

C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 24, Issue 1

Memorial Bench for Enlisted Heritage Hall

The current plan is to dedicate our memorial bench at the Gunter Annex of Maxwell AFB, AL on 21 June 2013. This bench is very special because it is located at the premier site, the Air

Force Enlisted Heritage Hall (AFEHH), honoring USAF enlisted personnel. The bench is unique because its design has the names of our enlisted personnel who lost their lives in Vietnam on one panel and the names of the officers who lost their lives on the opposite panel.

be published on our web site, <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/> as soon as they are finalized. The date was selected to provide maximum coverage on the base (site of the Senior NCO Academy) and, hopefully, for great press coverage by both the Air Force News Service and the public media.

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This design allows visitors to the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall to focus immediately on the enlisted names as they walk up the walk, between the memorials to enlisted recipients of the Air Force Cross, while still showing the names of all of our fallen brothers.

If you live in an adjoining state or can include the dedication in your early summer vacation plans, please come to Gunter and make this an occasion to remember for years to come.

Anyone visiting the AFEHH will gaze upon our bench and be reminded of the sacrifice of these outstanding members of the Caribou family.

Presentation of the bench will recognize our 39 fallen brothers, but will also honor **all** C-7A enlisted personnel who made possible the numerous performance records set by the USAF Caribous in Vietnam.

Specific details of the dedication will



The C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter
is the official publication of the
C-7A Caribou Association.

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President/Board Member - Pat Hanavan [535, 68]
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President Emeritus - Nick Evanish [457, 66]
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Squadron Representatives...

457th Royal Moulton [457, 66], phone 540-720-7092
 457th Mike Thibodo [457, 70], phone 651-483-9799
 458th Lee Corfield [458, 69], phone 724-775-3027
 458th Al Cunliffe [458, 68], phone 334-285-7706
 459th Bob Cummings [459, 66], phone 865-859-0888
 535th Cliff Smith [535, 69], phone 804-453-3188
 535th Mike Messner [535, 70], phone 321-453-0816
 536th Dana Kelly [536, 70], phone 407-656-4536
 536th Chuck Harris [536, 68], phone 325-465-8096
 537th George Harmon [537, 69], phone 951-695-0630
 483rd Gary Miller [483, 68], phone 262-634-4117
 4449th Bill Buesking [535, 70], phone 210-403-2635
 18th AP Bill Buesking [535, 70], phone 210-403-2635

Members are encouraged to communicate with the Editor of the Newsletter. Send change of address, phone number, or e-mail address to:

Pat Hanavan
 12402 Winding Branch
 San Antonio, TX 78230-2770
 pathanavan@aol.com
 210-479-0226 (home), 210-861-9353 (cell)

\$10.00 dues are payable each January. Write your check to **C-7A Caribou Association** (not Mike Murphy) and send it to:

Mike Murphy
 555 Couch Ave, Apt 432
 Kirkwood, MO 63122-5564
 MikeM53@earthlink.net

President's Corner

At this year's *Sun 'n Fun* Fly-in and Expo, Pat Phillips was honored by the Federal Aviation Administration with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award which recognizes pilots who have demonstrated professionalism, skill, and aviation expertise by maintaining safe operations for 50 or more years. We owe a great deal to Pat for his service on the Board of Directors. He vacated his position on the Board a few weeks ago to be eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee to select a slate of candidates for our next election. Congratulations and thanks, Pat.



On 13 February, SecDef Leon Pannetta announced the creation of the Distinguished Warrior Medal (to rank **ABOVE** the Bronze Star) for remotely piloted vehicle operators and cyber warriors. Considerable opposition resulted from veterans all over the country. When Chuck Hagel was sworn in as SecDef, one of his first acts was to direct a review of this new medal by the Service Chiefs. On 9 April, based on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Secretaries, Secretary Hagel superseded the 13 February memo and directed that a distinguishing device be designed to be affixed to existing medals rather than awarding the DWM. **Hooray for sanity!!!**

Caribou Artist

Tom Dawes [537, 70] recently purchased several note cards and a larger framed print of the Caribou. The drawings were done by one of our members, Jack Froelich [457, 68], and are sold through Redbubble. He was very happy with them – good quality paper and excellent mounting and framing.

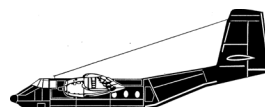
Editor's note: Jack is interested in doing other pictures of the Caribou, operations, and locations we supported. You can contact him at jack_froelich@mac.com. You can see his work at <http://www.redbubble.com/explore/froelich>



Aviation Hall of Fame

Ron Alexander [459, 66]

On 27 April, Ron Alexander was inducted into the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame. Ron is Director of the Vintage Aircraft Association and a former USAF and Delta pilot. He founded the Alexander Aeroplane Company in 1979 in Griffin, GA and developed a hands-on builder education business that became SportAir Workshops. Ron had his first airplane ride at age 14 and earned his private pilot certificate at age 17. He owns and flies a J-3 Cub, a DC-3, a Waco YMF-5, and a Stearman Cloudboy 6L.



7th AF DFC Citation S.O. G-2801, 11 Sep 1968

First Lieutenant Louie Lacy distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A pilot in Southeast Asia on 26 January 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Lacy flew three sorties into Khe Sanh Air Base, which had been surrounded by hostile forces for several weeks and was under continuous attack. His aircraft received intense hostile fire from automatic weapons on each of his three approaches and departures. The complete disregard for his own personal safety enabled Lieutenant Lacy to aid in the orderly resupply of Khe Sanh. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Lacy reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Tet at Khe Sanh

by Lou Lacy [459, 67]

I arrived in Vietnam in late November 1967, the 28th I think. I was assigned to the 459th TAS at Phu Cat. One of the first missions I flew was transporting bodies from Dak To to Pleiku. It was quite a change from the land of the big BX to this situation.

I flew 75.2 hours in December and even got Christmas off to see Bob Hope at Phu Cat. I went TDY to Da Nang on 6 Jan 1968 because we got an extra \$20 per month TDY. I flew 6.0 hours on 26 Jan 68 doing a shuttle from Da Nang to Khe Sanh (with Bob Bess and Loren Schnoonover). We were carrying supplies into Khe Sanh and sometimes bringing lucky people out. The procedure was to never stop on the ramp, keep taxing slowly, shoving cargo off, then troops would run out and jump on the tail gate.

I remember being stacked over Khe Sanh up to about 6000 or 7000 feet and the mortars would start hitting the airport when the aircraft landed. It felt a little like shooting fish in a barrel, but we were the fish! I have never gone

duck hunting since I got back. I know how they feel!

We would always land east and takeoff west out of Khe Sanh because the A Shau Valley was just to the east with some big guns on a steep bluff that the aircraft had a hard time knocking out. Another memory a DUMB C130 driver called Khe Sanh approach and requested a GCA and everyone on the freq couldn't believe it. Approach said are you aware of our situation and his reply was be advised I am unfamiliar with your field and request a GCA lucky he didn't get everyone on board killed.

Some other memories – we were moved from our beautiful French hotel in downtown Danang back to the base. The hotel had one good feature. From the top floor, with binoculars, you could see the nurses on the German hospital ship *Helgoland* across the street. The bad thing was a Nuc Maum factory across the street!

Two Women

Two women, from completely opposite economic, social, and cultural backgrounds, earned common ground during the early days of World War II to set a path for women in aviation that would steam roll into women's roles today that are without boundaries.

Jacqueline Cochran was born in 1906 in a cotton-fields-and-sawmill small town in western Florida. It is said that she grew up in such poverty that she never owned a pair of shoes until she was nine. As she grew, she loved the sight of an airplane and she firmly believed that one day she would fly. In 1932, she earned her pilot's license, and she not only flew, she soared. At the time of her death in 1980, she held more international speed, distance and altitude records than any other pilot, male or female.

Nancy Harkness Love was born in 1914, the daughter of a wealthy physician, in Houghton, Michigan. By the time she was 16, she earned her pilot's

license. During her college years at Vassar, she earned extra money by taking students for airplane rides. She married Robert Love, an Air Corps Reserve major. Early in 1942, when he was called to active duty in the Munitions Building in Washington as the deputy chief of staff of the Ferrying Command, Nancy piloted her own plane for her daily commute to the Operations Office of the Second Ferrying Group, Domestic Division, near Baltimore.

The Domestic Division was commanded by Col. William H. Tunner, and Nancy Love convinced him of the idea of using experienced women pilots to supplement the existing pilot force. Although Col. Tunner's proposal to the Army Air Corps was denied, he appointed her to his staff as Executive of Women Pilots in 1942. Within a few months she had recruited 29 experienced female pilots to join the newly created Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS).

That same year, Jacqueline Cochran was appointed Director of Woman's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD).

The WFTD and WAFS were merged on August 5, 1943 to create the paramilitary WASP organization at 120 air bases across America. The female pilots of the WASP ended up numbering 1,074, each freeing a male pilot for combat service and duties. They flew over 60 million miles in every type of military aircraft. The WASP was granted veteran status in 1977 and given the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009. "I might have been born in a hovel, but I am determined to travel with the wind and the stars," said Cochran.

New Memorabilia

Two new memorabilia items are available – a Caribou refrigerator magnet and a C-7A ID plate. Examples of both were sold at the Dover reunion. The magnet is now customized for our Association. Examples were printed in the last newsletter. See page 28 or the web site for the final versions.

Reunion Hotel Register Now!!!

The Seattle hotel for our reunion (9-13 October) is the DoubleTree Suites, Southcenter. Reservations are open now for our group rate. Call 206-777-3393. Group code is "C7A."

Rate is \$99 plus 12.4% tax (\$111.28 total). Rate is good from 7-15 October. All rooms are suites.

**CALL TODAY AND MAKE
YOUR ROOM RESERVATION!!!**

Museum of Flight

On Thursday, 10 October, we will go by chartered bus to the Museum of Flight for a private docent tour. This museum is one of the best in the country. It holds one of the largest and most comprehensive air and space collections in the United States, containing millions of rare photographs and negatives, a world-class library, tens of thousands of artifacts, and over 150 rare aircraft and space vehicles.

Aircraft holdings include: Boeing 80A, B-17F, B-29, B-52G, VC-137B, WB-47E, Canadair CL-13B Sabre, Concorde, P-40N, D.H. 106 Comet 4C, A-4F, DC-2, DC-3, Fiat G-91, V-1, Fokker D.VII and D.VIII reproductions, Super Corsair, A-6E, F-14A, F-9F8, Lear Fan 2100, Learjet 23, Super Constellation, D-21B drone, F-104C, RQ-3A Dark Star, AV-8C, F-4C, BF-109E, Mig 15, Mig 17, Mig 19, Mig 21, Nieuport 28, P-51D, YF-5A, H-21B, P-47D, Rutan Voyager, HH-53, Sopwith Camel reproduction, Spad XIII reproduction, PT-13A, Spitfire Mk.IX, Taylor Aerocar III, XF-8U-1, and Yak 9U.

Apollo Command Module 007A, various Apollo engineering mockups, International Space Station Laboratory mock-up, and Soyuz descent module.

Artifacts include military and airline uniforms, insignia, and a cutaway model of the Boeing SST.

Lunch will be on-your-own at the Wings Cafe in the museum.

Boeing – Everett



Boeing Plant Tour

On Friday, 11 October, we will go by chartered bus to tour the Boeing factory in Mukilteo, WA, 25 miles north of Seattle. The facility is home to the 747, 767, 777 and 787 Dreamliner production lines.

During the tour of the world's largest building by volume (472,000,000 cubic feet or 13,385,378 cubic meters), visitors see airplanes being built for Boeing's worldwide base of airline customers.

The tour lasts 90 minutes. No still photos or video cameras are allowed on the tour. We will view the aircraft being assembled from tour balconies above the production line floor. The 787 line is fascinating – the aircraft being assembled travel along the assembly line just like an automobile production line.

We hope to have time to visit the Paul Allen museum (the *Flying Heritage Collection*) near the Boeing plant in conjunction with the Boeing tour.

Reunion Speakers

Several speakers are being lined up for our reunion. Topics include the Women's Air Service Pilots (WASPs) of WW II, test flying the Boeing 787, and reflections on the Vietnam War by a Marine veteran and CIA pilot of the conflict.

City Tour for Ladies

A city tour is being planned for the ladies while the men are visiting the Boeing plant. Details are still being arranged, but the following paragraph gives an idea of what is being planned.

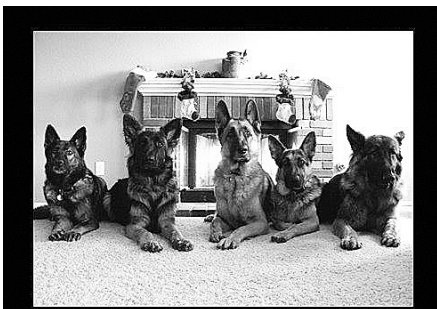
A highly recommended city tour guide will accompany the ladies for a most interesting tour of the city highlights. Starting with the perimeter of Seattle, you will see the floating homes on Lake Union and the Ship Canal. Two neighborhoods are most interesting: Fremont with entertaining outdoor art and the neighborhood of Magnolia featuring award winning landscaping.

The group will travel along the waterfront to Pioneer Square to visit the Klondike Gold Rush Museum, the galleries, and the glass blowers at the Glass House Studio.

Traveling through downtown Seattle the flagship store of Starbucks, Nike and Nordstrom's. At the Seattle Center, you visit the Chihuly Glass Museum and Gardens. This stop includes additional time to see Paul Allen's music museum, an architectural wonder shaped like smashed guitars, and time on your own to visit the observation deck of the Needle.

Lunch at the Pike Place Market which is the most visited site in Seattle.

A visit to a private, historic home is also being considered.



The Department of Home Security

We're pretty sure you have the wrong house, but hey; come on in and we'll talk about it.

Editor's Reading List

Lions of Kandahar by Rusty Bradley and Kevin Maurer. ISBN 9780553807578

Politically Incorrect Guide to the Vietnam War by Phillip Jennings. ISBN 9781596985674

Thunder Below by Rear Adm. Eugene B. Fluckey. ISBN 978-0252066702

Reno Or Bust

by Jerry York [537, 67]

The slogan of C-7A Caribou pilots and crew members of the 537th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Phu Cat Air Base could well have been "Reno or Bust." To get there, we would have traveled a distance of 9,480 miles. The distance was verified on an oil painting received by the squadron for the crew lounge.

The four-by-eight-foot mural was sent by Harold's Club of Reno, in response to my request. The flight mechanics got together one evening in the lounge and decided we needed something to adorn the wall.

I suggested a painting and was subsequently elected by the others to write the letter to Harold's. Sending several pictures of the Caribou, I asked if it would be possible to get a painting of a cowboy astride a Caribou, since we called ourselves the "Caribou Cowboys."

We were all astounded when we received the huge oil painting. It was almost unbelievable. The picture was exactly what we had requested and much more than we had ever hoped for.

7th AF DFC Citation S.O. G-0386, 3 Feb 1971

Staff Sergeant Gilbert Nickerson distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A Flight Engineer at Tien Phuoc, Republic of Vietnam on 26 December 1969. On that date, Sergeant Nickerson completed three sorties into Tien Phuoc in adverse weather carrying vitally needed ammunition. The base was under intense hostile fire, but off loading was accomplished in minimum time due to the precise performance of Sergeant Nickerson. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Nickerson reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Gilbert Nickerson [459, 70]

7th AF Air Medal Citation S.O. G-0319, 29 Jan 1971

Staff Sergeant Gilbert Nickerson distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A Flight Engineer at Dak Seang Special Forces Camp, Republic of Vietnam on 12 April 1970. At that time, the camp had been under siege for several days, supplies were critical, with no other means of resupply. Sergeant Nickerson, working skillfully in complete darkness of a blacked out aircraft, successfully

completed an airdrop of vitally needed water, medical supplies and ammunition. Sergeant Nickerson's entire load landed within the small perimeter of the besieged camp and was recovered by friendly forces. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Sergeant Nickerson reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

The Price of Freedom

by Rusty Bradley [USA SF]
from *Lions of Kandahar*

If in fact it is your time to be called before God, you typically won't know it. Sometimes you will, and these are the hardest of times — when the blood pours from your nose and down your throat, clogging it, causing you to spit and gag. You heave for breath in the smoke and dust. Your equipment seems to suffocate you. You wipe the salty sweat and grime from your eyes, only to realize it is blood, either yours or that of the enemy. You would stand but you can't move your legs. You grasp the open, gaping wounds in your body, trying not to pass out from the pain. You feel the anger thinking of the loved ones you will never see again, and losing your life infuriates your soul. You rage to get to your feet and grab for a weapon, any weapon. Regardless of your race, culture, or religion, you want to die standing, fighting like a warrior, an American, so others won't have to.

For those looking for a definition:

This is the price of freedom.

Historical Quotes

Intuition is often crucial in combat, and survivors learn not to ignore it. — Col. F. F. Parry, USMC (Ret.)

Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. — Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.

Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys. Look on them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death! — Sun Tzu

7th AF DFC Citation

S.O. G-1470, 17 May 1968

Lieutenant Colonel Guy D. Perham distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A Aircraft Commander near Phan Thiet, Republic of Vietnam on 24 February 1968. On that date, Colonel Perham was diverted on an emergency medical evacuation to Phan Thiet where 15 Vietnamese civilians were seriously burned. Through Colonel Perham's leadership and outstanding ability, he landed at Phan Thiet where no runway lighting was available, a low overcast obscured any available moonlight and high gusty crosswinds prevailed, an act which undoubtedly saved the lives of some of the patients. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Colonel Perham reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Phan Thiet Med-Evac

by Guy Perham [535, 67]

Our missions in 1968 were 12 hours long. Mission time started at takeoff and ended when you landed at the end of the day. It made for long days. One of our missions racked up a record of 22 sorties, 22 loadings, 22 takeoffs, 22 landings on mostly improvised strips, 22 exposures to the enemy, and 22 off-loads. During the Tet Offensive of 1968, my crew was on the tail end of a mission supporting Special Forces camps in III Corps when we got a call from the ALCC asking if we would volunteer to fly a med-evac mission out of Phan Thiet. We agreed and diverted to our "home plate" in Vung Tau to pick up a med-evac team. Since none of us had been to Phan Thiet, I wanted to get there while there was still daylight.

We landed at Vung Tau, reconfigured for the new mission, and took on the med-evac team of three. Unfortunately, the team forgot the keys to the medical equipment boxes, so we were further delayed until our flight mechanic solved the problem with the crash ax.

By the time we got to Phan Thiet, it was dark. We flew over where we assumed the field was – it was totally blacked out – and I thought I saw what looked like the end of the runway. I initiated a timed 90-270° turn that I thought would somewhat line me up for a landing. Still unable to see squat, an Army Huey pilot on the ground told me that he would orbit at the end of the runway and when I thought I was lined up on final he would turn on his landing light for a reference. Wish I knew who he was, because he saved the mission and possibly our sorry little rear ends.

We got on the ground, taxied to where three ambulances awaited us, and unloaded 18 civilians, mostly all burned in some degree. The first two were little boys on a litter. I'll never forget that. The rest were walk-on patients. Our med-evac team went to work on them while we taxied down the runway with no lights and fearing the sound of mortars that we were sure would be incoming as soon as Charlie zeroed in on us. Back at Vung Tau, we off-loaded, shut down, and went to the bar.

Later that month, my copilot had to have knee surgery. While he was in a wheelchair at the hospital, the two little boys recognized him as one of the crew that evacuated them from Phan Thiet. From that time on, they would push him in his wheelchair wherever he needed to go. A great reward for what he did for them and the other 16 victims.

Later, I flew in to Phan Thiet during daylight. The infield was packed with choppers and other Army aircraft. In the midst of all this was a 150 ft. antenna. Had we had to make a go-around from a missed approach, we would have been toast.

That's a story I am very proud of. I thought of that night many times after I returned home, commanding a tanker squadron and having to tell my squadron members not to wear their uniforms off base lest they be spit on by a completely uninformed public. I thought of all the real good we did in Vietnam - the orphanage we fed by

"procuring" food from supply missions and the medical assistance our flight surgeon volunteered to the orphans and the residents of an old folks' home.

After all the blood was shed, according to General Abrams in *The Abrams Tapes, 1968-1972* (worth reading), we won the war and then our Congress gave it all away by refusing funds to support South Vietnam.

Weather At An Khe

by Jerry Smith [537, 67]

It was monsoon season and I was returning to Phu Cat after a trip up into I Corps. I should have refueled along the way, but knew I could make it to Phu Cat. Got there, but they had a major monsoon storm roll in and they were below minimums. I circled a bit, but they repeatedly said "No dice" and "Go to the alternate." I started out VFR, but now I was in the soup toward An Khe.

Approach Control was off the air, so I flew needle to the ADF and set up a holding pattern – no other nav aids were working. The tower said they had just gone below minimums! I held for a while, but the fuel gages told me I was running out of time. It was late in my tour and I knew the area very well. Suddenly, a sucker hole opened up just enough to let me see a small stretch of road to Pleiku that I recognized. I spiraled, followed the road to An Khe, and called the tower for a Special VFR approach. They said "No way." They were below minimums. I declared an emergency and said I was coming in.

There were enough breaks in the clouds to let me slip onto the runway. The tower was used to crazy Huey stunts, so I wasn't written up or reported. We taxied in, parked, and the #1 engine sputtered and died. It would not do to spread this story about a Flight Examiner with over 1100 hours in-country, so I swore the copilot and flight engineer to secrecy. Shortly, I left Vietnam in one piece. Lot of mistakes and lessons learned. I was overwhelmed by God's answering my prayers and giving me that sucker hole!!

Engine Backfire

by Bill Duvall [536, 66]

I read with interest the article, *Sierra Hotel*, by Dick Besley in the Nov 2008 issue about the R-2000 engines. From mid Dec 1966 to Dec 1967, I was the assistant 535th Field Maintenance engine shop chief at Vung Tau. Our shop was responsible for the 60 engines in both the 535th and 536th squadrons.

Moving into the Army engine shop, we discovered pieces of 3 Bendix portable ignition analyzers. We were able to get enough parts from the three to make one good one. This came in very handy in trouble-shooting the engine ignition system. The R-2000 had a problem with lead buildup on the spark plugs, fouling them out. We implemented a procedure of taking the analyzer with us to the launch area every morning and standing by as the crew did their run ups. This way, we were able to fix any problem and send the aircraft on its way. After the Australians found out we had the analyzer, they would ask us to run it on their planes when they had problems.

A big problem was that the engines tended to backfire one time during flight. A red X would be out on the engine write up when the plane returned. We would do everything we could to fix the problem, but to no avail. We would have to sign it off as "unable to duplicate." As everybody knows, flight crews hate to see that.

If the problem continued, we had no choice but to change the engine. We pretty much knew what was causing the problem, but could not isolate it. Dallas Airmotive was the overhaul facility for the R-2000. In the process of overhauling the engine, they sometimes set the valve guides too tight, causing a valve to stick occasionally. A simple cylinder change would fix this problem if we could figure out which cylinder.

We decided that the only way to find the problem cylinder was to send an engine specialist along with the plane on its next mission. We would plug the Cannon plug of the analyzer into

the receptacle located on the bulkhead behind the pilot's seat. In flight, the maintenance man could watch all the cylinders firing.

Hopefully, when the R-2000 backfired its one time, the mechanic could see it on the analyzer. After the plane landed, we would change the correct cylinder, saving an engine change and the Air Force a pretty penny. I don't know if this practice continued after I left, but during my tour it worked numerous times.

7th AF DFC Citation **S.O. G-2555, 19 Aug 1968**

Technical Sergeant Lewis E. Fry is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A Fight Engineer in Southeast Asia on 28 January 1968. On that date, Sergeant Fry participated in three flights into the Khe Sanh Air Base, which had been surrounded by hostile forces for several weeks. Sergeant Fry's aircraft received intense automatic weapons fire on all three sides during approaches and departures that day. Once on the ground, Sergeant Fry worked with great speed and efficiency in off-loading the supplies which he had carried in and then secured the aircraft for takeoff. The complete disregard for his own personal safety enabled Sergeant Fry to aid in keeping an orderly flow of supplies into Khe Sanh. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Fry reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Supporting Khe Sanh by Lew Fry [459, 70]

When I was assigned to fly missions into the Khe Sanh area, I had flown there before and it wasn't too bad. We would fly over the base and spiral down within the base perimeter to reduce the chance of getting hit by ground fire. Today was different; the base was under heavy attack by everything you could think of. We made our first landing and

went back to Danang to refuel and get another load of badly needed supplies. On the second run, we flew down the river just above the water then came up enough to clear the treetops and landed. After off-loading, we departed rapidly, usually before the enemy knew we were there. On the next trip, we spiraled down for our landing. We were very lucky that no one was hit. The Marines held the air strip and surrounding area for more than 45 days against all that the NVA could throw at them.



Airdrops at Hoi An *Caribou Courier*, February 1968

Under a low cloud deck, a flight of three C-7A's of the 459th TAS, escorted by helicopter gunships, airdropped ammunition to Regional Forces and Popular Forces under heavy attack south of the Hoi An River on 4 Feb 1968.

"It was a successful and satisfying mission," Lt Col James K. Secrest, leader of the flight, remarked, "All crew members performed well under the adverse conditions and delivered the cargo with pinpoint accuracy."

Minor battle damage was inflicted upon the third Caribou of the flight flown by Capt Harry C. Pund and 1/Lt Michael D. Smith.

"We had just started our run when we took four rounds from an automatic weapon. Most of the hits were in the right wing and we started streaming fuel. We completed the drop and then headed for home."

Note: Lt Col Secrest; Capt Robert D. Drake, Jr; Capt Harry C. Pund; 1/Lt Michael D. Smith; SSgt James M. Allen; and Sgt Tommie L. Williams received the Distinguished Flying Cross for these missions to Tra Kieu (15 miles southwest of Hoi An).

Air America in SEA

by Gene Rossel
Air Commando Association

America sincerely wanted to honor her commitments and while America did not sign the 1954 U.N. convention, they did sign the 1962 Geneva Accords. All American military personnel left Laos. They really didn't leave completely. They established a military presence in Thailand. The North Vietnamese did not leave Laos and every president from Eisenhower to Nixon considered Laos to be the lynch pin preventing communist encroachment throughout the Pacific Rim.

There was a dilemma and the solution was Air America. Kennedy ordered H-34 helicopters, DHC-4 Caribous, and C-123 providers transferred to Air America. All military inscriptions were removed. Initially, this was mostly for SAR and the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, *ordered* Air America to be the primary SAR for Northern Laos. The U.S. military handled the South with Air America acting as secondary.

At first, spotters for artillery and armed aircraft bombing operations, called Butterflies, flew in Air America aircraft. Certain Air America pilots were designated as T-28 pilots and they provided close air support for military operations in Laos, as well as SAR close air support. This was ordered by Johnson and had nothing whatsoever to do with the CIA. The CIA was primarily involved with the Hmong in northern Laos. Air America was also designated as joint SAR for Site 85 and it was Air America who rescued the survivors after they were over-run in 1968.

Later in the 60's the *Ravens* took over the T-28 operations for a couple of reasons. They wanted the job, and "so called civilians" operating military aircraft in combat was difficult to explain to inquiring congressional members and journalists. Still, the Ravens needed to be supplied and the U.S. Government did not want to have

U.S. military personnel flying all over Laos in violation of the 1962 Geneva Accords. C-123's and C-130's, operated by Air America pilots, picked up ammunition from Udorn at a site called Pepper Grinder and flew into Laos to the various sites manned by Raven personnel. In fact, Air Force pilots would fly their C-130's to Udorn and hang around the Air America restaurant and pool while Air America crews flew them into Laos.

In December 1971, George Ritter, Roy Townley, Edward Weisenback and Khamphanh Saysongkham loaded up at Pepper Grinder in a C-123. This was an Air Force aircraft and not FAA certified and did not have an N number. The last three numbers of the aircraft serial number were 293. Their destination was LS69A located on the west side of Northern Laos and they were loaded with white phosphorus rounds used by the Raven FACs to spot enemy positions for incoming armed Air Force aircraft. The wind was stronger from the South that day and there was a low layer of clouds obscuring the ground. The normal route is North and then West staying south of the Mekong river.

The Chinese were in the process of building a road from China through Pak Beng and had heavy artillery guarding it. No one really has explained why it needed guarding. Apparently, 293 flew too far North and was shot down by the Chinese. Jim Ryan, chief pilot of fixed wing operations in Laos, flew inside a Volbar Turbo Beech in the area dropping leaflets asking for any information about the crew, who had simply disappeared. They were hit and Jim was badly wounded causing him to lose the lower portion of one leg. He recovered and went back to flying with a artificial limb. Years later, it was reported there was a site near Pak Beng where vegetation would never grow and an obvious fire. It was confirmed this was the crash site, but with the White Phosphorous load the crew probably evaporated before they hit the ground.

The families were quickly sent home

with no explanation and no idea of the fate of their fathers and husbands. There were several indications that the crew had been captured and were being held prisoner and all this added to the family's anxiety. Eventually, it was determined that all had perished, but it took several years.

There were two other C-123's shot down with no explanation as well. Every one of these people were veterans that deserved their country's honor. They were killed in action, but have received very little respect. In all, 146 Air America flight crews were killed in action and 35% of them were from 1969 to 1973.

It was in this period that Nixon decided on a course of action to end the war. He escalated the war in Laos, drawing the North Vietnamese out of Vietnam to protect the Ho Chi Minh road, making it look like the South Vietnamese could handle their defense without U.S. assistance. U.S. troops were pulled out and the war in Vietnam actually ended in 1972. Many Air Force crews were shot down over the road, but Nixon could not afford an obvious military presence in Laos.

Air America was thrust into a combat role more so than ever and several C-123's, DHC-4 Caribous, and other aircraft were shot down and the crew killed during this period. One of the more famous rescues involved a C-130 gun ship with a call sign of Spectre 22. They were shot down over the road east of Pakse. All 15 were rescued. Two of those rescued were picked up right on the road by Air America. I was the pilot on H-45, an H-34 helicopter, that picked up the copilot. The other crew member was picked up by my wingman, Bruce Jachens. The C-130 crew received all kinds of medals, including the Air Force Cross. The SAR was written up by Stars and Stripes, but Air America was redacted. Bruce and I never received anything. We didn't really ask for anything, but a pat on the

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Air America (from Page 8)

back would have been nice. Saying we did it just because we happened to be in the area and were ambulance chasers is not what I call nice. The Air Force requested our assistance. Once at night and the next day. King 27 was in control and we were under his control. He wrote the story and did say Air America was involved, which I appreciate.

Ironically, you can't write the true history of the war in Laos, or even Vietnam without mentioning Air America. The picture you sent of Saigon clearly shows the Air America ramp. I was flying Porters there in '67, '68 and half of '69 before going to Laos and, knowing the Porter, it is easy to spot in the picture along with the C-46 aircraft.

Six Into Nine

by Dick Kent [536, 67]

Sometime during the summer of 1968, I was selected to ferry a C-7A from Vung Tau to Manila, Philippines. I recall that Philippine Airlines (PAL) had the IRAN contract for the Boo. I was to drop off one and pick up another for ferry back to Vung Tau.

The trip was planned for six hours and two 250 gallon fuel bladders were installed. The weather was good and the direction was generally due east. The departure time was noon, so we would get there before dark.

We had our normal complement of radio and navigation gear. I arrived in Vietnam not long after one of our 155 mm howitzers had shot the tail off of a C-7A, with catastrophic results. Soon thereafter, FM radios were installed so we could talk with the local artillery. These were short-range radios, so of little use for this ferry trip. Navigation gear included the J-2 gyro compass system, a B-16 magnetic compass, and an ADF. We had no VOR, but TACAN had been recently installed. Other radio gear included VHF, UHF and HF, and we had our weather radar.

Earlier in my career, I had flown KC-

97 tankers at Hunter AFB, Savannah, GA. We would periodically deploy to the Azores, to refuel B-47 bombers deploying to North African bases. The trip was 12 hours- 4 hours to Kindley AB in Bermuda, 4 hours to Ocean Station Echo – not a good alternate- and 4 hours to Lajes Field in the Azores.

The KC-97 used the N-1 compass system. The KC-97 also had a live navigator with dangerous telescopic equipment, and VOR, DME, and TACAN. The story goes (usually told at pre-deployment missions briefings) that one unnamed crew wound up heading due north at Ocean Station Echo. The fate of the crew and aircraft was never revealed, but the cause of the problem was real. Compass system gyros would periodically precess. Therefore, it was a good idea to periodically check your heading with the B-16 magnetic compass heading. Even though this was the era of SAC checklists, we did not seem to have one for the “hours and hours of boredom followed by moments of stark terror.”

Our Vung Tau departure was normal and on time. Some time after takeoff, I attempted to contact our control center on UHF. That radio was dead. I tried VHF. No contact. About 2 ½ hours into the mission, I noticed our heading had moved about 5 degrees right. I figured it was poor piloting and corrected back to the left. In another 30 minutes, the heading had again moved to the right.

At this time, I recalled the KC-97 story, and started checking the gyro heading with the B-16. The precession, which occurs very slowly, continued. For whatever reason, I would split the B-16 and gyro headings and correct back to the right. I turned on everything we had working, including the TACAN.

About 5 ½ hours airborne, the TACAN locked onto Laoag TACAN with a DME of 125 miles. I recalled that the TACAN direction card would rotate with the gyro compass, but the needle indication was true. We were 125 miles northwest of Laoag, heading northwest. Laoag is located at the northwest tip

of Luzon Island, so continued use of the gyro heading would take us to one of the Chinas. I quickly turned to the B-16 heading and started inbound to the TACAN.

To say the least, I was relieved. We touched down in Manila International Airport nine hours after takeoff. With a little bit of experience and lot of luck, we saved three crew members and a C-7A. Thank goodness for bladders.

B-17 Navigator's Log



10-4-43 Mission #3. Hanau, Germany. Frankfurt rubber works. Biggest rubber plant in Germany. 100 miles inland. We were in the lead group. 2½ hours over Germany and France. The lead navigator got lost and bombed St. Dizier, France. Looked just like Hanau, Germany. Fighters (ME 109's) attacked us at the target. Nine 109's attacked us head-on 30 min. later. We hit a cloud of flak at the same time. We were hit by flak in the wing – a nice hole. The 109's peeled off one by one and came in head-on. I got some good bursts in at 10:00. One 17 feathered a couple of props and dropped down. The 109's lined up and took turns on him. They probably got him. 20 min. later we ran into more flak. Nine more 109's attacked from head-on. Think we got a couple of them this time. We then hit the Dutch coast and across. One 17 crashed in England. Shot up too bad. All of the crew bailed out. When we landed, we found four holes in our plane – one of which was beside me under the copilot's seat. We'll have to go back there again.



JUST A COMMON SOLDIER

by A. Lawrence Vaincourt

He was getting old and paunchy and
his hair was falling fast,
And he sat around the Legion, telling
stories of the past.

Of a war that he had fought in and the
deeds that he had done,
In his exploits with his buddies; they
were heroes, every one.

And tho' sometimes, to his neighbors,
his tales became a joke,
All his Legion buddies listened, for
they knew whereof he spoke.
But we'll hear his tales no longer for
old Bill has passed away,
And the world's a little poorer, for a
soldier died today.

He will not be mourned by many, just
his children and his wife,
For he lived an ordinary and quite un-
eventful life.

Held a job and raised a family, quietly
going his own way,
And the world won't note his passing,
though a soldier died today.

When politicians leave this earth,
their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their passing and
proclaim that they were great.
Papers tell their whole life stories, from
the time that they were young,
But the passing of a soldier goes un-
noticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution to the
welfare of our land
A guy who breaks his promises and
cons his fellow man?
Or the ordinary fellow who, in times of
war and strife,
Goes off to serve his Country and offers
up his life?

A politician's stipend and the style in
which he lives
Are sometimes disproportionate to the
service that he gives.
While the ordinary soldier, who offered
up his all,
Is paid off with a medal and perhaps, a
pension small.

It's so easy to forget them for it was
so long ago,
That the old Bills of our Country went



to battle, but we know
It was not the politicians, with their
compromise and ploys,
Who won for us the freedom that our
Country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger,
with your enemies at hand,
Would you want a politician with his
ever-shifting stand?
Or would you prefer a soldier, who has
sworn to defend
His home, his kin and Country and
would fight until the end?

He was just a common soldier and
his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us we
may need his like again.
For when countries are in conflict, then
we find the soldier's part
Is to clean up all the troubles that the
politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor while he's
here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage at
the ending of his days.
Perhaps just a simple headline in a
paper that would say,
Our Country is in mourning, for a sol-
dier died today.

Unwanted

by John Lloyd [535, 68]

I arrived at Vung Tau in early October
from 8th Aerial Port Squadron (APS)
in Saigon, where I started my tour on
29 June. I came from Norton AFB, CA
where I was a C-141 loadmaster.

I was assigned to the 8th APS as a
C-130 Loadmaster. However, no one
at MPC had bothered sending me to
C-130 Loadmaster school at Little
Rock AFB. When I tried to sign in at the
Aerial Port, they just scoffed! A C-141
Loadmaster is of very little use on grass
and dirt landing zones!

It took 93 days, going to the CBPO
every day, to get an assignment from
there. Finally, I got an assignment to the
483rd Tactical Airlift Wing at Cam Ranh
Bay. Three or four days later, I was sent
to Vung Tau AAF. (535th TAS). Here we
go again! No one there much wanted a
C-141 Loadmaster either!

I talked them into letting me "fly
along." I read and reread the -1 about
five times. Then, I browbeat the senior
NCOs into giving me a check ride and
taking my case to the Commander, Lt
Col Harry Hunter. Finally, a waiver was
granted allowing me to fly as a qualified
Caribou FE/FM. A home at last!

58 And Still Flying

The U-2 provides high-altitude, all-weather surveillance and reconnaissance, day or night, in direct support of U.S. and allied forces. It delivers critical imagery and signals intelligence to decision makers throughout all phases of conflict, including peacetime indications and warnings, low-intensity conflict, and large-scale hostilities.

The U-2 is powered by a lightweight, fuel efficient General Electric F118-101 engine, which negates the need for air refueling on long duration missions. The U-2S Block 10 electrical system upgrade replaced legacy wiring with advanced fiber-optic technology and lowered the overall electronic noise signature to provide a quieter platform for the newest generation of sensors.

The aircraft has the following sensor packages: electro-optical infrared camera, optical bar camera, advanced synthetic aperture radar, signals intelligence, and network-centric communication.

A U-2 Reliability and Maintainability (RAM) program provided a complete redesign of the cockpit with digital color multifunction displays and up-front avionics controls to replace the 1960's vintage round dial gauges which were no longer supportable.

The U-2R, first flown in 1967, was 40 percent larger and more capable than the original aircraft. A tactical reconnaissance version, the TR-1A, first flew in August 1981 and was structurally identical to the U-2R.

The last U-2 and TR-1 aircraft were delivered in October 1989. In 1992, all TR-1's and U-2's were designated as U-2Rs. Since 1994, \$1.7 billion has been invested to modernize the U-2 airframe and sensors. These upgrades also included the transition to the GE F118-101 engine which resulted in the re-designation of all Air Force U-2 aircraft to the U-2S.

On Feb. 9, 2012, there were only 29 pilots in the world who had ever reached 2,000 hours flying the U-2

Dragon Lady Recruiting



The Air Force is searching for officers to pilot the U-2 "Dragon Lady," a reconnaissance aircraft that provides critical high-altitude intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to the nation's decision makers.

Lt. Col. Stephen Rodriguez, 1st Reconnaissance Squadron commander at Beale Air Force Base, and Maj. "Eric" a pilot with the 1st RS, gave a recruiting presentation at the Scott AFB theater on Dec. 5, 2012 to inform interested pilots on how the U-2 program works, and how to apply for the position.

During the presentation, Rodriguez and Eric talked about the history of the U-2, the expansion of the program to the year 2025, training requirements, and why the U-2 program would be something to pursue.

"The U-2 is unique – it's a single-pilot mission," Rodriguez said. "It's very challenging for an aviator. The mission is never routine." Pilots interested in flying the U-2 should start the application a year before they are going to PCS.

"We'll interview the pilot at six months out, and we would bring him/her out during their PCS time," Rodriguez said.

Pilots, who meet the requirements, should put together a package, which includes all their officer performance reports, a wing commander endorse-

throughout the program's history. On Feb. 10, Maj. Mark made it 30 pilots. The major, whose last name was withheld for operational security reasons, achieved the milestone while deployed

ment letter, and a statement of intent.

"Once the pilot submits the paper package, we look at it," the commander stated. "We'll call him/her if we feel the pilot would make a good candidate, and then the person goes through a two-week interview process."

"We are looking for mature, experienced pilots who show a good degree of airmanship and who are also good officers," said Rodriguez, who has 19 years of flying experience. Rodriguez added that the wing has a limited number of U-2 pilot openings.

"We will produce up to 24 pilots a year. Typically we look for captains all the way up to young lieutenant colonels. Some first lieutenants actually qualify."

The presentation provided useful information to the pilots who attended.

"I thought the presentation was outstanding," 1st Lt. Aleksey Tyabus, a C-21 pilot at Scott, stated. "They answered a ton of questions for everyone there. They were clear about the U-2's mission and how important the U-2 is in the fight. Their presentation gave all the information needed to make an informed decision on choosing whether or not this is the aircraft and lifestyle for me. This was a big motivational boost, and I guarantee that my application will be going to the U-2 program very soon."

from Beale Air Force Base, CA, to the 99th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron.

During U-2 test flights in 1956-1958, ten pilots lost their lives in accidents.

Dragon's Fire (Part 1)

by Col. Ron Terry, USAF (Ret.)

In 1926, 1st Lt Fred Nelson was a flight instructor at Brooks Field, San Antonio. He had been teaching pilots to attack targets “the way it’s always been done” – straight-in strafing passes with guns blazing forward. He knew there had to be a better way. When attacking a target in a conventional way, the pilot had to fly away from the target after each pass and then had to reacquire the target before the next pass. Nelson had an idea. One morning, he drove around the gunnery range marking ground targets with bags of lime. He then went back to the airfield, took a .30 cal machine gun and mounted it so it was pointing out the left side of his De Havilland DH-4 biplane. Nelson rigged a gunsight on the wing strut, got in, and took off. His fellow pilots, who watched his shenanigans, thought he was off his rocker. Nelson flew around the ground targets and, with pinpoint accuracy, hit each one.

His concept was proven effective. He had found a better way – flying in a pylon turn meant he never lost sight of the target area and therefore had complete control. When he landed, Nelson immediately and excitedly told his commander of his idea and the results. He was devastated when his commander told him to stop flying around in circles and “do it by the book.”

The stories of Nelson’s side-firing gunship spread, but not until 1939 did another imaginative pilot try to do something about it. Capt. Carl Crane’s thesis at the Air Corps Tactical School was for the adoption of a side-firing airplane. Crane knew about Nelson’s exploits and expounded on them by recommending a two-man airplane with as many as 12 machine guns sticking out the side. His vision saw the gunship attacking mass flights of bombers, as well as “antiaircraft machine guns and gun emplacements, small sea craft, and troop concentrations.” What foresight! Especially in 1939, with WW II already



started. Can you imagine the difference a fleet of gunships could have made to the outcome of the many battles in Europe and throughout the Pacific Islands? Thousands of American and Allied lives might have been saved.

Another young officer, Gilmour Craig MacDonald also challenged the status quo. MacDonald was a “blow up the chemistry lab boy,” a teen and adult inventor, and all-round risk taker. He was assigned to a coastal battery in Oahu during WW II. He had already invented a gunsight for antiaircraft guns when he proposed a side-firing aircraft – a gunship. He knew of Nelson and Crane and went at the problem from a different angle. In a letter to his headquarters in 1942 he wrote:

“Dear Sirs: With a view to providing means for continuous fire upon submarines forced to the surface (German subs were blowing up a lot of ships along the East coast), it is proposed that a fixed machine gun be mounted transversely in the aircraft so that by flying a continually banked circle, the pilot may keep the undersea-craft under continuous fire if necessary. It will be realized that aircraft with normal types of gun mounting may make one pass at

the target, but must then turn and come back before being permitted another burst of fire ...”

MacDonald received no response – someone didn’t think his idea worthy of one. In 1945, MacDonald recommended a transverse firing super bazooka, plus rockets, be installed in aircraft to pin down troops in foxholes – again, as it flew a pylon turn. And once again, no response. This handsome Army flier, auto-racer, and glider pilot was persistent and when, in 1961, President Kennedy called for methods of dealing with counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam, MacDonald once more submitted his side-firing gunship proposal. At last he received a response! From Gen. Disosway, the Commander of Tactical Air Command, came the words, “The silliest idea I’ve ever heard.” Perhaps the general saw the idea of a gunship as a threat to his fighter-bombers and thus a threat to future funding, mission assignments, etc? MacDonald called the response “parochial stupidity and unwillingness to even try an unconventional weapon.” Undaunted, MacDonald got an AF Reserve buddy of his, Ralph Flexman,

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Dragon's Fire (from Page 12)

to come to the Targets Lab at Eglin AFB for his annual two-week active duty tour. Flexman was Assistant Chief Engineer at Bell Aerosystems and was himself an inventor. They brainstormed together and Flexman was told of the side-firing gunship and the dismal responses.

Flexman became a proponent of the gunship idea. He briefed his bosses at Bell and wrote a letter to his Air Force counterpart about the advantages of the side-firing gunship in a limited war situation – such as Vietnam. He also sent a copy of that letter to his friend Capt. John C. Simons, along with the suggestion that a test program be initiated to prove the gunship theory. John Simons was a psychologist who, like Flexman, was working on the human aspects of flight. He worked at the Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH – the hub of aeronautical research and development. To say that Simons got excited about the idea of gunships would be an understatement. He liked Flexman's proposal to test the gunship idea and also saw the possibility that the concept would become more than a fire support platform. Simons thought that a laser could be used to designate targets or side-looking infrared equipment to acquire targets at night. He was right; fighters sometimes now use the pylon turn technique to mark targets with their lasers for laser-guided bombs. In April 1963, John Simons set about proving the validity of the gunship idea. Simons submitted the idea to various Limited War panels at the Pentagon and to the weapons and ballistic experts of the Aeronautical Systems Division (ASD). Why they came back with negative responses is incredible, but they did, with a final retort that the idea was "technically unsound." Simons tried sidestepping, going around, and going through, but decision-makers told him that he "should not get involved with the weapons aspect!" Simons

was convinced live tests would prove the effectiveness of the gunship, but the word was "dabbling in weapons trajectories was stretching a research psychologist's duties a bit too far."

This battering would have stopped most men dead in their tracks. Not Simons ... he persisted. One of his bosses gave him "under the table" approval for a few test flights – without armament. Day and night, Simons and other buddy pilots flew around Ohio selecting targets as they banked the C-131 and T-28 aircraft into left turn circles. They marveled at the simplicity and the ease with which a target could be acquired and held in the sight. Along the highways of Ohio, trucks and cars would stop and passengers would get out and look at the crazy airplane pilot who was flying around in circles. With cameras simulating guns, Simons presented the proof to an Aeronautical Systems Division panel, which gave the project "zero priority." Simons appropriately named the effort "Project Tailchaser." The low priority slowed testing to a crawl and eventually Simons was assigned to other duties, but passed his gunship project along to others until it was lying dormant in a file cabinet.

Capt Ron Terry was a former fighter pilot brimming with self-confidence, and according to those who knew him, was a born leader with uncanny common sense and was also a super salesman. That such a man should pull the "Project Tailchaser" file out of the cabinet was pure fate. The gods must have really been grinning. Ron had spent time in Vietnam on a fact-finding team and came across some real problems. One in particular, the Viet Cong were rampaging through villages and forts almost unimpeded. The Viet Cong knew that normal response times for fire support requests were measured in hours before fast movers arrived on station. This allowed the Viet Cong to break contact before the fire support arrived. And more often than not, the Vietnamese had set up a "flak trap" to ambush the friendly fighters.

Terry's vision was for the gunship to be like a police patrol car – ready to go anywhere, anytime, on short notice and with enough firepower and loiter time to inflict severe damage to the enemy and stop attacks before the enemy escaped. Furthermore, firing from a left pylon turn gave the pilot complete control over the target area, unlike conventional fighters that required a forward air controller in order to make a strike. Ron Terry was hooked. Thirty-eight years after Fred Nelson's flight in 1926, Terry restored momentum to the gunship idea! He received permission to work the project and he and John Simons flew several flights with gun camera simulators.

Simons reiterated that a live test was needed to show the skeptics. Terry submitted a scenario to the Limited War Office, which showed a tactical operation employing a gunship, mainly in defense of villages and forts. They liked it ... but not enough to fund an official test. Terry borrowed an airplane and a crew and flew to the test range at Eglin AFB, FL. Because the trip was unofficial, Terry had to pay crew expenses with his personal credit card. At Eglin, he borrowed a GE 7.62 mm electric Gatling gun (the mini-gun) and, together with his team, mounted the gun on a pallet which was then fixed to the floor of the aircraft with the gun sticking out the left side door of the C-131. A triggering device was hooked to the gun, which extended all the way to Terry's position. A camera reflex viewfinder was installed as a gunsight inside the pilot's left side window. On the first test flight, after initial firings for alignment, Terry's shooting was so accurate that he wrote his initial "T" on the target with this 6,000 round per minute weapon.

A curious passenger on the aircraft was Lt. Col. Phil O'Dwyer, who was the Director of Requirements for the 1st Combat Applications Group of the Special Air Warfare Center at Eglin AFB. He had never seen anything like

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Dragon's Fire (from Page 13)

this before. He was jumping up and down shouting, "Damn unbelievable! Son-of-a-gun, do it again! Let me see you do that again!" Terry did. When they got back on the ground, O'Dwyer asked Terry if he thought he could shoot as accurately at night using flares. Terry replied, "Definitely." So, O'Dwyer said, "Show me."

Two young airmen volunteered to go along and throw out flares. That night they went out on the over-water test range where Terry's shooting was as good as it had been earlier. The next day, O'Dwyer arranged for 30 mannequins to be placed in foxholes and behind trees on the tactical range at Eglin AFB and told Terry, "Those represent an enemy squad in the jungles of Vietnam – see what you can do." Terry hit all of the mannequins. Over the next couple of days, O'Dwyer arranged various targets and Terry's gunship hit them all. O'Dwyer asked Terry if he could mount the guns on C-47 and C-123 aircraft already being used extensively in Southeast Asia (SEA). This was exactly what Terry wanted. He knew he would never be authorized to get new aircraft introduced to SEA. The C-47 was his aircraft of choice because of its loiter time, dependability and availability.

Terry returned to Wright-Patterson with proof of the gunship's effectiveness, as TSgt. Tom Ritter filmed the Eglin test missions in their entirety. The Limited War Office really got excited when they saw the film. They reimbursed Terry for his trip and gave him orders and funding to return to Eglin to try his experiment with the C-47.

When Terry and his crew got back to Eglin, Phil O'Dwyer was standing by with the C-47 and an audience of interested Special Forces (SF) officials. Terry surprised O'Dwyer when he asked permission to mount three mini-guns on the C-47 instead of one. O'Dwyer couldn't believe his ears and excitedly said, "Hell yes!" The triggering mechanism was rigged so

he could fire one gun, two guns, or all three at the same time. Over the next two weeks, the Air Commandos concocted various target scenarios, which required very precise shooting – with immense firepower. From "killing" one or two "guerrillas" with short, accurate bursts from one gun, to "blowing away" enemy-filled hootches with all three mini-guns on "full auto," the gunship never failed. The Air Commandos were ecstatic – this was exactly what was needed in Vietnam.

At last, someone was impressed. The Special Air Warfare Center sent a wire to Hq USAF and just about everyone else in the world that a "new idea" – a new concept had just been tested that would be a tremendous asset to U.S. forces in Vietnam and "we recommend immediate deployment for combat evaluation." Unfortunately, the response from Tactical Air Command, Pacific Air Forces, and Hq USAF was a resounding, "No!" Their justification was that "this is not the way we deliver ordinance in the Air Force."

Terry kept fighting, in spite of the fact that his bosses warned him it would be an impossible task – with resistance coming from the very top. Col. Cook, Chief of the Limited War Office at Wright Patterson, advised Terry that the only thing that could be done at this time was for Terry to go to the Pentagon and see if he could gather support for the program. Terry proceeded to Washington, where he knocked on many doors, showed the Eglin test footage, and briefed the concepts to many offices in the Acquisition and Operations staffs. Although the concept and test footage impressed nearly everyone, he still received no support; too many senior generals opposed the program.

Not one to give up, Terry casually walked into the Vice Chief's Executive Office and announced that he had an appointment to brief the Chief of Staff, Gen. Curtis LeMay, on a new and important concept for SEA. The Vice Chief's executive officer, a colonel, checked the calendar and found

nothing. So, he checked with Gen. LeMay's executive officer. There was no appointment logged on Gen. LeMay's calendar either, but both officers were acutely aware that he often scheduled appointments without informing either of them. They assumed this to be the case. After all, it was inconceivable that a mere captain would brazenly show up without an appointment!

Having penned an appointment on LeMay's schedule for the following week, Gen. McConnell's executive officer returned to his office and proceeded to chew Terry out for getting his dates mixed up. Terry apologized profusely and pleaded that his boss at Wright Patterson not be informed of his error. Terry then promised to return the following week with the briefing in hand.

The following week, Terry and Ritter were back to brief the most powerful man in the Air Force about using gunships to defend villages and forts. While waiting his turn, Terry overheard the Intelligence Director tell LeMay that Viet Cong sappers and mortar crews had destroyed most of our A-1, T-28, and some B-57 aircraft the night before at Bien Hoa AB. Again, serendipity! Terry marched in and told Gen. LeMay that he was going to brief him on how gunships could defend our bases against sappers and mortar crews ... as well as stopping attacks on villages and forts.

The entire Air Council was in attendance, including Lt. Gen. Ruegg, Terry's old boss. Ritter showed the film where Terry destroyed the Eglin targets and wrote his initial with the mini-gun. In a scene reminiscent of a Roman arena, LeMay looked around and asked for a "thumbs-up or thumbs-down."

All of the Air Council three-star generals gave thumbs down. That is ... all but one. It was General Ruegg, who spoke up, "General LeMay, this is a new concept and could very well revolutionize air to ground warfare."

General LeMay, looking at Terry, "Son, how many guns do you have?"

Continued on Page 15

Dragon's Fire (from Page 14)

Terry, "Twelve, sir, three for each of the three C-47's, and three for spares."

General LeMay, "How much funding do you need?"

Terry, "None, sir."

General LeMay, "How long will it take you to be ready?"

Terry, "A week! I just need a plane to get me, my crew, and equipment over to Vietnam."

General LeMay looked around his staff and, with his trademark stogie stuck in his mouth said, "Send this boy over there."

Terry and Ritter went back to Wright-Patterson to ready the equipment and manpower. However, the "thumbs down" staff did not give up easily. Terry's transport to Vietnam did not materialize until a call went through from Terry's boss to the Vice Chief of Staff, Gen. McConnell. When Gen. McConnell told Gen LeMay, he was furious! As a result, a C-141 was immediately re-routed to Wright-Patterson to transport Terry and his crew to Vietnam.

The team both modified the aircraft and served as the flight crew for combat evaluation and training of the 1st Air Commando Wing personnel. Team members included: 1st Lt Ed Sasaki, 1st Lt Ralph Kimberlin, TSgt Tom Ritter, SSgt Paul Bunch, A1C James Schmeiser, and A2C Alan Sims. Also accompanying the team was Tom Morse, a General Electric technical representative for the 7.62 mm Gatling guns.

Still, the top brass were not finished. A wire from Gen. Sweeney, Commander of the Tactical Air Command, was sent to fighter commanders around the world. "This concept will place a highly vulnerable aircraft in a battlefield environment in which I believe the results will not compensate for the losses of Air Force personnel and aircraft – we should continue to vigorously oppose ... employment of such highly vulnerable aircraft." This belied the fact that C-47's were already flying both flare and Forward Air Control (FAC) mis-

sions in Vietnam on a regular basis.

As a direct result of Gen. Sweeney's wire, an armed entourage met Terry and his team when they arrived in Saigon. They told Terry the team would be going back to the U.S. on the next passenger flight and their mod kits and supplies would be sent later. However, before the next outbound flight was ready, a wire came in from Gen. McConnell, which angrily replied to the TAC Commander, "Be advised that this concept has had Air Staff consideration. This has the Chief's personal okay. It certainly is in the Air Force's interest to try the program rather than to sit on the sideline commenting ..." The entourage returned and escorted Terry to the 7th Air Force Commander in Saigon, where Terry briefed him on the gunship.

With the commander's blessing, Terry and crew were sent off to Bien Hoa AB where they modified three C-47 aircraft with guns and sights, trained crews, and got on with fighting the war. Each gunship crew consisted of pilot, co-pilot, navigator, two gunners (who loaded and repaired the guns – only the pilot fired the guns), a loadmaster who dispensed the flares, and a Vietnamese liaison officer who coordinated by radio with Vietnamese friendly forces. Terry's team arrived on December 2, 1964. The first daylight mission was on December 15th, and when the 1st Air Commando Wing crews were trained in gunship tactics, they flew the first night mission on December 23. The aircraft's designation changed from C-47 to FC-47 (later AC-47 Armed Cargo Attack Aircraft) and the volunteer crews were transformed overnight from "trash haulers" to combat crew members.

"Spooky" was born. The AC-47 took its name from the night missions it flew and the particular camouflage paint scheme. The aircraft's other, unofficial, nickname, "Puff the Magic Dragon" came from the Vietnamese who, when they saw the "tongues" of fire coming from the sky (tracers), called it a dragon. This was the Year of the Dragon.

Spooky's reputation became well

known – with incredible speed. Everyone involved in a fire fight was crying out for gunship support. Viet Cong would break off attacks on villages or outposts, sometimes after the first fusillade was fired. Spooky proved itself versatile by being on airborne alert day and night. Along with flying close air support missions for ground forces and escorting friendly convoys, Spooky saved villages, forts, and SF camps.

During a mission flown on February 8, 1965, an AC-47 stopped a major Viet Cong offensive in the Highlands in a strike that killed over 300 Viet Cong. Before one full month of actual combat missions had been completed, the AC-47, was credited with having changed the order of battle for the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta. It is certainly fitting that the classic John Wayne movie, "The Green Berets," depicted Spooky saving a remote SF camp from being overrun.

Before the combat evaluation was completed, the AC-47 made its name. Terry couldn't have been more pleased when Gen. Moore, 2nd Air Division Commander, asked for a full squadron of AC-47's. Moore was seconded by Gen. Ferguson, Commander of the Air Force Systems Command, who noted to Air Force Headquarters, "The reports which have been received indicated spectacular success in killing Viet Cong and in stopping attacks, together with a concurrent psychological factor way out of proportion to the effectiveness of other air and ground force efforts."

When the squadron of 20 AC-47's arrived in Vietnam, it was designated the 4th Air Commando Squadron and was dispersed throughout Vietnam, plus Thailand, from where the crews flew missions into Laos every night. In Laos, the AC-47's became truck busters. In 1969, the AC-47's were handed over to the Vietnamese Air Force. At the time of the turnover, the AC-47 had successfully defended more than 4,000 forts, hamlets, and enclaves. History shows that they never lost a group they were assigned to defend!

My Tour In 1967

by Greg Plum [483, 67]

My Vietnam tour started in November 1966. I was assigned to the 20th TASS at Da Nang working on O-1E aircraft. I was only at Da Nang two months, when I was transferred to the 483rd upon takeover of the C-7A's from the Army. We lived in tents. Although it was not the best housing, it was a lot better than our combat troops. Our quarters were across the canal from a POW camp. On occasion, the North Vietnamese would try to sneak in via the canal to try to break them out, thus a guard station at the canal which we had to cross to use the latrine and showers when we had water. The rats were the next worst thing. I think they were NVA as they only came out at night. Wrapping my bunk with heavy plastic took care of that problem.

In January 1967, I left for Cam Ranh Bay (CRB), assigned to the 483rd. On arrival at CRB we had to build our living quarters, so we built hootches by day and worked on aircraft at night. We learned a lot about the C-7A with the help of the deHavilland rep assigned to help us as we did not have any formal training on this aircraft. We had a lot of good people and some of us had worked in the same squadrons Stateside. We fixed and solved a lot of problems and we were used to working together.

In April, I was placed on flying status as a grade 3 non-crewmember. I would go to flight operations and ask who needed some help that day and would fly with that crew to get in my flying time. Have never figured that one out. In July, I was sent to Phu Cat along with several others to help out with their maintenance. I was told that, due to maintenance problems, they were not making all their missions.

In August, I and another airman were asked to go to a crash site at a Special Forces camp near Duc Pho. This turned out to be Caribou 62-4161, shot down by friendly fire coming in for a landing with a full load of ammunition

on board. Sadly, the crew never had a chance as they only had seconds to live with the aircraft rolling over and going straight in. We flew in everyday for about 5 days, clearing out the wreckage and I thought about that crew every day.

A couple of weeks later, myself and another airman were asked to go to another Army camp to fix a C-7A that had blown both left main tires on landing. On this trip, we had to draw weapons before leaving. I figured this trip would be more dangerous. After blowing the tires on landing, the pilot had taxied the Caribou up to the perimeter fence. Talk about your rear end being literally on the line.

After some difficulty, we got the jack under the wing and the plane raised so we could make the repairs. We needed to be out of this location before night-fall. After making the repairs, I went into the plane to see what our holdup was and found the pilot and the other airman arguing about signing off the repairs because the pilot had grounded the plane with a Red-X. After a short discussion, I signed off the repairs and the other airman signed off the Red-X. Neither of us were 7-levels, but we are in the middle of a war zone. I thought, "Let's use some common sense here and get the hell out of Dodge."

As we were taking off, I was looking out the tail thru the cargo door we could not close. The base was coming under attack and the Army was firing off flares. I could see tracer fire and North Vietnamese running along the fence near the area we just left. Another 10-15 minutes and we might not have made it. I returned to CRB later that month.

At CRB, I was pulled off the line and sent to flight crew debriefing to try to route write-ups to the proper departments. One evening, a Major came in complaining that he did not see why he had to go thru this debrief as we basically did not know what we were doing. By luck of the draw, I ended up debriefing him. One of his complaints was that the plane flew tail heavy. This was a new one on me, as we had never

had a tail heavy condition to deal with. I asked if he took off that morning with this condition and he said, "No, it was only after picking up some cargo on his way back to base." Clearly a "no brainer," as I guess he did not understand weight and balance. Nothing wrong with the plane, just improper loading. I worked in debriefing all of October then rotated back home.

God Bless America A Real Star

Kate Smith was born and grew up in Columbia, MO. In early 1940, Kate, a fiercely patriotic American, and the biggest star on radio, was deeply worried about her country.

She asked Irving Berlin if he could give her a song that would re-ignite the spirit of American patriotism and faith. He said he had a song that he had written in 1917, but never used it.

He said she could have it. She sat at the piano and played it and realized how good it was. She called Mr. Berlin and told him that she couldn't take this from him for nothing.

So, they agreed that any money that would be made off the song would be donated to the Boy Scouts of America. Thanks to Kate Smith and Irving Berlin, the Scouts have received millions of dollars in royalties.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=TnQDW-NMaRs

This clip is from the movie "You're in the Army Now". Near the very end, you will see a familiar face (POTUS 40) in this one that we are all very proud of.

Frank Sinatra said that when Kate Smith, whom he considered the greatest singer of his age, first sang this song on the radio, a million guys got "dust" in their eyes and had to wipe the tears the "dust" caused. If you can watch and listen without "dust" getting in your eyes, then you have no soul.

USAF X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle



In the next installment to improve space capability and further develop an affordable, reusable space vehicle, the Air Force conducted its third X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle (OTV) launch here on December 11, 2012. The launch comes on the heels of the successful flight of OTV-2, which made an autonomous landing at Vandenberg AFB, CA on June 11 after a record 469 days in space.

“We couldn’t be more pleased with the strides we’ve made in this program and the success of the X-37B vehicle on the first two flights,” said Mr. Richard McKinney, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space. “However, it is important to keep in mind that this is an experimental vehicle and a third mission is still relatively young for a test program. This is the first re-flight of a vehicle so that is certainly a key objective for us. We have only just begun what is a very systematic checkout of the system.”

Lt. Col. Tom McIntyre, X-37B program manager for the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office, explained that the third X-37B flight will not only help the Air Force better evaluate and understand the vehicle’s performance characteristics, but this first re-flight is an important step in the program. OTV-1 launched in April 2010 and spent 224 days in orbit before going through the refurbishment process prior to being prepped for this mission.

The X-37B program is examining the affordability and reusability of space vehicles, so validation through testing is vital to the process. The X-37B OTV is designed for an on-orbit duration of approximately 9 months. Actual duration will depend on the execution of test objectives, on-orbit vehicle performance, and conditions at the landing site.

The program is designed to demonstrate reusable spacecraft technologies for America’s future in space and operating experiments which can be returned to, and examined, on Earth. Technologies being tested in the program include advanced guidance, navigation and control, thermal protection systems, avionics, high temperature structures and seals, conformal reusable insulation, lightweight electromechanical flight systems, and autonomous orbital flight, reentry and landing.

CSAF Reading List

Hat in the Ring: The Birth of American Air Power in the Great War by Bert Frandsen

West with the Night by Beryl Markham

The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy by David Hoffman

Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers, 1941-1942 by Daniel Ford

Leading With Honor by Lee Ellis

Dressmaker of Khair Khana by Gayle Lemmon

The Sovereignty Solution by Anna Simons, Joe McGraw, and Duane Lauchengco

I Always Wanted to Fly: America’s Cold War Airmen by Col Wolfgang Samuel

Realizing Tomorrow: The Path to Private Spaceflight by Chris Dubbs and Emeline Paat-Dahlstrom

Counterstrike: The Untold Story of America’s Secret Campaign Against Al Qaeda by Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker

China Airborne by James Fallows

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

No One’s World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn by Charles Kupchan

Need, Speed, and Greed by Vijay Vaitheeswaran

Glad I Grew Up When

It took 3 minutes for a TV to warm up.

Nobody owned a purebred dog.

A quarter was a decent allowance.

You’d reach into a gutter for a penny.

Your Mom wore nylons that came in two pieces.

You got your windshield cleaned, oil checked, and gas pumped for free.

Laundry detergent had free glasses, dishes, or towels inside the box.

It was a privilege to be taken out to dinner at a real restaurant by your parents.

They threatened to keep kids back a grade if they failed ... and they did.

Big Mouth Comedienne aka Colonel Maggie

Entertainer, Actress. Born Margaret Yvonne Teresa Reed, Martha Raye joined her parents' vaudeville act at three years old. The singer, dancer, actress, comedienne performed on Broadway, in movies and on television. Beginning in 1942, she entertained American troops through World War II, Korea and Vietnam, even though she had a life long fear of flying. For nine years she made trips to Vietnam, sometimes staying up to six months at a time and often using her training as a nurse to help with the wounded. She was made an honorary member of the Special Forces units that she often assisted and received her Green Beret and title of Lieutenant Colonel from President Lyndon Johnson. Nicknamed "Colonel Maggie" by the troops, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest commendation for civilians, in 1993. In honor of her service to the military, special exception was made to policy so that she could be buried in the military cemetery at Fort Bragg.

During that time, a serviceman flying a "Huey Slick" helicopter carrying troops recalls that his ship received combat damage to the extent that he had to return to base at Soc Trang:

"I was the pilot of that 'slick' which had received major damage to the tail-rotor drive shaft from a lucky enemy rifle shot. The maintenance team at the staging area inspected and determined that a one-time flight back to base camp would be okay but grounded the aircraft after that. Upon arriving back at Soc Trang, I informed Martha (she came right up to us and asked how things were going) that we had a gunship down in the combat area and additional efforts were being made to extract the crew. I don't recall if we had received word of the death of the pilot at that time. Martha stated that she and her troupe would remain until everyone returned from the mission. As there



were no replacements, the servicemen could not return to the mission. While the servicemen waited, Raye played poker with them and helped to keep everyone's spirits up. I enjoyed playing cards with Martha but regretted it somewhat. It appears that she had plenty of practice playing poker with GIs during her USO service in multiple wars. But I still love her for who she was and what she did. When the mission was completed, resulting in the loss of a helicopter, gunship and a Viking pilot, the Major in command of the Vikings had been wounded when the ship went down. He was flying pilot position, but was not in control of the ship when the command pilot, a Warrant Officer, was shot. When he and the two remaining crewmen were returned to Soc Trang, Raye volunteered to assist the doctor in treating the wounded flyer. When all had been completed, Raye waited until everybody was available and then put on her show.

Everyone involved appreciated her as an outstanding trouper and a caring person. During the Vietnam War, she was made an honorary Green Beret because she visited United States Army Special Forces in Vietnam without fanfare, and she helped out when things got bad in Special Forces A-Camps. As a result, she came to be known affectionately by the Green Berets as "Colonel Maggie."

A Great Lady by An Army Aviator

It was just before Thanksgiving 1967 and we were ferrying dead and wounded from a large Graves Registration Facility west of Pleiku. We had

run out of body bags by noon, so the CH-47 Chinook was pretty rough in the back. All of a sudden, we heard a "take-charge" woman's voice in the rear.

There was the singer and actress, Martha Raye, with a Special Forces beret and jungle fatigues, with subdued markings, helping the wounded into the Chinook, and carrying the dead aboard.

"Maggie" had been visiting her Special Forces "heroes" out "West." We took off, short of fuel, and headed to the USAF hospital pad at Pleiku. As we all started unloading our sad passengers, a "Smart Mouth" Air Force Captain said to Martha, "Ms. Raye, with all these dead and wounded to process, there would not be time for your show!"

To all of our surprise, she pulled on her right collar and said, "Captain, see this rank insignia? I am a Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army Reserve and this is a Caduceus which means I am a Nurse, with a surgical specialty. Now, take me to your wounded!"

He said, "Yes ma'am, follow me." Several times at the Army Field Hospital in Pleiku, she would "cover" a surgical shift, giving a nurse a well-deserved break.

Hand Salute!



Margaret Yvonne Teresa Reed
Aug. 27, 1916 – Oct. 19, 1994

In The Boonies

by Bill McDonald

Almost everyone knows about all of Bob Hope's trips to Vietnam. He would do his annual Christmas shows for TV, which were recorded live at some of the safest bases in Vietnam, while surrounded by TV cameras, reporters and lots of tanks and protective armed troops. I was at his Christmas Day show back in 1966, just north of Saigon. I enjoyed it very much. It was one of a few good memories that I have of my Tour of Duty. But, meeting Martha Raye – better known to the troops, as Colonel Maggie – was the highlight event of the year for me.

I met Martha Raye in Phu Loi, South Vietnam, in the early part of 1967. She came to our small air field base camp, without any fanfare at all. She just arrived and began causally talking to us guys there. We of course knew of her from all her old movies. I made mention to her that I wanted a photo to show my mother – “who was her biggest fan” - and she turned that into a 5 minute comedy routine about how only the real old folks remembered her. She teased me about that and then put her arms around me. She made fun of everything, including referring to herself as The Big Mouth! The guys in my unit, the 128th Assault Helicopter Company, were really impressed that she had come all the way out to see us. We never had any big name entertainers ever come through our camp; so her visit was something very special to all of us.

Later that day, I got my chance to get up on stage (the top of a flat bed truck) with her and get my photo taken with her. I found her to be a very real person, and she gave you the feeling that she really cared about you. There were neither reporters, nor TV cameras on her visit. She was there because we were there.

At that time, her reputation was rapidly growing among veterans. We heard many stories about her from

the Special Forces Units out in the Boondocks. When we would fly into almost any small SF camp, the guys would speak most highly of her. She was their hero for sure. She had been traveling to Vietnam (I am told that she paid her own way) and spent weeks, and sometimes up to six months at a time in country. She kept this pace up for over nine years during the Vietnam War. She was not there just to entertain the troops, but also engaged in nursing work wherever it was needed. She spent most of her time out in the field, or in the hospitals. She went to some of the most dangerous and remote locations in Vietnam.

She was not looking for any publicity, or photo opportunities; she went where she knew the need was the greatest. She visited base camps that no other entertainers dared to go to. She walked through the mud and rain and took the heat and mosquitoes all in stride. No one ever remembers her complaining about the food, the weather, transportation, or life in general. She spent time at places that did not have hot showers, let alone places for women to use a rest room. She had to endure the same hardships that the GIs did. Her job was to keep up our spirits and make us feel loved and appreciated. She didn't come to Nam for a visit; she came to work.. That for her meant sometimes going back and using her nursing skills and help with patients.

There were many stories going around about all the battles she had been in while in country. She did not try to shelter herself from harm's way, and she refused over and over again to allow anyone to risk his life to protect, or evacuate her to a safer place if she happened to be subjected to any kind of enemy attack. There is one story that made the rounds with the Special Forces units that we ran into, but somehow never made it into the newspapers, or on the evening news shows at that time, that I can recall. I have some of the facts but not all of them. But this story reveals the real character of this

wonderful woman warrior.

The story relates how Colonel Maggie, who was a trained RN before going into the entertainment field, went to entertain and visit a very small Special Forces camp, maybe near Soc Trang, in early 1967. I was told that she and some clarinet player, had gone to the camp to entertain, but while they were there the NVA attacked the camp. Mortar rounds and small arms fire were incoming. It appeared that there was a full-scale assault on the base camp. It was uncertain if the camp would be able to hold off the assault. The camp medic was hit, and so with her being a nurse, she took over and began to assist with the treatment of the wounded who kept pouring into the aid station.

The camp was in great danger for several hours of being overrun. The higher-ups in the military were trying to dispatch helicopters to the camp, but a combination of very bad weather and heavy fighting made that task a very dangerous mission for any crews that would be trying to come in to get the wounded, or to pull her out to a safer place. All this time, she was subjecting herself to the dangers of flying shrapnel and incoming automatic rifle rounds. She tended to the task that she was trained for – treating the wounded. She was said to have remained calm and fully active in doing her work – even with all the action taking place just outside the aid station. She kept focused on treating the wounded and did not seek shelter or safety for herself.

She kept refusing any and all rescue missions. She spent hours putting her skills as a nurse to use treating patients and even assisting with surgery. She was in the operating room for 13 hours; she then went through the aid station talking with the wounded and making sure that they were okay. It was said that she worked without sleep or rest, until all the wounded were either treated or evacuated out on a Huey (helicopter). She did not leave that camp until she was satisfied that all the wounded were taken care of.

A *Fini* Flight To Remember

by Cuff Kelso [537, 70]

April 2, 1970 was supposed to be a day of celebration for Bob Croach. He and I took off from Phu Cat on his last mission before returning to the USA, and he had quite an array of things he wanted to do on that flight. As we were wrapping up the last of those adventures, a low level foray over the South China Sea, we were diverted up from Nha Trang to Pleiku to help resupply Dak Seang, one of our regular Special Forces camps which had come under siege by the NVA the previous day. On that day Cuddy 413, piloted by Capt Dale Grigg, and Cuddy 454, piloted by Lt Richard Henry, put airdrop loads into the camp with little enemy ground fire.

However, day two of the siege brought about a significant increase in the enemy attack that included heavy fire directed against the Caribous sent to deliver needed supplies. We landed at Pleiku just as the second resupply mission of the day was ready to depart for Dak Seang. We felt the excitement of actually being able to do a combat airdrop until we learned that a C-7A manned by two good friends, Lt Steve "Choo Choo" Train and Lt Chuck Suprenant, and MSgt Dale Christensen, my favorite engineer and a fine individual, had been shot down making their drop. At that time, they were listed as missing, but would eventually be confirmed as KIAs. Needless to say, we were devastated, but the urgency to resupply the camp only increased.

Bob and I were scheduled to lead the third drop as soon as more airplanes arrived at Pleiku. Finally, more Bous from Cam Ranh Bay landed and we briefed the mission. Of the four aircraft commanders, Bob was the only one who had ever flown into Dak Seang. Because two of the Cam Ranh Bay boys outranked Bob, they had a hard time with him as lead. Numerous times enroute to the drop, the other two

higher-ranking aircraft commanders breached radio silence. At one point, I went on over to the FAC frequency, hoping to leave all the interruptions behind. But it was not to be, the others had gone over on their own and were garbaging up that frequency as well, even as the FAC, Elliot 16, was attempting to put in an air strike around the camp.

We finally got briefed by the FAC and hoped to do better than the second wave which received erroneous wind information and failed to get much of their load into the camp. Several pallets were so far outside the camp that they had to be destroyed by friendly fire to keep them from falling into NVA hands.

Now it was our turn. Down the chute we went, from East to West. Putting along at our usual 120 knots, it was a real helpless feeling until I saw an attack helicopter blow by us on the left, hosing down the enemy with machine gun fire. Still, the tracers were coming up at us as we approached the camp, but we were able to get rid of the load. As we broke North away from the camp and started to climb out, I saw our load land slightly short of the desired target, but still very recoverable. I watched the second aircraft put its load directly in the camp (he may not have had good radio discipline, but at least he could make a good drop), #3 strung his outside the perimeter, and #4 put his cargo on the runway, which was outside the camp's defenses.

Dusk was setting in as we made our way back to Phu Cat. Clouds and rain began to settle in, but we made it. Because of the day's tragedy, everyone forgot that it was Bob's last flight in-country and the greeting party that normally meets everyone's *fini* flight was nowhere to be found. After we got back to the squadron building, I dumped a beer on Bob's head and wished him well. We had flown together many times and I was sorry to see him go, yet joyful that he had survived his last mission in Vietnam. All I could think was, "What a *fini* flight that was!"

7th AF DFC Citation S.O. G-0309, 29 Jan 1971

First Lieutenant Robert E. Croach distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as an Aircraft Commander of a C-7 Aircraft near the Special Forces Camp at Dak Seang, Republic of Vietnam, on 2 April 1970. On that date Lieutenant Croach elected to fly an emergency resupply mission in direct support of the besieged camp. With complete disregard for his personal safety Lieutenant Croach successfully completed the drop while flying through heavy automatic weapons fire. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Croach reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

First Lieutenant James V. Kelso distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as a Co-Pilot of a C-7A Aircraft near the Special Forces Camp at Dak Seang, Republic of Vietnam, on 2 April 1970. On that date Lieutenant Kelso elected to fly an emergency resupply mission in direct support of the besieged camp. With complete disregard for his personal safety, Lieutenant Kelso successfully completed the drop while flying through heavy automatic weapons fire. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Kelso reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Honorary Life Members

If you know of an active member who should be recognized for "outstanding service to the Association," please submit his name to the Board for their consideration. Include the member's accomplishments (over an extended period of time) that you think make him worthy of the honor and distinction of being an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Association.



Although this isn't the regular Aircraft Commander, the men in the Special Forces camps supplied by the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing can attest to the fact that Caribou crews are "tigers" when it comes to getting them their supplies.

TSgt Ralph E. Murrell [458, 68] gives his temporary Aircraft Commander a helping hand with the checklist before starting engines.

First Waivered A/C's

by Charlie Austin [457, 67]



Charlie Austin, Ray White, and Warren Pierce (left to right above) were the first three 2nd Lieutenants in our Squadron to be upgraded to Aircraft Commander with the waiver – Pierce and I were the first two and flew our check ride together with Lt Col John B. Ducote from Wing Stan/Eval.

We had 10 of the best short field approach and landings that you will ever see – Dak Pek, Dak Seang, Mang Buk, Dak To, etc. We were just kids who

loved to fly and had a lot of private flying time, but we were good and the Check Pilot was impressed.

We would fly ever day, anywhere any time, maxing out our monthly and quarterly flight time allotment (120 hours a month / 330 a quarter). Sometimes it all seems like yesterday and yet so long ago.

It was a very solid foundation for a very successful and rewarding career.

Keeping our memories of our "Bou" days alive is very much appreciated by those of us that were there.

I sometimes forget the good times and the bad, but I'll never forget those in our Squadron ... that lived in our Quonset hut ... that never returned.

To their memory!

Crew Chief of 63-9719

If you were the crew chief of 457th TAS Caribou 63-9719, please contact

pathanavan@aol.com

or 210-479-0226

Delbert Lockwood

by Jon Drury [537, 68]

One of the finest officers I ever served with was Delbert Lockwood. He was clean cut, professional, personable, and a real gentleman. He came during the second half of my year at Phu Cat (Spring 1969), when we moved into newer, brick barracks. Early, we discovered that for both of us faith formed a meaningful ingredient of life. In the evenings we would share our journey of faith, deepen our friendship, and as for all aviators, shared war stories about flying. We were both Aircraft Commanders, so we did not have the opportunity to fly together.

He came to keep a broken R-2000 cylinder in his room. On a mission he flew out of An Khe, a cylinder failed completely and the engine steamed fire out of the top of the engine. Delbert feathered the prop and shot the fire bottle to the engine with no effect. An engine fire is one of the most critical emergencies an aviator faces. He returned to An Khe, shut down, and discovered that the failed cylinder had separated from the engine and jammed in the cowling. When it was removed, it became a display in his room.

Missions into Ben Het in June of 1969 were seldom routine. Delbert flew one of the dangerous airdrop missions and received the Purple Heart for a wound to his face received when an enemy round hit part of the aircraft and debris sprayed his cheek.

After I went on to C-118's at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, I saw him once at Cam Ranh Bay. After Caribous, he went to fly C-130's out of Taiwan and his aircraft was lost on a mission. I was sorry to lose this great friend.

It was a special pleasure to honor Delbert's memory at the Fall 2011 reunion of the C-7A Caribou Association, in Dallas, TX, and to have his family present. I often wanted to pass along to his family my memories of this great man. Along with the family I grieve his loss.

Tech Rep

by Anson Lang [P&W, 68]

Liquid lock or, as it is sometimes called, hydraulic lock, is a condition peculiar to reciprocating engines and radial engines in particular. It is caused by oil draining past the piston rings into the combustion chambers of the cylinders below the horizontal position on the engine. It happens mainly in the very bottom cylinders No. 7, 8, and 9. It can be alleviated by proper scavenging of the engine before shut down.

When motoring the engine through, with the starter, before starting, if the engine begins to rotate then suddenly stops, do not attempt to motor it further. Do not attempt to relieve the liquid lock by rotating the propeller in the direction opposite rotation. This will suck the oil back into the induction system and when the engine is turned with the starter, the oil can be pulled into the cylinders and cause the liquid lock again. Do not attempt to force the engine through the lock by hand pulling the propeller. This will cause damage to the pistons and will bend the connecting rods.

The correct method for clearing liquid locks is to remove the front spark plugs from the lower cylinders and allow the oil to drain from them. Install new spark plugs and rotate the engine again with the starter. In rare cases a second liquid lock is experienced. Repeat the clearing procedure.

2014 C-7A Reunion

Based on the straw poll at the reunion, the Board has selected Fort Walton Beach, FL for the 2014 reunion. Plans are to visit the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola and the USAF Armament Museum at Hurlburt Field.

We will be at the Ramada Plaza Beach Resort with beach front, tropical gardens, pools, waterfall, and great reputation for hosting military reunions.

Last Day

by Rick Zastrow [535, 68]

August 31, 1969 was my last day and night in country. All equipment and weapons were turned in and Fred Bynum and I were ready to go. We celebrated all day and into the night with our envious friends.

Around 8 PM, nature called, as she often does when drinking beer all day, so we headed to the nearest latrine. While standing doing our business and looking thru the screening at the flight line, we noticed mortar rounds walking in. I looked at Fred and said, "Why they got to do this on our last night in town?"

Outside the latrine was a bunker, but alas, we had been warned when we first got to Vung Tau not to use it – some Army guy went in and was bitten by a cobra hiding in a corner. So, until that day, neither Fred nor I had been in any bunker.

We decided, under the influence of our bravery juice, to risk it anyhow. We got down on our hands and knees at the entrance, with Fred in the lead using his trusty Zippo to light the way. As we slowly made our way in, watching carefully for reptiles – what happens but the whole place lights up!

I rolled over on my butt looking up to see lights on and Al Teasley, our medic, standing over us. He asked "What are you idiots doing?" I, with great indignation stated, "We're looking for snakes."

He just shook his head and said, "Why didn't you turn on the lights?"

How To Start A Fight

My wife was hinting about what she wanted for our upcoming anniversary.

She said, "I want something shiny that goes from 0 to 150 in about 3 seconds."

I bought her a bathroom scale.

And then the fight started !

View of A Reporter

in *Caribou Clarion*, Feb 1968

Mist was falling over the fog shrouded hills of central Vietnam as a C-7A Caribou of the 483rd TAW droned monotonously onward carrying oil and "beef-on-the-hoof" to a Special Forces camp. Suddenly, the pilot slowed the plane to near stalling speed, then dropped down between the cloud layers and landed smoothly on a 1,000 foot dirt strip adjacent to the An Lac camp (VA2-97).

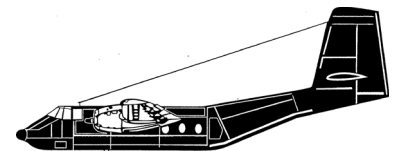
A harrowing landing? No. An exciting mission? No. It was simply another routine cargo errand flown by the men of the 483rd. Yet, to the personnel of the An Lac Special Forces camp and to those stationed at the hundreds of other such camps throughout the Republic of Vietnam, it was a vitally important mission, supplying them with food and ammunition – literally providing them with their life's blood.

Six squadrons of C-7A's comprise the 483rd which is headquartered here (at Cam Ranh Bay). This self supporting wing is commanded by Col. William H. Mason and is responsible for supporting all operational units throughout South Vietnam.

The versatility of the C-7A makes it an ideal cargo plane for the typical supply missions in Vietnam. Its capability to be flown, fully loaded, at extremely slow speeds enables the crew to make pinpoint air drops or landings for friendly forces in the jungles and mountains.

With highly skilled pilots at the controls, an 800 foot dirt strip is all that's required to make successful takeoffs and landings.

When the pages of history finally close on this conflict, the record of the C-7A Caribou, and the men who fly it, will be prominently mentioned.



Life After The Bou

by Pete Rikeman [536, 68]

After I rotated Stateside in March 1969, I realized that there were some things a lot worse than duty in a combat zone – things such as being assigned to SAC. I spent several months hearing spellbinding tales of spending years on alert in exotic locales such as Grand Forks, Minot, and K. I. Sawyer.

I began to long for the simple pleasures of being shot at. After volunteering for every conceivable aircraft flying in SEA, I got orders for helicopter transition. I figured I'd be flying Jolly Greens, but found I was going to be a Huey gunship pilot. The Air Force had one unit, the 20th Special Operations Squadron, the *Green Hornets*, in Nam.

After training at Shepard and Hurlburt, I was sent to Cam Ranh Bay. Our missions consisted of sitting all day in Green Beret camps waiting for their recon squads to get in trouble across the border in the area of the Ho Chi Minh trail. Our weapons were 14 2.75 inch rockets and two 7.62 mini-guns, which faced out, rather than the Army configuration of mini-guns facing forward, and were fired by gunners rather than the pilot.

On 8 September 1971, we were working north around Da Nang when we got a call to cover some troops that were pinned down on the top of a cone-shaped hill. They had been dropped off with the intention of descending into the valley. They came under heavy fire, killing one and wounding one.

We flew to their position as a flight of two with two more in reserve and I and my flight lead began to circle below the crest of the hill, intending to allow the "slicks" to come over us to pick up the patrol. It was then that we realized that the Army armorers supporting us had ignored our request to be given only factory fresh, belted ammo, rather than belts put together from small remainders.

As we circled clockwise around the hill, my left mini-gun jammed. No

Above and Beyond



When visitors first enter the National Veterans' Art Museum in Chicago, they will hear a sound like wind chimes coming from above them and their attention will be drawn upward 24 feet to the ceiling of the two-story high atrium.

Dog tags of the more than 58,000 service men and women who died in the Vietnam War hang from the ceiling. The 10 foot by 40 foot sculpture, entitled *Above and Beyond*, was designed by Ned Broderick and Richard Steinbock. The tens of thousands of metal dog tags are suspended 24 feet in the air, 1 inch apart, from fine lines that allow them to move and chime with shifting air currents. Museum employees using a kiosk and laser pointer help visitors locate the exact dog tag with the imprinted name of their lost friend or relative.

problem, we just turned and circled counterclockwise. The right gun immediately jammed. I told the gunners to get whatever weapons they had and make as much noise as possible while I fired our rockets, since I was unwilling to pull off the target while troops were under fire. Luckily, we took no hits and successfully extracted the patrol without further casualties.

After completing my tour, I spent the rest of my time in the Air Force at Hurlburt, and later joined the Colorado Army National Guard to fly helicopters out of Buckley.

You Might Be A Maintainer If...

You've ever made a new pilot buy you a beer just to put his name on the canopy frame.

You have ever been tackled, duct taped to a tow bar, covered in PET and sand, egged, sour-milked, peanut buttered and jellied, and slapped under the emergency wash station in 30 degree weather.

You've ever worked weekend duty on a jet that isn't flying on Monday.

Weather Briefings

by Joel Rosenbaum [Det 18, 68]

One of the items I saved from my one year tour of duty in Vietnam was the stationary from the Visiting Officers Quarters (VOQ) at McChord AFB, WA. I stayed there overnight to make the morning charter flight from McChord to Cam Ranh Bay (CRB). The name of the VOQ, *The Monsoon Inn*, was both appropriate and ominous. The name should have been the name of the 483rd TAW command post.



The term monsoon just means “seasonal wind.” Thunderstorms and rain showers in Vietnam during the monsoons are dependent upon the wind direction and geography. In Vietnam, the two monsoon seasons are the Northeast Monsoon and the Southwest Monsoon. Unlike fall, winter, spring, and summer, there is no specific date for the start of the monsoon season. There is only a range of about a six week period. Generally, the Southwest Monsoon begins sometime in May and ends in September. The Northeast Monsoon begins in October and ends in February. There are short transitional periods between each monsoon.

The start of each monsoon season depends on the movement of the Intertropical Convergence zone. This is the reason why a specific date cannot be fixed for the monsoon season well in advance. Forecasters note the change in wind directions as the Intertropical Convergence Zone moves toward and away from the equator. In Southern Vietnam, the Northeast Monsoon results in showers and cloudiness along the coastal region, but it is dry inland. In Northern Vietnam, most of the country is blanketed by rain and low clouds.

During the Southwest Monsoon, there are heavy thunderstorms west of the Annam mountains away from the coast. Most of the time, the Annam Mountains kept the thunderstorms away from CRB. You could see them building over the mountains to the West. Only a few times during the Southwest Monsoon did they slip over the mountains and affect air operations at CRB.

Forecasting the weather in Vietnam is very different from forecasting for stateside bases. I was fortunate to attend a Tropical Forecasting course at Chanute AFB, IL before reporting for Vietnam duty. The usual tools of forecasting in the continental U.S., such as analyzing isobars (lines of pressure), cold fronts, warm fronts, and occluded fronts, were not useful in South Vietnam. Analysis of winds, called streamline analysis, and detection of small speed maximums in upper levels were critical in forecasting and analyzing the weather in Vietnam. A thorough knowledge of the climatology available for the air bases was also very useful. Persistence and Climatology were two useful tools in forecasting Vietnam weather.

As chief forecaster for Detachment 18, 30th Weather Squadron at CRB, I alternated responsibilities with the detachment commander for giving the daily weather briefing to the 483rd TAW command post in the morning and the daily weather briefing to the 12th TAC Fighter Wing in their auditorium in the afternoon.

The 483rd TAW staff were easier to brief and the setting was much more comfortable. Overlays were prepared in advance for the weather at CRB and the outlook for the next few days. Forecasts for the regular destinations requested by the 483rd TAW were presented in overlays. Any developing typhoons were presented with location and forecast tracks. A typhoon is the same as a hurricane, but, West of the International Dateline, they are called typhoons. Because the Pacific Ocean is so much larger than the Atlantic,

the typhoons have much more area to grow and strengthen and can be more destructive than their Atlantic Ocean counterparts.

Typhoons were of two concerns to the 483rd TAW. The first concern was for any Caribou being ferried from the West Coast to Vietnam. The other was for possible evacuation of Caribous if the track came too close to CRB. This occurred with Typhoon Nina which came ashore at CRB on November 28, 1968. Fortunately, the typhoon came apart just at it came ashore and I think the maximum wind gust was 45 mph. However, I do recall there was lots of rain. The Caribous at CRB evacuated in advance of Typhoon Nina. Col. Turk humorously joked at a later briefing that they went to Bangkok East. To this day, I’m not sure what he meant and I was too embarrassed to ask. Apparently, it was an inside joke.

I vividly recall an F-4C accident at CRB that required the Caribous to follow an unusual takeoff procedure. On January 27, 1969, an F-4C from the 559th TFS of the 12th TAC Fighter Wing was scrambled from the alert pad for a close air support mission just before sunrise. The F-4C struck the runway barrier, veered off the runway, and one of its bombs exploded, killing both the pilot and back-seater. There were virtually no takeoffs or landings I can remember for some time after that. However I do recall Caribous taking off in a direction opposite from what they usually used at that time of year. In January, the prevailing wind direction at CRB was from the North at 11 mph. Takeoffs are usually into the wind, but on that day Caribous were taking off in a Southerly direction. I could only assume it was to avoid the accident site and their short takeoff requirements gave them more flexibility.

Several times during the year, at their request, I gave a lecture on the weather and climate of Vietnam to the Army 0-1 Bird Dog pilots at the Army Aviation

Continued on Page 25

Weather (from Page 24)

airfield at Dong Ba Thin, across the water from CRB. Their attitude about aircraft damage and accidents in Vietnam was very different than the 483rd. The Army tried to write off accidents as a combat loss (editor: The Air Force did the same. See *Rules of Engagement* in Newsletter 19-1, May 2008). If one of their aircraft crashed into a mountain it was a hostile Vietcong mountain. In contrast, at a 483rd briefing an officer was upset because a Caribou returned from a mission with some bullet holes. The officer demanded details of the altitude the Caribou was flying when hit and did the crew do everything they could to avoid hostile fire.

The difference between the Air Force and the Army in Vietnam also extended to the appearance of buildings. The Army felt that in a war zone why paint and spruce up a building when it may become splinters in a hostile attack. The USAF had a program, through its civil engineers, to provide paint and rollers to any unit that wanted to beautify its living quarters. We negotiated with an Army Sergeant at the Dong Ba Thin mess hall who desperately wanted to paint his mess hall, but the Army refused supplies. We traded him paint and rollers we got from the Air Force civil engineering office to improve enlisted men's quarters and traded them to the Army Sergeant for steaks, potatoes, and salad for a party for our enlisted men.

As Chief Forecaster, I also had the responsibility of meeting Weather Officers arriving at CRB from the States on their way to other bases in Vietnam by Caribou. I would get them fatigues and bring them to the Vietnamese tailor shop on the base to have their name tags and ranks sewn on. I remember one officer who noticed, when we picked up his set from the tailor, that the Vietnamese woman sewed his name and "United States Air Force" upside down, so we made her redo it. We attended Tropical Forecasting school together and he was involved later with the

forecast for the ill-fated Iran hostage rescue mission.

I was involved with some unusual operations at CRB. An Air Force weapons development team from Kirtland AFB arrived and requested support. The operation was called Commando Vault. It involved dropping a 15,000 pound bomb from the rear of a C-130 with a parachute to create a clearing for a helicopter landing pad for two helicopters. The movies they showed us of the training drops were scary. The explosion looked like the mushroom cloud from an atomic explosion and where there had been trees was a completely flat area devoid of all vegetation.

I understood that the C-130 would drop its bomb in the morning and then fly regular transport missions the rest of the day. Today, these bombs are described as Daisy Cutters. Initially our weather detachment provided weather support for these operations out of CRB. I often wondered if the C-7A had the ability to carry this type of load.

C-7A loads once came up in a discussion with one of the non-rated staff members as we were preparing our briefings for the 483rd at the command post. The officer commented about a recent mission where he rode along on a C-7A. He remarked that the saddest thing he ever saw was body bags being loaded onto the Caribou on his trip. To this day, that conversation still haunts me.

My experience with the staff at the 483rd at the command post was a very positive one. For the most part, I can say the same for the 12th TFW, except for one Colonel. He swore that he landed in fog that our weather observer failed to report. Having come to CRB after serving as a weather officer at Otis AFB, MA the fog capital of the U.S., I am very familiar with fog and there was none that day and it was a very rare occurrence at CRB. As a 1/Lt., I let him put on a show at the afternoon 12 TFW daily briefing by yelling at me that our weather observers nearly killed him by not reporting fog. Three days later,

one of the F-4C pilots called me aside quietly and told me that the Colonel forgot to turn on his defogger on landing and would not admit it, but blamed poor weather observations.

While I can't tell you what I had for breakfast three days ago, my Vietnam experiences are as vivid as if they occurred yesterday. I can recall the rain beginning to fall shortly after darkness fell during the Northeast Monsoon, the first thunderstorm in late April 1969 marking the approach of the Southwest Monsoon, and watching two shows at once on RMK-BRJ hill, also called Herky Hill for the C-130 transient crews billeting there. One show was The Beatles' "Yellow Submarine," the other was a C-47 "Spooky" gunship working over Hon Tre Island near Nha Trang. The tracers put on an awesome light show.

I was also fortunate to have some Army 14th Aerial Port Officers living in the Quonset hut that was home for a year. My charter flight returning me to the States after my year tour was scheduled on a Seaboard World Airway charter. They did not have a very good reputation. They were often late and one of their Vietnam charter flights with servicemen aboard strayed over the Russian held Sakhalin Island and was forced down by Russian fighters. They were held until negotiations freed the plane, crew, and U.S. servicemen. This would not be a good way to end a Vietnam tour and my friends in the 14th Aerial Port graciously rearranged my transportation to a more reliable carrier.

Computer Woes

My memory really sucks, so I changed my password to "incorrect." When I log in with the wrong password, I get the reply, "Your password is incorrect."

Help!!!

Check your email address on our web site, <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/>. Send any change to:

pathavavan@aol.com

Two Trash Haulers At Mach 3+

by Lee Shelton [459, 67]

As my September 1967 graduation date from Undergraduate Pilot Training drew closer to the time when we would “select” our first operational aircraft, based on final class standing. At that time in our history, everyone in every class knew their assignment would take them to Vietnam; you just weren’t sure what you would be flying when you arrived there. Maybe not immediately, but eventually we were all sure to go.

My “first choice” in the block of available aircraft was an F-100 Super Saber. My second selection, for reasons known only to me and perhaps God, was the Canadian-built, DeHavilland C-7A Caribou, a piston-powered, STOL (Short Take Off and Landing), tactical transport aircraft. Perhaps God also knew that I would have killed myself in the F-100, so he and I gratefully accepted our C-7A assignment. I was to be a bona fide “trash hauler.”

If any aircraft matched its nickname, it was the Caribou with its high wing, sweeping high tail, exposed butt, pug nose, and crane-like main landing gear. The real beauty of all this airborne ugliness was its unmatched ability to deliver 5500 pounds of literally anything into abysmal Special Forces airstrips less than 1000 feet in length. In accomplishing its singular skill, the Caribou droned between deliveries at an indicated airspeed of 125 knots, making it the slowest retractable gear aircraft in the entire Vietnam theater of operation! Proves God was still looking out for me, since you could walk away from most Caribou crashes.

I absolutely loved my time in the Caribou. Assigned to the 459th TAS at Phu Cat, I spent the majority of my 1967-68 tour flying from our detachment at Da Nang. As my Air Force flying career progressed for the next two-plus decades, I often remarked that the best thing that ever happened to this

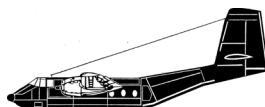
all-jet student pilot was being assigned to an underpowered, prop-driven, straight-winged, cambered airfoil ... where I truly learned how to fly.

Umpteen years later, I am an instructor pilot and flight examiner in the SR-71, flying operational sorties in the A-model and instructional missions in the B-model. When I joined the 1st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron in 1977, my squadron commander was Pat Bledsoe, who had been a O-1 “Bird Dog” FAC in Vietnam. He did his combat duty at 115 knots. As a result, Pat clearly held the “record” for the man who had flown the slowest and the fastest in his career, but Pat’s O-1 had a fixed gear. My Caribou credentials clearly qualified me for the claim to fame as the “slowest to fastest” human in manned, air breathing aircraft with retractable gear.

In 1981, Major Les Dyer was accepted into our SR-71 squadron and began his training as a Blackbird pilot. Many years earlier, Les had also begun his military flying career as a trash hauler. In 1970, Les was a Caribou pilot in Vietnam flying with the 458th TAS. You can see this coming, right??

Significant academic and simulator requirements were accomplished and Les was finally certified to begin the SR-71 flight instruction phase. History records that at 1115 Local Time on Friday, January 29, 1982, in SR-71B S/N 61-7956, Les Dyer, Blackbird student, and Lee Shelton, Blackbird instructor, dropped off their assigned KC-135Q tanker with a full, 80,000 pound load of JP-7 and began the acceleration to Mach 3+ above 80,000 feet.

Never before and never since had two aviators, previously qualified in the slowest retractable gear aircraft in the USAF inventory, flown together in the world’s fastest aircraft! We were a rags-to-riches pair and we joke about our “history-making mission” to this day.



Time Passes

As I’ve aged, I’ve become kinder to myself, and less critical of myself. I’ve become my own friend.

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world, too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

Whose business is it, if I choose to read, or play on the computer, until 4 AM, or sleep until noon? I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 50, 60 and 70’s, and if I wish to weep over a lost love, I will.

I will walk the beach, in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves, with abandon, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They, too, will get old.

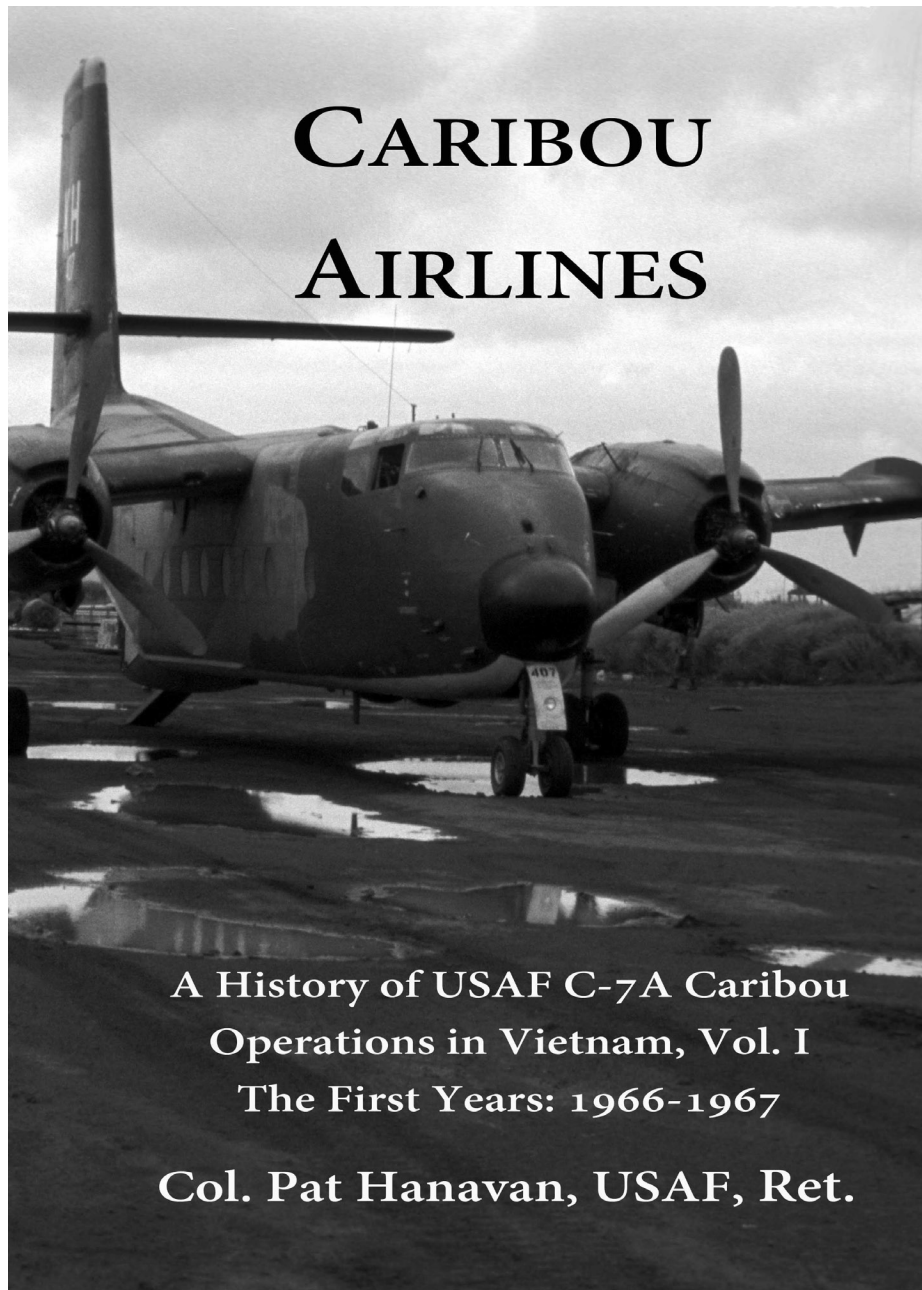
I am sometimes forgetful. Some of life is just as well forgotten. Eventually, I will remember the important things.

Sure, over the years, my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break, when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody’s beloved pet gets hit by a car? But, broken hearts are what give us strength, and understanding, and compassion. A heart never broken, is pristine and sterile, and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning gray, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don’t question myself anymore. I’ve even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be. And I shall eat dessert every single day (if I feel like it).



CARIBOU AIRLINES

A History of USAF C-7A Caribou
Operations in Vietnam, Vol. I
The First Years: 1966-1967

Col. Pat Hanavan, USAF, Ret.

Bou Tracks or Whodunit?

Rumor has it that what seemed to be the “tracks” of a Caribou on the sandy beach of a small island off the coast of Vietnam, between Phan Rang and Cam Ranh Bay, **were** actually made by a fearless C-7A crew!

Does anyone have a picture of this phenomenon or know how they came to be on the beach? If you do, please share the photo or facts with the editor.

Caribou Airlines, Vol. II 1968: Tet Offensive

Volume II of *Caribou Airlines* will be published in the early fall and will be available on Amazon.com as a print-on-demand book or a Kindle book.

Signed copies will be available at the Seattle reunion or by mail order from the author.

The writing of Volume III: 1969 will start after the reunion with a planned publication date in 2014.

Caribou Airlines is a comprehensive history of USAF C-7A operations in Vietnam. It is about aircrews, crew chiefs, maintenance officers, line chiefs, maintainers, phase inspection personnel, specialty shop personnel, supply personnel, personal equipment specialists, administration and operations personnel, commanders, staff personnel, etc. They made it possible to deliver the troops, guns, ammunition, rations, beer, soda, equipment, animals, etc. to hundreds of bases on the battlefields of Vietnam.

The 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing and its squadrons were not an airline, per se. They were tasked with supporting Army and Marine units and other customers with air landed and air dropped supplies using pre-defined, emergency, and opportune sorties to front line locations where the supplies were needed.

The history of the Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV); C-7A Caribou Association newsletters; and personal stories of those involved in C-7A operations provide the context for this book.

Signed copies of the book can be ordered from the author for \$20:

Pat Hanavan, 12402 Winding Branch
San Antonio, TX 78230-2770

Time Is Running Out!!

Check the mailing label on this newsletter. If it does not show “2013” or later, then it is **TIME TO PAY** your Bou Tax or this will be the **last** newsletter you will receive.

If the year is before 2013, you may have:

1. changed your address and the last newsletter went to an old address
2. just sent in your check
3. forgotten to send your check

DO IT TODAY.

Make your \$10 check to the **C-7A Caribou Association** and send it to:

Mike Murphy
555 Couch Ave, Apt 432
Kirkwood, MO 63122-5564

12402 Winding Branch
 San Antonio, TX 78230-2770
 Address Service Requested



Non Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Tulsa, OK
 Permit No. 1957

Memorabilia

MEMORABILIA ORDER FORM

Contact Jim Meyer at jsmeyer3019@sbcglobal.net to check availability of items.

Fill out this form and mail with a check to: **C-7A Caribou Association, c/o Jim Meyer, 3019 Oneida, San Antonio, TX 78230.**

1. Polo Shirt*	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$18.00	Total: _____
2. Colored T Shirt	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$15.00	Total: _____
3. Round Engine (R-2000) T Shirt	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$12.00	Total: _____
4. Denim Shirt (short sleeve)	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$25.00	Total: _____
5. Denim Shirt (long sleeve)	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$30.00	Total: _____
6. Denim Hat	One size fits all	Qty. _____ @ \$13.00	Total: _____
7. Baseball (white) Hat	One size fits all	Qty. _____ @ \$13.00	Total: _____
8. 457 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
9. 458 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
10. 459 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
11. 535 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
12. 536 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
13. 537 th Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
14. 483 rd Replica Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
15. Caribou Lapel Pin		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
16. Caribou Poster (12" x 18")		Qty. _____ @ \$5.00	Total: _____
17. Caribou Challenge Coin		Qty. _____ @ \$8.00	Total: _____
18. Caribou DVD – 1:10 long		Qty: _____ @ \$5.00	Total: _____
19. Caribou decal (outside)		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
20. Caribou data plate (new)		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
21. Caribou refrigerator magnet (new)		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____

Total: _____

*Polo shirt colors: White, Gray, Yellow, Red, and Light Blue (please specify)

Note: Each amount above includes cost of purchasing item and domestic shipping. Any excess funds are a donation to the Association.

Photos of items can be seen on the web site: <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/memorabilia/memorabilia.htm>