sailing Cruise, Blackbeard Pirate's sailing ship from Destin Harbor (optional activity.) Happy hour on board. Will cruise either the Gulf or Choctahatchee Bay. Transportation—sufficient POV's will be available to get everyone to Destin Harbor.
- 1930 Reservations for dinner at a seafood restaurant in Destin (overlooking the harbor) if you want to dine with the group, or make your own plans for dinner at any one of the many restaurants to choose from. Order from the menu.
- 2200 Moonlight walk on the beach—meet at the Oasis Hospitality Suite.

20 Sep 97, **Sat.**

- 0900-till Oasis Room Hospitality Suite Open. Free time. Many optional activities available to include AM golf at Eglin's course, factory outlet shopping (2<sup>nd</sup> largest outlet in nation-- just east of Destin), fishing, Eglin's Armament museum, drive down east to scenic Seagrove beach, etc. Breakfast and lunch at your leisure.
- 1430-1600 Rustic business meeting/reports. Oasis Hospitality Suite.
- 1800-1900 Rustic Happy Hour. Dress: Coat and tie. Photos taken of all attendees for our history project (no charge.)
- 1900-till Banquet dinner, program, and entertainment. Rustic group photos taken sometime during the evening. (We expect a number of people from the local area, base, and Rustic friends to join us for the evening.)
- 2200-till Oasis Hospitality Suite open.

21 Sep 97, **Sun.**

- 0800-1400 Oasis Hospitality Suite open. Breakfast at your leisure. Hotel Garden Café open.
- 0900-1000 Possible follow-up meeting (if required.) Oasis Hospitality Suite.
- 1100 Hotel checkout time.
- 1400 Hospitality Suite closed

**BATTLE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT:** Here's some fairly accurate figures you can use to calculate your reunion expenses. Exact figures will be in the June Newsletter, along with your Reunion Registration forms. You do not need to make reservations at this time. Basic cost per person includes the following:

Registration fee	\$10.00
Banquet	25.83 (includes 16% tip, tax; no charge for banquet facilities)

Hurlburt Club Lunch 8.40 (includes 20% tip=club rate, tax) Optional if you don't take the tour.

Total: \$44.23 per person

Optional expenses: Blackbeard Sunset Cruise \$20.00 per person (normally \$25) Open on a first sign up basis till ship is full. Recommend you sign up ( i.e. pay) for cruise when you send in your initial registration in Jun/July/Aug. Operates out of the scenic Destin harbor. Beer and soft drinks included.

All other optional activities expenses will be on a pay-as-you-go basis once you arrive.

Ramada Room Rates (based on double occupancy, per night—\$10.00 for each additional person ):

LOCATION OF ROOM (i.e. overlooks):	COST:
Parking Lot	\$65.00 + 9% tax
Courtyard/pool	70.00 “
Towers-poolside (six story)	75.00 “
Towers-gulfside (six story)	85.00 “
Tower suites are available	

All rooms have two double beds and are very attractive. The Parking lot rooms are exactly the same as any of the others, you just don't have as nice a view out your door. This is a first rate resort hotel. You will definitely get your money's worth.

Each person must make their own reservations with the Ramada, or any other hotel/motel you chose. You don't need to make them yet. Phone numbers will be in the next newsletter.

If you're coming unaccompanied, and would consider sharing a room with another Rustic to halve the room expense, let me know. We'll let you know who is interested in doing this.

**ALTERNATE HOTELS:** Additional information on other hotels, and phone numbers, will be included in the June newsletter.

**RUSTIC VIDEO PROJECT:** Doug (Cecil B. DeMill) Aitken has lost his mind. He has volunteered to put together a Rustic video made from home movies and 35mm slides taken by Rustics. He says he will convert your movies to video, so just send him the movies. Here's his instructions: Send your slides, movies, video (if you've already converted your movies to video), cassette tapes of airstrikes, or any recordings—CD or cassette—of flying songs ( to be dubbed into background) to:

Doug Aitken 1006 South Wellonsburg Place, Apex, NC 27502

Any questions on suitability, call Doug at (919) 387-8519; E mail: 76140.3076@compuserve.com

All materials will be handled with care, copied, and returned ASAP. Please clearly label all items with your name and provide any pertinent information, (dates, names, places, chronological list of movie shots, etc.) on a separate piece of paper. Doug especially needs songs/appropriate music for the audio background on the video. Have you got some?

This is a BIG JOB so help Doug by getting your inputs to him *QUICKLY*. He's going to need time to put all this together. He's funding this project himself—and will make copies available to everyone at cost. Thanks Doug!

**RUSTIC HISTORY PROJECT:** The Rustic History book project is getting bigger and better as we speak. Jim Reese has worked the outline hard, and it has undergone several revisions. The biggest thing he needs from each of you now, is your own personal anecdotes/remembrances of those events, missions, activities, personal stories, etc that only you are aware of. This is what will really personalize this book. Here is each Rustic's chance to contribute to the publishing of a book of truly historical significance (OK, some historical interest). Our objective is to get at least one story from each Rustic, but submit more if you can. The book's outline and Jim's instructions are attached to this newsletter. Don't miss this opportunity—start writing your piece of history today, and then get it to Jim. I'm confident every Rustic will want to have a copy of this book once it's printed. Please read the additional instructions listed on the History Book Outline (attached).

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#### ONE-LINERS:

- ♦ Mick Gibbar is trying to locate any actively flying **OV-10 or O-2** Aircraft. Can anybody help him?
- ♦ Bill Sleigh and Doug Aitken are working on **Rustic Souvenir** T shirts, Coffee cups, baseball hats. (Don Ellis, can put both an O-2 and OV-10 aircraft head-on profile on a letterhead for us?)
- ♦ Don Mercer is getting info to put a tour together for a **return visit to SEA, Cambodia, Vietnam**.
- ♦ Roger Dodd is bringing his keyboard for **entertainment**.
- ♦ Lendy Edwards has set up some **golf** tee times for Sat AM, 20 Sep, at Eglin's course, if you want to get a round in.
- ♦ Lendy is also setting up our **Rustic Data Base** using Microsoft Access. Please info him a copy of all e mail messages containing information on new-found Rustics: [lendy@bsc.net](mailto:lendy@bsc.net)
- ♦ An **A-37 static display** aircraft has been added to Hurlburt Field Air Park due to the efforts of the Air Commando Association. They are working on getting an OV-10 aircraft.
- ♦ I had the opportunity to tape a detailed **interview with Ray Stratton** this past week which covered his tenure as Rustic Commander. We now have interviews of Lester, Adams, Arellano, and Stratton.

**FUND FOR A SPECIAL GUEST:** As many of you know, Col Oum (cmdr at Kampong Thom, H-302) is planning to come to the reunion. (He lives in Austin.) Many of you have also indicated that you would like to show your appreciation to him and would like to help with his reunion expenses; therefore, we have started a Col Oum Reunion Fund. If you would like to contribute to this fund, please send your check payable to me: Claude Newland 4033 Indian Trail Dr, Destin, FL 32541. Indicate on check: Col Oum Fund (or something similar.) Send whatever amount you would like to contribute. Les Gibson has already sent in the first contribution (\$30.00.) Thanks Les! Any extra funds left over after his reunion expenses have been covered will be used towards a gift to be presented at an appropriate time.

**SPECIAL THANKS:** My special thanks to all of you who have pitched in to help make this reunion a success. Many hands do make light work! I would like to especially acknowledge the efforts of Bill Sleigh who has stepped in to be the reunion local assistant coordinator. Bill has not only taken over the job of sending out the initial reunion packages to all new-found Rustics, but he also covered for me while I was in Atlanta, and has become instrumental in helping finalize many of the details of the reunion.

**FINAL DEBRIEF:** Here's your mission should you chose to accept it: help us find a Missing Rustic, get your history inputs written and in to Jim Reese or one of the chapter coordinators (see history attachment enclosed), and come and join us for some fun in the sun on the Emerald Coast. (You may never get another chance in this lifetime to have a weekend like this one.) Hope to see you in Sept.

CHEERS,

*Claude*

Claude Newland, Rustic 19



DON ELLIS

TOM CALVANELLI

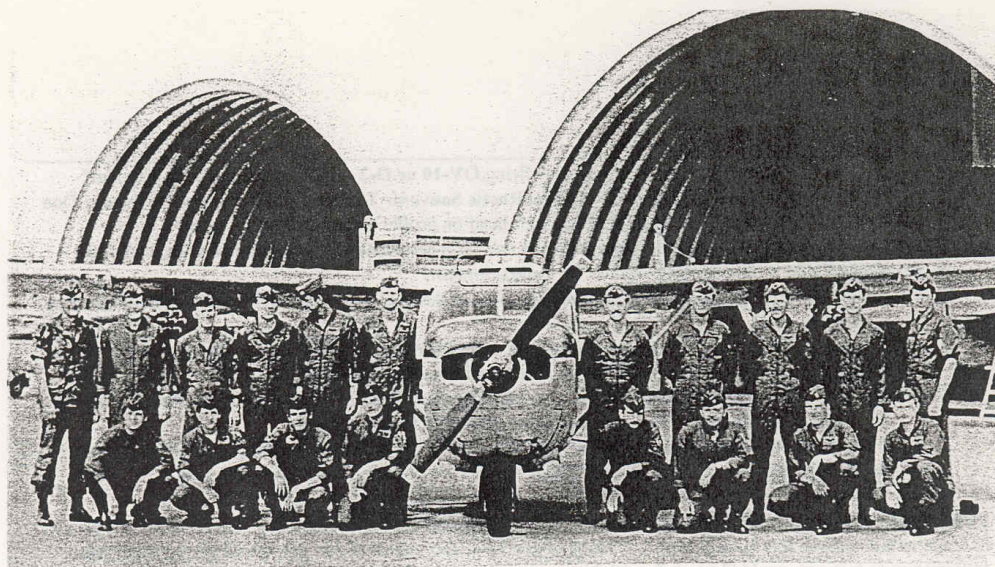
CLAUDE NEWLAND

LANNIE TRAPP

DICK GREEN'S

BILL LEYDORF





STANDING (LEFT): Jack Koppin, Dick Roberds, John Litton, Bob Harris, Drake Green, Tom Jones  
 (RIGHT): Ron Grattop, Blake Lancaster, Steve Cross (or Bob Atwater?), Wyn Pells?, Don Mercer  
 KNEELING (LEFT): Daymond Gonzales, Wayne Baker, Mick gibbar, Steve Hopkins  
 (RIGHT): Tom Cantor, Jack Bowen, Chuck Casey, Paul Dimmick?



RAY & JAN STRATTON



JIM TWADDELL



BILL  
MCADAMS

DON  
ECHELBERGER



BEN ATKINS



**JULY 1970 to AUG 1973**

**Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION (POC: Jim Reese)**

- ◆ The Big Picture in SEA. Political environment; political unrest at home..
- ◆ Cambodian incursion May/June '70.
- ◆ Request for help/air support for Cambodians.
- ◆ Rustic mission—how it all began; how it ended (briefly) Details in Chapters 3-5.

**Chapter 2. RUSTIC CHRONOLOGY/TIMELINE/LIST OF MAJOR EVENTS**

(POCs: Bien Hoa OV-10—Jim . Reese  
Bien Hoa O-2 ---Don Mercer and Dick Roberds  
Ubou OV-10 ---TBD (need volunteer)  
Interpreters ---Walt Friedhofen

- ◆ List of one liners or short summary of major events.
- ◆ Campaigns, targets, battles, mission types; Example:
- ◆ 3 Jul '70—First Rustic mission flown over Cambodia
- ◆ July '70—Siege of Kampong Thom begins
- ◆ 4 Jan '71—Phnom Phen airport hit by sapper attack.

[Note: Purpose is to give the flow of the tactical situation in Cambodia . We will try to make some sense of when/why/where we were putting in air, escorting convoys, etc. Individuals would only be mentioned by name only as they come up in describing a significant event in the flow of battles/campaigns. Where there are overlapping inputs (first three POCs above) they would be folded together into one chronology.]

**Chapter 3. OV-10 OPERATIONS FROM BIEN HOA: Jul 70- Nov 71 (POC: Jim Reese)**

- ◆ Details of Rustic beginning/missions/ command structure.
- ◆ Drawn from oral history of the first three Rustic commanders [Jim Lester, Tom Adams, Walt Arellano] and OV-10 ALO Bob Clifford + others.
- ◆ Rustic AO map; photos, etc. (submitted by OV-10 Rustics)
- ◆ Move to Thailand
- ◆ Anecdotes/personal stories (submitted by OV-10 pilots/Rustic personnel from this era.)

**Chapter 4. O-2 OPERATIONS FROM BIEN HOA: Jul 70 - Oct 71 (POCs: Don Mercer and Dick Roberds—O-2 pilots, send your inputs to these guys with an info copy to Jim Reese!!)**

- ◆ Details of O-2 beginnings/missions/command structure
- ◆ Drawn from oral history of first three Rustic commanders [Jim Lester, Tom Adams, Walt Arellano] and O-2 ALOs (Jim Hetherington and Dick Roberds) + others.
- ◆ Details of O-2 ending.
- ◆ Photos, etc. (submitted by O-2Rustics)
- ◆ Anecdotes/personal stories (submitted by O-2 pilots/Rustic personnel from this era.) None received as yet.

**Chapter 5. OV-10 OPERATIONS FROM UBON: Nov 71 - Aug 73 (POC: TBD—Still need a volunteer)**

- ◆ Startup of operations from Thailand/missions/command structure.
- ◆ Drawn from oral history of the Thailand Rustic commanders [Les Gibson, Ray Stratton, Bill Ernst, Bill Powers (haven't located him yet), and Si Dahle.]

- ◆ Details of deployments to Vietnam; Details of Rustics ending.
- ◆ Photos, etc. (submitted by OV-10 pilots from this era.)
- ◆ Anecdotes/personal stories (submitted by OV-10 pilots/ Rustic personnel from this era.) None received as yet.

[Note: the idea for chapters 3-5 is for each individual to tell at least one personal story (you are encouraged to submit more) about a highlight of his tour with the Rustics. These stories will probably be listed in Chronological order with no need for transitions. Give each story a title if you can. Hopefully, everyone will submit at least one story, so these chapters will be by far the longest, most important and most interesting. Don't be left out! Here's your chance to tell your story and get it published.]

#### **Chapter 6. THE RUSTIC INTERPRETER STORY (POC: Walt Friedhofen)**

- ◆ Details of how the Rustic interpreters got their start; recruitment; backgrounds; contributions.
- ◆ Interpreter training program highlights; fight to receive aircrew designation; Did interpreter role change after move to Ubon?
- ◆ Photos, etc. (submitted by Rustic interpreters/personnel.)
- ◆ Anecdotes/personal stories (submitted by interpreters from both Bien Hoa and Ubon era.)

#### **Chapter 7. MISC. ANECDOTES/PERSONAL STORIES –Non operational in nature. (submitted by any Rustic) Example:**

- ◆ The Black Market Crash of 1970. (by Claude Newland)
- ◆ The Most Dangerous Day of the Year to be Flying, etc., etc..

#### **Chapter 8. RUSTICS 25<sup>TH</sup> YEAR REUNION (POC: Claude Newland) Reunion Photos .**

#### **APPENDICES:**

1. COMMAND STRUCTURE: Wiring diagrams for command structures at Bien Hoa and Ubon.
2. MAPS: Maps of Rustic AO, Bien Hoa AB, and Ubon AB.
3. RUSTIC PERSONNEL: List of all pilots, interpreters, and other Rustic personnel alphabetically by name and chronologically by date of tour; 'Missing Rustics' list.
4. CAMBODIAN ALLIES: List.
5. RUSTICS REMEMBERED: Short memorial to Rustics KIA and those who have flown their last flight. (Inputs needed from those who knew these individuals.)
6. WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Short bio. of each Rustic (taken from the Rustic questionnaire you sent to Claude Newland (POC: Lendy Edwards)

\*\*\*\* Any Suggestions? We'd like your comments/inputs/critique!!!! (This outline is not final)

#### **Admin Comments**

1. Initial format will be 8.5 x 11, in a loose leaf binder, so changes can be readily made as they come in.
2. Submit inputs ASAP, hopefully, before the reunion. Book will be finalized after the reunion.
3. Final decision on format, quality of book (hardbound vs soft bound; number of pages etc.) will be made at the reunion business meeting.
4. There will be an thorough index. This will be done absolutely last.
5. Font will be Times Roman 11 point with full right and left margin justification; Chapters will be numbered individually (Chapter 1, 1<sup>st</sup> page 1-1, then 1-2, 1-3 etc. Chapter 2, 1<sup>st</sup> page 2-1, 2-2, etc.)
6. A 'draft' outline of the book will be mailed out with the Aug '97 Rustic newsletter.

**\*\*\* PLEASE MAKE 3 COPIES OF YOUR INPUT. SEND ONE COPY OF YOUR INPUT(S) TO THE RESPECTIVE CHAPTER POC; SEND ONE COPY TO JIM REESE, AND KEEP ONE COPY FOR YOURSELF. \*\*\*\* Thanks!! (Just do it.)**





## RUSTIC NEWS



Reunion Logo (on shirts and hats)

30 Jun 97

**REUNION DATES:** 18-21 SEP 97, Ramada Beach Resort, Ft Walton Beach, FL

**IT'S TIME TO REGISTER:** The first-ever Rustic FAC reunion is fast approaching and it's now time to send in your registration. (Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel by each individual...see instructions in separate paragraph below).

If you're still undecided about whether all the effort (and yes, expense) is worth it, just remember this will be a once in a life time chance to renew old friendships, share common experiences, make new friends, revisit old haunts, enjoy the beaches of the Emerald Coast, see how Hurlburt Field has grown, get an update on what is happening in Cambodia and Vietnam, and become part of the continuing legacy of the Rustic FACs. You'll also be in on the ground floor of our Rustic FAC History book that so many are working on.

If you were ever going to make a trip just for yourself, this should be it...the inheritance for your kids can come later. Besides, we aren't getting any younger, and there's no guarantee that another opportunity like this one will come along. You just might want to do this for yourself...you'll be glad you did.

Please fill out the enclosed Registration Form and mail it, along with your check, to Claude Newland in the morning so you don't forget. See you there.

**REUNION PLANNING MEETING:** The local area Rustics gathered at Jim and Barbara Lester's house on Monday evening, 9 June, for a reunion planning meeting. In attendance were Don and Kathrin Echelberger, Lendy and Sue Edwards, Claude and Tona Newland, and Bill and Nancy Sleight. Our thanks to Jim and Barbara who hosted a terrific buffet dinner for the group on their back porch overlooking the scenic intercoastal waterway. It was a perfect evening for a back yard get-together, and after a bit of socializing and getting the wives acquainted, we spent time going over the reunion agenda and fine-tuning our planning for that weekend.

In summary, things are going well. The weekend agenda is set, the hospitality room details are being finalized, name tags have been purchased, (Lendy Edwards will print them for us on his computer), and reunion memorabilia items are ready for ordering...you can order them even if you can't attend the reunion.

Charlie Jones, President of the Air Commando Association, gave us a brief explanation of the ACA, its goals, objectives, etc. He will attend our reunion business meeting on Sat, 20 Sep and also plans to join us for the Sat. Banquet.

Don't miss out on a memorable get-together on the Emerald Coast. Come join us for the first-ever Rustic FAC Reunion.

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS:** The reunion is being held at the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort on Okaloosa Island, Ft Walton Beach. (See enclosed post card.) A block of rooms, with special discounted rates, have been reserved for the reunion in the name of 'Rustic FAC Reunion'. This is a beautiful resort hotel which has been completely renovated...all rooms have two double beds and are very nicely appointed.

Each family must make their own reservations by calling reservations: 1-800-874-8962. Tell them you are attending the Rustic FAC reunion and would like the Rustic FAC Reunion rate. Room rates are:

LOCATION(overlooking):	COST:	
Parking Lot	\$65/night	= same size/type room as courtyard/pool rooms
Courtyard/pool	\$70/night	
Poolside Towers	\$75/night	High-rise tower with room facing pool
Gulf Front Towers	\$85/night	High-rise tower with room facing gulf front

**MISC:** Add 9% tax to all room rates. Our hospitality suite is located on the east side of the Lagoon which contains the Waterfall Mountain. Any room location will get you a nice room.

**ALTERNATE HOTELS:** Rooms are available at the Sea Isle Motel which is located across the street and about a half block away from the Ramada (within walking distance). It is a very nice motel, recently renovated, and rooms are approx. \$ 55/night + 9% tax (Ask for the Rustic Reunion rate). Continental breakfast included; no restaurant; small pool. Call 1-800-408-2200.

Other motels (no special rates contracted) which will require you to have a car:

Ft Walton Beach:	Destin:
Howard Johnson (904) 243-6162	Days Inn (904) 837-4667, 1-800-DAYS INN

Rate: \$50/night + 9% tax  
Economy Motel (904) 244-7676  
Super 8 Motel (904) 244-4999

Hampton Inn (904) 654-2677

All things being equal, the extra cost for a parking lot room at the Ramada will be well worth the money for this outstanding facility, plus convenience.

**WHO'S COMING?** The following 48 Rustics and Friends of Rustics have indicated they 'definitely' plan to attend. As you can see, many wives (and a few girlfriends) are planning to attend, so bring your lady.

Doug Aitken +1	Don Echelberger +1	Steve Hopkins +1	Jim Siebold +1
Wayne Baker +1	Roy Eklund +1	Jess Jessup +1	Bill Sleight +1
Jeff Boston +1	Lendy Edwards +1	Shad Kimball +1	Ray Stratton +1
Tom Calvanelli +1	Don Ellis +1	Jerry McClellan +1	Joe Vaillancourt +1
Tom Canter +1	Walt Friedhofen +1	Don Mercer	Otto Walinski
Steve Cross +1	Jim Gabel +1	Claude Newland +1	John Drury +1
Si Dahle	Sy Gaskill +1	Jim Nuber +1	George Larson +1
Mike Davenport	Les Gibson +1	Howie Pierson +1	Chris Polk +1
Dave Dekoker +1	Curtis Hawker +1	Jim Reese +1	Van Kirk +1
Roger Dodd +1	Jim Hetherington +1	Dick Roberds +1	Jim Lester +1
Waldo Dodd	Randy Hetherington +1	Jon Safely	Tom Adams +1
Bill Ernst +1	Hank Keese +1	Frank Sovich	Col Oum +1

Those who said they're 'not sure, but plan to attend':

Atwater, Woody Baker, Ball, Bowen, Brooks, Brower, Carruthers, Dandeneau, Driskill, Dorr, Engleman, Hull, Ligonde, Mittendorf, Perry, Ross, Richard Wood (I haven't heard from most of the others.)

Now's a good time to invest in a couple phone calls to call those you'd especially like to see at the reunion and encourage them to attend. This list will be updated in the August newsletter.

**TREASURER'S REPORT.** As of 30 Jun 97 (does not include expenses for printing of this newsletter):

General Treasury	Received: \$1,976.00 (from 52 contributors)
	Expenses: 955.48
	Balance: \$1,020.52

Thanks to all who have contributed to our reunion efforts. If you haven't contributed, but would like to do so, suggested contribution is \$20. Please make check payable to Claude Newland and mail to 4033 Indian Trail Dr. Destin, FL 32541.

Although it looks like our fund is 'fat' right now, our planned Rustic History Book will benefit from any extra funds we accumulate...this will help lower the individual book price...so give us your support if you can.

**GUEST OF HONOR:** I spoke with Col Oum this past week. He confirmed he plans to attend our reunion. He's not sure if his wife will accompany him, but one of his sons might. Through your generous contributions to the Col Oum Fund, we should be able to cover his reunion expenses. If you would like to contribute to this special fund to help defray his expenses, please send your check (suggested contribution is \$10), payable to Claude Newland, and designated for 'Col Oum Fund'.

**NEW FOUND RUSTICS:** Pilots: Tom Capps, Charles Casey, Ron Grattopp, Jon Hawley, Emery Kiraly, Bob Messer, Robt Schwein, Ron Van Kirk; Intell: Ralph Wenck; Interpreters: Art Paradis, Jean Claude Gestas, Joe Gerand, Ralph Dow, Pierre Ligonde, Charles Manuel, Norm Falcon (Next roster update available at the reunion.) Can you help us locate any of the other 'Missing Rustics'?

**RUSTIC VIDEO PROJECT:** Doug Aitken tells me he has received very little input from 0-2 Rustics for the video he is putting together for the reunion. This is a great opportunity, so everyone (0-2 and 0v-10 drivers alike) send him your 35 mm slides or home movies taken in 'Nam' and he will incorporate them into the video. Please get them to him by the end of July...he needs to go 'final', so don't delay.

#### ONE LINERS:

- ♦ Last Thanksgiving Lannie Trapp went back to Vietnam on a congressional trip; visited Saigon and Hanoi; 'talked to a contractor who was running Bien Hoa AB—base is virtually deserted with some revetments, but otherwise not much left
- ♦ Air Commando Association Web site that could be of interest: <http://home.earthlink/~aircommando1/>
- ♦ I've been in touch with the families of Jerry Auth, Garret Eddy, Malcolm Life, and Michael Vrablicki. All have been very supportive of our efforts to include them in our book (chapter entitled 'Rustics Remembered.') We are still trying to contact the families of Joe Gambino and Robert Berry. Can anyone help us with a lead?
- ♦ Reunion Preparty—Wed, 17 Sep at the Newland's, 4033 Indian Trail Dr, Destin. 7 PM. If you're in town, come on over!!



**RUSTIC HISTORY BOOK:** Jim Reese reports that the taped interviews of Rustic Commanders Walt Arellano and Ray Stratton have been transcribed on paper. Our thanks to Don Ellis and John Engleman who undertook these heroic efforts. We are hoping to get the oral histories of each Rustic commander, so we still have a few yet to go.

Each Chapter overview is now in the process of being written. Here are the volunteers who will be coordinating a specific chapter:

Introduction/Big picture—Jim Reese

OV-10 Bien Hoa Rustic History—Jim Reese

0-2 Bien Hoa Rustic History—Don Mercer/Dick Roberds

OV-10 Ubon Rustic History—Jon Safely

Rustic Interpreter History—Clint Murphy

Rustics Remembered—Claude Newland

Send your individual history inputs, personal stories, etc. to the appropriate person above. If you haven't taken the time to jot down your 'remembrances', now's the time! We would like to have several history stories from each Rustic, since this will be one of the most meaningful parts of the book.

**HISTORY INPUTS:** You don't have to be an accomplished author to submit a Rustic history input...just put it in your own words...and tell your story. We'd like to hear it. Here's a few stories that have been sent in:

#### BATTLE AT RUMLONG, Tues, 2 Nov 72—Doug Aitken, Rustic 16,

There was a troops-in-contact (TIC) at Rumlong. By this time they had been under constant attack for a week...I was in the front seat with one of the new French speaking pilots (Capt Bob Andrews) in the back seat. ...we flew down to Rumlong and ordered up some air to support the movements of the troops moving from the North and South towards Rumlong.

The Rumlong ground commander did not speak English or French well at all. As a consequence, we were forced to have him relay his information and requests for air strikes to the commander to the North. When we first arrived on station, Rumlong had asked for strikes very close to his position—virtually right on the perimeter of his position running North along Route 6, among the hootches either side of the highway.

He did not indicate he was in trouble and sounded calm on the radio. Blue Chip (7AF Headquarters) disallowed these grids, but did approve grids of known enemy locations (KELs) to the North and South of the town in support of the relief forces. All this information was being relayed at this time by 'Ramrod', an EC-121 used as a radio relay.

We planned to put the first set of air on KELs in support of the Southern Relief Column. Just as Hawk 05 showed up, the Northern ground commander called a TIC—receiving mortar, .51 cal, and small arms fire. Ramrod cleared me on those grids, and after the ground commander corrected my smoke, I cleared the fighters for their first pass.

Hawk 05 was a flight of two A-37's from our old buddies at the 9<sup>th</sup> SOS at Bien Hoa. (Here Doug explains their ordnance and the tactics they used to minimize taking ground fire 'hits' on their aircraft)

...on the TIC to the North, each had made two passes for me. Lead was out of rockets, and Two was out of napalm. Now it gets really interesting. Rumlong screams on the FM radio something which I cannot understand. He is in an honest to god panic. The Northern ground commander tells me that Rumlong is saying the VC are coming over the wire and infiltrating his position. I asked the fighters to hold high and got the grids Rumlong wanted hit. They were the same grids which Blue Chip had earlier denied me. They were 100 meters north and south of his perimeter, which was basically the marketplace at the only intersection in town. The Northern commander said we had broken his original TIC. At that point, our relief, Rustic 18, (Tom Clinch) was already on station orbiting the target area at 9000 Ft...I was at 5000 FT, and Hawk 05 was at 7000 FT. As I wanted to make sure that Rumlong really wanted a strike that close to his position, I put in a mark 150 meters north of the perimeter. The Northern commander relayed, "Good smoke, but go south 20 meters. He is really getting hit hard."

I declared a tactical emergency and had Rustic 18 relay same to Ramrod. I called the fighters to get into position, then while they were doing so, I rolled in and made three or four passes until my HE rocket pods were empty. I cleared the fighters in, having to restrict their run-ins to East to West or West to East due to friendly proximity. The hootches the bad guys were in were on either side of Route 6...on stilts, and the enemy fire was coming from under the hootches.

The A-37's did beautiful work, with Lead dropping the napalm, one can at a time, onto the road where it could splash under the hootches. When they were done, the Northern commander shouted, "Move 20 more meters South!" So the fighters used up all their strafe on that target, and then I made several passes with my 7.62. Hawk Lead reported that I was taking ground fire—the A-37's had also been hosed on their passes.

...out of ordnance and fuel, we left for home. Rustic 18 had requested more air when he passed along the information about the TAC emergency, and he was self expending as we left the area...just before we crossed fence, Rustic 18 reported that the NVA had broken contact at Rumlong...

I put the Hawk 05 pilots in for the Silver Star—They did great work in a bad situation, and got hosed on every pass. I have no doubt that without their accurate napalm and rockets, Rumlong would have fallen that afternoon.



Getting day-time sightings of enemy trucks in our Area of Operation (AO) in central Cambodia in 1970 were a rarity. Getting a day-time truck "kill" was even rarer. This was not too surprising since there just weren't many motor vehicles in the country to begin with, and secondly, what enemy motorized activity may have existed, usually occurred at night, was difficult to locate, and was almost impossible to kill due to the fleeting nature of the target. Central Cambodia definitely was not the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but on 19 December, 1970, I got lucky.

On the previous day, 18 Dec., I had flown aircraft # 639 on a five hour mission and put in 3 sets of F-100's on a routine target. This mission was somewhat unusual because I had a non-Rustic, C-121 ABCCC staff officer (name I don't remember) in my back seat. At the completion of this mission, I RTB'd to Korat AB, Thailand, to deliver this officer back to his ABCCC unit. RTB'ing to Korat for an overnigher was a rarity and was considered a special 'good deal.' Only recently had the Rustics been tasked to provide such shuttle services, and these missions were infrequent, so everyone was vying for the job. Also, being able to conduct such a mission without a French or Cambodian-speaking interpreter in the back seat was indicative that there were now a few english-speaking Cambodians attached to the various Cambodian ground units, so we could venture such a mission without the full benefit of an interpreter in the rear cockpit (It was doable, but having an interpreter in the RCP was still the most effective way to get good results.)

On 19 Dec, I was scheduled to fly a late afternoon return mission to Bien Hoa Air Base with a normal visual reconnaissance mission enroute over the AO. This mission was also a bit unique because I was flying solo—it was the only solo mission I ever flew as a Rustic.

The weather was beautiful. The monsoon season was over and the skies were exceptionally clear. The visibility was about the best I had ever seen. Unfortunately, there was no action all day in the AO, and being solo just made the mission seem that much longer. I droned around for four hours boring holes in the sky. Approaching bingo fuel, I picked up an approximate heading of 130 degrees for Bien Hoa, climbed from 1500' AGL to 3500' AGL, and started home. As I crossed the Mekong River just south of Kampong Cham, the sun was sitting a little above the horizon and I began anticipating an uneventful flight back to base while enjoying a evening sunset.

As I approached the Michelin rubber plantation located southwest of Kampong Cham, a moving column of dust, arising from the plantation trees, caught my attention ahead of me and off to my left. I knew a dirt road ran ram-rod straight north-south through the plantation. Approaching the plantation from the southwest, I initially couldn't see the road due to my standoff angle—but someone sure was making fast tracks, heading south down that road, creating a terrible dust trail, and every second was bringing him closer to my intersecting flight path. The established Rules of Engagement defined this road as a Line of Communication (LOC) and any motorized traffic was considered hostile. I couldn't believe my good fortune, but I had to act quickly to get in position for a roll-in before I was spotted.

In quick succession I reached up to turn on the pipper, select the HE (high explosive) Rocket pod position, arm the Master switch, and start my roll-in. I was on a wider than normal left base position, so my dive angle would be shallower than desired, despite the fact that I was at 3500' altitude. This would require a little TLAR (that looks about right) methodology in my delivery.

I couldn't help but imagine the driver's surprise when he finally saw me. I was on a left base, rolling in from the southwest to the north with the low sun somewhat at my back. About half-way through my roll-in, he finally picked me up, slammed on his brakes, and started fishtailing down the road directly towards me in an even larger cloud of dust. With the thick trees on both sides of the road, there was no avenue of escape.

On an extended final, I raised my nose to correct for my shallow dive angle and fired off two separate HE rockets in rapid succession in an attempt to bracket the vehicle—which, for the first time, I could now make out to be a jeep. The first rocket exploded on the road short of the target and accomplished it's intended effect. The driver braked harder, skidding just off the west side of the dirt road, and came to a complete stop. Two persons immediately jumped from the vehicle and dove into the adjacent trees. Pulling up from my pass, I checked my gas—not good—I didn't have much playtime, and it was getting darker by the minute.

Turning left onto a downwind, I could see the jeep still sitting on the grassy shoulder of the road, but there was no movement. Assessing the situation, I armed my four 7.62mm guns for my next pass, thinking this would be the best means to disable the vehicle to ensure it didn't drive off after the sun went down. Simultaneously, I started calling Batcat ABCCC, hoping there was someone readily available to help finish off the job for me. (Time now being of the essence, under these circumstances, it sure would have been nice to have had a backseater aboard to help with this coordination.) Batcat said they would see what was available and I rolled in for my strafe pass.

Rolling in now from a more normal base position, I belatedly dialed in the correct mils for a strafe pass, put the pipper short of the target and opened fire, walking the pipper and bullets up to the truck, and then started a bunt maneuver to keep the stream of tracers on the target. Holding the pass a little longer than I should have, I started my dive recovery with a good pull. Once on downwind, I again observed no movement around the vehicle.

The question now—what next? I'm low on gas and the sun is rapidly setting. Fortunately, Batcat had the answer. They informed me Stinger 88, a gunship, was enroute, and was about 10 minutes out. Could I hold on a little longer to point out the target to them? I immediately went into a loiter mode with one eye on my gas gauge. Shadows were starting to turn a murky grey and dusk was setting in.

By the time Stinger 88 arrived, visibility was diminishing and I was having difficulty distinguishing the jeep's position in the darkening shadows. I briefed Stinger on the situation and as soon as he arrived, I immediately rolled in to mark the target by bracketing it with two Willy Pete (white phosphorous) marking rockets. As soon as I pulled off the target, I started a right turn direct to Bien Hoa



Air Base, giving corrections off my marking pass as I RTB'd. Stinger reported he too was having difficulty acquiring the target due to the approaching darkness, but said he had the target area identified and would go to work and do what he could. From the tone of his voice, I wasn't very confident that he would be able to find, much less hit, the target.

Approximately ten minutes later, however, Stinger called me to report that he had hit the truck and it was now on fire—one truck (albeit a small one) KBA. This was my only truck kill in my 9 months as a Rustic.

Somehow, the last vibrant colors of the waning sunset looked a little more beautiful to me that evening as I settled back for the remaining portion of my flight home.

#### THE LESSON—Clint Murphy, OIC Rustic Interpreters

I had been flying for only six or seven missions. I was trying desperately to juggle my responsibilities; taking notes, map reading, monitoring the radio in order to keep up with the mission's demands. I was still deeply impressed by the colors, shapes and sounds of the mission. Later, battle weariness and fatigue, coupled with the growing desperation of the battle would dull the edge of these first impressions.

On this day we had just begun our sweep over the area of operations when we received a desperate call for help from a FANK position in a small village. It was under siege and had been penetrated by the enemy. Despite a day long desperate battle to dislodge the enemy with a series of air strikes the FANK position was overwhelmed. The FANK commander went abruptly off the air and a dreadful stillness fell upon the battle. Nothing stirred below us. Not a bird or puff of wind interrupted the dreadful, placid face of the battlefield. Aside from the blackened patches that still smoked from the last napalm strikes. It was hard to tell that a desperate battle had taken place only minutes earlier.

We then flew north of town in order to contact another FANK position. After ten minutes we returned south towards the town, low and to the side of the road that ran through town. Just as we flew south of the town, I saw the body of a FANK soldier who had been thrown onto the road. He had been not been there before our small ten minute flight to the north. He lay there, half-naked in a fetal position. I observed him through my binoculars and saw that he had been shot in the back of the head. This suggested that he had been captured, executed and tossed on the road for our benefit. A deep shadow near his head was actually an enormous blood slick. I remember being astounded at how much a man could bleed. I took a picture of this man and we flew further south and then saw a sight at the crossroads that confirmed our impressions. It was a 'flower ring' of twelve FANK soldiers arranged head to head with their feet facing outward. Each of them had been shot in the back of the head. None of them had been there before our 20 minute flight to the north of the village. Someone was tapping us on the chest and saying, "What happened to these men will happen to you. You are next!"

This incident marked a great change in my attitude. After this time I began to see the enemy in a very personal light. A deep rage and disgust for the enemy began to build in my soul. This incident was the first real communication between me and the enemy. The enemy had singled me out and personalized what I was doing. The envelope of distance and time, which I mistakenly thought had separated me and the enemy had ripped it apart.

What we had been doing was not a game or an abstract military exercise! It was nasty, brutal and very, very real. Now I understood why we were fighting these awful people. I knew in my gut that the enemy needed killing and lots of it.

#### THE BIRDS—Clint Murphy, OIC Rustic Interpreters

On this mission I flew with Captain S., a madman fundamentalist from Alabama, a dead shot, tobacco chewing artist, and excellent pilot. I knew when I flew with him that things were going to pop. He would come up to me two or more days before a mission and have a "pre-flight" conference with me. "Murph," he would softly say, "got your shit together?" (chomp, chew).

"Yes" I would answer.

"OK" he would say. "Cause we are gonna kill, OK"

"OK" I would answer. And that was it. He was very, very, serious. He wanted to successfully nail the enemy and he wanted me to be mentally and professionally ready to do my part. I would then pour over my maps and intelligence information to have a "menu" of "hot" targets for him. We were going to be busy during the entire mission. We were going to definitely 'rock and roll' at the enemy's expense.

Things had gone well on this mission. That is, we put in two air strikes, strafed a few bicyclists and expended most of our 7.62 ammunition and rockets. We were on a roll and in a very rare instance of carefree behavior he announced: "Gonna make a flower. Are you for it Murph?" (Chomp, chew).

"Sure," I said, thinking 'what is he talking about?'

"See those birds?" he asked. I looked over and saw on the edge of the great lake a tall tree loaded with hundreds of white herons.

"I see then," I said.

"Watch" he said, and winged the aircraft straight down at the tree. Down and down we plunged with the white ball of birds wing larger and larger. Then he fired a white phosphorous (Willy Pete) rocket in the center of mass of the tree. The tree of birds exploded into a beautiful expanding white flower. As we pulled up, Captain S. spat some red-man tobacco into a plastic bag and said: "SHIT HOT," and we flew on in the hunt for the enemy. Later, we expended the rest of our rockets and ammunition on some special targets I had prepared. He never mentioned a word about the white-bird flower he had created, and neither did I.



#### RECOLLECTIONS—Don Mercer's notes, Rustic 41

Sleepytime (Saigon Cap) Mission—By this time my vision as an air Force pilot was beginning to change. I was beginning to feel more like a transport pilot (God forbid) and felt the situation was rapidly deteriorating. During the previous two weeks I had gone back over to the 68<sup>th</sup> and 145<sup>th</sup> (Huey sqns) and grabbed a couple more rides as a door gunner. Firing the door gun from low altitude got the juices flowing. In hindsight I think I had seen one too many John Wayne movies. Today this only lends credence as to why most FAC's were 1st lieutenants and Captains. We were expendable and in many cases did foolish things.

Somehow word got back to Maj. Hetherington and I had a great ass chewing as in "why do you think the Air Force put all its money into training you just to have you show no sense by flying in Huey Slicks." It was at this point that I was told I might remain a 2Lt for awhile as I was not "exhibiting any good sense." I vaguely remember expressing my frustration about the boredom and futility of the Sleepytime mission. One thing was for certain, there would be no more flights in the choppers but I still managed to get over to the 68<sup>th</sup> for a few parties. Guess I had been around too many people at VMI who thought like "grunts".

Rustic—28 October. Even though my message to the higher ups got no awards for tact and subtlety, it must have worked.

After having received a couple hour intel briefing by Don Dorr on "Freedom Deal", free fire zones, the most highly trafficked routes, and many other items, some useful and some sundry, I was scheduled with Don Stone on VR2 or my first trip across the "fence". Got across but cut short due to weather.

I remember to this day that first night mission to Cambodia. As we left on the 313 radial out of Bien Hoa I was both excited and apprehensive. As we left Tay Ninh and Nui Bah Dinh - "The Rock" - I felt like Columbus and that we had just reached the flat end of the earth. Talk about a dark void. The dark sky met the dark earth and there was no horizon other than the little gray and black ball in the cockpit. We were flying lights out as with virtually all night missions once we departed the Bien Hoa area and the cockpit lights were progressively dimmed in order to obtain improved night vision. The standard check as we crossed the border area was to go lights out. No need to create a target rich environment. The last thing that I want in this war was to provide the enemy with a marksmanship badge.

15 December—VR1 with Don Hagle. Put Hawk 03 (#4231) in at WU283322 and Hawk J5 (#4211) in at WU279317, both for Prey Totung. Got out in daytime. After having worked the area at night it was interesting to see it in the light. Enjoyed seeing the AO for a change. Saw an RF-4 making a recce run and a C-47 making an airdrop over Prey Totung. Both sets of fighters were handed off by an OV-10. Till can't believe that Prey Totung is holding out.

First set had slicks against a .51 cal site. Second set had nape and CBU against KEL (known enemy location). Both strafed as usual. Also worked Stinger 72 (#6915), then went up to Hotel 21. He said that he wanted to give Rustic 40 (Beagle) a VC head as a Christmas present due to the strike he'd put in the night before. Ran into incoming arty on the second stride. Nothing like wondering where the trajectories of that stuff is going.

Had a party when we got back. Bob Messer passed out this morning and just fell down where he was standing.

#### THE MONSOON WATER SPOUT—Walt Friedhofen, Rustic R

Convoy CAP is usually a tedious, boring mission, and it was the luck of the draw that I drew such a mission with a fairly new Rustic in mid-1971 during the monsoon season. Water, water everywhere and nary a thing to shoot at. So, to liven things up, the pilot decided to put on an aerial display the likes of which would put an base open house to shame. The Grand Finale was an inside loop so low I began to pray at the top. I can't say we actually pulled out - an atmospheric miracle must have kept us above the water. The convoy commander was ecstatic about the display and reported that everyone had come port side (about 15 boats) to watch. They were cheering wildly ESPECIALLY THE WATER SPOUT (his words) WE WERE KICKING UP AS WE PASSED THE COMMAND BOAT. I drank a 12-pack when we got home.

#### ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL—Walt Friedhofen, Rustic R

I had an early morning go with one of my favorite pilots who was obviously groggy from a hard night of partying and little sleep. Our mission was CAP for a huge water convoy stretched out over many miles of river. We had no contact with the convoy CC and even the two Black Ponies (marine OV-10's) wouldn't talk to us, so up and down the river we went. The pilot soon tired of this and gave me the stick. Up and down the river I went - for what seemed like an eternity. After a considerable time I realized that I hadn't heard a word from the pilot. I called to him on the intercom without response. I yelled, whistled, and rocked the wings. Still nothing. Then it dawned on me. He was out cold (or had died of boredom). At first it was amusing, then something else dawned on me. I had flown enough missions to know that we fueled out of the centerline first so it could be punched in an emergency, and I realized that it had to be very close to that time. I didn't know for sure whether the acft would transfer to the wing tanks on its own or not, but I wasn't going to wait until the engines started sputtering to find out. I began pulling Gs and negative Gs realizing all the while that I was using more fuel. It took forever (probably about 60 seconds) to bring him to life. When he awakened he asked what was going on. I replied "Oh, nothing sir - how's the fuel states?" His only comment was "Ah! Time to switch fuel tanks." WHUH!





## RUSTIC NEWS

1 NOV 97

**RUSTICS' FIRST REUNION IS NOW HISTORY:** And what a great first chapter is was in the Rustics future legacy! Eighty eight (88) Rustics attended the reunion on 18-21 Sep 97 and 165 people attended the reunion banquet on Sat. night.

To say that our first reunion was a success would be an understatement—the weather was beautiful, the Ramada Beach Resort was a class act with a perfect beach-front setting, the Hurlburt Field tour and briefings were very professional, highly informative, and most enjoyable, and of course, the spark and emotionalism of old friends renewing past acquaintances was a 'high' that's hard to describe. The instant camaraderie of everyone bound together by a common mission drew us close together once again (despite the intervening 25 years) and old friendships were rekindled and many new friendships were formed amongst those who attended.

Another special element of the weekend was the excitement generated by seeing some of our dear Cambodian and Vietnamese friends again. The attendance of Col Lieou Phin Oum (Hotel 303), Lt Col Kohn Om (Cambodian fighter pilot and squadron commander), and June Le, (O-2 Night Rustics hootch girl) and her beautiful family, added a certain grace to our gathering, and allowed them, as well of many of us, to share with each other things that needed to be shared and said after all these years.

The entire weekend was such an emotional charge and enjoyable experience for everyone who came, including the wives. Those who didn't bring their wives said they wished they had, and that next time they'll ensure their wife also attends. Needless to say, it was a weekend to be remembered! Everyone, without exception, had one of the best times of their lives.

### WHO ATTENDED?

Adams (2), Aitken (2), Baker, J.W (2), Baker, W.N. (2), Bell (1), Bellefeuille (1), Boston (2), Brooks (2), Calvanelli (1), Cantor (2), Capps (2), Charlton (2), Clinch (2), Cross (2), Dahle (1), Decabooter (2), Dekoker (2), Dodd, R. (2), Dodd, W. (1), Dorr (2), Driskill (1), Drury (2), Dung Le (4), Echelberger (2), Edwards (2), Eklund (2), Ellis (3), Ernst (2), Fink (2), Freix (1), Friedhofen (2), Frischmuth (1), Gabel (2), Gaskill (2), Gibbar (2), Gibson (1), Greene D. (2), Hagle (2), Harris (2), J. Harshaw (2), Hawes (2), Hawker (2), Hetherington, J. (2), Hetherington, R. (2), Hellwig (1), Hopkins (2), Hull (2), Jones (2), Keese (2), Kimball (2), Koeppel (2), Kohn Om (2), Landtroop (2), Larson (2), Lemke (2), Lester (2), Carolyn Life (1), Mercer (2), Mittendorf (1), Morneau (2), Murphy (1), Newland (2), Nuber (2), Col Oum (1), Paquin (2), Pells (1), Perkins (2), Polk (2), Reese (2), Roberds (2), Safely (2), Schwein (1), Seibold (2), Sleight (2), Sovich (2), St John (1), Stratton (2), Strickland (2), Thomas, Doc (1), Thrower (2), Vaillancourt (2), Van Kirk (2), Virtue (1), Wood R. (1), Wood, W. (2)

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE RUSTICS?—A SECOND REUNION:** Mark your calendar! By popular demand, the Rustics are planning to hold a second Rustic reunion on 23-26 Sep 1999, (tentative date) again at the Ramada Beach Resort Hotel here in Fort Walton Beach, FL.

The Rustics had such a great time at this year's reunion, that they enthusiastically said 'let's do it again, same place, approx. same time, in two years.' The Ramada and the Rustic 'Hootch' hospitality building are available, so we have all the essential elements to make the next reunion as good as, or even better, than this one. Our challenge will be to make the next reunion just as exciting as the past one, so start making your plans now to join your Rustic friends on the beautiful white beaches of the Emerald Coast in '99.

### TWO GREAT RUSTIC VIDEOS YOU'LL WANT TO HAVE:

- 1) **THE RUSTIC STORY:** This is an excellent, action packed, 1 hour 25 minute video (produced by Doug Aitken with the assistance of a professional video editor) of the OV-10 and O-2 Rustics in action in SEA. It contains pictures of our bases, hootches, mascots, flight lines, Rustic parties and party flight suits, pictures of a number of Rustics and Rustic gatherings/parties; OV-10 and O-2 on the ramp, in revetments, taking off and landing, ordnance, pre-flight, etc.; aerial pictures of Cambodia, our AO, actual Rustic combat movie footage which includes Fac self-expenditures, fighter air strikes, gunship air strikes, Trapp's shootdown debrief at the Rustic hootch, etc.; it ends with footage of a number of 'Fini' champagne flights and an 'Amazing Grace' bagpipe tribute to our 'Rustics Remembered.' Throughout the video, Doug has done a marvelous job of dubbing in appropriate background music, beginning with the introductory dueling banjo music as the OV-10 and O-2 alternately entertain us with their grace and firepower.

All of the footage on this video is taken from actual home movies and 35 mm slides taken by Rustics during their tour in SEA. It will bring back a lot of memories and will allow you to show your family and friends what it was like flying over Cambodia, lightly armed, and unafraid, in your trusty Fac aircraft.

This was a labor of love by Doug (and Don Mercer, who provided some assistance.) They are not making any profit from the sale of these videos, but are selling them at cost. Only a limited number are still available (over 70 copies were sold at the reunion)

so get your order in to Doug as soon as possible.

Our many thanks to Doug and Don for their efforts in producing such a great video for the Rustics.

**Cost \$25.00. Send check payable to: Doug Aitken, 1006 S. Wellonsburg Pl., Apex NC 27502**

- 2) **RUSTIC REUNION VIDEO:** This is a professionally made video of our first Rustic reunion. It's going to be a *keepsake*, so you'll want to order one whether you came to the reunion or not. It is a 5 1/2 hour video (after editing) that contains all the major elements of the reunion weekend and includes pictures of everyone who attended, plus some Rustic interviews. Why is the video so lengthy? Our initial dilemma: how were we going to edit the whole weekend down to just one 2 hour video—there was so much good material to include. Judy Boudreaux, our videographer, solved our problem. She agreed to produce our video at the six hour video format speed at no extra cost to us. I have seen the final results and the video and sound quality is very, very good!

Length and quality not being a problem, we were then able to include the following in the video: *Rustic welcoming ceremonies and introductions, Col Oum's arrival, the tour of Hurlburt Field to include the 16th Special Operations Wing mission briefing, AGOS update briefing, and AF Special Ops School update briefing on Vietnam and Cambodia, Air Park and FAC Memorial tour, and C-130 gunship static display; highlights of the sunset cruises (both ships) with interviews of Rustics on board and dinner scenes at the Lucky Snapper Restaurant; the hospitality suite with Rustic Memorabilia; the Sat night Rustic banquet which included Roger Dodd's band entertaining us at happy hour, group photos, interviews of Rustics, Sy Gaskill in 'prime form' as our master of ceremonies and all our evening speakers to include comments from all of our Rustic commanders, AmyLe (daughter of June Le), Lt Col Kohn and Col Oum.*

This was a marvelous weekend and it has all been captured on tape. Order your copy today—it'll be a great Christmas present to yourself.

**COST \$30.00 (includes shipping and handling.) Send check payable to: Emerald Coast Video Productions, 2423 Duncan Dr., Niceville, FL 32578.**

**The following persons have already paid for a copy of the Rustic Reunion Video:**

Adams, Brooks, D. Greene, Hagle, Hellwig, Kohn, McClellan, Nuber, Roberds, Van Kirk, Vaillancourt

**RUSTIC HISTORY BOOK 'DRAFT':** The 1<sup>st</sup> 'Draft' of the Rustic Unit History book has been printed and was distributed to each Rustic who attended the reunion (with a detailed cover letter of instructions written by Jim Reese attached.) *Each Rustic* is being asked to provide their comments, suggestions and critique of the 'draft' and, of course, we are still asking everyone to contribute a personal story, or two (or more), for the book. If you haven't yet submitted your input to Jim Reese, time to 'get on it.'—you don't want to be left out!! Your personal stories are what will make this book especially meaningful.

They say every good book is written five times (that means we are still just in the second, or third rewrite stages) so your careful, critical review of the book is very important to us. Your critique and inputs will ensure our book tells the complete Rustic story accurately and fully.

The draft book is already over 137 pages in length and would have been even longer if we had printed everything we plan to print—but, in an attempt to keep down initial draft printing costs, we printed just enough of the book to give everyone a good idea of what to expect. Once you see the draft, you'll agree the chapter writers did a terrific job on every chapter—they are each to be commended (Reese, Safely, Roberds, and Murphy)—but each of them would also agree, there is still room for improvement and 'tweaking' before we go 'final.'

**WHEN IS YOUR CRITIQUE INPUT DUE?** Those who attended the reunion and received a copy of the book have been asked to complete their review NLT 15 Dec 97. Once they complete their review, they are to forward their copy of the draft to one of the Rustics who did not attend the reunion (each cover letter of instruction clearly indicates which person, not attending the reunion, they are to send their draft copy to.)

**IF YOU DID NOT ATTEND THE REUNION:** You should receive a copy of the draft in the mail (from one of the Rustics who attended the reunion) in late December, or earlier, if that person completed their review before 15 Dec. Once you receive your copy, please critically review it, make your inputs, and follow the instructions on Jim Reese's cover letter. **We request all reviews, comments, and inputs be sent to Jim Reese NLT 15 Mar 98.**

*If you haven't received your copy of the draft book by early Jan 98, contact Jim Reese. Suggestion: Don't wait till you receive the draft before you start writing your own personal story inputs—do that now.*

Once all reviews/inputs are received, the Book Steering Committee will do a final edit, insert maps, pictures, etc., and complete the book for final publishing—this could be a very lengthy and time consuming phase.

**OUR OBJECTIVE:** To make this the best possible book about the Rustic FACS!!! That means we're going to emphasize quality and we do not plan to rush ourselves with an arbitrary self-imposed publishing deadline. However, we do hope to have the book ready for printing sometime in '98. (Please help us with your timely reviews and get your story inputs to Jim Reese ASAP.)



OUR SINCERE THANKS to everyone who has already contributed to the book project—this book is going to be truly awesome work—it's the Rustics' Story that needs to be told!!

**BOOK CLASSIFICATION ISSUE:** We have learned that some of you are still reluctant to write your personal Rustic story inputs because you are concerned about subjects that you think might still be considered 'classified.'

Jim Reese and Greg Freix have thoroughly researched this subject and have verified that virtually everything pertaining to the SEA conflict that was classified from DoD sources is now declassified (all of our Rustic daily intell summaries and other classified Rustic documents were DoD sources). This information was confirmed by the AF Historical Agency.

This means all information pertaining to our operations in Cambodia and Vietnam is now unclassified. Anything you recall about specific missions, campaigns, tactics, weapons, U.S. or Cambodian personnel, geography, maps, targets, etc. are no longer classified. As long as we stick to information taken from DoD sources (we were all DoD sources while performing the Rustic Mission) we are on solid ground. It's when we get into information taken from non-DoD sources (such as CIA, State Department, etc.) that we may be on thin ice.

As a guide, whatever we can personally recall is almost certainly not classified. If there is any doubt, you should probably omit it from anything you submit.

**RUSTIC FAC ASSOCIATION?** During the reunion business meeting it was decided that the Rustics should investigate the feasibility of forming a Rustic FAC Association. Don Mercer volunteered to chair this working group. Our thanks to Don and the other volunteers, Wally Friedhofen, Shad Kimball, and Clint Murphy, who are going to assist Don. **If any of you have information that might be helpful to this group, (on 'How to form an Association,' etc.) please get in touch with Don or any of the other members of this working group.**

**RUSTIC HATS AND T-SHIRTS:** The Rustic hats and t-shirts were such a big hit at the reunion that we quickly sold out the few extras that we had to those who did not pre-order theirs before the reunion. Bill Sleigh then took pre-paid orders for additional hats and t-shirts and he expects them to arrive shortly. Once they arrive, Bill will be mailing them directly to those who placed an order at the reunion. Be patient, they should be in your mail box within a month's time. If you have any questions, contact Bill Sleigh. Our 'hats off' to Bill for taking the time and effort to ensure that everyone who wanted a hat and t-shirt is going to get one.

**CURRENT ROSTER:** An updated Rustic Personnel roster is enclosed with this newsletter for all Rustics. Please check your information. If it's not accurate or complete, please notify me, Claude Newland, and send me the correct information at 4033 Indian Trail Dr. Destin, FL 32541 or E Mail: [cnewland@gnt.net](mailto:cnewland@gnt.net)

**MISSING RUSTICS:** Unfortunately, over 50 Rustics didn't even know about our first reunion because we haven't been able to locate them—although we've been trying!! We need everyone's help to locate them. (We would be remiss if we didn't locate them in time for them to find out about our book project and our next reunion.) Please review the list of 'Missing Rustics' on the enclosed Rustic Personnel Roster and take it upon yourself to help us find some of these people. Dig out your rosters, pilot training class yearbooks, orders, or anything else that might help give us a lead, etc., etc.

If you have any information that might be helpful, please pass it to: Steve Hopkins (770) 487-1773 or E Mail: [hoppy612@mindspring.com](mailto:hoppy612@mindspring.com)

Steve has volunteered to chair a 'Missing Rustics' Search Committee. Members of his committee, so far, are Don Mercer and Claude Newland. If you'd like to be involved in the effort to locate our 'Missing Rustics,' please notify Steve. The more, the merrier.

#### ONE LINERS:

- ♦ Tom Calvanelli and John Charlton are looking into what it will take to get an **OV-10 aircraft in the Hurlburt Air Park**. Let them know if you'd like to help.
- ♦ **Jim Seibold** takes center stage again and does it up big—he got engaged during the reunion.
- ♦ Next reunion we'll use Jon Safely's suggestion and require each guest speaker to talk with one hand in a **bowl of ice water**. (But we very much enjoyed each one of them!! Thanks to all for making the Sat. night banquet a success.)
- ♦ **Ltc Kohn's speech** was a hoot—what a sense of humor. (It's on the Reunion video.)
- ♦ Next time—**Better Beer** (but, we had plenty of it.)
- ♦ What did you think of the **FAC Memorial** at the Hurlburt Air Park? It's a good start, but surely the FAC community can, and should, do better.
- ♦ The Air Commando Association is breaking ground on their new **ACA Offices and Museum** building which will be located just West of Hurlburt Field on highway 98. They have offered the Rustics space to display Rustic FAC memorabilia. Bill Sleigh has volunteered to be the coordinator to receive any **Rustic memorabilia** you would like to loan/ give to the Rustic organization and he will act as our liaison with the ACA museum. All Rustic items displayed at the ACA museum will remain the property of the Rustics or the individual who loaned them.

- ◆ Claude and Tona Newland attended the ACA's annual **memorial service** held in conjunction with the annual ACA reunion at the Hurlburt Air Park on Sunday, 12 Oct 97, and Claude participated in the service by reading the names of the Rustics killed in action and the names of those Rustics who have died since SEA.
- ◆ Lendy Edwards has volunteered to serve as Rustic Treasurer.

**AWARDS AND DECS: The Rustics have formed an Awards and Decs working group.** *Members are: Doc Thomas, Greg Freix, and Don Mercer.* This group is looking into the current USAF procedures to review and reevaluate previous SEA awards submissions which were, for a myriad of reasons, not approved. Suffice to say, that over the years since Vietnam, it has become evident that a number of awards were erroneously or mistakenly disapproved, 'dropped through the crack,' or never got acted upon due to our hasty departure from SEA. As you may know, many awards are just now being appropriately awarded. More to come on this once the details are known. Please feel free to contact one of the above members of the working group if you would like to discuss this subject. *(Editor's note: Two Silver Stars were presented to two former airmen at last month's Air Commando's Assoc. Reunion Banquet for the valor they exhibited, under fire, during a massive rocket attack on Bien Hoa Air Base in '67.)*

**RUSTIC FINANCES:** If you have not contributed financially to our Rustic effort, and would like to do so, recommended donation is \$20.00. Please make contribution payable to "RUSTICS" and mail to Lendy Edwards: 11 Poplar Ave, Shalimar, FL 32579

**FRIENDS OF RUSTICS:** If you'd like to continue receiving the Rustic Newsletter, etc., you can become an Associate member of the Rustic FAC organization by sending your \$20.00 donation to Lendy Edwards (address above), payable to "Rustics"

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Claude,

"Sierra Hotel! Mission Well Done!"

"The whole event showed the hands of Master Planners. You and the Team assembled performed Above and Beyond. I know some of the names of those who helped you, but I'm sure there are some planners I don't know of: please let them know of this note of thanks.

"Sy Gaskill was an inspired choice as MC for the dinner. Sy was a classmate at UPT/Williams, graduating in Dec 1966. I can not remember if I was aware he was in the OV's while I was in the 0-2's at Bien Hoa. As Aide to a Senator, he's in an interesting position for the future.

"I even managed to stay alert through the dinner speakers after I realized these men had a direct effect on my daily life during the period, and I ought to pay attention to what they had to say.

"Stepping into the group was like passing through a magic curtain: 26/27 years just melted away."

*Bob Virtue*

Claude,

"Thanks for your work.

"Do you realize what a service you have done for a large number of grateful Rustics by taking this reunion under your arm and carrying it through? I really appreciate your calling me last winter and asking me to get the 0-2 pilots together."

*Dick Roberds*

*(Editors Note: Congratulations go to all the 0-2 guys who put on a 'full court press' to locate the 0-2 Rustics. Don Mercer, especially, was very instrumental in finding many of you. Thanks again for all the effort and phone calls.)*

Claude,

"I'm getting all your messages and appreciate them. I had a second surgery (neck fusion) and am in an uncomfortable neck brace, but back at work teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Unable to come to the reunion, not quite in the condition and, of course, hate to break up the school year. I truly appreciate your contacting me and wish everyone the very best. Hope you all have a great time."

*Norm (Quebec) Falcon*

Claude,

"It is with great regret that I have to relay that I will not be able to attend the reunion....I have been on the road continuously for the complete summer with two weeks in Korea and numerous one week stints in places like Boston, San Diego, and Norfolk...I am now looking at either two or three trips to Germany, possibly a return to Korea and...[trip]to Colorado Springs over the next two months.

"I am enjoying the memories generated by the chatter between the group. Now that we have email list maybe we can stay in touch and future events will allow me to participate more directly. I have a few mementos scattered around in the boxes which remain unpacked just like almost everything from my AF career....Maybe sometime around Christmas I will have the opportunity to go dig into the mess. Until then, think of me as a shadow as I listen in...

"Thanks for your persistence and hope it pays off in a great reunion. Please relay my regrets and fond memories to all the guys and our outstanding hooch maid."

*Bob Messer*

**'THANKS' AGAIN TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED MAKE THIS YEARS REUNION SUCH A BIG SUCCESS AND ' THANKS' TO ALL WHO ATTENDED! IT WAS TRULY A MARVELOUS WEEKEND!! SEE YOU IN '99!!!**





## RUSTIC NEWS

Reunion Logo (on shirts and hats)

**TIME ON TARGET:** Reunion Dates: 18-21 SEP 97, Ramada Beach Resort, Ft Walton Beach, FL

30 Aug 97

**MISSION OBJECTIVE:** It's almost time! The long awaited 1<sup>st</sup> ever Rustic FAC reunion is about to become a reality. Time to preflight your equipment, dust off those photo albums, be sure your camera has film and batteries, gather together your memorabilia, movies, slides, tapes, see if that old party suit will still fit, and get yourself ready for some Rockin' and Rollin' on the Emerald Coast.

**LINE-UP CARD:** Who's coming? Rustics registered as of 30 Aug. (Other local 'Friends of Rustics' will be in attendance at the banquet.) We expect approx. 150 people to be at the Sat night banquet.

Adams (2), Aitken (2), Baker, J.W (2), Baker, W.N. (2), Boston (2), Brooks (2), Calvanelli (1), Cantor (2), Capps (2), Charlton (2), Clinch (2), Cross (2), Dahle (1), Decabooter (2), Dekoker (2), Dodd, R. (2), Dodd, W. (1), Dorr (2), Driskill (1), Drury (2), Dung Le (4), Echelberger (2), Edwards (2), Ellis (3), Ernst (2), Fink (2), Friedhofen (2), Gabel (2), Gibbar (2), Gibson (1), Greene D. (2), Hagle (2), Harris (2), JHarshaw (2), Hawker (2), Harris (2), Heatherington, J. (2), Heatherington, R. (2), Hellwig (1), Hopkins (2), Hull (2), Keese (2), Kimball (2), Koepfel (2), Kohm Om (1), Landtroop (2), Larson (2), Lemke (2), Lester (2), Carolyn Life (1), McClellan (2), Mercer (2), Morneau (2), Newland (2), Nuber (2), Col Oum (1), Paquin (2), Polk (2), Reese (2), Roberds (2), Safely (2), Schwein (1), Seibold (2), Sleight (2), Sovich (2), St John (1), Stratton (2), Strickland (2), Vaillancourt (2), Van Kirk (2), Virtue (2), Wood (2),

Others who indicated they were coming (but registration not yet received): Davenport, Gaskill, Murphy, Pierson, Thomas, Walinski

**RUSTIC TRIVIA:** LET'S HAVE SOME FUN. Request all Rustics return the enclosed Rustic Trivia questionnaire to me NLT 10 Sep. (or whenever) so we can have this information for the reunion. (Return envelope provided). Appropriate recognition will be made the reunion and in the post-reunion newsletter.

**PRE-PARTY:** If you're arriving a day early, a pre-reunion gathering of Rustics will take place at Claude Newland's house on Wed, 17 Sep at 1900. Just show up. Directions from the Ramada: Go East on Hwy 98 to Destin (4 miles.) Cross Destin bridge. At fourth stop light (Main street), turn left (north). Go north 3 miles and turn right (east) at Indian Trail Dr. Go east for 1 mile to 4033 Indian Trail Dr. (bay side.) Phone: (850) 654-2955.

**WHAT TO BRING:** It will still be warm on the Emerald Coast, so dress for a summer-type climate. Things to consider bringing with you: cameras, video cameras, tape recorder, all your memorabilia, slides, tapes, photo, albums, sunglasses, umbrella, swimsuit, wind breaker, hat, coat & tie for banquet, casual cloths, appropriate cloths for optional activities, and golf clubs if you plan to play a round.

**HITTING THE LINKS:** Lendy Edwards is setting up tee times at the Eglin AFB golf course for Sat morning, 20 Sep. If you want to play a round, suggest you give him a call so he will know how many tee times to reserve. 1-850-651-6766. (I apologize, I should have requested this information on the reunion registration form.) Even if you don't call, bring your clubs and we'll make it happen.

**GROUND TRANSPORTATION:** If you're flying into the *Okaloosa County Airport* (Eglin AFB) and indicated on your Reunion registration form that you want to be picked up at the airport, we will have someone there to meet you and bring you to the hotel. To be on the safe side, *please also call* Don Echelberger, 1-850-664-5444 a couple days before the reunion to confirm your expected arrival time. Don is coordinating pick-ups. If for some reason you arrive and no one is there, call the Hospitality Suite, 1-850-243-9161 Ext. 7558. Return transportation for Sunday will be worked out at the reunion. (Plenty of help is available.)

**WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE HOTEL** on Thursday, 18 Sep.:

- 1) Check-in at the *main lobby front desk*. Get your room key. Rooms should be available NLT 3 PM (checkout time is 11 AM.)
- 2) Report to the *Oasis Room Hospitality Suite* for reunion sign-in.—Oasis Room is located out in the large hotel courtyard on the east edge of the fabulous waterfall mountain. Hospitality Suite will be open at noon. (But we'll be setting things up starting at 9 AM, if you'd like to come by to help.)
- 3) *Official Reunion Welcome* will be at **8 PM** at the Oasis Room Hospitality Suite. Soft drinks, beer, ice tea, set-ups, ice, and some munchies will be provided. If you prefer another drink of choice, it's BYOB.

**GUARD FREQ: EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:** Ramada Plaza Beach Resort 1-800-874-8962  
Oasis Room Hospitality Suite: 1-850-243-9161 Ext. 7558

**STILL NEED TO REGISTER?** If you haven't registered, it's still not too late. Make your own hotel reservation and then give me a call. I'll take your reunion registration info over the phone—then send me the check, or bring it with you when you come. You're welcome even if you show up unannounced. Hey,...do it that way!!!...make a *grand* entrance, be the surprise of the party!

**ALTERNATE BILLING PLAN: HOTEL ROOM SITUATION:** Due to the great response we have received for the reunion, we have already exceeded the number of Rustic rooms initially reserved at the *Ramada Plaza Beach Resort*. We are hoping to have a few more rooms at the Ramada become available once the hotel releases some rooms which were reserved for a Shriner group that may not use all of the rooms they had blocked for themselves. Rustic room rates (add 9% tax) are: Facing parking lot-- \$65.00; Facing courtyard/pool--\$70.00; Towers facing pool--\$75.00; Towers facing gulf--\$85.00.

What to do? If you want to stay at the *Ramada* (highly recommended), call them to make your own reservation. Ask for Rustic rates. 1-800-874-8962. If they say there are no Rooms available, tell them what type of room you want and ask them to put you on a standby list for a room. (Joe Guidry, my contact, says the extra Shriner rooms should be released to us on Wed. 3 Sep.) Then recommend you make a reservation somewhere!!

The *Sea Isle Motel* is the closest alternate hotel. It's located within walking distance of the Ramada (about ½ block West of Ramada). The Rustic rate is \$55.00/night for 2 people. This is a nice, clean, cheerful hotel, everything in practically new --with a free continental breakfast. But it's not located on the gulf. Call 1-800-408-2200. I you make a reservation here, and later wish to cancel it, you must notify them NT 72 hours in advance.

The *Ft Walton Beach Holiday Inn* is located about ¾ of a mile West of the Ramada and is on the Gulf. Nice property. We have not negotiated for any Rustic rate. Call 1-850-244-2444.

Other motels were listed in the June 97 newsletter. If you need more information, or assistance, call me: 1-850-654-2955.

**SORTIE RECAP: SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (abbreviated):**

THURS, 18 SEP.	1200 Hospitality Suite opens. <i>Sign-up for optional activities for Sat AM.</i> 2000 Reunion Welcome/Opening (wear of <i>party flight suit</i> -optional)
FRI, 19 SEP.	0830 Picked up at Ramada for bus tour of Hurlburt Field/aircraft static displays, briefings on Cambodia & SEA, lunch at Hurlburt Club. 1430 Arrive back at Ramada. 1515 Depart Ramada For Destin Harbor—Sunset Cruise (Optional) 1600 Sunset cruise till 1900 1930 Dinner at Destin's Lucky Snapper Restaurant (On the harbor-Optional) Till? Hospitality Suite open. Walks on-the-beach.
SAT, 20 SEP.	AM Optional activities. Hospitality suite open 1430 Reunion Business Meeting. Hospitality Suite. 1630 Banquet Set-up. 1800 Happy Hour—individual photos. Forum Room—Top floor of Towers. 1845 Group photos—All present 1900 Reunion Banquet/Program (Coat & Tie) Till? Hospitality Suite open. Walks-on-the-beach.
SUN, 21 SEP	AM Breakfast at your leisure. Hospitality Suite open. 1100 Room Check-out time. 1100 Hospitality Suite Closes

**PHOTO IMAGERY:** Two great videos are going to be available for you to purchase.

- 1) **RUSTICS IN ACTION:** Doug Aitken has put together a terrific video made from the Rustic home movies and 35 mm slides everyone has sent him. He will have a copy of the video at the reunion. He will be making these available to you *at cost*. This has been a labor of love—thanks Doug! More on exact cost and how to order this video in the post-reunion newsletter.
- 2) **REUNION VIDEO:** A professional video photographer is going to make a video of the weekend reunion activities. Orders for this video will be taken after the reunion has been completed. Details in next newsletter.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** As of 30 Aug 97 (does not include cost [approx. \$100.00]for printing this newsletter.)

General Treasury      Received:      \$2,465.00



Expenses: 1,710.00 (includes \$500.00 for printing of history book 'draft')  
Balance: \$ 754.69

Thanks to everyone who has generously contributed to this effort. If you would like to help, and have not done so already, recommended contribution is \$20.00. Please make check payable to: Claude Newland and mail to: 4033 Indian Trail Dr. Destin, FL 2541

#### ONE LINERS:

- 1) Ltc Kohm Om is coming to the reunion. He was Cambodian AF Sqn /CC. Spent time with Bien Hoa Rustics.
- 2) Col Oum's expenses are all covered. He has his airline ticket in hand. Thanks for everyone's support.
- 3) So far, everyone signed up (84) for the sunset cruise has a reservation. We're chartering two sailing ships. (Max is 88.)
- 4) If you have a party flight suit you can still get into, the time to wear it will be Thurs afternoon/evening, 18 Sep.
- 5) Roger Dodd and friend(s) will be providing music at the banquet happy hour and after the dinner.
- 6) We hope to have O-2 and OV-10 static display aircraft available for the Hurlburt tour on Fri AM.
- 7) An updated Rustic roster will be mailed out with the post-reunion newsletter.

**OUR CONDOLANCES** to Lee and Jo Bergeron. They lost their thirty-one year old daughter to incurable leukemia about six months ago. The leukemia had only been diagnosed a few weeks even though a curable form had been under treatment since last Thanksgiving. Their three other children and most of their family members live nearby (Austin area.)

**RUSTIC HISTORY BOOK UPDATE:** This project is coming on strong. Jim Reese and his team of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers will have an abbreviated 'draft' copy of the book printed in time for the reunion and everyone there will get a copy. The book Steering Group will be meeting on Thursday afternoon, 18 Sep, at the Ramada to discuss format, content, layout, artwork, etc., etc. (Time to be determined.) If you are arriving in the early afternoon on Thurs, you are welcomed and encouraged to attend this meeting. The time of the meeting will be posted in the hospitality suite.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Jim will be asking everyone's help in critiquing the 'draft' and we plan to have a copy forwarded to everyone who is not able to come to the reunion. We would like your comments/suggestions/recommendations. The book Steering Group will then consolidate your comments/inputs and prepare the book for printing. **MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE ALSO NEED YOUR PERSONAL REMEMBERENCES AND STORIES.** Our OBJECTIVE is to have at least one story from each Rustic in the book...more if you have them. If you haven't submitted your input, now is the time to get with it...what are you waiting for? When was the last time someone offered to immortalize you in a book? Sit down now and take a few minutes to tell us about the things you remember most about your tour in "Nam". No story is insignificant. If you don't tell it, the world won't know about it., so do it today.

A BIG thanks to everyone who has already submitted inputs. They make for some great nostalgic reading and bring back a lot of memories. Some of these stories cover experiences which we all shared in common, and some of them are about things that only the individual knew about—that's why it's important we hear from each one of you.

**PUBLISHING DATE:** Realistically, expected to be about a year from now. That will allow sufficient time for critiquing, review, proofing, etc. and allow time for additional Rustics to submit their individual inputs.

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PERSONAL STORIES/REMEMBERENCES:** We haven't set a firm cutoff date yet. Why? Because these stories can be added at the end of their appropriate chapter in random order, so we can accept them right up until we 'go to print.' The sooner the better, however.

Here's one of the eight stories recently mailed in by Ron Van Kirk.

#### Special Mission: "We need 3 Single volunteers!"

It had been an event-filled week. Lanny Trapp (Rustic 07) and Cambodian backseater Sgt Khorn had been shot down and recovered on 26 September, 1971. There was a major offensive by the Viet-Cong on Tay Ninh, South Vietnamese Provincial Capitol, and 30 Miles of Highway 22 up to Krek, the besieged Cambodian rubber town. It was also time for the end of month party for the Rustics at Bien Hoa, to say farewell to those at the end of their tour and welcome in the "newbies". So it was on September 29 that the party (awards, recognitions and celebration) played its course, and I (Rustic 08) retired to my room to write a letter home and call it a nite.

It was quiet by now, and about mid-night, and there came a knock on the door. To my surprise, it was Major Clifford, our C.O., and he asked if I had a minute to talk. So, of course I did. I had only been in country about 90 days, but had never been visited, let alone at this hour of the morning, by "any" of the senior officers. After all, I had been a lowly 2Lt until 23 days ago! Major Clifford explained he was looking for "3 volunteers" for a mission – and ..... "they had to be single". I explained that to my knowledge, he only had 3 single Rustics. He confirmed my suspicion! So I responded – "in that case I am a volunteer ..... what is the mission?" He couldn't say – but advised I needed to be at the flight line at 06:00. I was to bring with me whatever I thought I might need for

toiletries for a day or two, a list of radio frequencies and a maybe a change of underwear. All would be explained. He departed, I wrote my letter and got a bit of sleep.

At 06:00 the 3 single guys/ volunteers - Otto Walinski, Bob Berry and I, gathered as requested. There was a group of Marines - 10 in all, and some other people we had never seen before, as well as Major Clifford. We were issued AR-15's, and told we were going to be "inserted" with the Army to call in Air Strikes "as required" to halt the offensive to take Tay Ninh. We would be inserted at both Tay Ninh East and Tay Ninh West, as well as just north of Tay Ninh in a town called Katum. The Marines were assigned to us for protection, and would accompany and remain with us for "the duration". By the luck of the draw, Otto got Katum, Bob Berry got Tay Ninh East and I got West. We were escorted to our Hueys and departed immediately for our appointed areas.

In my group was a surprise. Along with the 3 enlisted Marines there was a bonus - a Lt/Col. (I discovered during the next day that he was THE ranking Marine in Viet Nam, and wanted to get out of the office for a while!) As usual, there was no advance warning to the Ground Commander at Tay Ninh West that I was coming. We were simply dropped off at "a convenient site" on the base by the Huey driver. We created quite a curiosity as we wandered thru the base, and asked directions to HQ. Here was an Air Force Lieutenant (I believe the fatigues I had on were still showing 2 Lt), wandering thru an Army base, with 4 Marines, including a Lt/Col, all apparently reporting to "the Lt". No one knew what to do with us. I met the Base Commander, explained why we had been sent, and requested a complete radio set-up. He ordered one brought to the HQ compound - and we were in business 75 feet from the door to the C.O.

I soon learned why we had been sent ..... for real. It was obvious the Army personnel there knew nothing of Air Force ordinance, and to eliminate a 51 Cal. position, would gladly have us expend a Mk82, Laser guided bomb, CBU or Napalm - regardless of separation or orientation from friendlies! We formulated a plan whereby the C.O. would advise me of the "threat" and let me advise and explain ordinance options. It worked great! With our proximity to Bien Hoa, we had ample communication with, and support from Raps, Hawks, Rustics and others. But I was never able to establish contact with either Otto or Bob, which concerned me.

The first day was a bit awkward, but things started rolling smoothly on day 2. Communications were improving with our Army counterparts, and we seemed to be holding the VC advance. It was not without it's moments, however. There were several rocket attacks, and one in particular that hit within a city block. The Marines slept on the ground next to the jeep (attached to the radio cart). I got to sleep IN the jeep, on the front seats, and never could get the stick shift to stay out of my back! Serious kinks? Yes there were. It was quiet when there was no action to coordinate - since a jeep with 4 Marines and an AF Lt was like a cancer - no one, I mean No One, except HQ personnel ever ventured near us. They looked, they pointed, they talked among themselves, but they would not approach!

By the end of the second day, one of the Marines asked if he could go visit an old buddy of his that he knew was stationed at Tay Ninh. I let him go, with request that he be back in 3 hours. Shortly after he left the compound, there was a rocket attack on the base, and we all hit the dirt, because one hit close. The Marine returned - and it had not yet been an hour. He was quiet - but none of the 3 enlisted men had talked much for the past 2 days anyway. He just sat down, took out his knife and started sharpening it. I noticed about 2 hours later he was still sharpening it. Came to find out that his friend, had been killed by one of the 122mm rockets that had been fired into the base. He spent the next 2 days either sharpening his knife or Breaking down and reassembling his rifle, with his eyes closed!

By the end of the fourth day, the offensive had been blunted. The Army C.O. and I agreed they no longer really needed my service, so the Marines called for a ride home, and I talked my way onto a Huey that was heading "toward Long Binh" - close to Bien Hoa. It was dark when we approached the base. Rather than contact the tower, the pilot found an open area, with no lights, landed and let me hop out..... into the darkness. As the Huey departed, the landing light illuminated a sign on the edge of the concrete pad I was on. It said simply: "Danger - Mine Field!" He had dropped me in the no-man's land between the ARVN and the US sides of Bien Hoa.

The only way out was a worn path ....into the ARVN side. Mindful of the "rumors" of U.S. personnel being attacked for their weapons, I moved down the path with some trepidation. My choices were to brave the mine field - go right for the U.S. side of Bien Hoa (and hopefully survive to kill me a Huey pilot) or go thru the ARVN side. With no option therefore, I strolled calmly into the base and wandered toward what I thought might be the front gate - having never been on the ARVN side. I got lucky. The surprised look on the face of the U.S. MP's that were sharing Guard duty at the entrance was almost worth the trip. They sprung for a jeep and took me to the U.S. side.

I arrived at the Rustic hootch about 10:00 PM. And only then learned that Otto had been "dropped" into Katum just as it was being overrun. He was put in a tank and evacuated for the next 3 days. Bob Berry had also found his way back earlier in the day. We all were tired and had stories to tell, but Major Clifford later topped any we had, when he confided that at least one, and possibly 2, of us had not been expected to return from the mission.





# Bien Hoa Rustics



## STANDING L→R:

JOE VAILLANCOURT, DOUG HELWIG, DON ELLIS, GIL BELLEFEUILLE, PAUL RIEHL,  
MIKE WILSON, JIM WOODS, JAMES LESTER, JAMES HETHERINGTON, ROBT. BURGESS,

CHUCK MANUEL

## KNEELING L→R:

DON TROOKS, GEORGE BROWER, CLINT MURPHY, BOB PARADIS, RON DANDENEAU,  
HANK KEES. GREG FRELIX, AL METCALF, JERRY DUFRESNE