

The Vietnam Archive
Texas Tech University
Special Collections Library, Room 108
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1041

Mary Saffell,
11/11/05

Dear Mary,

Enclosed is a photo for your Vietnam Archive Collection and the Virtual Vietnam Archive. Please send me a digitized copy. Today is Veterans Day and this gives me pause as I write this to you. I honor those that served in such a long war and especially those in the secret times in Thailand and Laos. It is one small scrapbook photo from the year I spent at NKP and will be a modest addition to the collection.

I took the photo at the end of September, 1970 while stationed at NKP RTAFB or Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base or "Naked Fanny." NKP was built in 1963 and was the forward operating Air Force Base of the SEA conflict.

Many of NKP missions were highly classified and it was a "Secret" base for many years. The aircraft at NKP were mostly venerable old aircraft: A-26 "Counter Invader", A-1H and E "Skyraider", C-47 "Gooney Bird", C-123 "Provider", O-1 "Birdog", O-2 "Skymaster", O-V 10 "Bronco", HH 3 "Jolly Green Giant", HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giant", CH-5 and CH53 "Knives", AC-119 "Spooky" gunship, EC-47 "Electric Goons", QU-22 "Pave" and other "passers by" including the AC-130 "Spectre" gunship or an occasional aircraft landing temporary or landing in distress from the Army, Marines, Navy and Air America (CIA).

The missions from NKP were many and varied but many were interdiction on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Forward Air Control, Search and Rescue of downed pilots and crew, Insertion and Extraction of special missions troops, reconnaissance and communications, ground fire suppression of the NVA in Vietnam and NVA forces that were invading Laos in the northeast and southeast and the Pathet Lao Communist forces in countless areas of Laos. NKP was also home to secretive "Task Force Alpha" and other communications capabilities and missions to support the Air Force in SEA and collect information on movements of enemy forces along the intricate and long "Trail" and other areas of Laos.

In the photo, on the left is an OV-10 Bronco, ("Nail") tail number 14620 of the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron (23rd TASS) a FAC (Forward Air Controller) and the aircraft on the right, an armed A-1H Skyraider, ("Sandy"/ "Hobo") tail number TC139-803 of the 1st Special Operations Squadron. The partial building in the photo is the Air Traffic Control Tower at NKP for the 56th Special Operations Wing which was the command authority at NKP.

I took the OV-10 photo because it was the most modern aircraft on the flight line among the historic vintage aircraft. I had not seen an OV-10 before arriving at NKP. This was the only photo I took during my tour. A "shutter bug" airman was teaching me to take and develop film. I ordered my own camera but never received it.

I came from a Tactical Fighter Wing at George AFB, CA where F-4 Phantom jet fighters flew and pilots trained to come over and fly in the SEA war. I was used to the whine of turbines and the blast of afterburners. Now at NKP, I heard the cough, whir and

roar of radial piston engine propeller aircraft and the beat of rotors from the helicopters. The sound of radial engines I came to enjoy and to this day, I volunteer with a flying 63 year old DC-3 (C-47/R4D).

In many ways NKP reminded me of an old WWII or Korean War Air Force field. But these venerable aircraft, pilots, crew and ground support carried out numerous missions that no "modern" aircraft could handle. More info can be searched on the net: NKP, 23rd TASS, A-1Skyraider Association, 40th ARRS, 21st SOS, Ravens and Thailand Laos Cambodia Brotherhood.

Thanks for your work,
Steve "Mac" McDaniel