

Volume 22, Issue 1

15 June 2018



Rustic News

www.rustic.org



President: Johnny Drury, Rustic04@aol.com
President Emeritus: Claude Newland, Rustic19@cox.net
Vice President: Roger Hamann, RusticYankee72@aol.com
Secretary/Treasurer: Jim Nuber, jnubes@cableone.net
Rustic SEA Photo CD: Ned Helms, rusticfac15@gmail.com
Reunion Photo CD: Jim Seibold, seiboldjim@aol.com
Search Committee: Rog Hamann, RusticYankee72@aol.com

Director: Jim Reese, jimboree@bellsouth.net
Director: Tom Capps, cappstom@gmail.com
Director: Don Ellis, donellis@sc.rr.com
Historian: John Safley, rdleader77@verizon.com
Website: John Charlton, jtscpcp@gmail.com
Health & Wellness: Doc Thomas, shialary@msn.com
Database: Lendy Edwards, lendy@cox.net

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE.

Laura and I hope everyone in the Rustic Family is enjoying a healthy and productive first half of 2018! We would love to hear from you at any time at Rustic04@aol.com.

The Rustic Board of Directors just completed our bi-annual meeting last month with no major issues arising. However, there was a healthy discussion on how best to continue telling the Rustic story to future generations. Our multi-year efforts writing and publishing *"The Rustics: A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia"* was indeed a monumental feat to get our story out to the public. But perhaps there are other ways to continue that

effort. (We are not getting any younger.) All of us have many stories of our own experiences which we often consider insignificant, but often prove to be valuable to future historical researches. And many of us have attempted to capture some of these stories with taped interview videos through an Atlanta non-profit organization called "Witness to War.org." The interviews are already in the public domain and most are also now in the United States Library of Congress. However, to make these interviews more accessible to the general public, the Board discussed providing links to these videos via our Rustic web site and Rustic FaceBook Page. As a result, **John Charlton** and **Rog Hamann** are looking into providing these links into these locations. As a note, the most recently completed "Witness to War" interviews conducted at our last reunion are still being edited by "Witness to War" and are not yet available. However, many Rustics have completed interviews over the last many years at other venues and those might now be available. One last personal comment: If you have not provided your personal video story to "Witness to War" please do so when able. This organization is often available at veteran reunions across the country, so please find your opportunity to preserve history.

As an avid historical researcher and author, I wish my ancestors had captured more of the "insignificant" parts of their lives, and especially those pertaining to the military history of our Great Country. Perhaps we can contribute to our families' legacies by doing so.

On one final subject, I thank **Jim Seibold** for his recent Herculean efforts in designing, producing, and distributing the Rustic Reunions CD which covered our 25+ years of Rustic get-to-gathers. This CD indeed captured the camaraderie of many years. In addition to his hundreds of hours of sweat, many technical difficulties, and often long-awaited email responses (often including mine), he had much difficulty with finding the correct addresses of many of our Rustic Family. So, I encourage all to please update any of us of your new phone number, mail or email address. As we all increasingly change our location, it is getting difficult to keep in touch with this Family.

NEXT REUNION. Fall, 2019 Las Vegas Nevada

Shad Kimbell is heading up reunion planning for our Fall 2019 reunion in Las Vegas, Nevada. Dates TBA. He is currently investigating possible hotels and developing a schedule of events. He is coordinating his planning with the Nellis 19 Weapons Squadron “Rustics” who attended our 2017 reunion in Ft Walton Beach, FL. The 19 WPS would like to host us for a visit to Nellis AFB. Expect an update in our December 2018 newsletter. Start making plans now to attend.



TREASURER’S REPORT. Jim Nuber. The association is in great financial shape. In addition, with your specific donations, we continue to support our Cambodia charities in Kompong Cham, Cambodia. Please mail your tax-deductible contributions (*payable to “Rustic FACs” and earmarked for “Cambodian Charity”*) to me at: 1429 Evening Shade, Prescott, AZ 86305-6432. Thanks to all who continue to support this effort!

In case you are wondering...we have received royalty income of \$1,407.67 since publishing our revised Rustic book on lulu.com.

ROSTER UPDATES.

Gloria Auth (C) 512-483-1443
Dr. Donald S. Dorr 8327 118th Avenue, Largo FL 33773-5050. (H) 727-223-3789, (C) 727-4207059
Roland Deshaies 24 Chestnut Ave, Lincoln, RI 02865, 401-302-0929, roland.deshaies@yahoo.com
Robert H. Jessup PO Box 771, Hiawassee, , GA 30546-0771, (C) 770-853-7207
Mark Berent mberent02@gmail.com
Bill Leydorf (C) 865-207-0830
Putt Richards 421 Fanny Ann Way, Freeport, FL. 32439, (C) 808-620-0411, grzlyputt@aol.com
Stanley J. Richie 708 Ridgely Ave, Apt A, Fairmont, WV 26554, 304-367-1112

HISTORIAN REPORT. Jon Safley. My efforts to sort and catalogue the remaining Rustic historical artifacts continues...slowly. My plan is to send our complete list of remaining artifacts to the powers-that-be at the Ft Worth Aviation Museum (which includes the FAC museum) to see which they’re interested in, then ship those they want, to be include in their archives. *Note: Over the past year Jon has attempted to contact those Rustics who had any personal items donated to the Rustic history archives, to see if they would like them returned. He is now resolving what to do with any unwanted/leftover items.*

KOMPONG CHAM CHARITIES. Lendy Edwards. In accordance with the executive board’s approval at our Oct 2017 reunion, the Rustics have made two \$2,000 payments to Sunrise InnerCHANGE to assist them in their ongoing charity efforts in Kompong Cham. Payments were mailed 12/2017 and 1/2018. This is the same organization we have been supporting since our original group visit to Cambodia in November 2000. We’d like to thank all the Rustics who continue to support this charitable effort. We’re happy to report Sunrise now has a Facebook page and it looks pretty good. It is found at: Sunrise InnerCHANGE Cambodia.

WITNESS TO WAR INTERVIEWS. During our 2017 Rustic reunion a number of Rustics recorded their personal stories via video interviews with Witness to War.org. Each of these interviews will be made available on their web site once they have been edited. (*Roger Hamann reports they are still in the process of editing the Rustic interviews and will advise him once they are posted.*) Our Rustic Webmaster, **John Charlton**, is investigating whether we can post a link on our Rustic website that will take us to each interview. **Roger Hamann** suggests the interviews also be linked to the Rustic FAC Family Facebook group. Standby for future news on these two projects.

RUSTIC STORE. Lendy Edwards. A few 2017 Reunion baseball caps are available and can be ordered online on the Rustic website. All of the old original hardbound Rustic (black) books and all of Dick Wood’s commercially printed Rustic hardbound (red) books have been sold. There are none in inventory.

CALENDAR.

1. **2018 All-FAC Reunion**, Seattle, WA, 17-22 Sep 2018, Red Lion Hotel, 11211 Main St., Bellevue, WA 98004; ph# 1-800-733-733-5466 for reservations. Additional Information and registration at: fac-assoc.org.
2. **2019 NKP Reunion**, June 2019. Contact Arnie Harmon (Ohio) for details, 614-563-1114
3. **2019 Rustic FAC Reunion**, Las Vegas, Nevada. Fall 2019, Dates TBA

AUSSIES CONTINUE TO RESTORE RUSTIC OV-10 67-14639.

In 2007 the Australian War Memorial in Canberra obtained OV-10, 67-14639, for restoration and display. They specifically wanted an OV-10 which was flown by Aussie FACs in Vietnam. A number of Aussie's flew 639 at Cu Chi Air Base in III Corps as an Issue FAC in 1970. Several future Rustics (*Nuber, Newland and Freix*) also flew 639 as Issue FACs prior to becoming Rustics. 639 eventually became a Rustic bird flown at both Bien Hoa and Ubon. **Greg Freix** says it was "my" airplane at Bien Hoa and later at Shaw AFB. He flew his last Air Force flight in 639 at Shaw. Many of you may have also flown 639. Check your log books. 639 was found in the Philippines when it was obtained by the AWM Museum. The Bronco's wing is now on and the tail booms will be following in a few weeks. The horizontal stabiliser has received its first coat of USAF grey.

Here's where you can help. **Shane Casey** of the museum staff requests that if you had ties with the RAAF FACs, flew 639, or have 639 photos, please contact him at:

Shane.Casey@awm.gov.au. He has posted a

very interesting and the detailed history of 639 at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/about/our-work/projects/asteedreborn>. This is interesting reading and includes a number of photos. Shane hopes you will take the time to contact him with your stories of photos.



Rustics Lendy Edwards (L) and Nancy Sleigh (R) inspect the fuselage of 639 in the restoration hanger at Canberra, Australia, Apr 2008. They were attending an All-FAC reunion being hosted by the Aussies.

SKYMASTER 962 RELIVES GLORY DAYS AT SHAW AFB, SC. *By Airman 1st Class Benjamin Ingold, 20th Fighter Wing Public Affairs, May 08, 2018.* Far from the jungles of Vietnam where it served in the war effort from 1969 to 1970, an O-2 Skymaster sits perched above Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina.

The Skymaster 962 static display at Shaw was rededicated May 4, to honor the service and sacrifice of the Red Marker Forward Air Controller Detachment members and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

"This is an exciting day for our society," said retired Army Lt. Col. Ray Rhodes, Society of the Vietnamese Airborne president. "It feels like we're inviting a long-lost friend back into our ranks. And, indeed, for those of us 'Red Hats' from Team 162 who were on the ground in the jungles, rice paddies and mountains of Vietnam, O-2 Skymaster 962 was an angel who kept watch over us when our enemies sought to do us harm."

The pilots of the Skymaster and its predecessor, the O-1 Bird Dog, coordinated close air support and artillery adjustment, and provided real-time intelligence to American and allied ground forces by flying quiet, slow moving aircraft low over the jungle.

"The South Vietnamese Airborne was an elite unit known for its courage and ferocity in combat," said Gary Willis, Society of the Vietnamese Airborne director. "They were recognized off the battlefield by their distinctive red berets. The American Army advisors in Team 162 and the Air Force detachment that supported the airborne adopted their uniform, including the red beret."

The Red Markers, the call sign of the forward air controller detachment, began as a single officer in 1962 without an aircraft, advising from the ground. The detachment grew to maximum strength in 1969 with a crew of 36 forward air controllers, crew chiefs, radio operators and maintenance personnel.

“In early 1971, the South Vietnamese Air Force assumed the direct air support mission for the airborne and the Red Markers’ combat role ended,” said Willis. “The Red Marker O-1s were all transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force and allies. Most of the O-2s were withdrawn from Southeast Asia and assigned to units in Korea, Hawaii and the continental United States, including Shaw Air Force Base.”

Over the course of the 20-year conflict, five men who served with the Red Markers died in combat, 34 Red Hat advisors were killed and 20,000 Vietnamese Red Berets were lost in battle.

“We hope this aircraft, number 962, now wearing its combat colors, reminds all who see it of the mission and sacrifice of the Red Markers, Red Hats and Red Berets,” said Willis. “I’ll close with the radio call every forward air controller loved to make, ‘Lead, this is red marker one-eight. You are cleared in hot, hit my smoke!’” *It appears 962 was reassigned in 1970. Did any Rustics fly her?*

WITNESS TO WAR TO PROVIDE NEW EDUCATION RESOURCES. Tom Beaty, Founder, May 2018.

We recently released a new section on our www.witnesstowar.org website centered around the educational use of Witness to War veteran interviews. This establishes the final pillar of our 3-part mission, which is: **Preserve. Honor. Educate.**

We’re excited to offer this **FREE** resource for teachers and administrators for use in the classroom, in order to bring the firsthand, human aspect of war to life for students. It is our hope that this content will supplement and enhance the lesson plans that teachers are already using, in an easily-integrated format.

We have hand-selected modules around WWII, Korea, & Vietnam War battles and experiences that we feel provide interesting and informative content around particular themes.

If you would like to learn more, please visit the **EDUCATORS** section of our website or email us for additional guidance. (Please note: We will be expanding content to include other wars, conflicts, battles, and experiences in the near future.)

On this Memorial Day, we reflect on our servicemen and women who lost their lives serving this great nation, and those who have never been recovered. We thank them and their families for their ultimate sacrifice, so that we may live our lives in freedom and peace. We hope that our mission, and the sharing of stories from those who served alongside them, will honor their memories and preserve their legacies for current and future generations.

A continued and heartfelt thanks to all of those who have entrusted us with their stories, and all of you who have provided so much support and friendship to the Witness to War Foundation throughout the years.

Regards, **Tom Beaty, Founder, Emily Carley, Director, and Martin Madert, Interviewer**

SHORT BURSTS.

1. Never Forget. Roger Hamann posted a timely reminder on the Rustic FACEbook page: Memorial Day 2018...**Never Forget... Garret Eddy, Mike Vrablick, and Joe Gambono.** Let us also remember our many Rustic brothers and Cambodian friends who have taken their final flight.

2. Medical. Don “Rice Ranger” Ellis had some gall stones removed in April. He reports he is doing well and he and **Helene** are looking forward to doing some traveling this summer. Next year when the Rustics have their reunion in Las Vegas, they will be in attendance and celebrating their 50th Anniversary.

3. Rustic FACEBOOK. Roger Hamann reports we currently have 62 members in our Facebook group comprised mostly of a silent majority.

4. Travels. Doug and Kim Caywood recently made a trip to Florence, Italy.

5. Anniversary. Jim and Marcia Reese are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary 23 June. *Congratulations!*

6. Significant Events. If you have any significant events coming up or anything you’d like to share with the Rustics, let me hear from you. (Send to **Claude Newland**, rustic19@cox.net, or 850-654-2955).

WHAT THE RUSTIC FAMILY (OR BEING A RUSTIC) HAS MEANT TO ME. Prior to our 2017 reunion we asked everyone to submit comments on what being a Rustic has meant to them, or what it has meant to be part of the Rustic family. Below is a second installment of some of the responses. Future newsletters will contain others.

Steve Peffer (Rustic O-2 Crew Chief, Dec 70-Feb 71).

I joined the Rustics in Nov. 2012. The 2017 reunion will be my very first Rustic Reunion. I wanted to be involved over these past few years, however, it didn’t go that way at all. I guess God had another plan.

I've truly only felt like a Rustic when I've e-mailed, phoned, or Skype **Bob Blair** in the last 5 years, as we were part of the proud "**Aunt Tilly's Boys**" at Binh Thuy AB Vietnam, there was always comradery and support. After 46+ years of not seeing my old friend I'm finally going to see him once again on Oct. 19th, 2017 at approximately 10:30 pm, God willing. I know myself pretty good and I'm sure emotions will be of great joy as **Bob Blair** is a true friend.

When I first returned from my tour in Vietnam my family had welcome arms, however, in hindsight it was short lived. I had a strong sense of being underappreciated. I didn't say anything to anybody as I didn't want to offend people in general. In my mind I truly just had some of the greatest experiences of my life in Vietnam. I felt no one really cared less what I had been through. It was a strange time, and one I needed to get through and work out by myself internally.

It never crossed my mind for some reason to try and seek out buddies that I hung out with in Vietnam. No doubt the number one group of airmen that came into my mind on several occasions happened to be the Rustics. This is where I had the best memories, the most fun, and the most liquor I've ever drank in my life. This could be a book in itself, enough said.

Moving on to my final words about how I felt being a Rustic. I'm still in Binh Thuy, it's late May – early June 1971 and I was lucky enough to get picked to fly one mission on a Cessna A-37 Dragonfly. I can remember most of my drinking buddies were crying their beer about me getting to be the chosen one. It was unbelievable; it will always be the flight of my life and one I'll never forget. The anticipation, the take-off, the views, the G-force, and of course, the stars I saw before almost passing out before leveling off after a low pass drop of our ordinance. Do you think I trusted the Pilot with my life? Then he asked if I want to take the stick. Well, I didn't stutter and said of course! At that instant I knew this was a pivotal moment in my life, and it was. I've never held a stick of a moving Jet aircraft since that day. The flight back to Binh Thuy AB was nothing less than spectacular. The pilot's name is a mystery to this day... I'd sure like to meet him once again, talk, and shake his hand.

Unfortunately, and without much notice, the next month I found myself abruptly transferred to the 19th Tass Da Nang AB 0-2 flight line for several weeks, then on to Phan Rang AB. It was a while before I found out that our Rustic Binh Thuy Group had been scattered all over several Bases in Vietnam. I caught my "Freedom Bird" at Phan Rang and came home to California.

On a side note: There is a tribute to my father **George E. Pfeffer**, a Flying Tiger with the 69th D.R.S. 14th Air Force, "The Greatest Generation is available at: <http://www.flyingtigers69thdrs.com/>.

From Don Brooks (Rustic 02, Jul-Dec 70).

Being a member of the Rustic Family has been the main connection to my SEA experience. The first part of my combat tour was spent with the First Air Cav and with the Special Forces. While I have a lot of memories from those early days, I have only a few friends that I stay in touch with. The memories of my time as a Rustic are the things I cherish most from my SEA tour. We did, in fact, really become a family. We lived together, worked together, and played together. We shared truly unique experiences that few others have ever had, or will ever have, the opportunity to do.

The friends I made there among the other pilots, interpreters, and our allies are like no other, because we bonded into a team, dedicated to a mission that really meant something. We made a difference and shared a great pride in what we accomplished every day. I especially relish my memories of working as a team with our interpreters. They trusted us and we trusted them. We depended on each other. How great it was to see the true joy of those troopers as they realized that they were really making a meaningful contribution to helping keep a nation alive. The years are beginning to take its toll on us, but I will always remember and be proud of being one of the Rustics.



Kohn Om and Don Brooks, Rustic reunion, Colorado Springs, 2013.

From Ron Dandeneau (Rustic F, Jun-Dec 70).

Being a Rustic was the partial accomplishment of a life-long goal. My goal in my Senior Yearbook was to be a Pilot. Although I never fully accomplished that goal, flying with the Rustics as a French Interpreter brought me very close to it and I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in a flying mission.

During my Senior Year of High School, I applied to my Senator for a slot to the Air Force Academy and unfortunately was not selected by him. I then applied for the Air Force Academy Prep School a couple of years later as an enlisted man. I had my Commander's support and felt I had a good chance of being selected. All applicants had to pass a Flying Physical. Had no problems with my physical when I enlisted so expected no problems with this. However, was in for a surprise when I failed something called a "Red Lens Test". I am not color blind but apparently have a color deficiency.

When the Rustics came calling in June of 1970, all they could tell me before I volunteered, was that I would be speaking French and flying. I told them that I would be glad to help out but that unfortunately I could not pass a flying physical because of the "Red Lens Test". Then I heard the great words "Don't Worry About It". I was elated and quickly volunteered. I was accepted and spent my next six months (I had already been in Vietnam in my normal specialty for six months) with the Rustics doing a job I really loved.



Lannie Trapp presenting Ron Dandeneau his DFC, Rustic Reunion 2002, San Antonio, TX. Our thanks go to Don Mercer who made this belated award (and many others) possible.

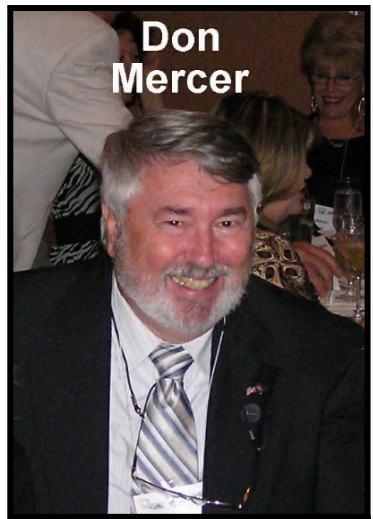
From Don Mercer (Rustic 41, Sep 70-Sep 71)

I am going to pass on providing detailed input, as to what it means to me to have been a Rustic. I simply cannot give all my thoughts, emotions, experiences, and resultant opinions their rightful due in a one-page constraint. Additionally, I doubt that many want to hear some of my opinions on our involvement in SEA, and our national policies that have prompted the US, our beloved nation, to remain at war throughout much of my lifetime.

Suffice it to say, my combat missions flown as a Night Rustic forever changed my life, some for the better with wonderful bonds formed and far too much for the worse, on which I will not elaborate other than for one sentence. On that count, I certainly hold my service in far higher regard than do most of the folks whom I have encountered at the Veterans Administration.

However, I have no regrets about having volunteered for duty in SEA, having selected FAC as my first operational assignment, and having volunteered for the operation in Cambodia as a French interpreter, as Clint Murphy had flown up to Cam Ranh Bay AB to interview me when I was in the 3-day Theater Indoctrination School there. I never knew that any organization, let alone the Air Force, had such low standards to become an interpreter. But then, those were desperate times; and my five years of French in high school and college apparently qualified.

I did my duty in SEA, as I was raised and schooled to perform it. And I am proud to count among my friends, men who did likewise, not only as Rustics but in many other capacities during the war given that I graduated from Virginia Military Institute. With this said, I am disappointed in the extreme that our nation's so-called leaders have not learned much, in my qualified opinion, from all that occurred in Southeast Asia. As has been said, if we do not learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.



*Don Mercer
Rustic reunion 2009
Henderson, VA.*

Thus, in the final analysis, my service as a Rustic is much of a mixed bag. I do my best to keep the good times at the forefront and to keep the bad in the rear. Some days I am more successful than on others.

From Ron Van Kirk (Rustic 08, Jul 71-Jun 72).

I have always been a quiet, unassuming individual. In a crowd, you usually do not know I am there (*who is this guy kidding?!).* When I graduated from pilot training, the OV-10 was my first choice. One of the best decisions I have made in my life. I was in the first UPT class to have 4 weeks cut off of the program, expediting pilots through training. As a result, we lost almost 50% of our starting class, so I was a survivor. I was expedited through Fairchild (winter survival), then Florida (water survival), then OV-10 training at Hurlburt. 10 days later I departed for SEA from Travis AFB. I was going to possibly die with a 45 day leave balance...but no time to relax.

Arriving at Cam Rahn Bay, some commander took a look at my data and explained that since I had taken French in high school, I was now qualified to be an interpreter. Since they needed French speaking pilots for Cambodia in the Rustics, I was off to Bien Hoa in June. Experienced my first "Hail and Farewell" party and learned how long 346 days sounded. I was quickly qualified/combat certified and on my very first solo mission was called into a TIC with French speakers. I managed to pull it off. They lived and I was again a survivor. On landing, I wrote and requested Mom send me a petite Larousse dictionary and a verb wheel – you never know. Turned out most of the words I needed were not in a civilian dictionary....



**Janette and Ron Van Kirk
Rustic Reunion 2005
F'T Walton Beach, FL.**

In September, I had barely 90 days in-country, was still a lowly 2nd Lt., and Major Clifford visited late one evening and suggested I be one of the 3 single volunteers he needed – to go ground FAC. I did not know at the time that 2 of the 3 were not expected to come back – but all 3 did. One got dropped into a mine field after dark as a final hurdle – that was me. But I made it – walked out. I was again a survivor. The day to day missions to help save the Cambodians was varied – sometimes dull, sometimes fraught with challenge. But for the first time I was with a like-minded team of diverse individuals that functioned with a single purpose and would willingly risk their life to save one another. The opportunity to work for a noble goal with brave and valiant aviators is something you do not experience very often. The officers and enlisted worked and lived together with dedication and respect, and functioned like a well-oiled machine. It was exceptional. It would never happen again.

We had a mixture of fun and fear, victory and defeat, but became a band of brothers. Once I DEROS' back to my IP position, and thru my following 8 years in the service I did not see any of those guys again. Then after I was married to a woman who did not know me when I was in the Air Force, and some 20 years had passed, I got an unexpected call from Doug Aitken, asking for my extensive collection of pictures and movies from SEA. There was a plan to write a book and they needed some pictures – off went the collection.

Then there was the invite to the first Rustic Reunion – in Ft. Walton Beach. Had to go! My wife, Janette got a full exposure, basically overnight, to the mission in Cambodia and the players that were involved, although some of their rough edges had been worn off a bit over time. That led to the return trip to Cambodia in 2000. The band of brothers and extended family picked up where they had left off – interfacing as if time had not passed. Testament to the past, and the bond. The stories, the personalities – the friendships that were added or amplified. Never happened previously – and has not since. Once in a lifetime, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away – the force was strong, and we were all survivors.

Still cannot speak French, but I still have the verb wheel, petite Larousse and the memories. Can no longer fit in the OV-10, but if I close my eyes I am still there any time. Being a Rustic.....invaluable, worth every minute!

FROM A RESIDENT OF A MILITARY TOWN, FT. WALTON BEACH, FL. (Letter to the Editor, FWB Daily News, May 2017.)

Eglin Joint Base Command located near Ft. Walton, Florida is presently the largest Military Complex in the world and encompasses a large contingent of Air Force units, Naval Warfare units, the 7th Army Special Forces, and 6th Army Rangers.

My home is exactly 5 miles outside the main gate of Eglin AFB. Most folks in the USA don't live in a Military Town, with lots of guys in uniform walking the streets and jets overhead daily. They go on with their lives unaware of what a Military Town is all about. And that's OK... but I want to share with you what it's like to live in a Military Town.

We see guys in uniform all the time. We have state of the art, high-performance aircraft in the air nearby all day long. We hear the SOUND OF FREEDOM when an F-22 or F-35 streaks over the house... and we read in the local paper, sometimes daily, but at least weekly, of the loss of one of our own in combat in the Middle East.

And that is what brings me to the reason for this email.

Staff Sergeant **Mark DeAlencar** was 37 years old, had a family and was a Green Beret with the 7th Army Special Forces stationed here in the Fort Walton area. He was killed on April 8, 2017, while fighting Islamic State in eastern Afghanistan. In January of 2017, he was deployed for the second time to Afghanistan. He promised his adopted daughter, Octavia, that he would be home for her High School Graduation. He didn't make it. But she went to graduation anyway. And in the audience were eighty (80) US Army, 7th Special Forces soldiers from her dad's unit in full Parade Dress Uniform. Additionally, they brought THEIR FAMILIES to be with them, as well.

And as Octavia ascended the steps to the stage to receive her diploma THEY ALL SILENTLY STOOD UP. And when she was presented her diploma they ALL CHEERED, CLAPPED, WHISTLED... and YES, CRIED. Everyone in attendance then stood up and cried and cheered. Octavia had graduated and yes she had lost her Dad... but she had 80 other DADS to stand there with her and take his place. I just wanted to share this moment with you... and remind you that THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LIVE IN A MILITARY TOWN. This is the real America we all love... and I'm proud to be part of it. May God bless our men in uniform and their families who give so much.

RETREAT AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY. Roger Hamann shares an old Rustic FACEbook post by **Mark Berent**, AKA Papa Wolf at Phnom Penh.

I was caught in the rain as I returned from a hike to my RV parked in site 8 at the Air Force Academy Fam Camp. As I approached my home on wheels, I heard a crackle as a loudspeaker was switched on. Then I heard a bugle playing a melody I had not heard in 42 years. I glanced at my watch. It was 1700 hrs. and I recognized Retreat, the call to attention for the Star-Spangled Banner to be played as the American flag was lowered. I wasn't sure where the flagpole was located so I faced the loudspeaker situated somewhere in the pine trees. Though I was only a few feet from the door, I was actually thrilled to be able to come to attention and, under the new regs, salute.

Then I was really surprised as a huge wave of emotion swept over me as the rain pelted down. My God, the thoughts; the stream of consciousness; the rapid freeze frames of pictures just behind my eyes. Since it was such current news the first picture was of that wretched football player seated while the national anthem was played. But it was instantly obscured by dozens of rapid-fire images that appeared in split-seconds: the flagpoles I had seen on so many air bases where we would stop our cars if driving and get out and salute; the midnight sign-off of TV stations of yore wherein they overlaid the American flag with the Thunderbirds looping while Magee's High Flight was read; the tiny flag POW Mike Christian fashioned in the Hanoi Hilton; the flags held by so many people as I followed the funeral cortege for Robin Olds to his final resting place here at the Academy; and finally, the folded flags I never saw held by the survivors of lost comrades.

The last strains of our national anthem echoed through the trees and I found I had more than rain streaming down.

It's interesting that now, as we are so much older, we can let our emotions have free reign, something we



could not do in combat.

MIKE GAGNE, RUSTIC K, ADDRESSES FRENCH STUDENTS. *Mike Gagne.* For the past five years I've spoken about the Rustics at a local French high school which is a half hour outside of Chateauroux, where I live. My presentation is to graduating students who have been studying history. They have also been studying English, so my initial presentation is in English. I arrive with all my stuff: medals, uniform, Rustic books and a USB key with pictures of Bien Hoa and some of our pilots and interpreters. I also include a few short videos of the OV-10 in action that I scrounged on the web.

During the presentation I pass around my memorabilia and afterwards the kids bombard me with questions. The boys usually ask technical questions, "How long were the missions? Did the airplane have armament? Did you get a chance to pilot the aircraft? Did you get shot at? Were you wounded? Why did you volunteer?", etc. The girls are more prone to sentimental questions such as, "Did you leave a girlfriend back home? Did you get to go and see your family when you were there? Were you afraid?" etc.

Basically, they can't understand why a 19 or 20 year would volunteer for something like this. The majority of fathers or grandfathers of most French kids today have not seen war, so it is not a common subject at home.

At the end of the presentation I bring out my French which, of course, surprises everyone. Then they ask me how I ended up in France?

This generates other questions about my dad, Normandy and D-Day, the Nato base at Chateauroux, and how Dad opened an American style snack bar in Chateauroux in 1952. Most likely these were the first hamburger cooked in France. I also explain that my mom worked for an underground newspaper in Paris with Albert Camus in 1945, and so on.

It's always a great experience for me to talk about my fellow Rustics.

Some of you may be wondering how it is that I live in France. Dad was on the beaches on the third day of D-day with the 79th. Infantry Division. He met Mom in Paris. He kind of kidnapped her and married her in Maine after his discharge from the Army. He was discharged in Paris.

In 1951 and after a few kids, my sister and I, we all came back to France to meet my French grandparents, I was one year old. Dad got wind of the huge NATO base being built at Chateauroux and tried to get a job on the base as a civilian worker...which he didn't get! That's when he decided to open the first snack bar in France in 1952 ("Joe From Maine"). It was closed by my sister in 2014.

At the time, when I was a kid, Dad would put a manager in the business every four years, that's when we would go back to Maine. At Chateauroux I went to school on the Base. When it closed in 1967 I was in high school so, I went back to the States to finish school.

I had managed "Joe's" from 1981 to 1986 but opened my own place in the Burgundy region after 1986.

MEMEORIAL DAY REMEMBRANCE. Bill Ernst, Rustic 04. I went to Oahu's "Punchbowl" Natl Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific on Sunday, 27 May, and cleaned the stone FAC memorial placard that was dedicated in 2002. I then placed an American flag next to it and a flower lei. The flag is on a wooden stick about three feet long. Trudi gave me the lei, which is colorful and pretty.

I laughed when I arrived at the cemetery's entrance because I had planned to be by myself. Instead, this was the day the Boy Scouts, and several other groups and families, arrived to begin their distribution of flowers and flags on all of the graves. The Scouts were in uniform and their leaders were marching their groups up the hill on the access road and finally into the main gate.

I hope all of you had a wonderful Memorial Day. Thank you for serving your country in combat.



French high school students who heard Mike Gagne's presentation on the Rustics.

NEXT REUNION
FALL, 2019
LAS VEGAS, NV

Rustic FAC Association
4033 Indian Trail Drive
Destin, FL 32541

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED