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Rustic News



www.rustic.org

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NEXT RUSTIC REUNION. The next Rustic reunion will be in 2013 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Our vice president, **Johnny Drury**, is spearheading the effort, along with support from several other Rustics in the local area. Johnny is planning on a late September 2013 date in conjunction with a home USAF Academy football game. Start making plans now to attend. See you there.

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER. The Rustics welcome **Barbara J. Dahlberg** in Palmetto, FL as our newest associate member. She joined and made a contribution in memory of her brother **Doug Norman's** (Rustic Mike) 40th anniversary of becoming a Rustic.

REUNION REPORT, 13-16 October. The 2011 Rustic reunion is now history and what a great reunion it was! The weather was perfect, the white gulf coast beaches glistened, the emerald green water was serene, and good food and good-natured camaraderie permeated every event.

The weekend's activities started with a pre-party at **Claude and Tona Newland's** house Wednesday night that was attended by about 25 Rustics who were in town early. For some this was their first opportunity to get a sneak preview of the newly revised 488 page hardbound Rustic book, *The Rustics – A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia.* Reduced priced copies of the new book were available for those who had not yet ordered a copy (*more on the book later in this newsletter.*)

Reunion Attendees included:

Doug & Carol Aitken, Don & Jin Hee Brooks, Tom Capps, Bob & Dorte Clifford, Peter Condon, Ron Dandeneau, Bill & Jan Decabooter, Roger & Linda Dodd, Johnny Drury, Lendy & Sue Edwards, Don & Helene Ellis, Walt & Sharon Friedhofen, Phil & Beth Frischmuth, Jim & Sally Gabel, Jean Claude Gestas, Dick Goddard, Hank Keese, Georgie Koppin, George & Mucha Larson, Bill & Cathy McAdams, Mac & Mary Jo McGarvey, Marcel & Denise Morneau, Claude & Tona Newland, Jim Nuber, Kohn Om, Jack & Chris Otis, Jim & Marcia Reese, Jim & Diane Seibold, Marcia Siebert, Nancy Sleigh, Bob Thomas, Jack & Anne Thompson, Dave & Sue Van Dyke, and Ron & Janette Van Kirk.

The reunion officially kicked-off at noon on Thursday with the opening of the poolside Rustic Hooch at the Ramada Hotel. Before long there was a loud din of chatter as Rustics and wives and friends greeted one another and renewed old friendships and made new friends. The evening dinner was held at the nearby Crab Trap restaurant and was followed by the official "welcome" back at the hooch. It was particularly gratifying to welcome several wives of some of our deceased Rustic brothers who were in attendance--**Nancy Sleigh** and **Georgie**

Koppin. We also welcomed our special guests, **Kohn Om and Peter Condon.** This was **Kohn Om's** seventh Rustic reunion (*boy, that guy never ages!*) A BIG “thank you” goes to everyone who helped sponsor our two reunion special guests. As you know, **Kohn Om** lives in Virginia and **Peter Condon** came all the way from Brisbane, Australia, to be with us. (*More on Peter later.*)

Friday was a busy day that began with a bus tour of Hurlburt Field and a mission briefing by the 8th Special Operations Squadron which flies the Osprey aircraft. Most of the squadron was deployed, but there were two static display aircraft on the ramp which were open to us for a hands-on visit. Then, off we went to the beautiful Hurlburt Field Air Park where we visited the FAC Memorial and got a group photo in front of one of our old Rustic war birds, OV-10 # 626. The Command Historian, **Herb Mason**, provided a guided tour around the various special ops aircraft on display—many of which the Rustics saw “in action” firsthand in Vietnam and Cambodia—and distant memories came flooding back. Lunch was at the new Soundside Club (completed in 2010) which is now an all-ranks club. The new club is located about 200 yards east of its old location and a new conference/training facility building now stands on the site of the old club.

The afternoon and evening were spent at the nearby scenic Destin harbor. Destin was in the middle of its annual October Fishing Rodeo and the harbor was alive with activity as the charter fishing fleet returned with their day's catches to be weighed-in at the Rodeo's dockside weigh station at A.J.'s Seafood Restaurant. While aboard the Daniel Clement Webster sailing vessel on a sunset sailing cruise we were entertained by a pod of Atlantic Bottlenose dolphins which were frolicking in the Gulf just outside the East Pass jetties. As the sun was preparing to set, a special thrill was an unexpected fly-over by three vintage T-6 aircraft that perform regularly over the Destin harbor for visiting tourists. They weren't the Thunderbirds, but their almost directly overhead aerial display of formation flying, coupled with their loud radial engines and periodic smoke trails, were a glorious sight—a fitting ending to a wonderful two hours of sailing. Oh yes, did we mention that our pirate crew aboard the sailing vessel kept the grog flowing freely. We were indeed a “cheerful” group as we disembarked. The evening culminated with the group enjoying a seafood dinner at A.J.'s Seafood Restaurant. For many, the sunset sailing experience was one of the highlights of the weekend.

Saturday started with a few hardy souls getting up early to play golf at Hurlburt Field. **Lendy Edwards** led the gaggle and rumor has it the two competing teams ended up a dead tie but had great fun. Saturday was a free day for optional activities but many stayed close to the Ramada and the beaches, or the hooch, and enjoyed each other's company. **Frank Sovich** dropped in for an unannounced brief visit and purchased a couple new Rustic challenge coins. (Frank was spending a few days with his brother in Destin.) A Rustic business meeting was held in the afternoon and the Rustic banquet followed that night.

As usual, the Rustic banquet was another highlight of the weekend. Our thanks go to **Jim Seibold** who took photos throughout the weekend and also took photos of folks as they arrived during the Happy Hour. Our perennial favorite and musically-talented **Roger Dodd**, along with his long-standing bud, **Bill Hartley**, provided entertainment throughout the banquet happy hour and dancing entertainment following the evening's program. Wow, the Rustics clean up pretty nice as evidenced by all the good-looking folks in attendance.

Doug Aitken was his usual charming self as our master of ceremonies and entertained us with an array of jokes that generally centered on the realities of “retirement living.” (*Boy, that hits close to home?!*) Guests were introduced and recognition was given to those who traveled the farthest to the reunion--in the CONUS, it was **Phil and Beth Frischmuth** from McMinnville, Oregon, and internationally, it was **Hank Keese** from Belgium and **Bob and Dorte Clifford** from Denmark.

As customary, and with **Ron Dandeneau's** assistance, the Rustics took time to remember and toast our MIA/POWs and our missing Rustic brethren who are no longer with us. Since our 2009 reunion, **Ron Koepel**, Rustic 09, has taken his Final Flight. Each KIA and Missing Rustic's name was read in remembrance, as well as that of our departed Cambodian ally and friend, **Col. Lieou Phin Oum.**

The evening continued with a delightful “Destin Seafood” buffet dinner. After a short break, **Doug Aitken** entertained the crowd with a short teaser-portion of his brand new “Rustic Story” DVD. One of the highlights of the DVD is a complete A-37 airstrike recreated from video and audio clips provided by various Rustics. Priceless! A gratis copy of the one-hour DVD was provided to each Rustic and guest in attendance and copies will soon be available for sale on our Rustic website (www.rustic.org under “Rustic Store”).

Claude Newland, chairman of the revised Rustic book project, concluded the banquet program by recapping how our revised book project got started and thanked everyone for their personal stories that give the book such a first-hand “I was there” quality. Over 85 additional new stories were added to the revised book, plus a lot of new information that was not included in the original book. Members of the Book Revision Committee that were present were recognized for their many contributions to the book and a special plaque presentation was made to Aussie FAC **Peter Condon**, Tamale 15, who voluntarily formatted the entire new book. It was due to Peter’s efforts that our book has such a professional look and his countless hours of support ensured the book was completed in time for our 2011 reunion. We all are indebted to Peter for his outstanding support on our behalf! Peter’s plaque read: “Peter Condon, Tamale 15, In Appreciation For Helping Us Record Our History—The Rustics.”

Following Peter’s acceptance remarks, a surprise plaque presentation was made by **Lendy Edwards** on behalf of the Rustics to **Claude Newland** for his efforts in chairing the revised Rustic book project. The eve-



Peter Condon

Claude Newland

ning concluded with group photos being taken and the group raucously singing “Waltzing Matilda” as a tribute to our Aussie guest. **Roger Dodd** and the “Flyer” band provided dancing entertainment into the evening hours.

Sunday morning came all too quickly as we gathered in the hotel’s Garden Café for a Farewell Breakfast. The reunion concluded with many heartfelt hugs and promises to meet again in Colorado Springs in 2013, site of our next reunion. We hope you will be there!

REQUEST FOR 2011 REUNION PHOTOS. Jim Seibold requests that you send him copies of any photos you took at this year's reunion. He is going to put together a 2011 reunion photo CD and the quality and completeness of the end-product will be a direct result of the support he receives from us. Do it today before you forget! Please email your photos to Jim at: seiboldjim@aol.com or, better yet, mail him a CD that has all your reunion photos. "Thanks" in advance. Jim's reunion photo CDs are priceless keepsakes that we distribute at the next reunion.

ELECTION RESULTS. Elections were held at the reunion business meeting and the following will serve as your Rustic Board for the next term.

President: **Claude Newland**
V-Pres: **Johnny Drury**
Treas/Sec'y **Jim Nuber**
Historian: **Jim Gabel**
Directors: **Tom Capps, Don Mercer, and Jim Reese**



L to R: Tom Capps, Jim Gabel, Claude Newland, Johnny Drury, Jim Reese, & Jim Nuber

Our thanks go to outgoing Board members **Don Ellis** (Treasurer) and **Shad Kimbell** (Director) for their work and service on behalf of the Association for the past term. Don has actually served as out treasurer for the last 8 years or so, and has been an excellent treasurer. **Jim Nuber** has some big shoes to fill. *Thanks Jim for stepping up!*

A BIG "thank you" also goes to our unsung heroes who work on the various Association projects throughout the year:

Lendy Edwards	Website, Newsletter publisher, Rustic Store
Ned Helm and Jim Seibold	Rustic SEA Photo Album DVD
Roger Hamann	Rustic Search
Jim Seibold	Photographic History of the Rustics

IMPORTANT “MEMBERSHIP” CHANGE NOTICE. At the reunion Business Meeting the membership approved several changes that will affect future operations and membership status. These changes were instituted to (1) streamline operations, (2) make administration easier, and (3) to cut down on our annual expenditures—which, by far, consists mostly of newsletter printing and mailing costs. Basically, since we are an all-volunteer organization we are trying to make the running of our organization a little bit easier for those who are shouldering the load.

The biggest change is that the annual recurring dues of \$20 will no longer be collected. Yep, you heard correctly. Frankly, collecting annual dues is a “pain.” Instead, we have reduced Lifetime Membership dues to \$100 and encourage all of those who have been paying annual dues to “join up” and become a lifetime member you want to continue receiving the Rustic News and periodic Rustic notices. This price is still an absolute bargain. It will keep you “in the loop” and up-to-date on your Rustic buds. This alone is worth the price. An installment plan is available. Secondly, it will help support future Rustic reunions, and lastly, sometimes we even provide you with some nuggets of information that are timely and relevant If you’d like to become a new Lifetime member, please mail in the Membership Form at the end of this newsletter. *Check your newsletter address label for your current membership expiration date. Currently we have 53 lifetime members.*

Rustic Newsletters will continue to be issued twice each year; one Annual Issue in November and one in May. The May issue will now be an “electronic” newsletter and the November issue will be hardcopy. When we have a reunion scheduled, the May issue will also be hardcopy and will include the reunion Registration package, etc. The annual Rustic Roster will be sent out electronically each November. As a result of these changes, it is important that each member ensure we have their current email address. If you have any questions on these changes, please contact one of your Board members or **Claude Newland** for clarification.

We will continue to keep our Rustic website current and post all newsletters on the website. The Rustic Net is also still active for those who care to participate. It's another great way to stay in touch with your Rustic buds and it's free.

WINGMAN SUPPORT.

1) Steve Hopkin’s daughter Corby recently had two brain aneurisms successfully treated and she is now back teaching school near Luke AFB. She is married to a fighter pilot. Her name is Latin for “Raven.” Her uncle was a Raven FAC. Steve explains, “My brother wanted to name a daughter that, but was killed in an F-4 crash before he could, so we did named our daughter Corby.”

2) Howie Person, Nail 01, who led the final four-ship OV-10 flyby at Ubon on 15 Aug 1973, had to go back in the hospital in early Nov which resulted in some surgery. Appears his intestines got a little twisted and one of the results was a hernia. The docs opened him up, fixed the problems and zipped him up again. He's recovering well and getting his energy back. He is one tough bird. Gilberta says Howie was being moved to a rehab center for a week or so. If you want to drop him a card, his home address is: 145 Oakshade Lane, Novato, CA, 94945. Gilberta sees him daily and will bring any mail to him. Howie says "we're Cleared Hot on life" and expects to see us all in Tucson next year at the All-FAC reunion!!

NEW RUSTIC BOOK AVAILABLE IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS. The completely revised Rustic book, “The Rustics – A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia” is now available on www.lulu.com for \$34.99, plus shipping, for the 488 page hardbound coffee-table size book and \$8.99 for an electronic download version. The book is listed as “The Rustics.” It cost no more to ship two books than one, so consider buying an extra copy as a Christmas gift for a family member or a friend. It’s a priceless keepsake. The new book has 233 more pages than the original book, “lots” of additional photos, over 85 new Rustic stories, and a lot of new information that makes this book the most complete Rustic Story ever told. This book fills in a lot of the gaps that were in our original book. Once ordered, it takes about 10 days to get the book.

Comments on the new book:

Johnny Drury--I just downloaded an electronic copy of our new book because I couldn't wait until my hard copy arrives. I think it is fantastic and a tribute to all of you who helped put it together. It has a lot of additional information and flows very well to tell our story. The non-Rustics who have seen the book here really enjoy it. I think I have convinced at least one or two people to buy it for Christmas gifts. Again, thanks to all.
Johnny

Randy Roberts--Claude, et al - Fantastic - Sierra Hotel and take an "attaboy." As a sidebar, you were very generous with your mention of members of the "Nails" (moi included). Brought back memories too damn numerous to mention. Again, THANK YOU FOR A JOB WELL DONE. Randy (Nail 38)

Gloria Auth--Claude, thank you and the others so much for all you have done on the Rustic book and the Rustic mission. I received it yesterday. You guys are the best of the best and I can't wait to read every word of it. I treasure this book and your memories. I am going on another mission – although I don't know where, to see if I can find Jerry's call sign. It's driving me nuts. Fondly, Gloria

Bill Carruthers--I just received the download version of the book. It is amazing that in less than 20 seconds, I can get a 500+page book. Outstanding job!

Jerry Dufresne--I really enjoyed the book and salute all of you for a job well done!! You were leaders in war and continue today as well!! Rustic India.

WHO HELPED "GIT ER DONE!?" The revised Rustic book is the culmination of two years work; one year to revise and rewrite the book and a second year to revise, edit and format it. Truth be known, the book was constantly being revised right up until it went to press. Our thanks go to everyone who contributed to the book and especially to the members of the Book Revision Committee who made it happen: **Doug Aitken, Ned Helm, Jim Gabel, Don Mercer, Claude Newland, Jim Reese, Dick Roberds, and Ron Van Kirk.** And enough cannot be said about the superb effort of our Aussie friend and fellow FAC **Peter Condon** who stepped forward to voluntarily format our book. Peter spent unknown countless hours in this effort. He is a true scholar, gentleman, and a great friend of the Rustics! *To All: THANKS FOR A FIRST-CLASS JOB WELL DONE!*

A RUSTIC CHALLENGE--HOW CAN WE BEST PUBLICIZE OUR NEW BOOK? YOUR HELP IS REQUESTED. Reality check--No one will ever know about our great new book unless we tell them about it so consider helping us with this new project...or at least give us your inputs. At the reunion it was decided we need to form a book "Marketing" committee to help publicize our new book and gather inputs from the membership. The goal will be to "get the word" out about our book to the FAC community and the general public. The committee will also consider which institutions or libraries should get a gratis copy of the book for their records. **Johnny Drury** is heading this effort and requests your inputs. If you'd like to help with this effort, serve on the committee, or have any ideas or recommendations, please contact Johnny at: rustic04@aol.com or 719-282-9100.

Serving on this committee may be one of the greatest services you can render to the FAC community and to the general public. Will you help us get the word out?

PHILLIPINE OV-10 CRASHES. Manila, Philippines – A Philippine Air Force [OV-10} bomber plane crash-landed along the runway near the chapel of the Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City about 10 A.M. on 9 November inflicting injuries to the two pilots on board. Senior Supt. Edwin de Ocampo, director of the Zamboanga City Police said "The aircraft was totally wrecked." Fortunately, the two pilots were able to eject before the plane, an OV10 #801, hit the ground. A military report identified the two pilots as certain **1Lt. Buscas**

and **Maj. Trajano**, who suffered a fracture in the right leg. The report added that the two were on a test flight when the incident happened.

BAY BEACON NEWSPAPER TELLS THE RUSTIC STORY. **Del Lessard**, a reporter from the local Bay Beacon Newspaper, contacted **Claude Newland** before the reunion and asked to interview several Rustics for a Veterans' day article. He had heard about our new book through a friend and wanted to meet some of the Rustics firsthand. Del interviewed **Kohn OM** and several Rustics on Friday afternoon during the reunion and a lengthy article about the Rustics, with photos, appeared in the Bay Beacon newspaper, The Eglin Flyer, and Hurlburt Field Patriot base newspapers on Veteran's Day, Friday, 11 Nov. The article will be posted soon on the Rustic website: www.rustic.org.

RUSTICS NOW HAVE THEIR OWN CHALLENGE COIN. The Rustics new challenge coin has the OV-10 patch on one side and the Night Rustic O-2 patch on the other side. This is a first-class coin with a hand rubbed finished. Coins may be ordered from our "Rustic Store" page on our website at: www.rustic.org, or from Lendy Edwards as follows: \$9.00 for first coin and \$8 for each additional coin. Shipping is included.



SHORT BURSTS:

- 1) **Rustic Book Catalogued with the Library of Congress.** **Jim Reese** has registered our new revised book with the Library of Congress. Thanks Jim!
- 2) **OV-10 used as Movie Extra.** Did you know the James Bond movie, "The Living Daylights," has an OV-10 sitting on the ramp about one-third the way through the movie? (*Too bad Bond didn't fly it!*)
- 3) **Current Information Regarding DD-214's.** It's official. DD-214 discharge papers are now ONLINE. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214's. <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

HMMM...WHAT'S THIS? **Doug Robertson's** home was broken into recently while the family was out. The police said it was probably kids from the neighborhood. He reports, "The one thing they took which I'm sure they have no clue what they are is a 35mm aluminum film can with a couple dozen flechette nails in it that I brought home from my Vietnam trip. Any chance someone may have some they might want to part with? For what reason I don't know why but they have a special place in my souvenir shelf along with other Nam stuff like my .50 cal round I picked up on Nui Ba Den...still pissed." RusticRadio. *Doug, glad to hear no harm came to the family.*

RUN FOR THE WALL. **Steve Hopkins, Rustic 45**, participated again in this year's annual Run For The Wall (rftw.org). He reports, "We left LA 10 days before Memorial Day weekend and arrived at The Wall the Friday before Memorial Day. Usually have about 1,000 bikes when we get to DC. Next year will be my 10th Run. Absolutely awesome time; we stop at schools and VAN hospitals all the way across to talk about vets and to keep the POW/MIA accountability issue alive. The ride was emotionally charged as always. This year we had three MIA daughters riding with us. One's father's remains are tentatively ID'd, but have to await corroboration by the JPAC folks here at Hickam (where I am now). None of them ever knew their dads and it was great watching 500 guys circle the wagons around them for 10 days while riding across the country."

RUSTIC “RENDEZVOUS” AT OSHKOSH? Tom Capps would like to know how many of you would like to make a group visit the Oshkosh Air Show in either late July 2012 or 2103? Tom attended this year’s Oshkosh Air Show and has scoped out some possibilities for billeting, meals and package deals, and is willing to help coordinate a Rustic gathering. Nothing is in concrete yet. If Oshkosh is on your bucket list and you think you might want to go, or just want to be “kept in the loop,” contact Tom at 919-846-5411 or at tom-caps@nc.rr.com. Tom will share his wealth of information on Oshkosh with those who respond and everyone can help make inputs to the trip’s plan/itinerary.

Tom reports, “The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) does an absolutely wonderful job of putting together a fantastic event including 10,000 aircraft of all types (no OV-10 or O-2, and I only saw one Cessna 310 this year). Exhibits include a conglomeration of historic war birds and associated military equipment. Then there are endless home built aircraft and manufacturer displays of home-build kits. The EAA Museum is extremely well done and deserves a good half day to visit. General aviation and executive aircraft companies as well as aircraft component manufacturers have excellent displays. Many of the companies offer free gifts to attendees. EAA has numerous memorabilia stores around the air show grounds. Food vendors are more than ample.”

FAC MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT HONORED. In an unprecedented move on November 8, 2010, the Habersham County Board of Education voted unanimously to name the new middle school in Demorest, Georgia in honor and in memory of **Hilliard A. Wilbanks**, FAC Medal of Honor recipient. The Middle School was dedicated on Saturday, August 13, 2011 with formal ceremonies beginning at 10 am. All students scheduled to attend next year received special invitations to be a part of the dedication.

RUSTIC WORLD TRAVELERS. It seems a number of folks are working on their “bucket list” to include:

Don Mercer – Recently took a 17 day photo safari trip to South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe which he described as “one of my life’s great adventures.” That was followed a few weeks later by an entire family cruise from Fort Lauderdale. “I frequently wonder how I ever held down a day job.” Some info and photos are posted on www.rustic41creations.com.

Bill & Donna Leydorf -- (Oct) flew to Barcelona, Spain, and rented a small apartment for five nights, then rented a car and drove around France. They visited a lot of small villages...”beautiful countryside.”

Lendy & Sue Edward—(Oct/Nov) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with an extended cruise to the Pacific islands (Hawaii, Samoa & French Polynesia) with Sue’s sister and her husband, Betty and Jimmy Hardee. Betty and Jimmie also traveled to Cambodia with the Rustics back in 2000.

Doc and Gayle Thomas—(Sep) made a trip to England and Belgium and arrived in Belgium on 28 Sep. to visit **Annie and Hank Keese**. Doc had a mild stroke while in London but knew what to do so he seemed no worse for wear for the episode. He didn’t let a little thing like that keep him from attending our reunion and having a great time

Bob “Redeye” Harris just completed a combination flying/driving trip to Texas and Oklahoma to visit his two daughters and their families.

What have the rest of you been doing lately? Send your updates to Claude at: rustic19@cox.net.

AVIATORS. How lucky are we? Even if flying hasn’t been our “job,” what a great and special group we belong to!



Aviators -- Once the wings go on, they never come off whether they can be seen or not. It fuses to the soul through adversity, fear and adrenaline and no one who has ever worn them with pride, integrity and guts can ever sleep through the `call of the wild` that wafts through bedroom windows in the deep of the night.

When a good pilot leaves the `job' and retires, many are jealous, some are pleased and yet others, who may have already retired, wonder. We wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because we already know.

We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

We know in the world of flying, there is a fellowship which lasts long after the flight suits are hung up in the back of the closet. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life.

We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is. Because we fly we envy no man on earth. -Author Unknown

LETTERS TO THE RUSTICS

From **Doug Mitchell**, Rustic 30 (June)—*after inquiring about Doug's Rustic tour dates for our revised book, he writes:*

Guys, I had no idea anybody gave a rat's about my time in SEA. To be honest, I don't make much effort to remember any of it myself, although certain sporty events are not forgettable. All my military records are in storage far away so I will have to do the best I can from a fallible memory. I arrived in Saigon Dec 70, and spent 1 year flying EC47's; returned to the CONUS in Dec 71 for transition to OV-10's and back to NKP around Mar 72.

I got checked out in OV's as a Nail (118, I think) with an interesting introduction to Ban Kari pass along with Jack Shaw then went to Ubon as Rustic 110 (I think *corrected to Rustic 30*). 'Spent a couple of months back in Saigon as a Rustic then back to Ubon. May 72 to Nov 72 is probably my best guess at my time as a Rustic.

As far as I know I was the only Rustic who actually conducted air strikes in Angkor Wat. I worked a flight of Cambodian T-28s on one occasion and on another it was a Cambodian AC-47 both were given to me by intel before I took off and I rendezvoused with them over Angkor Wat. I may still have some pictures of the trench system in Angkor that we hit. My backseater kept complaining that we were getting shot at - I rather thought that was the point. I was able to navigate Cambodia a bit better than others because of the year I had spent in EC-47's since most of that year was spent in flying over Cambodia, including a night flight that actually landed in Phnom Penh - the Rustics weren't the only ones to have secret missions in Cambodia.

Perhaps the most important thing I did as a Rustic was to refuse to strike a fuel depot that was in the very heart of Kampong Cham. ABCCC called me to ask me to confirm the intel and I confirmed that there were hundreds of fuel barrels stacked under the trees along the main drag by flying down the main drag at treetop level (ok I was a bit low but that's why I had the rep as a magnet ass) but I also saw that there was no way to take them out without taking out at least half the town. ABCCC wanted to send me a flight of F-4s right away and they were quite put out with me when I refused to conduct the airstrike. They asked me to show the depot to my replacement on-station which I obligingly did. I was pleased as I left to RTB to hear him a) confirm the depot and b) also refuse to strike it. Nothing else was ever said to me about my refusal to hit it.

[One day] I got pissed off when ABCCC wouldn't let me shoot back at the Khmer Rouge who were slaughtering civilians so I called a buddy in Saigon and volunteered for the Ravens--Nov '72 sounds right for getting to Vientiane; got checked out as a Raven and flew out of Savanaket until war's end in Mar 73 (?), then returned to Vientiane and sat on my butt for several months until we went south to Udorn where I flew under the call sign White Rose with Det 1, training Cambodian FACs. I think it was Jun 74 when I returned to CONUS for good.

I ended up with around 1780 combat hours, a reputation for being a magnet ass and a mess of useless salad for my class A's. 'Hope that fills in the gaps. When I get back to Angel Fire someday I'll try to verify those dates if it's necessary. **Fr Doug**

*Editor's Note: The following letter is a reminder of why we need to stay in touch with one another through our association. You just never know who might show up, or what might surface. Sometimes it's priceless. Below is a compilation of email and phone conversation notes between **Don Mercer, Claude Newland** and **Sokhan Ket** on 23 November.*

From **Sokhan Ket** (Cambodian Soldier)

I just learned that Rustic is alive and well among the pilots and air crew that ran the program. I am a survivor of the Khmer Rouge regime of Cambodia and most of all a survivor of the battle of Prey Totung, Kampong Cham, national highway 7. I was a 15 year old child soldier in 211th BC station at Wat Kwet Thom when the Cambodian Paratrooper Brigade and the Khmer Mike forces regiment were digging in at Prey Totung in late 1972. The 7th and 9th division of the NVA cut our lines into pieces and choked us off from Skoun to Kampong Cham. With what we had back then, Rustic was our soul mate and our eyes in the sky.

I did not know much, except to know that Rustic was always there for us day or night. All of us survived the onslaught due in large to the Rustics who made their presence day and night telling the fast planes where to hit. When no one could act fast enough, the Rustics took matters into their own hand with the rockets and the machine guns they had. The NVA was devastated because of the capability Rustic accurate target marking. Rustics helped us by call in for ammo drop and food drop. Logistics on the ground from the Cambodian Army was next to none.

In early 1973 I got malaria and was sent to Phnom Penh to recover. My parents insisted I leave the army and go back to school so I enrolled in an English teaching high school. My family survived the Khmer Rouge regime and when the Vietnamese invaded in 1979, our family crossed over the border into Thailand as refugees. I worked for the U.S. Embassy there for 1 1/2 years.

The reason I now know about the Rustic community is organized and writing about the program is because I had a conversation with a friend, **Benny Mullinax**, a retired USAF who is now living in San Diego, CA not too long ago. Benny did not know about the Rustics but remember what I was sharing with him of my admiration to the Rustics, and last week Benny mailed me a copy of a book " Call Sign Rustic" and I had opportunity to read and actually relieved the experience of what it was like through the writing in the book. I was one of those ragtag teenager soldiers with a Garand M-1, a flip flop sandal, and wore more ammo pouches than clothing.

I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping the under armed, undertrained, under strength Cambodian soldiers who fought with what they had to protect Cambodia from the NVA. No honor is greater than to know that Rustic family still care and write about the guys on the ground.

Currently I am living in Atlanta, Georgia. I've been in GA since 1982 when I left refugee Camp in Thailand. I have been working for the State of Georgia for the Refugee Resettlement Unit for 30 years now. I have two children, ages 19 and 22, and both are in college.

I would be honored to hear from or meet any Rustics, particularly those in Georgia. My address is 1000 Old Conyers Road, Stock Bridge, GA 30281 Home: 770-506-8952, Cell: 678-949-4660. With Best regards, I remain. **Sokhan**

Sokhan has been informed about the new Rustic book.

Merry Christmas to all!



Standing L-R: Don Brooks, Walt Freidhofen, Ron Dandeneau, Dave Van Dyke, Mac McGarvey, Marcel Morneau, Jim Reese, Phil Frishmuth, Dick Goddard, Tom Capps, Bill McAdams, Hank Keese, Ron Van Kirk, Doug Aitken, Johnny Drury, Jack Thompson, Bill Decabooter, and Jack Otis. Sitting L-R: Jim Gabel, Lendy Edwards, George Larson, Kohn Om, Don Ellis, Roger Dodd, and Bob Clifford. Knelling L-R: Claude Newland and Jim Nuber. Not shown: Bob Thomas and Jean Claude Gestas.



Standing L-R: Chris Otis, Beth Frishmuth, Sue Edwards, Erica Newland, Tona Newland, Jin Hee Brooks, Marcia Reese, Denise Morneau, Helene Ellis, Mary Jo McGarvey, Dorte Clifford, Jan Decabooter, Anne Thompson, and Janette Van Kirk. Sitting L-R; Sally Gabel, Sharon Friedhofen, Mucha Larson, Nancy Sleight, Diane Seibold, Sue Van Dyke, Carol Aitken, Georgie Koppin, and Marcia Seibert. Not shown: Cathy McAdams.

Rustic "Lifetime" Membership Dues Form

Note: The Rustics no longer collect annual dues. They have lowered the "Lifetime" dues rate to \$100 and encourage everyone to join as a Lifetime member. You may elect to pay in four quarterly installments and, if so, the first installment would be \$25. Your Lifetime membership will keep you in touch with your Rustic buds and abreast of what is happening in the FAC community. You will also be helping us continue our periodic reunions. Priceless!

Last Name _____ First Name _____ Date _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____ Spouse's Name _____

Rustic Callsign _____ Rustic Tour Dates _____ FAC Aircraft _____
Other FAC Callsigns _____

Lifetime Membership: \$ _____ \$100.00 if paid in full (or \$25-installment payment.)
Cambodian Charity (*Tax deductible*) _____
2013 Kohn Om Reunion Fund _____
Total: \$ _____

Please make your check payable to "**Rustics**" and mail to: **Jim Nuber**, Treasurer, 1439 Evening Shade, Prescott, AZ 86305-6432

Rustic FAC Association
4033 Indian Trail Drive
Destin, FL 32541

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED