

# **More Memories of Naked Fanny**

By

***Robert Dennard***

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Cover Photo - Across the Fence.

An A-1H Skyraider crosses the Mekong on a combat mission. The Mekong formed the border between Thailand and Laos... for slang it was referred to as “The Fence”.

USAF Photo by 1stLt Alan Price Young taken while performing his official USAF duties... flying a combat mission “over the fence”.

# Dedication

I could not possibly dedicate this to just one person or another. And to dedicate it to one group or another seems to ignore all of those who have made us what we are today. So I've decided that this has to have more than just one dedication.

Somewhere I came across the following. Both seem appropriate:

*In honor of all those who served and are serving now in distant corners of the world to protect our freedom and the freedom of others. Their selflessness shall not be forgotten.*

And:

*A veteran is someone who, at one point in his/her life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America," for an amount of "up to and including my life."*

So this is dedicated to:

**Those who through all time, past and present, "wrote the check".  
In particular, those who went before me and those who have come  
after me who have sacrificed to keep our nation strong.**

I could not dedicate this book without making it particular to "Naked Fanny". In 1962-1963 a huge rectangle was carved out of the jungle in Thailand near the border with Laos. It was cleared down to bare red dirt and an air base was constructed. From mid 1964 until 1975 the base was occupied by American servicemen from all walks of life. In the beginning they came to help win the ever widening war in Southeast Asia. In the end they were there mainly to protect American lives. Over the years there were tens of thousands who spent their time at NKP.

During the existence of the base it was the people that made the base what it was and made my year there the proudest of my military carrier. From the Seabees that started building the base in late 1962 to the rescue units that first deployed there... to the Air Commandos that followed... all the way to those that closed down the base... it was the people that made the base what it was through the years. Most came home... some did not. So this is also dedicated to:

**Those who were there.**

Some were young... still in their teens, and some were middle aged in their mid forties... and there was everything in between. They were soldiers, and sailors... Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. Most were Airmen from the Air Force. Some... far too many... died there in their youth. The rest of us did our time and came home.

**This is for everyone living and dead who “did time” in that huge rectangle carved out of the Thai jungle... to everyone who had some of that Thai red dirt in their nostrils... to all of those “Lifers” and to those one term “Legal Draft Dodgers”... to everyone who is a member of the “Royal Order of the Naked Fanny”. I salute you and thank you for your service. Welcome home brother.**

***I want to thank the people who contributed to this book.***

I have to give a very special thank you to Victoria Rogers, my editor for the book. Although her “day job” is as “Executive Vice President of the New World Symphony, she was very good at making suggestions and ideas for changes... some of which I ignored to her great frustration,

Victoria went over every word, comma paragraph and passage to make sure the book read well. There were a lot of times that I knew what I meant... she made sure others would too. She also made sure it made sense to someone that didn’t necessarily know all of the jargon. Mostly, she made improvements in nearly everything I wrote.

She made this book much, much better than it would have been without her dedicated efforts.

My name shouldn’t be the only one on the cover of this book. If space would allow, it should also have the names of the 42 other people that contributed their stories. Without them, this book would not exist:

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Thanks guys. Without your stories, I could not have created this book.

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# Preface

I wrote my first book, *Memories of Naked Fanny*, and this book to record the recollections of the role that the USAF base at Nakhon Phanom played in the Southeast Asia war. Most of us who were there are now graying... most by now have been graying for many years. I wanted to get our memories recorded before I and those who were there disappear from the earth.

My father fought his way ashore in France and climbed a massive cliff to take Point Du Hoc in World War II. These were tough Rangers who had already seen action in Italy. They fought and clawed their way to the top and suffered the highest loss of any units in the D-Day landing. He saw a reunion of those soldiers some fifty years later on TV. When he saw that program he said that none of those men could have been there... that he didn't recognize a single face. Yet, he knew he must have known most of them. He said that they couldn't have been there because they were all gray haired old men... everyone who fought and died with him were young, strong, tough Rangers.

Now I know how he felt. When I close my eyes and remember my time at Naked Fanny, I don't see a single gray hair in any person there. I know there were some with gray creeping in... and some who were being made gray by being there. Just the same, when I contemplate our time at "the Fanny" I envision all who were there... including myself... as young virile men in the prime of life.

Writing these books is not because of some sudden realization of my own mortality. I have been aware of that since I was 19 when an A-26 aircraft fell out of the sky at NKP and nearly killed me. From that day forward, I realized that I could die at any time... on any day... and have been reminded of that fact several times since. But now the final day is certainly growing closer. The fact is that we are nearing the end... at least a lot closer than we were in the sixties and early seventies. My goal is to get our memories into books before the inevitable happens. With that in mind, this is to get our time and place in the war immortalized in a book.

Anyone who was there knows that "Naked Fanny" doesn't have anything to do with anatomy. "Naked Fanny" was GI slang... a nickname for a little "Garden Spot" carved out of the jungles of South East Asia during the Vietnam War. More accurately, the place was Nakhon Phanom Air Base... or as most of us called it; NKP. We all knew the nickname "Naked Fanny" but it was just easier to say NKP.

What we were doing there was in the overall sense part of the Vietnam War. But... we were really embroiled in what has become known as "The Secret War"... the war in Laos. The fact that there was a war in Laos and that we were in any way involved in that war was kept secret for many years. It wasn't until the later 1990s that US participation and documents about the "Secret War" began to be de-classified.



We had three “jobs”; the first was to “interdict” the flow of materials and supplies as it was moved down the “Ho Chi Minh Trail” from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. In simple words, we were bombing anything and everything moving down “The Trail” through Laos.

Our second “job” was to support the Royal Laotian Government. What that really meant is we were giving close air support to the Royal Laotian Army... bombing and strafing the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces opposing the our allies.

The third job was to rescue downed pilots. No matter what other activity was going on at the base, if a pilot had to bail out over “Indian Country” everything was put on hold and every asset was dedicated to his rescue. *[Not politically correct today, “Indian Country” was part of the slang of the times meaning enemy controlled territory.]*

But this book is not about the war in the classic sense. It is about the people who were there. It is not a formal historical treatment of the events. It is the stories and memories about NKP told by the people who spent their time in the “little garden spot” hogged out of the jungle... only ten miles from “Indian Country”.

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This is not intended to be a scholarly book. By that, I mean I’m not documenting and referencing all of the events, times, or dates. I have tried to research everything that I could and in almost all cases have found a document or some person’s comment that verifies what is written here. I have not added all the footnotes or other references that a scholarly study requires. This is about the people... the rest you can look up in the history books.

When I first started this book, I thought that it would be easy. I would just collect stories from other guys who spent time at NKP... do a little bit of editing and presto-changeo... I would publish the book. Well... that’s not the way it worked out.

The first problem was to weed-out any “fairy tales” or made up crap. I’ve seen some stuff passed off as real that was clearly made up. That didn’t mean that every thing had to be absolutely factual. I didn’t mind if a “war story” or two got in as long as it had some basis in real events... as long as it was about real people. So, at a minimum most of the stuff in the story had to be verifiable.

What “verifiable” meant was that I had to research each story to be sure that the main elements of the story were true. So, what started out to be just collecting stories became hundreds upon hundreds of hours of research. In the end, every story is about true, factual, verified events. When someone’s story seemed to be far fetched, I checked to verify that it wasn’t completely made up. I rejected those that were.

That’s not to say that I tried to change the way guys remembered stuff... or that I tried to change the way the stories “evolved” over the years... these are still their stories. But it does mean that the stories are about stuff that really did happen. Of

course, as “war stories” are, after being told over and over again for many years, they might not be exact truths. I don’t think it matters if they are exact truths. They are the way the guys who were there remember it... after all, that’s what matters.

~~~~~

My goal for this book has always been to tell you about the time and place... and in the words of the guys that were there. For me, being able to communicate to you has been most important... not some literary or technical rules. I wanted to keep the stories the guys told the way they told it... the way you might hear it while having a drink with the guys that were there.

I didn’t want to leave out anything about the years at NKP. I wanted to cover every possible thing that happened over the years. I wanted readers, future historians and future generations to understand NKP... to know every detail about what being at NKP was like.

Month after month I looked for new stories to cover every operation... every bit of life at NKP. And if I couldn’t find someone with a story about something, then I had to do the research and write about it myself. This went on and on. I always felt like I still had some “holes” in the story. Then one day I realized that there will always be “holes” in the story. There’s no way I can collect the memories of every person who was ever there.

So in the end I decided that I needed to get these stories out there for the world to read... to finally give birth to this baby knowing that I have done the very best I can. With this, hopefully, you can at least get a feel of the times and the place... at least see a little bit of it through the eyes of those who were there... and in some little way you might have a sense of the smell of the place and what it was like to snort the red dust of “Naked Fanny”.

