



Rustic News

Volume 4, Issue 1

March 5, 2000

NEXT RUSTIC REUNION: ROAD SHOW OR NOT? The next Rustic reunion will be in **2002**, as voted by the membership at our last reunion. Date and location to be determined. Where would you like to have your next reunion? Anyone desiring to help host a reunion in their city, is to submit a proposal to the Association officers **NLT Jun 00**. Please send proposals to **Claude Newland**. Once all proposals are evaluated, a decision on date, time, and location will be announced **NLT Jun 01**. If there are no suitable proposals, the reunion will again be held, by popular demand, in Ft Walton Beach, FL.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: Thanks to everyone who continues to support the Rustic FAC Association through your annual membership. To date, 79 members have paid dues for 2000. Your dues promote future Rustic reunions and make our Rustic Web Site and this newsletter possible. With part of your dues money this year we have paid up the expenses to maintain domain (name), for the next 10 years. We did this to take advantage of a special money-savings offer from Networks Solutions the maintainer of domain names etc. *Thank you for your support of the Rustic FAC Association!*

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: Please review the enclosed Rustic FAC membership roster and notify **Lendy Edwards** (850-651-6766 or lendy@bsc.net) if additions or corrections are needed. *(In particular, please check to ensure we have your correct e mail address.)* The Rustic officers have decided to mail out future annual roster updates in early December of each year so you'll have the latest updated addresses for the Christmas holiday season.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS REVIEW: During the last two Rustic reunions, it has become evident that a number of our association members were never properly submitted for awards and decorations as they should have been, or were denied awards that were routinely awarded to others for similar actions. It is widely recognized that, at the close of the Southeast Asian conflict in the rush to "bring the troops home", errors of omission or commission were made. To correct these errors, Senator Warner is now actively reviewing all petitions submitted to him.

Don Mercer has voluntarily stepped forward to act as coordinator, along with several other Rustics, to help bring the individual Rustic cases to Sen. Warner's attention. For the past few months, Don has been collecting notarized affidavits from the various crew members and commanders who have a bearing in each case, and will be submitting approximately seven cases for review within the next few months. Our thanks go to Don and to all those who are assisting in this effort! The work they are doing to ensure each of our veterans is properly recognized for their meritorious service is greatly appreciated.

Anyone who believes they may be in this category, should contact **Don Mercer** at 703-768-0843 or dmerc@life-insure.com

1999 REUNION RECORDED IN PHOTOS: Our thanks go to **Bill and Nancy Sleigh** for hosting the quarterly Rustic officer's meeting on 11 Feb. After routine business was completed, the rest of the evening was spent socializing and putting together a 1999 Rustic Reunion photo album from the pictures taken during the last reunion. This album will be displayed at future Rustic reunions, and will become part of the growing history of the Rustic FAC Association. **There is still room for additional photos**, so if you have extra copies of your favorite photos, please send them to **Claude Newland** for inclusion. We have plenty of the group photos taken at the banquet, but are in need of photos taken while sailing, at the Lucky Snapper restaurant, and at the FAC Hootch.

HURLBURT AIR PARK NOW HAS IT'S OWN OV-10: For the past several years the Rustics (under the able leadership of **Don Echelberger**, our Air Park Council Representative) have been working with Hurlburt Field to locate and obtain an OV-10 aircraft for display in the Air Park. These efforts came to fruition on 13 Jan with the arrival at Hurlburt's front gate of a three truck convoy containing a disassembled OV-10 aircraft, tail number 626. Rustics **Don Echelberger, Lendy Edwards, Claude Newland, and Bill Sleigh**, as well as a host of other local FACs, base dignitaries, and the Wing commander were on hand to record this momentous event.

In record fashion, Hurlburt Field personnel reassembled and restored the aircraft to pristine condition, and repainted it in its original SEA gray colors (it arrived in European green camouflage). On 16 Feb, the aircraft was placed on display in the air park and site landscaping and concrete work has now been completed. It is a beautiful sight! Now the O-1, O-2 and OV-10 aircraft are all three positioned together in the air park, and the new FAC memorial will be placed in the middle of these three aircraft.

Throughout the entire process, **Bill Sleigh** documented each phase of progress with his camera, and he plans to have these photos displayed in a photo album at the next Rustic reunion.



Darrell Whitcomb, Nail 25, is compiling the history of 626. This aircraft was flown by the Rustics. If you flew this trusty war bird, please contact Darrel with the details (dates, type mission, etc.) Address: 5311 Lindsay St., Fairfax, VA 22023 Phone: 703-359-7824 or E mail: nail25@aol.com.

Aircraft 626 will be dedicated on Saturday, 23 Sep, during FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion -2000 which is scheduled for 21-24 Sep 2000. All are cordially invited to attend.

RETURN TRIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA PLANNED: Standby for news from Southeast Asia. Planning is complete for a group of 25 Rustics, family and friends who are planning a return trip to Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam for 2-16 Nov. 2000. Rustics going on the trip include: **Doug and Carol Aitken, Tom and Lonna Clinch, Bill and Jan Decabooter, Lendy and Sue Edwards, Dick and Liz Green (joining the group in Bangkok), Diane Haguewood (traveling with the Seibolds), Don Haller, Jimmie and Betty Hardee (traveling with Edwards), Claude and Tona Newland, Jim and Marsha Reese, Dick and Marcy Roberds, Jim and Diane Seibold, Ron and Janette Van Kirk, and Mike Wilson.**

The **tour itinerary** includes spending several days in Bangkok, Thailand, then flying to Cambodia for visits to Phnom Penh, Kompong Cham, and Angkor Wat. The group will then split up for a few days as some will be traveling to Chang Mai in northern Thailand, while others travel to Vietnam. The trip to Vietnam will include a tour of Saigon, day trip to Vung Tau, visits to Bien Hoa and the tunnels of Cu Chi, and a gondola ride up to the top of Nui Ba Den mountain. The group will then rejoin in Bangkok for the return trip. Travel arrangements are being made through Davis Travel of Niceville, FL. **Donna Reyher** will be acting as host and tour guide.

We expect a full report from this group when they return, and hope they'll put together a trip photo album for future reference.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CAMBODIAN ORPHANAGE AND THE "HOUSE OF HOPE": While in Cambodia, the Rustics will make an overnight trip to Kompong Cham and will visit the Cambodian orphanage and "House of Hope" (home for young Cambodian women) that **Don Mercer** visited in Mar 99. As you might imagine, the staffs of both facilities are operating on a very limited budget, and their needs far exceed their resources. They are in need of many items, but we have been told that the easiest way to assist them is to provide cash, since a few dollars will go a long way on their economy. We have been in touch with the staffs of both facilities and are confident that the money is used wisely for its intended purposes.

The Rustics have established a fund to assist these two 'homes', and will take the money to them during their visit in Nov. If you'd like to make a contribution to this fund, please send your check (payable to 'Rustics' and write 'for Orphanage' of House of Hope on check) to **Lendy Edwards:** 11 Poplar Ave, Shalimar, FL 32579.

We plan to give a list of the names of contributors to the orphanage and the House of Hope. We're sure your contributions will be greatly appreciated.

THE "MOTHER OF ALL FAC REUNIONS" IS COMING: Mark your calendar! **FAC "Homecoming" Reunion-2000 is 21-24 Sep 2000** in Ft Walton Beach, FL at the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort. The highlight of the weekend will be the dedication of the new FAC Memorial and the dedication of OV-10 aircraft 626. This reunion will be one to remember. Over 2800 FACs have now been located and added to the ALL FAC database. A new FAC website will be on-line some time in March (We'll publish its address as soon as it's known.) All Rustics are invited. "Homecoming" Reunion-2000 information is available on the Rustic website, and a *Registration Newsletter* will be sent to each Rustic in **June 00. Hope to see you there!**

FAC MEMORIAL UPDATE: The new FAC Memorial for the Hurlburt Air Park is completely designed and is awaiting final approval from the Hurlburt Field Air Park Council and the Wing Commander (no difficulties anticipated). The Memorial will be three large granite stones. The center stone will be eight feet tall and will have a map of Southeast Asia and the three primary FAC aircraft (O-1, O-2, and OV-10) inscribed on the top, with the FAC story and the role of Hurlburt Field in training FACs on

the bottom. The two side panel stones will be 6 feet tall and will have appropriate scripture verses and the names of the 218 FAC KIAs in Southeast Asia listed on the front and back. The back of the center stone will have some additional artwork, as well as a list of FAC call signs.

The memorial will be dedicated at the FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion-2000 on 23 Sep 00.

The cost for the memorial will be approximately \$18,000. To date, \$13,500 has been contributed. This is very gratifying considering the fund raising effort for the memorial began last Nov. All of your Rustic Association officers are involved in working on the FAC Memorial Committee, and want to thank each of you who have supported this worthy cause.

This is truly a long overdue tribute to our FAC brethren who "gave all" for their country in SEA. If you have not yet contributed to the memorial, but would like to do so, please send your check (*payable to "FAC Memorial"*) to **George Ferkes**, 472 Parish Blvd., Mary Esther, FL 32569.

STATUS OF RUSTIC BOOK: Despite **Dick Wood's** persistent efforts, we have not yet found a commercial publisher for our book, "The Rustics - A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia". We are going to continue pursuing a publisher for another 6 months or so. If no publisher is found, we will decide if, and when, a second printing might be feasible.

So far we have sold over 320 books of the original 400 books printed. Cost is \$40.00 per book, plus \$4.00 shipping and handling per book. We have not actively been advertising our book because of the limited number remaining. We want to ensure we have enough copies for new-found Rustics, as well as for those which we have designated to be sent to libraries, etc., for historical purposes. If you would like to order another book, please send your check (payable to 'Rustics') to **Lendy Edwards** 11 Poplar Ave, Shalimar, FL 32579.

NEW FOUND RUSTIC: **Thomas H. Virnig** located us through the Rustic Web Site last November. He wrote:

"Hi, I just got my PC and found this page. I am Tom Virnig, MSGT USAF /Retired, ex-Rustic type. I worked for Capt Gabel and Lt Voss in 1971 at Bien Hoa.

Just some info: after leaving Vietnam, I returned to the USAF Survival School at Fairchild AFB, where I was one of two Code of Conduct instructors. The other was SSgt Mike Layton, who was with the SUNDOGS in 1971. I transferred to Det 4 Foreign Technology Div., Systems Command, at Yokota Japan in 1975 and was part of the Mig-25 exploitation effort. In 1978 I was assigned to Aerospace Division, Systems Command at Los Angeles Air Force Station. In 1980 I went back to Yokota, Japan to DCS Intelligence, Fifth Air Force. In 1983, we were involved with the search effort for KAL 007. I retired shortly thereafter, and have been living in Spokane, Washington since. I have worked for the Dept. of Social and Health Services ever since. My wife died earlier this year after 30 years of marriage

I have always been extremely proud of having worked with the Rustic FACs. That job made Vietnam almost bearable. If you need to contact me, my e mail is: tomvirnig@uswest.net or phone 509-326-6188. Sure am glad I found you guys!"

Tom Virnig

(Editor's Note: Tom, we're glad you found us! And our deepest condolences to you on the loss of your wife. We hope you can join us at one of our future reunions.)





www.rustic.org

RUSTICS
11 Poplar Avenue
Shalimar, FL 32579



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Rustic News

Volume 4, Issue 2

June 5, 2000

NEXT RUSTIC REUNION: Our next Rustic reunion will be in **2002**; exact time and location are yet to be determined. So far, no nominations have been received for an alternative location to Ft Walton Beach, FL. If anyone has an alternative location they would like the membership to consider, please submit your proposal to the Association officers **NLT 15 Jul 00**. Send proposals to **Claude Newland**, 4033 Indian Trail Dr., Destin, FL 32541. If there are no suitable proposals, the reunion will again be held in Ft Walton Beach, FL.

QUARTERLY OFFICER'S MEETING: The Rustic FAC Association officers and their wives combined business with pleasure this month by conducting their quarterly meeting with an evening out for dinner at the Summer House restaurant located on the Sound waterfront in Ft Walton Beach. Our thanks go to **Bill and Nancy Sleigh**, for making the arrangements.

The Association is doing well in all respects. 'Missing' Rustics continue to be found, we're financially sound, and our recently printed book, "The Rustics - A Top Secret Air War In Cambodia" has been well received by the membership.

Our primary objective in future months will be to continue our efforts to formalize the Rustic FAC Association as a legal entity, and to apply for tax exempt status as a 501(c)(3) organization. Since all of your Rustic officers are presently extensively involved in the planning of the upcoming FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion 2000 (21-24 Sep 00), and the design and raising of funds for the new Hurlburt FAC Memorial project, our primary efforts to become incorporated, etc. will become better focused after the 'Mother of All FAC Reunions' is completed. Our thanks go to **Doug Aitken** and his attorney brother-in-law; who have provided us some guidance on how to go about obtaining approval for IRS 501 (c)(3) status.

HURLBURT AIR PARK UNDERGOES RENOVATIONS: In preparation for the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the 16 Special Operations Command, the Hurlburt Air Park is receiving a lot of attention. Aircraft are getting new paint, additional landscaping is being installed, and new memorials, commemorating the many special ops actions the Wing has have been involved with over the past decade, are being added to the AirPark. The anniversary celebration will be 21-23 June 2000.

Improvements to the FAC portion of the Air Park include: the addition of OV-10 aircraft (tail # 14626 -which was a Rustic bird that many of you may have flown), pedestals with new bronze placards have been installed in front of the OV-10, O-2, and O-1 aircraft; the O-1 aircraft has been moved to a new location, so that the three primary FAC aircraft are now located adjacent to one other. All of these improvements will further enhance the functionality and beauty of what is already a jewel of an AirPark.



This view of the AirPark shows all three primary FAC aircraft. The new memorial will go into this area near all three aircraft.

RUSTIC FOUND: Damon Gonzalez, 0-2 Rustic 46, is now up on frequency. Our website continues to help us locate some of those hard-to-find 'Missing Rustics', or rather, they now find us. Here's another success story:

"Nice to be back in the fold and thanks. I can't tell you what a shock it was to find that there was actually a Rustic website and, more importantly, that all the guys I flew with were there! Most of my recent career has been devoted to Internet and this is just one more reason to love the web.

"I would very much like to have a copy of the book. I also plan on joining the association. Over the weekend I'll probably start going through my records to get the details straight for your database. In the meantime, thanks to you and others for doing all this work. I look forward to being a part of it in some way. In a way, this is sort of like being home again."

H.R. Damon González, Jr.

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(Editor's note; Damon, glad you found us! We look forward to seeing you at future Rustic reunions.)

BOOK REWRITE INITIATED: For the last eight months, The Rustic Book Review Committee has been searching for a commercial publisher for our book, THE RUSTICS - A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia. Here's a summary and update on their progress and plan for the future:

"This book was written and printed by the Rustics and distributed at our reunion in September, 1999. Those that have a copy know that it is a compendium of both the Rustic history and the individual stories of the Rustics. We like it. Lendy Edwards has about 50 copies available at \$40 plus shipping and handling. It is unlikely that it will be reprinted.

TWO BOOK PLANS ARE IN THE WORKS:

Plan A. We know that there are many Rustic stories out there that did not get into the book. We have a few of them already and we want the rest. If there are enough of them, we plan to edit and print them in the same format as the existing book. These will be mailed to purchasers of the book as an addendum. Since we know how to format the pages ourselves, the printing and mailing cost should be small. Please send your story(s) to Jim Reese: 5253 Wynter Creek Dr., Dunwoody, GA 30338. No deadline date has been set for receipt of stories, but we recommend you send them in ASAP in case we can include them in future publications. *(Editor's note: we'd like to include them in future Rustic newsletters, as well.)*

Plan B. Dick Wood has been looking for a commercial publisher for the book. This has met with some encouragement, but little success. One potential publisher took the time to write us a two-page letter explaining why it wasn't commercially publishable. The book is too long (148,000 words), it is written in too many different writing styles, it is redundant in that there are many stories covering the same subjects and it does not tell the Rustic story in a straight forward manner that is easy for the lay reader to follow. We have been invited to rewrite it (or have it rewritten) and resubmit it for commercial publication.

Much to its surprise, the Rustic Book Committee found itself pretty much in agreement with that publisher's opinions. We like the book the way it is, but we've had a year to think about it and we can see the difference between what we like and what will sell commercially.

We considered several options. **Dick Wood** agreed to rewrite the entire book for a 25-75 split of any royalties with the Rustic FAC Association. He also agreed to pick up all pre-publishing expenses and submit the manuscript to the Book Committee for technical review. Dick is a published author and has four books on the market, all on aviation safety subjects. He was one of the senior editors of our book and author of chapters one and two. You can see his writing style there and in a couple of the anthology stories. The Book Committee has accepted his proposal. Dick expects to have a manuscript completed by early September.

If you have suggestions, please contact Dick at <woodrh@ix.netcom.com> or call 425-335-1327.

A LITTLE BIT GOES A LONG WAY - RUSTICS TO VISIT KOMPONG CHAM "HOUSE OF HOPE": The Rustics making a return trip to Cambodia this November will be visiting the "House of Hope" (home for young Cambodian women), and an orphanage in Kompong Cham. If you'd like to make a charitable contribution to help either of these two worthy groups, please send your check (payable to 'Rustics' and write 'Orphanage' or 'House of Hope' on check) to Lendy Edwards, 11 Poplar Ave, Shalimar, FL 32579.

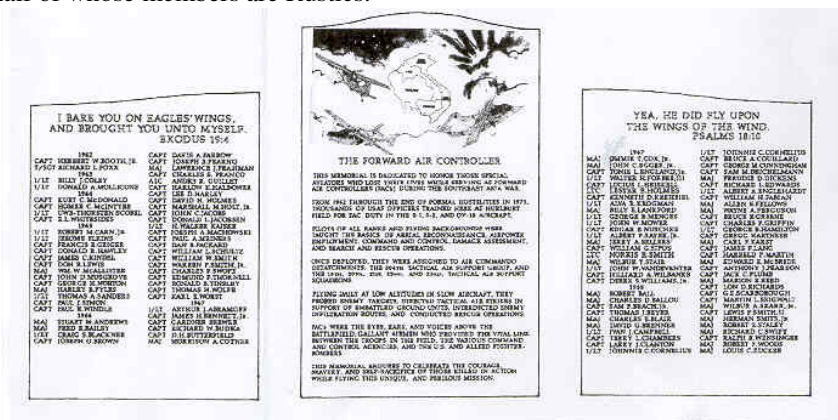
A list of contributor's names will be provided to the orphanage and House of Hope. We're sure your contributions will be greatly appreciated.

FAC MEMORIAL UPDATE: The new Hurlburt Field FAC Memorial Project is now completely designed, approved, and fully funded. Many thanks go to all the Rustics who supported this long overdue project with your generous contributions. Over \$21,000 was raised for this project since the FAC Memorial Committee began its fund-raising last November. The final results are not in, but the Rustics may have been the largest single group of FAC contributors to the new memorial. *Well done Rustics!*

The final memorial design was approved by Col. Scott, 16 SOW/CC, in May and memorial installation should begin in July and be completed in August. A formal dedication ceremony will be held on Saturday, 23 Sep 00, in conjunction with the FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion 2000. Hope to see many of you there!

The granite memorial will include the names of the 218 FACs killed in action in Southeast Asia, the Hurlburt story in training FACs, and a pictorial display of FAC aircraft. A list of FAC call signs will also be appropriately displayed at the memorial site.

It's gratifying to know that the Rustic reunions have had a direct impact on successful completion of this project. By expressing your concerns for improving the original FAC memorial, a seed was planted that culminated in the formation of a local FAC Memorial Committee - half of whose members are Rustics.



ALL FAC REUNION TO BE LARGEST FAC REUNION SEEN IN YEARS: The 'Mother of All FAC Reunions' is quickly approaching. Over 400 FACs, friends, and guests are expected for the FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion -2000 in Ft Walton Beach FL, 21-24 Sep 00. (These are just the preliminary numbers; it could be much bigger.) All Rustics are invited.

USAF Ret. BG John F. Flanagan, an O-1 FAC and author of *Vietnam Above the Tree Tops* will be the banquet's guest speaker. One of the highlights of the weekend will be the dedication of the new FAC Memorial in the Hurlburt Air Park. Members of the families of both Southeast Asia FAC Medal of Honor recipients are expected to be in attendance.

Roger Dodd (Rustic) and his band will be performing at the reunion banquet, providing entertainment at the Happy Hour and dancing after the banquet.

The reunion registration newsletter will be mailed in early June. If you don't receive one, contact **Jimmy Carter** at jimmywho@aol.com or call 912-922-0073. Reunion information will soon be posted on the new ALL FAC website: www.fac.aerix.com

FACNET: The FAC community now has its own E mail Net that allows its members to send messages to the entire FAC community with one stroke of the mouse. This is great tool for those messages that need FAC-wide dissemination. To get on the FACNET, send your request to **Darrel Whitcomb**, nail25@aol.com, and tell him you want to be on the 'Digest Mode'. Once put you on the NET, you'll only receive a maximum of one message a day from the FACNET. This is the 'Digest Mode', which will consolidate all daily messages and send them to you as one 'digested' message. This is great because it keeps you from getting comm-jammed with multiple singular messages.

SPECIAL PRICE AVAILABLE ON FAC PRINTS: **Joe Milich**, a renown aviation artist who is known for his pen and ink drawing of military aircraft, is making available to us, for a limited time, **O-1F, O-2A and OV-10 FAC aircraft prints at half his normal price.** **Background:** At the upcoming FAC 'Homecoming' reunion we'll dedicate the newest addition to the Hurlburt Field AirPark, OV-10 aircraft tail number **14626**. This aircraft is the subject of an article in an upcoming VIETNAM magazine edition, authored by **Darrel Whitcomb** (Nail 25). In addition, we have arranged for a special edition print, which depicts this aircraft on a rocket pass. The artist is **Joe Milich**, who has been doing pen and ink prints of all kinds of aircraft for over 20 years. He currently has over 875 illustrations available. Prints of OV-10 626, as well as Joe's previous prints O-1F and O-2A FAC aircraft will be available at the reunion, or if you prefer, you may order them directly from Joe. If you have a request for a specific OV-10 print number (say to match your call sign), he will fill that request on a FIRST COME- FIRST SERVED basis. Costs of the prints are \$18.50, which includes beautiful matting (light gray over dark blue), or \$45.00 with both the mat and a chrome metal frame with clear acrylic. Shipping is an additional \$7.00 via UPS. You can contact Joe at 1-800-443-3655, or fax your order to (303) 980-1042. Be sure to tell Joe, or his wife, that you are with the 'ALL FAC Reunion' in order to get these discounted prices (or mention **Doug Aitken's** name. Doug set this up for us. *Thanks Doug!*). Joe's e-mail is milichar@milich-arts.com. Copies of all three

FAC aircraft prints will be at the reunion so, if you wish, you may see them before you order.



RUSTICS
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Rustic News

NEXT RUSTIC REUNION: Tentatively planned for Fall 2002, Dates and Location TBA. Please fill out the attached survey form which will help us determine where to hold the 2002 Rustic FAC Reunion. Your input is important, so please fill out the survey today and send it to us, along with your 2001 annual dues.

Options for the 2002 reunion include: **1) Ft Walton Beach, FL** [Site of 2 previous reunions], **2) San Antonio, TX** [**Ron Van Kirk, Tom Clinch** and **Bill Decabooter** are willing to head up a team to coordinate site activities], **3) Las Vegas, NV** [**Claude Newland** and **Doug Aitken** are willing to head up a team to coordinate site activities], **4) Possible Cruise ship trip** to Gulf of Mexico or Baja California [**Bill Sleigh** is investigating possibilities and will report to us in March 2001. Cost per day is expected to be approx. \$100.00 day/per person.], and **5) Daytona Beach** [**Gil Bellefeuille**, POC for this site].

Let us know what you prefer by sending in the enclosed Rustic Survey.

RUSTIC ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES: It's that time of year again to renew our annual Rustic membership. Included with this newsletter is a dues renewal form. It's your dues that make this organization possible. Your dues will support future newsletters, allow us to keep our Rustic web site on-the-air, and support future Rustic reunion efforts. Don't delay. *Show your support by sending in your dues today!* Thanks.

(Check your address label with this newsletter. The month and year displayed on the label is your dues expiration date. If the date is Jan 01, you need to pay dues for 2001. Note: some members are paid up several years in advance.)

RUSTIC ROSTER AND EMAIL ADDRESSES: Enclosed with this mailing is the complete Rustic Roster with current email addresses. Please send corrections/additions (especially e mail corrections) to: **Lendy Edwards** 850-651-6766 or lendy@bsc.net.

NEW FOUND RUSTICS: Three new-found Rustics attended the FAC 'Homecoming' Reunion in Ft Walton Beach, FL this past September. **Ned Helm**, Ubon OV-10 pilot, **W. Larry Edmondson**, Ubon OV-10 Pilot, and **Mike Gagne**, Rustic Bien Hoa Interpreter, (who traveled all the way from France). Additionally, **Damon Gonzalez**, 0-2 pilot, **found us** and his letter is included in the Letters to the Editor section. Welcome to the Rustic fold, guys! It's good to have you all on board. (Their addresses are included in the attached Rustic Roster.)

FAC 'HOMECOMING' REUNION - 2000 A BIG SUCCESS! Over 700 FACs and their guests attended the 'Mother of All FAC Reunions', held at the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort, Ft Walton Beach, FL, 21-24 Sep 00. This reunion was patterned after our two previously highly successful Rustic FAC reunions, with the exception that the Hurlburt Field visit was held on Saturday in conjunction with the dedication ceremony of the new FAC Memorial. Over 1000 people attended the FAC Memorial Dedication

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ceremony and the dedication of the newly acquired OV-10 (tail number 14626) which was recently placed in the Hurlburt Air Park. These two ceremonies were undoubtedly the highlights of a marvelous weekend!

Twelve Rustics attended the reunion and had a great time. Many FAC call signs were also represented. The 'Coveys' and 'Nails' were the two largest FAC groups in attendance. Seven Aussie FACs, and FACs from as far away as Korea, Hawaii, France, and the North Pole were in attendance.

A full report of the reunion, as well as information on efforts being made to form a new All-FAC Association, will be mailed to you in an All-FAC Newsletter in Jan 01. As a result of this reunion, a FAC Book Steering committee was also formed to begin working on a FAC book that will cover the entire Southeast Asia conflict. Dues for the new FAC Association are expected to be \$20.00/year. Information on the



FAC book project and how to join the FAC Association will be covered in the Jan 01 ALL FAC Newsletter.

These are exciting prospects, since the FAC community has never previously enjoyed such cohesion, nor the ability to effectively communicate amongst its membership as we do now. (The computer makes it all possible!) Your Rustic officers encourage you to support this fledgling new organization, since it will enhance and promote FAC history and camaraderie. Besides, the reunions are proving to be great events in themselves, and a great way to see the 'World' while keeping in touch with old friends, as well as make some new ones.

ALL-FAC REUNION PLANNED FOR SPRING 2002 IN HAWAII. As a result of the recent All-FAC reunion, plans are underway for the next ALL FAC reunion which will be held in Hawaii in Spring, 2002. Details TBA in the Jan 01 All-FAC Newsletter. If your address is correct on the attached Rustic Roster, you should receive a copy of the Jan 01 ALL-FAC Newsletter.

RUSTIC BOOK STILL AVAILABLE TO MEMBERSHIP: There are only 35 remaining copies of the Rustic book, *'The Rustics - A Top Secret Air War In Cambodia'*, available for sale. Cost is \$40.00 per copy plus \$4.00 shipping and handling per copy. If you'd like to order additional books, send your check, payable to 'Rustics' to **Lendy Edwards**, 11 Poplar Ave, Shalimar, FL 32579. (As previously agreed, 30 copies of the book have already been set aside in reserve to be distributed to historical and military libraries.)

UPDATE ON BOOK PUBLISHING EFFORTS: **Dick Woods** continues to work on getting the Rustic Book printed commercially. Responding to a publisher's in-depth critique of our original book, Dick has reorganized and edited the various chapters and has resubmitted the first three new chapters to the publisher for review. No word yet from the publisher on how this version has been received, but we'll keep you posted.

All of the Rustics are indebted to **Dick Wood** for his voluntary efforts on our behalf! This is a time consuming project, and we appreciate Dick's work and publishing acumen in attempting to help us get 'our story' told to a larger audience.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Due to book sales and annual dues the Rustic treasury is on very sound footing. We thank all of you for your continued financial support. **Lendy Edwards'** end-of-year financial report (available upon request) indicates that the Rustics are now in a position to financially support charitable giving, as an organization, if that is our desire.

CHARITABLE GIVING PROPOSAL The unanimous consensus of the Rustics who recently returned from the trip to Cambodia is that we should make a concerted effort to give financial aid to both the House of Hope (home for young women) and the children's orphanage. The recent visit to Kompong Cham reaffirmed that both of these organizations are well run by competent and responsible leaders and are worthy of our support.

As a result of our positive bank balance, and recommendations from the Rustics who went to Kompong Cham, your Rustic Officers propose that the Rustics make a contribution of \$500.00 to House of Hope and \$500.00 to the Kompong Cham Orphanage. Your feedback on this proposal is requested (See Survey Form.) With your concurrence, we will make the above \$1000.00 contributions. These funds will not be designated for any one specific need. Instead we'll rely upon the respective staffs to determine how best to use these funds. Future Rustic contributions will be contingent upon availability of funds and the demonstrated results of our contributions.

The needs of the Cambodian people are great. The good news is one dollar (\$1.00) buys a lot more than you'd think in this country. If you're looking to help further, and want to make a private contribution, please send your check to **Lendy Edwards**, payable to 'Rustics' and designated for either the *House of Hope* or the *Children's Orphanage* (these are separate organizations. See dues form.)

HOW TO HELP THE KOMPONG CHAM OPHAN-AGE: One of the specific needs of the orphanage is bicycles for the children of school age. Older children attend a catholic-run school which is not co-located with the orphanage, and they are required to walk some distance. Bicycles are the preferred mode of transportation. A bicycle cost \$40.00.

If you'd like to make a designated gift of \$40.00 for a bicycle, please send your check to **Lendy Edwards**, payable to 'Rustics' and designated for *Bicycles*. (See Rustic Survey.)

*(Editor's note: Our sincere thanks go to **Don Mercer** who was the first Rustic to return to Cambodia and visit Kompong Cham (Spring '99.) It was Don who discovered the work being done by these two needy and deserving organizations.*



NEWSLETTER TO BE PUBLISHED EVERY 4 MONTHS: Future Rustic newsletters will be published every 4 months, rather than every 3 months as the current practice. This change will allow us to save administrative expenses by deleting one newsletter per year, but will still enable us to keep our membership fully informed of Rustic activities and reunions. The money saved from this change might also be better used or earmarked for charitable giving, etc. Look for the next Rustic newsletter in April 01!

THE RUSTICS RETURN TO CAMBODIA: (Trip Report by Doug Aitken)

Twenty-eight Rustics, wives, and friends returned November 16th from a memorable and unforgettable trip to Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Making the trip were: **Doug and Carol Aitken, Tom and Lona Clinch, Bill and Janet DeCabooter, Lendy and Sue Edwards, Dick and Liz Green, Jimmy and Betty Hardee** (Sue Edwards' sister and brother-in-law), **Claude and Tona Newland, Jim and Marcia Reese, Dick and Marcy Roberds, Jim and Diane Siebold, Trudy Haguewood** (Diane's Mother), **Betty Ochs** (Trudy's friend), **Ron and Janette Van Kirk, Don Haller, Mike Wilson**, Tour Operator **Donna Reyher** and her friend **Nancy Slocumb**.

The itinerary included an initial stop in Bangkok to try and recover from the approximately 22 hours of total flight time as well as to do some initial shopping. (You will be happy to hear that "Raja" from Ubon is alive and well and still tailoring for Americans—now in Bangkok instead of Ubon, which he left in 1975.) Then it was off to Cambodia, where the time was spent in touring Phnom Penh, traveling via coach up Route 6 to Kompong Cham, back down the Mekong in a high-speed boat, and visiting the mystical ruins at Siem Reap—the Angkor Wat temple complex. Then it was back to Bangkok to pick up all the fun stuff ordered on our initial stop, after which, most of the tour went on to Northern Thailand to visit Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and the Golden Triangle area, where the borders of Burma, Laos, and Thailand come together. Three couples (the **Greens, Newlands, and Roberds**) chose to use this time to travel instead to Vietnam, where they toured Saigon, the Chu Chi Tunnels, and Nui Ba Den Mountain in Tay Ninh Province. Then one final rendezvous back in Bangkok for the flight home. That was the itinerary, but it in no way can reflect the emotions, the laughter, and the camaraderie experienced by this group. Accordingly, here are some of the highlights, most of which concern Cambodia.

The day we arrived in Phnom Penh, we were met at the airport by **Nady Tan** and his wife and our good friend **Colonel Oum**, who was in Phnom Penh for the wedding of one of his sons. Nady Tan is profiled in the Rustic book, and is currently the Secretary-General of the Cambodian government. He and his wife are personal friends of the Aitken's, as Carol and Doug sponsored them into this country 25 years ago. We checked into the famous Le Royal Hotel and started the afternoon with a tour of the Killing Fields genocide museum at Tuol Sleng prison. This former primary school has been purposely left in a raw state, with evidence of the crimes committed there readily visible to those visiting. U.S. Army ammo boxes are left in each cell to show what the prisoners had to use as "honey buckets". Blood splatters are still evident on the walls and ceilings of the cells. These details and other photographic evidence were simply too gruesome for many in the group, and we were all in a very somber mood when the tour concluded.



That evening we tried to put those memories behind us as we had a dinner at Le Royal to honor Nady Tan and his wife Sara—known as “Mom” to us. In attendance was the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, **Kent Weidemann** and his wife, and the U.S. Defense Attaché, Colonel **Mike Norton** (former SOG grunt!) and his wife. Several surprises were in store for the Rustics that evening. First, **Colonel Oum** was able to attend and we Rustics got to meet his wife, **Sawadie**, for the first time. Colonel Oum had learned that “**Sam**”, every Rustics’ friend and favorite radio operator, was back in Cambodia, and just a week before our arrival, Nady Tan had been able to locate him and send a message to Sam’s village ten kilometers west of Kompong Thom. We were not sure if Sam would make the dinner or not, but we set a place for him. Shortly after dinner began, in walks Sam!

His story is a long and involved one, with several wives, children, and business ventures. For example, his first wife did not perish as originally thought, but escaped and is living in Australia with their two children. He was most happy to see all of us—some he had met during his visit to Ubon in March 1972—but for the most part, he was putting faces to call signs for the first time. He has established a Post Office Box in Phnom Penh in the hopes of hearing from his old friends. He especially would like to receive photos, as he lost everything when the Lon Nol regime fell to the Khmer Rouge. His address is: SOK SAN (SAM), P.O. Box 2671, Phnom Penh 3, Cambodia. We presented him with a Rustic hat and T-shirt, which we had taken along “just in case”, and promised him a Rustic book and an invitation to the next Rustic reunion.

The Ambassador gave us a short, insightful talk on what he saw as the problems facing this ravaged country. He wrapped up his speech with a tribute to what the Rustics had done these many years ago, concluding, “...I take my hat off to you.” Quickly noting that he was not wearing one, we presented him with—what else—a Rustic hat! After his speech, the final surprise of the evening arrived. The head of the National Assembly, the former co-Premier of the Cambodian government, the head of the FUNIPEC party, the son of King Sihanouk, (all the same guy!) Prince **Ranariddh** showed up at Le Royal for dinner. He was greeted by Nady Tan and graciously agreed to come by, meet the Rustics, and have his picture taken with us.

We concluded this special evening by listening to Nady Tan’s perspective on his unique position as both a U.S. citizen and a high official of the Cambodian government. We also learned that the Cambodian Migs shown in our book during their visit to Bien Hoa were flown there by Nady and a wingman. The purpose of that visit was to get those aircraft modified so they could carry U.S. bombs. After his eloquent speech, we presented him with a plaque in appreciation for his assistance in writing THE RUSTICS, and then we gave he and “Mom” special Waterford champagne flutes etched with millennium symbols signifying “Love, Health, Happiness, Peace, and Prosperity”—all of which we wish for them and their country.

The next morning began with another “bag drag” (something we got quite proficient at) as we literally “hit the road” on a small bus to Kompong Cham. Two highlights from this drive: a stop at the intersection of Route Six and Route Seven at Skoun. It was a special moment for **Diane** and **Jim Seibold**, for this is near where Jim took his hit and was given his “magnet ass” moniker. **Jan Decabooter** provided many a fun moment the rest of the trip as she passed around a very large (thankfully dead) spider, which **Ron Van Kirk** had purchased for lunch for 12 cents! Photo opportunities abounded.

At Kompong Cham, we stayed in the best hotel in town, and everyone had rooms facing the Mekong River. For this privilege, we paid \$5 a night. A small marketplace was across the street, and the main market was just two blocks away. We found out that we did not need alarm clocks, as at 0600, the fleet of cargo and passenger boats started tooting their horns to alert everyone of their imminent departure. Thanks!

The purpose of the trip to KPC was to more closely experience the Cambodian countryside, to visit the orphanage located there, and to meet the young women at the House of Hope. We did all that, and the visits to the orphanage and House of Hope were very moving. The need is so great. The orphanage is run by the Cambodian government, and about 50 young Cambodians are living there. Their ages range from approximately five to over 20 (several retarded youngsters stay longer than the average). As we were leaving, **Don Haller** and **Doug Aitken** combined their fading memory of the French language to engage the Cambodian teacher in conversation. His eyes welled up as he described how he survived the Khmer Rouge era. “Look down, work as peasant, never let them know I was teacher.” His story contrasted with the children’s smiling, happy faces as they waved good-bye.

The **House of Hope** is a Christian Residential Home for up to 20 girls rescued from prostitution who desire a new start in their lives. We met the Director, Sue Lloyd, and her assistant, Tammy, both young American women, who started this worthwhile project in 1994. They find young women who have been forced into a life of prostitution, take them off the street, and teach them respect and a trade. The women on the trip visited the House of Hope for manicures and pedicures and made small purchases of items the members had handmade. This was a way to help and to receive something in return in an effort to restore pride and meaning into the young women’s lives. While the women were so occupied, the men interviewed one of the security guards at the compound who had witnessed **Lanny Trapp’s shoot down** in 1971! He took us to the crash site, which was just one block south of our Hotel on the Mekong River! The old Rustics then gave everyone a good laugh as we ended the visit with a vigorous game of volleyball in the courtyard of the House of Hope. Those young ladies are competitive! You will be hearing more on the



House of Hope and the orphanage, as we feel these are most worthwhile projects for the Rustics to formally sponsor.

The next morning, Tuesday, November 7th, after our early “wake-up” call, seven of the Rustics hired motorbikes to visit nearby temples. **Lendy** thought he was being kidnapped as his driver peeled off from the rest of the group, but his fears were put to rest when he just pulled up to a gas station. Then while the rest of you were voting, we experienced life in the fast lane on the Mekong River. A long, fast speedboat, crammed with Rustics and Cambodians, made the three-hour passage down the Mekong to Phnom Penh. It provided our closest contact with the Cambodian people. As a generalization, it would be safe to say that we were an “item of considerable interest.” The older Cambodians would look at us with a blank stare, and only respond if directly nodded to or looked at. Younger Cambodians were outwardly much friendlier, with the children giving us that wonderfully remembered Cambodian wide smile. We saw several older men in Cambodian Army uniforms on the departure ramp and knowing that most of the old Khmer Rouge Army has been adsorbed into the existing Cambodian Army, we wondered if these guys had been former targets.

That afternoon, we toured the Royal Palace, the Silver Pagoda, and then took a very interesting drive south to the actual Killing Fields. The roads in Phnom Penh must be experienced to be believed. Crawling at no more than five miles an hour, we were bounced and tossed for over an hour. With decent roads, this trip would have taken only 15 or 20 minutes. The Cambodians have made this area a very suitable memorial to those who were killed there. The uncovered pits were sobering, as were the piles and piles of stacked skulls. The contrast of that sight with the eager Cambodian children “peddlers” of merchandise outside the gate of the memorial was amazing.

That evening, our last in Phnom Penh, **Nady Tan** hosted us at a magnificent dinner at a nearby hotel. It gave the Rustics another opportunity to know him better, to spend more time with Colonel Oum and Sam, and to meet the new mother-in-law of Colonel Oum’s son (She happens to be Cambodia’s Secretary of State.).

After bag drag number 3,456, we enjoyed our short flight to Siem Reap. Another five star hotel, the Grand Hotel d’Angkor—book rate of \$390/night—awaited us. Even better than the hotel was the experience of visiting Angkor Wat and the neighboring temples of Angkor Thom, Preah Khan, Ta Prohm, and Phnom Bakheng. After two days there, even the constant “tugging at your elbows” by the souvenir dealers was not a hassle—two sunsets at Angkor Thom, one on the grounds and one from a distance atop the hill at Phnom Bakheng were really special. Suffice it to say, if you like to travel, you owe it to yourself to visit this area. And do it soon, as the number of hotels going up in Siem Reap is amazing, and in a couple of years, the place will probably be over-run with tourists. Siem Reap showed much more prosperity than either Phnom Penh or KP Cham. For one thing, the roads were much, much better, and signs of poverty were not evident. People there seemed busy and happy, and hopefully this is the future of Cambodia.

We left Siem Reap airport with sadness. For some, our visit to Cambodia was too short. For example, a drive from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, up Route Six all the way to Kompong Thom, along the route of Chenla I and Chenla II—Rumlong, Kompong Thma, and the like would have been special, but at the time the trip was planned, the road was too bad. It has now been repaired, and perhaps this might be possible in a future visit. Anyone interested?

In closing, this entire trip in Cambodia was nothing but a series of contrasts. From the five star hotels in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to the \$5/night Mekong Hotel, from the stacks of human skulls to the beauty of the Cambodian Folk Dance, from the poverty evident off the main streets of Phnom Penh to the opulence of the dinners, from the beauty and glory of the Angkor Wat temple architecture to the saddening pillage of centuries old figures, from the graciousness of our hosts to the snipping at our heels by the multitudes of street vendors, from the matter-of-fact solemn telling of survival in the Pol Pot regime to the smiling waves at the big tourist bus, from the wonderfully diverse Cambodian lunches and dinners to the more exotic fare—like spiders and leeches, from the still, image producing moats surrounding the temples to the rapid movement of the muddy, mighty Mekong, we were subjected to contrast after contrast. It was truly the trip of a lifetime.

ADDENDUM: CAMBODIAN TRIP

Dougie, thanks for the wonderful narration of the Cambodia trip. It's brilliant!! I've heard that absentmindedness is a sign of literary genius, and here is living proof. By the way, how many cameras did you finally end up with? (*Editor's note: Doug had some difficulty keeping track of his cameras, and had to replace at least one of them.*)

One thing Jan and I thought you might add to the story is that the market in Cham was probably the most enjoyable of any we saw. Of course, it was a day, rather than a night, market and didn't have most of the treasures we all became so fond of. After we got past the thin facade of "Rolex" watches, purses and sunglasses, however, we really got a taste of what living in Cham must be like. We experienced all the smells, sights and tastes (not really) that the Khmers live daily. The baskets of dried seafood, the brightly colored sausages, the stacks of dried fish, the additional and numerous baskets of dried mystery wafers, the bags of rice, the clothing and all the other aspects of their lives really gave us an insight into their culture. No deep fried spiders. It was truly not there for the tourists. Jan and Janette bartered for some beautiful silk and filled that square for the trip.

Jan kept a daily diary of the whole trip. It is more of a chronicle of events than the magnificent portrayal you gave us, but it is available to jog memories to compile a complete story of the Rustic Odyssey. We would be glad to type it up and send it to you, or all, if you think it would be of any value. (*Editor's note: We hope you will.*)

I still can't believe you had your wits about you to remember such detail while deep in the throes of jet lag. Jan and I got up at 4:30 this morning. So, I guess we are still not out of it.

We can't properly express how meaningful it was for us to have this time with Carol and you and all the others. We made friends we'll never forget. In spite of all the emotion, memories and new, exotic experiences, the most fulfilling aspect of the Odyssey was the group of folks we shared it with. Thanks for being you. (You will probably see this in our "we love Ya'll e-mail", if we ever get it out. Probably at o'dark thirty tomorrow morning.)

Bill and Jan Decabooter

Editor's Note: With a 12 hour stateside/SEA time differential, the returning Rustics all suffered from some form of extreme sleep cycle disorder. They invariably found themselves waking up at all hours of the night, while nodding off to sleep at the strangest hours during the day. THANKS Doug and Bill for your comments!

CAMBODIA TRIP VIDEO OFFERED: **Doug Aitken** and **Ron Van Kirk** are planning to use their masterful talents to combine their respective videos taken during the recent Cambodian trip and produce a Cambodian Trip Video that would make Cecil B. De-Mill proud. Videos will be sold at 'cost'. Price will be announced as soon as it's known. If you'd like to be on the list to receive a copy of this historic video, please indicate so on the enclosed Rustic Survey form. Note: this is not an obligation to buy, but merely an expression of interest. Doug will be in touch with you, if you're interested.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Hi!

1970 is long time gone but I have to admit that all the time I spent with the RUSTICS is still engraved in my thoughts. What a surprise to find your site, and a good one at that. I browsed through the pictures and recognized a few faces, especially "VD", Lt. Van Dyke!!! I was with the Rustics from July to October 1970 as an interpreter. I also helped with the classes with the Cambodian officers. I flew the first few missions with my head in the "barf bag".

I was pulled out of air-cargo at Saigon on a voluntary basis at the time and didn't do much 'Acrobatic flying'!!! I have to admit it was one of the most exciting periods of my life.

I have been living in France since 1976 and had lost contact with everyone until today. I feel 30 years younger now! I am of course interested in joining your group and getting the book. Maybe I can make the reunion in September if I can get a few weeks off. Hope to hear from all of you.

Mike Gagne (Rustic K) michael.gagne@freesbee.fr

(Editors note: Mike did attend the All FAC Reunion in September and we really enjoyed getting reacquainted with him. Mike, good to have you on-line with us!)

Claude,

Nice to be back in the fold and thanks. I can't tell you what a shock it was to find that there was actually a Rustic web site and, more importantly, that all the guys I flew with were there! Most of my recent career has been devoted to Internet and this is just one more reason to love the web.

I would very much like to have a copy of the book. I also plan on joining the association. Over the weekend, I'll probably start going through my records to get the details straight for your database. In the meantime, thanks to you and others for doing all this work. I look forward to being a part of it in some way. In a way, this is sort of like being home again.

Rustic 46 Damon Gonzales, Jr. Damon.gonzalez@cross-check.com 707-586-0551 ext 9500

YOUR RUSTIC OFFICERS WISH YOU ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

We consider it an honor to represent you!

Claude Newland - President

Bill Sleigh -Vice-President

Lendy Edwards - Treasurer

Don Echelberger - Secretary

Visit our web site at: www.rustic.org
