

# C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 30, Issue 2

## No Slowdown for Caribou Operations in 1969

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The air campaign against North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia and cross-border incursions by friendly forces supported from Special Forces camps and airfields close to the Cambodian border were focal points of U.S. strategic and tactical military operations during 1969, as the North Vietnamese strove to replenish supplies, weapons, and force levels in the South after the losses suffered in Tet 1968.

After the siege of Ben Het, which lasted from late May to early July, the enemy turned their attention to Duc Lap and Bu Prang, two other Special Forces camps close to the Cambodian border. North Vietnamese attacks against the camps began in late October and persisted until mid-December. The efforts of C-7A crews in support of those camps, and the other camps along the Cambodian border, were critical to both camp defense and offensive operations from those bases.

Negotiations at the Paris Peace talks began in January 1969. President Nixon assumed office in January and soon thereafter the plans for "Vietnamization" began in earnest. Force reductions were announced and completed. The level of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War began to decline.

On June 30, five AC-47's were turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force. The U.S. Mobile Riverine Force was disestablished on August 25 and the Vietnamese Navy assumed the mission. The last of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division left South Vietnam for Okinawa on November 25 after five years in-country and 120 major operations.

U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam at the end of the year numbered 483,326 compared to 536,040 at the beginning of 1969. Change was underway, but the need for all types of air support did not diminish. (from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. III*)

*Maj. George Finck (right) and Maj. Hunter Hackney (center), shown below with Special Forces Sgt. Lewis, were each awarded the Air Force Cross for their respective airdrop missions in support of Duc Lap on August 24 and 25, 1968.*



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

### Elected Officers and Board Members...

**Chairman of Board/Member at Large** - Peter Bird [535, 71]  
**President/Board Member** - John Tawes [537, 69]  
**Vice President/Board Member** - Doug Boston [458, 68]  
**Treasurer/Board Member** - Pat Hanavan [535, 68]  
**Secretary/Board Member** - Al Cunliffe [458, 68]  
**Board Member at Large** - Ed Breslin [537, 67]  
**Board Member at Large** - Tom Snodgrass [457, 70]

### Appointed Positions

**Bereavement Chairman** - Jay Baker [535, 66]  
**Chaplain** - Jon Drury [537, 68]  
**Historian** - Pat Hanavan [535,68]  
**Newsletter Editor** - Ron Lester [459, 67]  
 ron.lester43@verizon.net Phone: 703-851-6892  
**Newsletter Editor Emeritus** - Pat Hanavan [535,68]  
**Newsletter Editor Emeritus** - Dave Hutchens [459, 69]  
**Reunion 2020 Planners** - John and Fran Tawes [537, 69]  
 Doug and Ellen Boston [458, 68]  
**Webmaster** - Peter Bird [535, 71]  
**President Emeritus** - Nick Evanish [457, 66]  
**Chaplains Emeritus** - Bob Davis [457, 69]  
 Sonny Spurger [537, 68]

### Squadron Representatives

**457<sup>th</sup>** Royal Moulton [457, 66], phone 321-567-5734  
**457<sup>th</sup>** Mike Thibodo [457, 70], phone 651-483-9799  
**458<sup>th</sup>** Lee Corfield [458, 69], phone 724-775-3027  
**458<sup>th</sup>** Al Cunliffe [458, 68], phone 334-285-7706  
**459<sup>th</sup>** Bob Cummings [459, 66], phone 865-859-0888  
**535<sup>th</sup>** Cliff Smith [535, 69], phone 804-453-3188  
**535<sup>th</sup>** Mike Messner [535, 70], phone 321-453-0816  
**536<sup>th</sup>** Dana Kelly [536, 70], phone 407-656-4536  
**536<sup>th</sup>** Chuck Harris [536, 68], phone 325-465-8096  
**537<sup>th</sup>** George Harmon [537, 69], phone 417-368-2549  
**483<sup>rd</sup>** Gary Miller [483, 68], phone 262-634-4117  
**4449<sup>th</sup>** Bill Buesking [535, 70], phone 210-403-2635  
**18<sup>th</sup> AP** Bill Buesking [535, 70], phone 210-403-2635

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 Todd Snodgrass) and send it to:

Todd Snodgrass  
 2515 S. White Cliff Lane  
 Wichita, KS 67210-1924  
 magic0866@cox.net Phone: 316-684-1184

## Chairman of the Board's Corner



Another year and another reunion has passed. By all accounts, the reunion was a success and big thanks are in order for all the people who worked so hard on it. Unfortunately, this one was way outside my combat radius, so I was unable to make it.

I am sure you have all seen the news of the terrible loss of the B-17 *Nine-0-Nine* and the consequent loss of life at the Hartford, Connecticut airport in Windsor Locks. While it is great to see the "old birds" flying, some have raised the question of safety given the age of the aircraft and some of the pilots.

I think I would answer the question as it is worth the risk. We have B-52's in our active inventory that are now scheduled to fly until they are 90 years old. We also recently witnessed the loss of two brand new B-737 Max aircraft. Flying has risks no matter the age of the aircraft or the pilots. When I walk through an aircraft museum, I always feel like I am walking through a graveyard, because there is no noise, leaking hydraulic fluid and oil, and none of the wonderful sounds those machines can make.

The tragic crash of *Nine-0-Nine* reminded me that Windsor Locks is also the location of the New England Air Museum (NEAM), <http://www.neam.org>, which has Caribou S/N 62-4188 on display.

The aircraft is a *bona fide* warbird and one that I have listed in my logbook. We have yet to place a memorial bench there and the aircraft is in dire need of a paint job. It was turned back to the Army National Guard after serving many years in the Air National Guard. I have contacted the museum director about both paint and a memorial bench, but I didn't even get a response. I suppose the politics of painting an ex-Army aircraft in USAF livery is a big issue.

If anyone in the Association has any connection to NEAM, it sure would be nice to complete our mission of at least placing a memorial bench near it. I really don't think NEAM has any idea that their old and ugly Army C-7A is actually a proud Air Force warbird. They don't even mention the Air Force in their description of the aircraft.

I also think that NEAM would be a good reunion location with plenty of things to see and a banquet on the museum floor.

We are off to the early sunsets of the coming winter (at least those of us in the higher latitudes) and I hope that everyone has a wonderful holiday season as we transition to the next year.

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**31<sup>st</sup> Annual C-7A Caribou Association Reunion**  
**October 14 – 18, 2020**  
**Orlando/Kissimmee, FL**  
**Ramada Gateway Hotel**

## Minutes of 2019 Business Meeting

Al Cunliffe, Secretary, announced at 10:05 AM that a quorum, 63 members, was present.

President, John Tawes called the meeting to order at 10:05.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bob Davis.

Invocation was given by Jon Drury.

A motion to adopt the agenda as published was made by Bob Neumayer, seconded by George Embrey, and carried unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes of the 2018 business meeting as published on the Association Website and included in the registration packet was made by Wayne Brunz. The motion was seconded by Marty Hillman, and passed unanimously.

### Officer and Committee Reports:

*Secretary Report:* Al Cunliffe:

The secretary presented a report on the motions considered and passed by the Board of Directors for the previous year.

20180910: Title: Elect a Chairman of The Board, Peter Bird continues as COB.

20181002: Title: Memorabilia Inventory. Revised the list of items carried and raised the total value of the items on-hand.

20190517: Title: Denver Reunion Budget. Approved the budget for the 2019 Reunion.

Motion to adopt the Secretary's Report was made by Chris Nevins, seconded by Don Asbury, passed by acclimation.

*Bereavement Committee Report:*

Jay Baker was unable to attend. Pat Hanavan provided a report of the previous year's activities, which consisted primarily of providing a letter of condolence or suitable condolence card to the deceased's family, and an offer for the widow to become an Honorary Associate Member of the C-7A Caribou Association, if they so desire.

*Audit Committee Report:* Pat Hanavan provided a review of the audit committee's finding. There were no discrepancies noted.

*Treasurer's Report:* Treasurer, Pat Hanavan, provided a summary of the Association's financial status, which was also included in the registration packet given to each attendee.

*Report on the Roster:* Pat Hanavan provided an update of current membership. We have 788 active members, 269 inactive members, 10 Honorary Lifetime Members, 47 Honorary Associate Members, and 7 Friends of the Association. There are approximately 7,410 names listed on the roster, of these 965 are deceased.

*Reunion Committee Report:* Pat Hanavan. Orlando/Kissimme is confirmed for the 2020 Reunion, October 14-18. Future sites being considered are San Diego, Atlanta, and Macon.

*Nominating Committee:*

Chris Nevins, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, reported on the work of the Nominating Committee to the Board of Directors. Their report represented the following names for positions on the Board of Directors:

President: John Tawes

Vice President: Doug Boston

Treasurer: Pat Hanavan

Secretary: Al Cunliffe

At-Large/Webmaster: Peter Bird

At-Large Members: Tom Snodgrass  
Ed Breslin

### Old Business:

The Caribou at Edwards AFB has been painted and is awaiting movement to their museum site.

Warner Robins AFB has expressed a desire to display an R-2000-7M2 alongside their Caribou when it has been restored and placed on display. The Association has sourced an engine from Sun Air Parts.

The engine is currently at Edwards AFB awaiting opportune airlift onward to Warner Robins AFB.

### New Business:

*Memorabilia for Warner Robins:* A Weight and Balance computer has been located for donation.

Marty Hillman has his logbook that documents his providing the Aircraft Commander checkout to then 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant John Jumper. The logbook will be scanned and the original provided to the museum.

*Website Maintenance:* Peter Bird has been suffering from macular degeneration for some time. Peter and Pat are working on improving the website and ultimately transferring maintenance of the website to a software development house.

*Newsletter:* Ron Lester, Newsletter editor, made a plea for more Newsletter input, particularly a request for each member present to submit a story.

*Election of Officers:* A call for open floor nominations was made to the members by Chris Nevins, the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. No floor nominations were received. Stoney Faubus made and Pat Hanavan seconded a motion to elect the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee. Motion passed by acclamation.

*Free Room Nights:* Winners of a free room night were: Bob Koop, Rick Patterson, Andy Quillope, Chris Nevins, Bill Ricks, Allen Shanahan, Larry Martwig, and Doug Schoenhals. Two spares were also drawn, David Toon, and Link Spann, but only 8 free nights were confirmed by the hotel.

### General Discussion:

535<sup>th</sup> TAS won the Caribou Bowl, by one question.

Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. Allen Shanahan moved for adjournment and Clyde Wilson seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55.  
Respectfully submitted

Hillis "Al" Cunliffe  
Secretary  
C-7A Caribou Association

## 2019 Reunion Attendees by Name

Aubray and Judy Abrams  
 Dick and Susan Bailey  
 Yogi and Judy Behr  
 Doug and Ellen Boston  
 Paul and Terry Bowen  
 Wayne and Joyce Brunz and guest  
 Brad Brunz  
 Allen Cathell  
 Tom and Chantell Collins  
 Lee and Donna Corfield  
 Bruce Cowee  
 Al and Shirley Cunliffe  
 Don and Dottie Dana  
 Bob and Peggy Davis  
 Tom Dawes and guests Niko and  
 Meg Goedde  
 Marlin Dietz  
 Jon and Bev Drury  
 Steve and Sue Elsasser  
 George and Kim Embrey  
 John and Peggy Eppolito  
 Stoney and Melva Faubus and guests  
 Gary Faubus Jr. and Angie Faubus  
 Rich Fox  
 Hal Gayer and guest Dale Runyon  
 Frank Godek and guest Ellie  
 Matthews  
 Pat and Alicia Hanavan and guest  
 Alicia Wright  
 George and Rebekah Harmon and  
 guests Tony and Andrea Harmon  
 Chuck Harris  
 Wyatt and Annell Heard  
 Rick and Debbie Hedrick  
 Glenn and June Helderbran  
 Martin Hillman and guest Margie  
 Wright  
 Pat Howe  
 Hub Hubbard  
 Chuck Jordan  
 Bob and Gail Kopp  
 Dave and Chris Kowalski  
 Gene Lambert  
 Jim and Sandy Laney  
 Dave and Debbie Larson  
 Mike Lavelle  
 Gene Lehmann and guests Janet and  
 Tom Lehmann

Ron Lester  
 Doug Lewis and guest Cindy  
 Pederson  
 \*Bobby and Keren Mack  
 George and Sandy Malamatos  
 Larry and Marva Martwig  
 Ken Mascaro  
 Bob Miller  
 Joe Moody  
 Bob and Iola Neumayer  
 Chris Nevins  
 Harry Norton  
 \*John Oxenham and guests Joel  
 Dewey and Ann Oxenham  
 \*Jim Page  
 Rick and Antoinette Patterson  
 Pat and Barbara Phillips  
 Harry and Sue Procina  
 Andy Quillope  
 John and Pam Record  
 Sergio and Anna Reza  
 Bill Ricks  
 Mike Riess  
 Pete and Mary Beth Rikeman  
 \*Michael Rinehard  
 \*Robert Schempf and guest Stan  
 Morton  
 Doug Schoenhals and guest Theresa  
 Littlejohn  
 Allen and Karen Shanahan  
 Tom and Kathy Snodgrass  
 Ron and Judy Sober  
 Link and Jean Spann  
 John Tawes and guests Michael May,  
 Michelle Vallow, and Mike Vallow  
 Curry Taylor  
 Don and Daphne Terrill  
 John and Elaine Teske  
 Mike Thibodo  
 Billy and Carol Tidmore  
 Staton and Debbie Tompkins  
 David Toon and guest Tom Harper  
 Charlie Tost  
 Rob and Ginny Waldron  
 JW and Donna Williams  
 Clyde Wilson

\*Indicates first time attendee.

**Univeristy of Colorado AFROTC  
 Det. 105** is the seventh largest of the  
 145 AFROTC detachments in the na-  
 tion, with approximately 200 cadets.

AFROTC Det. 105 Color Guard  
 members and our guests at the reunion  
 were:

Cadet Major Sebaston Urrunaga  
 Cadet 1/Lt. Cody Harris  
 Cadet 1/Lt. Zach Mason  
 Cadet 1/Lt. Lucy Pattillo

## Attendance by State

AL	4	MD	2	OK	2
AR	1	MI	1	OR	1
AZ	4	MO	1	PA	4
CA	5	MT	1	SC	1
CO	6	NC	4	TN	1
FL	3	ND	1	TX	10
GA	2	NE	3	UT	2
IN	2	NH	1	VA	3
KS	1	NM	2	WA	4
KY	2	NV	3	WI	1
LA	2	NY	2	WV	1

## Attendance by Unit

	357	1
	457	11
	458	17
	459	12
	483	3
	535	14
	536	7
	537	17
	908	1
Total		83

## Two in a Row!

*Congratulations to the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS!*

The 535<sup>th</sup> TAS team won Caribou  
 Bowl VIII, taking the crown for the  
 second year in a row.

## Afraid of the Number 452

by Bob Ross [535, 69]  
from *Newsletter Vol. 19-1, May 2008*

Thirty some years after the end of my flying career I only remember one flight number and when I happen across the number 452 it still brings back a vivid and slightly frightening memory. During my first night in the squadron bar, one of the experienced pilots explained the next day's schedule postings. Types of [missions] were by number, with 452 and 453 supporting the Fifth Special Forces.

I flew my first flight as copilot the next day with an Instructor Pilot (IP). The mission was some simple passenger run and after a while I felt I was getting the hang of it. Late in the morning we landed at Ben Hoa and were informed that the airplane flying the 452 [mission] had broken down and we needed to pick up the flight number in order to fly an emergency re-supply mission with ammunition for a camp under attack.

Once airborne, after learning what the hot cargo was all about, the IP informed me that I needed to establish radio contact with our fighter escort as soon as we were near the camp. Fighter escort! I had the feeling that I must have slept through the lesson about this type of mission in Caribou crew training. Contact established.

The IP slowed the Caribou to stall speed over the camp while the two F-100's made strafing runs on both sides of the runway. As the Caribou started to stall, the IP dumped the nose 30 to 40 degrees and began a tight spiral down.

Turning final, he horsed the nose up to bleed airspeed and called for gear and flaps. Habit patterns made it possible for me to accomplish these simple tasks just in time to land.

As we rolled towards the ramp, the Flight Mechanic cut all but one tie down strap. We pivoted at the ramp end

of the runway, the last strap was cut, and we drove out from under the load on our takeoff roll skyward.

My suspicion about having missed this lesson was now confirmed. Once safely airborne I managed to say, "Hope you didn't do all that for my benefit just because I'm new."

He replied, "so much for the demonstration, next approach and landing are yours."

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## Who's in Charge Here?

by Richard Fox [459 & 458, 69]

When I arrived in Vietnam I was assigned to the 459<sup>th</sup> TAS at Phu Cat AB, but was transferred to the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS at Cam Ranh Bay when the 459<sup>th</sup> was inactivated on May 15, 1970.

In early August 1970 I was a 1/Lt. instructor pilot. Lt. Col. Jeff J. Piercy, the Squadron Commander, had already passed his DEROS (Date of Expected Return from Overseas) and he was anxious to go back to the States. His replacement, Lt. Col. William L. Aden had arrived, but the "powers that be" wouldn't let the old commander leave until the new commander had completed his in-country check and was a qualified pilot.

I was the assigned instructor and we flew a mission down to Tan Son Nhut AB to shuttle supplies to Special Forces camps in the Delta. Since I was the Instructor Pilot and Lt. Col. Aden wasn't qualified in-country yet, I was the Pilot in Command.

As soon as we de-planed at Tan Son Nhut an Army Sgt. with service stripes running the length of his sleeve hurriedly approached Lt. Col. Aden and said, "Sir, I know you have your scheduled missions, but we have a camp that has been under siege since last night and they really need ammo right away. Can you resupply them?" Lt. Col. Aden told the Sgt. he needed to talk to the Lieutenant.

The Army Sgt. thought maybe the Lt. Col. hadn't heard him, so he repeated his plea for assistance. Again, Lt. Col. Aden said, "Go talk to the Lieutenant."

The Sgt., shaking his head in disbelief, came over to me and repeated his story, "Sir, we have a camp under siege that is desperately in need of ammo. Can you fly an emergency resupply to them?" I said, "Sure, we can do that."

The Army Sgt. turned and walked away, muttering to himself about how the Air Force still had a lot to learn about the chain of command.

*Editor's Note. Dr. Richard Fox is a well-known researcher on George Custer and the Battle of the Little Big Horn. His experiences during archaeological surveys in 1984-85 resulted in the publication of his doctoral dissertation, "Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: The Little Big Horn Re-examined" (1993, University of Oklahoma Press).*

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## Paymaster

by Duane Cocking [535, 68]

Late in 1969 I had an additional duty for a short time, as the "Civilian Paymaster" for Vung Tau. I had to go up to the financial office at Tan Son Nhut AB and pick up about \$3,000 worth of "P" (piasters), take it back to Vung Tau and pay the Vietnamese civilians. Every time I went up there I was armed with a sawed-off M2 that was always loaded.

One time, after picking up the "P," I decided to stop at the Officer's Club for lunch. I walked into the club with the money and my M2. Someone from the club stopped me and asked, "Is that gun loaded?" I said, "Yes, they don't work unless they're loaded."

He was a little distressed when I unloaded it without going to the red barrel, near the door, that was made for that purpose. After that, I never went back there for lunch.

## CRB Bomb Dump Explosion!

by Daniel E. Williams  
[483 SPS, K-9, 71]  
Copyright 2004

It was a hot summer night on August 25, 1971 at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base. I was at a North Bay Kilo post in the tri-service bomb dump area when a Kilo unit got an alert. The Sierra, Whiskey, Kilo, and Tango units went on Immediate Alert. Shortly thereafter, all hell broke loose.

In my area, one of the Tango posts spotted a flash from the mountains over-looking the bay area. This instituted an "in-coming" warning over the radio to all posts.

I had been in-country for only a few months and did not fully grasp that an "in-coming" was up close and personal. In a matter of seconds, one rocket blew up in the bay in front of me and another flew overhead and exploded behind me. My dog, Ceasear [*sic*], and me ate dirt. We were not hurt, just a little shaken.

Less than an hour later, the first of many satchel charges exploded in the tri-service area. I clearly remember a Tango security policeman yelling, "There goes another one!"

The tri-service area had 200, 500, 1,000, and 10,000-pound bombs in revetment areas. There were many bombs in each revetment. The satchel charges thrown in the revetments exploded and this ignited the bombs.

I was miles from the tri-service area, but could clearly see all the explosions. When a revetment of [26 500-pound bombs] exploded, the concussion and mushroom cloud resembled a nuclear blast. There were explosions all night long and into the morning. We were very lucky there were only a few casualties.

The next night I was picked to go on post in that area. As one of the few Sergeants in K-9, I had to go. There were white phosphorous and small pellet shells scattered all over the area.

We avoided any contact with hazardous material and made it through that first night.

One thing I will always remember is that two nights later, I was on post during a lightning storm. At the first flash of lightning, I, and I'm sure others, hit the dirt.

I will never forget the experiences of good old Cam Ranh Bay, and would not trade them for anything.



*Photo by Don O'Fee 483<sup>rd</sup> Security Police Squadron © 2003. Cam Ranh Bay AB munitions area exploded and burned for two days! August 25, 1971, 0226 hours. The rocket and sapper attacks resulted in the destruction of 6,000 tons of munitions valued in 1971 dollars in excess of \$10,300,000.*

## Missed the Fireworks

by Paul M. Witthoef  
[483 CAMS, 70]

I was a 1/Lt. Aircraft Maintenance Officer at Cam Ranh Bay AB when the bomb dump blew up in 1971, but I missed the fireworks.

I had been sent to some other base for a day to observe and report on the possibility of supporting another aircraft type, although that maintenance support change never happened.

Instead of "boom-boom" all night, I enjoyed steaks and beer at the other base's O'Club with my hosts.

My roommates on the sandy hill between the ocean and base made audiotapes of the sounds that night.

Lots of additional EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) people were brought to Cam Ranh because an exploding revetment full of bombs tends to "scatter" them!

## Court-Martial of Retirees

USAF Afterburner  
Spring/Summer 2019

Washington, DC, Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court announced it had denied a petition in the case of *Larrabee v. United States*, effectively upholding the Department of Defense's authority to court-martial a retired service member.

Retired Marine Staff Sgt. Steven M. Larrabee was found guilty of sexually assaulting a bartender in November 2015, three months after he was retired. At his general court-martial, Larrabee was sentenced to eight years' confinement, a reprimand, and a dishonorable discharge. His sentence was reduced to 10 months by a pre-trial agreement.

Larrabee had argued that he was not subject to Article 2 of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which provides that "retired members of a regular component of the armed forces who are entitled to pay" and "members of the Fleet Reserve and Fleet Marine Corps Reserve" are subject to the UCMJ and to court-martial for offenses prescribed therein.

The court confirmed previous rulings that military members on the retired list are not mere pensioners, but are a vital segment of the national defense, and thus are subject to the UCMJ.

*Editor's Note. In case there was any doubt, you are never retired from military service.*

## 536<sup>th</sup> TAS Maintenance Excellence

by Chuck Stone [536, 68]

When I saw the painting of “C-7A Caribou at Special Forces Camp” in the November 2018 issue of the *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter*, I knew I had to have a print. Looking closer I knew why. The aircraft was a “Yellow Tail” and the tail number was 173. As the Maintenance Officer for the 536<sup>th</sup> TAS, Caribou S/N 62-4173 was one of the sixteen C-7A’s I became very familiar with during my tour, July 68 - July 69.



Additionally, I knew the Crew Chief was A1C James Bird. I looked through my Vietnam photos and found a photo of A1C Bird standing beside 173, “Bird’s Machine” and also one of 173 painted for the 1968 Christmas day flights to SF camps and renamed as “Clyde the Caribou for Rudolph.”

I have read many of the outstanding achievements of the C-7A flight crews. They flew all kinds of cargo into remote and difficult landing zones, including landings or airdrops under combat conditions. Teamed with the flight crews were the mostly young maintenance personnel who awaited the return of the Caribous in late afternoon every day. The maintenance men had no idea of in what condition the aircraft would return or what would be needed to launch the aircraft the following morning.



A1C Bird was part of the “DEROS Hump” replacements in the summer of 1968, when most of the experienced maintenance personnel departed in a few weeks and the mostly young, inexperienced replacements arrived over several months. When I arrived in late July, fresh out of maintenance officer school, SMSgt. Ken Kimseu was the Maintenance Superintendent, assisted by MSgt. Jim Pennington. SMSgt. Kimseu’s challenge was to teach me what I needed to know quickly, because he was a short-timer and MSgt. Pennington was even shorter. When SMSgt. Kimseu boarded his last flight from Vung Tau, I wondered and worried what was to be.

It didn’t take long to stop my worrying. TSgt. William Rhoads, SSgt. Burkett, and a couple of other SSgts. stepped-up to lead and train the increasing number of new young crew chiefs. (I apologize for not being able to determine some of the SSgt’s names.) Rhoads, Burkett, and the other SSgts. organized the young crew chiefs into groups to expedite their training along with the nightly recovery and daily launches.

One training area emphasized was the mysteries of the cargo door adjustments. I touched a cargo door one day and it dropped down. Scared the hell out of me. I went to TSgt. Rhoads to report my doings and he said he would check it out. After that I kept my hands-off things I didn’t understand.

Each morning I arrived early to sign the aircraft releases. I often found crew chiefs sleeping on their aircraft. They got more sleep staying with their aircraft than going back to the barracks for a few hours before returning for

the early morning preflight checks. A contributing factor may have been that their barracks were old French concrete warehouses. Seems I remember a dim light bulb hanging from the barracks ceiling.

At the depths of the personnel losses due to rotation back to the States, we received five airmen on a temporary basis. Unfortunately, they were the least productive members of their original units. TSgt. Rhoads assembled the “temps” in the hanger for an incoming inspection and briefing. He first removed a pair of granny glasses with blue lenses (not official issue) from one airman, then a “Peace” medallion from another, and advised all of them we needed their help to accomplish our mission. TSgt. Rhoads told one of the five to report to my office. In my office TSgt. Rhoads asked the airman if he had a complete uniform. No, was the answer. TSgt. Rhoads then presented him with two sets of fatigues.

TSgt. Rhoads and the SSgts. quickly molded the temporary personnel, the newly arrived permanent party Airmen, and the remaining “old timers” into a solid, well-organized maintenance team. The five “temps” just needed firm guidance to become good, productive airmen. Each crew chief took great pride in their aircraft. Despite the diminished numbers of maintenance personnel, they did everything they could to maintain their aircraft in a safe, reliable condition to support the flight crews and the daily mission requirements.

The professional efforts of the NCOs and airmen did not go unnoticed. A1C Bird was named Outstanding Tactical Maintenance Mechanic of the fourth quarter of 1968. He was recognized for his efforts to make his aircraft one of the best maintained with the highest reliability. His task was complicated by the fact that his aircraft had some body bags ruptured on a mission. He literally tore apart 173 apart trying to

**Continued on Page 8**

## Excellence (from Page 7)

remove the stench from the aircraft. He did succeed in making it smell more like Pine Sol. TSgt. Rhoads was named the NCO of the Month for November and then NCO of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 1968, and SSgt. John Burkett was named NCO of the Month for December.

The leadership, hard work, and dedication of the NCOs and young Airmen of the 536<sup>th</sup> established a standard of maintenance excellence.

Throughout my Air Force career, I had many exciting and varied assignments involving newer and more spectacular aircraft, and I served with many outstanding officers, NCOs, and Airmen.

But, when I tell people what I did in the Air Force as a maintenance officer, I say my favorite aircraft was the C-7A with two full-throttled, rumbling air-cooled R-2000 radial engines. The sight of numerous C-7A aircraft stretched out-of-sight after takeoff is as exciting as watching minimum interval takeoffs (MITO) of B-52 and KC-135 aircraft.

The camaraderie I enjoyed with the maintenance men of the 536<sup>th</sup> will always stand out in my memories. They were one of the finest groups of young NCOs and Airmen I served with. God bless them all.

*Editor's Note. C-7A S/N 62-4173 was one of 12 Caribous that departed Vietnam December 10, 1971 on a ferry flight to McClellan AFB, CA.*

*The aircraft experienced an engine failure past the Equal Time Point from Hawaii to California and could not quite make the U.S. coast.*

*On December 19, 1971 Caribou S/N 62-4173 ran out of gas and ditched in the Pacific Ocean west of the Farallon Islands, approximately 30 miles from San Francisco, CA. All crew members survived. A rescue diver saved pilot Capt. Donald Henderson's life, as he was seriously injured on impact with the water – but that's another story.*

## Three Days the War Became Real

by Bruce Cowee [458, 68]

I arrived at Clark AFB for Jungle Survival School in mid-May 1968. Due to the higher priority to get fighter pilots through the school and on to their assignments, a group of “trash haulers” ended up waiting close to two weeks for a class. As a part of that group, I spent time exploring Angeles City and hanging out at the Clark AFB Officer's Club.

It was at the O'Club that I met Capt. Bob Bull. We had a conversation that really gave me direction and explained how the Air Force system worked.

During dinner that evening Bob told me he was Class of 1961 at the Air Force Academy. He said that he was going back to the Academy as an instructor after he filled his Vietnam “square” by finishing his tour flying Caribous. He was happy he had that assignment lined-up, as all he wanted to do was teach. (I have forgotten the field he was going to teach, but he was very excited about his future.)

Bob asked me what my future plans were and if I intended to make the Air Force a career. I told him I really hadn't made a decision, but most likely I would complete my pilot training commitment and separate – either going back to school using the G.I. Bill or pursuing a job with the airlines.

Bob told me that if I was planning to get out I would need to file the paperwork for a DOS (Date of Separation) as soon as I reported to my squadron, the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS, at Cam Ranh Bay. That way there would be no confusion as to my intentions and, when assignments came down, I wouldn't get an additional commitment to the Air Force.

Bob was in the 457<sup>th</sup> TAS at Cam Ranh Bay. He said we probably wouldn't get to fly together, but he would look me up around the hootches.

I followed Bob's advice and filed the paperwork for a DOS as soon as I completed my in-processing to the

squadron.

A lot of the new lieutenants were reluctant to put in a DOS and they tried to convince me that I would get a terrible assignment after Vietnam with a DOS on file, perhaps a helicopter or, heaven forbid, a missile silo. Regardless of all their advice, I remembered Bob Bull's words and felt comfortable with my decision.

I had my first in-country flight on June 6, 1968, and over the next couple of months I really learned a lot.

For the most part the missions were routine and it was as close to being a bush pilot as I could have imagined. The flying was exciting and the Special Forces Camps and Montagnard villages were like something out of *National Geographic*.

Then came August 24, 25, and 26, 1968. The enemy assault of the Special Forces (SF) camp at Duc Lap began late on the night of August 22 and by August 24 the SF team and their Montagnard troops were running critically short of ammunition, food, and water.

Duc Lap, like Bu Prang and several other SF camps, was very close to the Cambodian border.

A decision was made to airdrop supplies on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Those missions were flown by 458<sup>th</sup> TAS crews, resulting in the only two Air Force Crosses awarded to Caribou crew members in the war.

Major George Finck received his Air Force Cross for flying the USAF C-7A's first night combat airdrops on the 24<sup>th</sup> and Major Hunter Hackney received his for multiple airdrop sorties on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

I had flown with both of them in my two-and-a-half months with the squadron and I remember all the squadron members waiting up for our aircrews' safe return from those missions.

Then, on August 26, Bob Bull's airplane was shot down. The crew of three, Capt. Robert Bull, 1/Lt. Ralph Manners, and A1C David Sleeper, were KIA near the Cambodian border.

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## War Became Real (from Page 8)

These were the first casualties I had experienced first-hand and it really hit me. This was serious business we were involved in, and the reality of the war struck home.

On August 28 I flew the 410 Mission with 1/Lt. Mack Oldham as the Aircraft Commander. We had talked about seeing if we could find the wreckage of Bob's airplane, so on our last leg of the day we took on some extra fuel at Ban Me Thuot and took a detour toward the crash area on our way back to Cam Ranh Bay. We found it.

It was close to one of the airstrips near the border and the crash site itself was surprisingly compact. The nose of the Caribou was smashed. The tail section had completely separated from the fuselage and lay along side the aircraft. Both wings had separated from the aircraft, but lay in-place on the ground by the fuselage. It was a sobering sight.

As a footnote, the siege of Duc Lap continued, even with continuous air strikes by day, and nightly visits by AC-47 gunships.

A few days after those daring C-7A airdrops, a B-52 strike ended the siege. In the words of one of the SF team members, the Viet Cong troops were vaporized by the strike.

My assignment coming home from Vietnam was to the 44<sup>th</sup> MAS (Military Airlift Squadron) at Travis AFB, CA, flying the C-141. Most of my fellow lieutenants who did not have a DOS on file received SAC assignments to KC-135's or B-52's and had an additional commitment tacked onto their pilot training commitment to the Air Force.

Bob Bull's advice couldn't have been more on the money.



## Navy Captain Huan Tu Nguyen's Circle of Life

from Little Saigon Inside

June 8, 2019



*On the path unwinding  
In the circle, the circle of life  
Some of us fall by the wayside  
And some of us soar to the stars  
And some of us sail through our troubles*

*And some have to live with the scars  
"Circle of Life" by Elton John / Tim Rice © Walt Disney Music Company*

As the news spread about the nomination of U.S. Navy Captain Huan Tu Nguyen to be a rear admiral, some astute students of the Vietnam War noticed the Captain's unique history.

At age 14, Nguyen arrived in Guam as a refugee right after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Seven years before, he had been badly injured during the attack by communist forces during the surprise Tet Offensive. Some of the Viet Cong (VC) pretending to be civilians had infiltrated key areas in Saigon.

Nguyen's family was captured at their home in the early morning of the first day of the fight. The VC targeted his family because his father, Lt. Col. Tuan Nguyen, was the head of an armored division protecting the city.

Both Nguyen's parents along with his six siblings and his 80-year old grandmother were executed. He was the only one in his family who survived the brutality.

A few days later, Lem Nguyen, the Communist leader responsible for the

killings, was captured. Hearing of the cowardly and heartless massacre committed by Lem Nguyen, then Brigadier General Loan Nguyen, pulled out his revolver and summarily executed Lem Nguyen at point blank range.

The image was captured by Eddie Adams and became seared into the consciousness of American public opinion. The story of why Lem Nguyen met his death in such a manner was never mentioned and the American press quickly condemned the action of General Loan Nguyen as barbaric. The photo became an iconic image of the brutality of an un-winnable war and helped galvanize the anti-war movement.

Eddie Adams won the Pulitzer Prize for the photo. However, Adams believed he had destroyed Loan's life. He wrote years later, "Two people died in that photograph, the recipient of the bullet and General Nguyen Ngoc Loan. The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera." When Loan Nguyen died, Adams praised him as hero of a just cause.

Coming to America as an orphan, Huan Tu Nguyen was determined to make the best of his life and followed his father's military career.

Soon, barring any unexpected circumstances, he will become the first Vietnamese-American to be a U.S. Navy Rear Admiral.

He will join three other Vietnamese-Americans to hold general officer rank in the U.S. armed forces.

The Vietnam War produced many tragedies, brought down administrations and a country, and destroyed lives while creating refugees and endless misery. Yet, in the circle of life, the triumph of the human spirit, of good over evil, of hope over despair, is indomitable.

*Editor's Note. U.S. Navy Capt. Huan Tu Nguyen was nominated for promotion to Rear Admiral by President Trump on June 5, 2019 and was confirmed by voice vote of the Senate on June 27, 2019.*

## The Final Raider

by MSgt. Andrew Stephens  
AETC Public Affairs  
April 9, 2019



Joint Base Randolph-San Antonio, TX (AFNS), A legendary chapter in Air Force history has come to a close. Retired Lt. Col. Richard "Dick" E. Cole, the last survivor of the "Doolittle Raiders," died April 9, 2019 in San Antonio, TX at the age of 103.

On April 18, 1942, the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) and the Doolittle Raiders in 16 B-25 medium bombers attacked Tokyo in retaliation for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The raid significantly boosted American morale in the early months of World War II.

Cole was born September 7, 1915, in Dayton, OH. He graduated from Steele High School in Dayton and attended two years of college at Ohio University before enlisting as an aviation cadet on November 22, 1940. Soon after he enlisted, Cole received orders to report to Parks Air College in East St. Louis, IL, for training before arriving at Randolph Field, TX and later, Kelly Field, TX. He completed pilot training and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1941.

While Cole was on a training mission with the 17<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (BG) at Pendleton, OR, word came that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. The 17<sup>th</sup> BG flew anti-submarine patrols until February 1942, when Cole was transferred to Columbia, SC. While there, he and his group volunteered for a mission with no known details.

For weeks, Cole practiced flying

maneuvers in the B-25 Mitchell, twin-engine propeller-driven bomber with a crew of five. [The B-25 typically needed about 3,000 feet to takeoff, but they trained to get airborne in 500 feet. The modified B-25's were stripped of all excess equipment, including their bombsights and lower turrets, and loaded with extra fuel tanks that doubled capacity to about 1,100 gallons.]

The *USS Hornet* (CV-8) left port from Alameda, CA, on April 2, 1942 with the 16 bombers and crews. It wasn't until two days into the voyage that the Airmen and Sailors on the mission were told that they were heading toward Tokyo.

With Cole as the copilot for then-Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, B-25 bomber S/N 40-2344 would take off with only 467 feet of takeoff distance because all the aircraft had to be stowed on the carrier deck and Doolittle's aircraft was the first in line.



The mission was made more challenging by the sighting of a Japanese patrol boat that spurred the task force commander, U.S. Navy Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, to launch the mission more than 650 nautical miles from Japan, farther from Japan than originally planned.

The Raiders were supposed to land at Nationalist Chinese controlled airfields, refuel, and proceed on to western China, thereby retaining the USAAF a squadron of B-25's. Now the aircrews faced increasing odds against their ability to reach the airfields of non-occupied China.

Flying at a level of about 200 feet with their radios turned off, Cole and

the Raiders avoided detection for as long as possible. In groups of two to four aircraft, the bombers targeted dry docks, armories, oil refineries, and aircraft factories in Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe, as well as Tokyo. The Japanese air defense was so caught off guard by the Raiders that little anti-aircraft fire was volleyed and only one Japanese "Zero" followed in pursuit. With their bombs delivered, the Raiders flew towards China as planned.

Unable to find the planned landing field in China, Doolittle's crew bailed out of their B-25 when it ran out of fuel after 12 hours of flying. With the help of Chinese civilians, Lt. Col. Doolittle and crew made it to safety.

The attack was a big boost to U.S. morale and a psychological blow to the Japanese, demonstrating that their homeland could and would be attacked.

After the Doolittle Raid, Cole remained in the China-Burma-India Theater with the 5318<sup>th</sup> Provisional Air Unit (PAU) as a C-47 pilot flying "The Hump," a treacherous air route through the Himalayan Mountains.

The USAAF created the 5318<sup>th</sup> PAU to support the Chindits, long-range penetration groups that were special operations units of the British and Indian armies, making Cole one of the first members of the U.S. special operations community.

On March 25, 1944, the 5318<sup>th</sup> PAU was designated the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Commando Group by USAAF commander Gen. Henry H. Arnold, who felt that an Air Force supporting a commando unit in the jungles of Burma should properly be called "air commandos."

Cole's piloting skills blended well with the unit's unconventional aerial tactics as they flew fighter cover, bombing runs, airdrops, and the airlift of troops, food, and equipment, as well as the evacuation of casualties.

Lt. Col. Cole retired from the Air Force on December 31, 1966, as a Command Pilot with more than 5,000

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## Final Raider (from Page 10)

flight hours in 30 different aircraft and more than 250 combat missions.

In his final years, he remained a familiar face at Air Force events in the San Antonio area and toured Air Force schoolhouses and installations to promote the spirit of service among new generations of Airmen.

On September 19, 2016, Cole was present during the naming ceremony for the Northrop Grumman B-21 Raider, named in honor of the Doolittle Raiders.

**Fate of the Raiders:** Fifteen of the sixteen aircraft either crash-landed or the crews bailed-out. One aircraft landed at Vladivostok and the aircraft and crew were interned by the Soviets.

Of the 80 Raiders, one was killed during bail-out; two drowned when their aircraft crash landed off the China coast; eight were captured by Japanese forces; five were interned in Russia for a year; and the other 64 found their way to safety with the help of Chinese peasants and western missionaries and eventually returned to the U.S.

Of the eight Raiders captured: three were executed and five were imprisoned with one dying in prison from malnutrition and the other four held as prisoners for over 40 months.

The Japanese exacted horrific reprisals against Chinese civilians because of the assistance provided to the Raiders.

*Editor's Note. On April 18, 2019, USAF leaders and the family of retired Lt. Col. Richard Cole said goodbye to the last of the Doolittle Raiders during a memorial ceremony at JB-SA-Randolph, TX on the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the raid.*

*"The Doolittle Raid exemplifies American defiance and ingenuity," Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said at the ceremony. "They bet big, and it worked, because nobody thought such an attack was even possible. Nobody, except those who threw out the rule*

*book, customized the airframe, its hardware, its engine, and pioneered the training and operational tactics to do the unthinkable on an impossible time line."*

## Cockpit Education for Young Pilots

by Don Loranger [459, 67]

I remember my 366 days (1968 was a leap year) in Vietnam as the time when I learned more about flying airplanes, and how not to fly them, than at any other time during my 30-year USAF career. Here are a couple of my Caribou memories.

### First Mission.

I am sure every pilot remembers his first in-country flight. We were finally flying an operational mission, and at war no less! In my case, I am sure then-Maj. Paul Peoples remembered my first mission too, because I slept in and had to be conveyed to a running Bou perched at the end of the runway.

All checklists had been completed except for me strapping in. With his great class that I have come to admire over the years, Maj. Peoples only gave me a withering look. We then took off into the hot muggy morning on what was called the "Chu Lai shuttle." It was my very first flight ever with the cockpit windows open.

All the pilots will remember the art of chart annotation and adornment. First, charts were critical, essential tools in our work. Second, if you wanted to know how long someone was into his tour, you didn't need to look for a short-timer ribbon. Instead, all you had to do was look at their aeronautical chart.

Maj. Peoples was a master artist. His chart was decorated and annotated with the FM/VHF/UHF frequencies of every possible ALCE (Airlift Control Element), artillery site, Special Forces camp, dirt strip, etc. that one could imagine. He even had marked the best places to get great ice cream and a good

lunch. Plus, it was beautifully covered in soft plastic. It was truly a work of art.

Maj. Peoples was not only a kind soul; he was a generous one as well. So much so that, even though I was the FNG, he let me use his chart – until the third sortie of the day somewhere "feet wet" east of Chu Lai.

I was leaning over to see which instrument Maj. Peoples was pointing out and explaining to me on his side of the cockpit. I leaned left in a very fluid and natural movement. My hands holding the chart shifted right. WOOSH!!! Paul's masterpiece was gone, and so was his naturally ingrained cheerfulness.

We had a few laughs about the incident over the years, but, at that moment, it was not very funny. It was, however, most probably highly classified.

Sadly, Paul Peoples, a great gentleman and officer, passed away last year.

### Upgrade Action.

For us young lieutenants just out of pilot training, Vietnam offered the huge advantage of presenting us the opportunity for an early upgrade to Aircraft Commander. Coupled with the fact that we were invulnerable, this made for a great, if sometimes exciting, combination.

Our instructors were awesome, and they made upgrade a very challenging and rewarding experience. However, it did have its challenges.

Mine came on one of my final upgrade missions with Capt. Dave Younkin. Our flight engineer was "Swoof" Swafford, one of the most knowledgeable and hardworking flight engineers on the planet.

All had gone very well on the mission, and we were doing our last shuttle into Ba To (V-272) when Dave reached UP (remember up?) and pulled the #2 engine throttle to idle while saying, "Simulated emergency, you lost #2." No problem. I flawlessly went through the emergency procedure and setup for my downwind entry.

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## Pilot Education (from Page 11)

Younkin said. “Looks great, but what will you do now,” and he promptly pulled #1 to idle too. Two-engine flame-out! No problem. I stated that I would delay the gear and flaps, then I setup on final for landing.

It was going to be close, but I knew that by ballooning over the approach end palm trees, dropping full flaps, and then rounding out sharply at the very end of the runway that I could make it.

That is just what I did, right up until about six feet above the runway when Swoof screamed out on the interphone that brief phrase that we all dread, “YOU GOT NO GEAR!”

Dave Younkin and I nearly bent the throttle handles as we jammed them forward as far as they would go. We made it. No damage done, except to our pride and our wallets, as we bribed Swoof with a case of beer on his promise to never breathe a word of that experience. He never did.

I did have some fun with Swoof years later when I was assigned as a young Major to the Pentagon. I tracked him down at the Los Angeles Air Force Station and called him pretending to be from the IG (Inspector General) with the assigned task of investigating accidents and near-accidents in Vietnam that had gone unreported. I had him for a couple of minutes, until he saw through my ruse and made an unflattering reference to my family.

I love Dave Younkin. I also love the fact that I have never, ever since landed an aircraft without checking the gear at least three times on short final, even in a Cessna 172 with fixed landing gear.

We all have many, many of these stories. I look forward to seeing more of yours. Sadly, mine fail to capture the formative experience they were for me both as a professional and a man.

I remain proud of my Vietnam service and I am most proud of the brave patriots from whom I was able to learn so very much.

## Hap Arnold, Author

by Walter S. Andariese  
*Aviation History Magazine*  
 from *Air Force Times*  
 May 12, 2019

Gen. Henry H. “Hap” Arnold’s leadership of the U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II (WW II) was extraordinary and he was the only five-star general in the service’s history.

However, during World War I (WW I) Arnold served mostly stateside with the Army Air Service, followed by difficult peacetime duty.

Frustrated by inter-service rivalries in which Army aviation always seemed to come up short, Arnold wrote a series of six books in the mid-1920’s intended to highlight the value of military aviation and promote flying to a young audience.

Then-Maj. Arnold was well qualified to write such books. A West Point graduate, he had learned to fly in 1911 at the Wright brother’s school at Huffman Prairie near Dayton, OH. He and 2/Lt. Thomas Milling were the Army’s first certified military pilots and its first flight instructors.

Arnold’s books were aimed at teenagers, but adults interested in early aviation will find them enjoyable and informative. They feature the adventures of fictional airman Lt. Bill Bruce, freshly returned from service in WW I.

The volume *Bill Bruce on Border Patrol* opens with a list of all the titles in the set under the heading “The Aviator Series – Adventures of a Young Airplane Pilot for Boys 12 to 16 Years.”

The other five titles are: *Bill Bruce and the Pioneer Aviators*, *Bill Bruce the Flying Cadet*, *Bill Bruce Becomes an Ace*, *Bill Bruce on Forest Patrol*, and *Bill Bruce in the Trans-continental Race*. Most are available today via online suppliers.

While not a combat pilot himself, Arnold was familiar with the slang, terminology, tactics, and aircraft nicknames. To enhance the book’s sense of realism, Arnold incorporated real-life



events, including an unauthorized stunt performed by 2/Lt. Jimmy Doolittle.

Maj. Arnold was not alone in his struggle to promote military aviation. Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell led the fight for a strong peacetime air force. By the end of WW I, Mitchell commanded all American air combat units in France and served as chief of the Air Service, Group Armies. By 1925, his forceful advocacy of expanded air power and criticism of military leaders gained him a reputation as a loose cannon. Twice that year Mitchell was severely disciplined for his accusations and insubordination. In March he was demoted to the rank of colonel and sent to Texas.

Then, after the U.S. Navy airship *Shenandoah* crashed in September, Mitchell’s denunciations of the “almost treasonable administration of the national defense” earned him a court-martial.

Judged guilty in December 1925, Mitchell resigned from the Army rather than accept another demotion and separation from service for five years.

In testimony during Mitchell’s court-martial, Arnold vigorously supported his fellow officer’s ideas, and he, too, was called on the carpet.

In February 1926 Arnold was given one day to choose resignation or court-martial. He opted for the trial and was immediately transferred to Fort Riley, KS. The Army preferred to avoid the public spectacle of another court-martial.

Arnold gained favorable reviews at his new post, and his future prospects improved.

**Continued on Page 13**

## Hap Arnold (from Page 12)

With a less hectic command at Fort Riley in 1926, Arnold had time to write his books. His son, then in second grade, reportedly had a reading problem, and Hap would read to him each evening from books Mrs. Arnold bought. Hap Arnold found the books poorly written. He thought he could do better and began working on his aviation books. Although earning extra money was probably not on his mind, the book royalties would later cover bills for an operation his son needed.

Arnold hoped his books might excite the younger generation enough for the adult public to notice. More importantly, as it turned out, the youngsters who read his books would come of age a decade later as the nation again prepared for war.

In 1927 both military and civil aviation were looking up. Advanced aircraft designs, construction of new airfields, and Charles Lindbergh's solo transatlantic flight in May helped boost aviation's image. Yet as the U. S. hurtled toward another world war, the Air Corps was still on a starvation diet of planes and personnel.

In 1938 Arnold became chief of the Army Air Corps, and in 1941 was made commanding general of the newly re-named Army Air Forces. Throughout WW II he was on duty most of his waking hours, seven days a week. Despite several heart attacks, Arnold persisted before retiring in 1946. In 1947 he witnessed his and Mitchell's ideas come to fruition with the establishment of the U.S. Air Force as a separate service.

From the birth of heavier-than-air flight in 1903 until Arnold's death in 1950, his career closely paralleled the history of American military aviation. Arnold's legacy in the annals of aviation history is undeniable.

Few are aware that among his important contributions were six books that helped spark dreams of flight in countless young Americans.

## The Way it Was

by Charles Sitzenstock [459, 68]  
*Newsletter Vol. 22-2, November 2011*

I recall a mission into the mountains of North Vietnam at night to recover a Mike Force team (five of our Special Forces guys and a special enemy KIA whom we took to Saigon). Those were interesting and difficult days.

Many things I experienced then were so surreal that I try to remember only the good things. Try and forget the bad and the heat, dirt and stench. There were times that were absolutely funny, crazy, cruel, and some beautiful, but always dangerous. Our youth and sense of duty was the blessing that kept the fear at bay.

Every day was an adventure, a test, and a challenge. We engineers had a hand sign that we used to give to our fellow Bou comrades as we taxied out each time. Two fists together (one above the other) the top one with the thumb up and the bottom one with the thumb pointed down. I guess the interpretation is "it could go either way today, so be careful and take care."

You never knew what you would carry or get involved in each day. You could be hauling or dropping pallets of 105's or powder, vegetables and fruits, cases of booze/beer, wounded GIs and South Vietnamese, KIAs, cows, pigs, Montagnards; drop paratroopers (with or without their dogs); extract or rescue stranded G.I.s; relocate villages of scared Vietnamese civilians to a safe area; transport a missionary and his flock of school boys; move band members to play at the closing of a forward fire base; or take and pick up a damaged/repared bird in Bangkok, then go south to Songkla, over to Phuket, north to the F-105 bases, and then over Cambodia and Laos at 10,000 feet to Phu Cat.

We heard that one of our outfits got a letter from a North Vietnamese officer thanking us for transporting his troops from one place to another (you never

knew who was coming onboard).

I once transported a Vietnamese woman (who I initially thought was a gun shot victim) who was thrown aboard at one of our stops. Later in flight, I found out she was pregnant and I helped her deliver her baby (a girl). When we landed, she got off the plane and just walked away (unbelievable people). Beautiful country, but I wouldn't want to live there or die there, as so many did.

I also remember my many C-141 missions into Nam, before and after my C-7A tour, transporting wounded back to the states or an entire cargo compartment full of ten pallets (4 wide, 2 high) of KIA caskets (our boys) to Dover AFB.

*Editor's Note. That is not a misprint in the first sentence of this story. SSgt. Sitzenstock was awarded the Air Medal for his role on a night mission into North Vietnam, September 25, 1969. (7<sup>th</sup> AF SO G-4923, 1 Dec 1969)*

*He was also awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross because his knowledge, skill, and daring were major factors in the successful gear-up landing, with minimal damage, of a C-7A at Phu Cat AB, February 7, 1969. (7<sup>th</sup> AF SO G-2166, 15 May 1970)*

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## Time to Renew!

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**Tom Snodgrass**  
2515 S. White Cliff Lane  
Wichita, KS 67210-1924

## We Will Never Forget

On 17 August 1969, **SSgt. Donald James Jr.**, 457 TAS, suffered a cardiac arrest while loading a C-7A and died.

On 11 September 1969, 537 TAS C-7A S/N 62-4187 was shot down by small arms ground fire near the Special Forces Camp at Plei Djereng, killing **1/Lt. Robert P. Weisneth**, **1/Lt. Neil N. Greinke**, **2/Lt. Charles B. Ross**, **SSgt. Frederick Wilhelm**, and a U.S. Army courier.

On 26 December 1969, 459 TAS C-7A 63-9723 was shot down by small arms ground fire as it approached Tien Phuoc, resulting in the loss of the aircraft and the deaths of **1/Lt. David B. Bowling** and **TSgt. E. J. Welch, Jr.** The other crew member on the mission, **1/Lt. Richard J. Patterson**, was seriously injured.

### Yellow River

by Christie

So long, boy, you can take my place  
I got my papers, I got my pay  
So pack my bags and I'll be on my  
way  
To Yellow River

Put my gun down, the war is won  
Fill my glass high, the time has come  
I'm goin' back to the place that I love  
Yellow River

Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my mind and in my eyes  
Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my blood, it's the place I love

Got no time for explanations, got no  
time to lose  
Tomorrow night you'll find me sleep-  
in' underneath the moon  
At Yellow River

Cannon fire lingers in my mind  
I'm so glad I'm still alive  
And I've been gone for such a long  
time from  
Yellow River

I remember the nights were cool  
I can still see the water pool  
And I remember the girl that I knew  
From Yellow River

Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my mind and in my eyes  
Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my blood, it's the place I love

Got no time for explanations, got no  
time to lose

Tomorrow night you'll find me sleep-  
in' underneath the moon  
At Yellow River

Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my mind and in my eyes  
Yellow River, Yellow River  
Is in my blood, it's the place I love

From Steve Brown [458,70] "One  
of my memorable songs of the era was  
*Yellow River*, a big hit in the 1970's.

Every time we had a USO-sponsored  
Philippine band at the club, there were  
usually three girl singers – a lead singer  
and a backup group. They would al-  
ways sing *Yellow River*, but it came our  
"Jay-loow Reeber."

I'm not sure anyone understood any  
of the words, except, "Jay-loow Ree-  
ber," enthusiastically sung by girls in  
short skirts."

*Editor's Note. "Yellow River" was  
written by Jeff Christie and recorded by  
the British band "Christie." Released  
in April 1970, "Yellow River" became  
the No. 1 hit in the U.K. in June 1970  
and later reached No. 23 in the U.S.  
The record stayed on the "Billboard"  
Hot 100 for six months and was No. 1  
in 26 countries.*

*Jeff Christie said that the song was  
inspired by the idea of a soldier going  
home after the U.S. Civil War. Since the  
song was released in 1970, many inter-  
preted it to be about a soldier returning  
from Vietnam.*



*World War II Poster*

## Words of Wisdom

There is no such thing as a natural  
born pilot. Whatever my aptitudes or  
talents, becoming a proficient pilot was  
hard work, really a lifetime's learning  
experience.

For the best pilots, flying is an obses-  
sion, the one thing in life they must do  
continually. The best pilots fly more  
than the others; that's why they're the  
best.

Experience is everything. The eager-  
ness to learn how and why every piece  
of equipment works is everything.

And luck is everything, too.

BG Charles "Chuck" Yeager, USAF

## Tribute at the Traveling Wall

by Vic Sabala [458, 68]

It's been a while since the traveling Vietnam Wall came to our town. The local newspaper announced that volunteers were needed to read the names of those listed on the wall. I called and signed up for the 2:00 AM slot since those slots were hard to fill.

When I arrived for my time there were only three or four others in the park where the wall had been set up. In the center of the park was the flagpole. On the northeast corner was a tent where tables and chairs had been set up for refreshments. The others that were there were in the tent talking. At the south end of the park was a deputy sheriff sitting in his car.

My place was in a gazebo on the northwest corner of the park where I sat at a table equipped with a speaker system. As I started reading the names aloud, one of the men from the tent came over and told me that I don't have to read the names since there was no one else in the park. So I read the names off silently from where the previous person had left off.

As I was sitting there alone in the gazebo I caught a movement in the dark on the west end of the park. Out of the darkness stepped a man that I recognized as being one of the homeless persons living under an underpass. He looked around the park, not spotting me, and approached the flagpole in the center of the park.

He stopped and gave his best military salute to the flag. Then he approached the wall that was laid out on the east side of the park. I watched him as he moved from panel to panel. Then he would stop, take a step back and salute a name he knew on the wall. He scanned the entire wall, then retreated to the flagpole where he popped his final salute and disappeared into the night.

He thought he had been unseen, but I witnessed his reverence for his fallen

comrades.

I didn't know his name, but I later heard rumors that he had been hit and killed by a passing car.

I wanted to share this tribute that only I witnessed with you. My hope is that you see the homeless vets in a different light.

For them, every day is Memorial Day.

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### **The Last Full Measure**

by Jennifer-Leigh Ophihory  
AF Magazine, May 27, 2019



A1C William Pitsenbarger, an Air Force pararescueman (para-jumper or PJ), took part in more than 250 rescue missions before he was killed at the age of 21. His selflessness and valor in the Vietnam War earned him an Air Force Cross (AFC), which was upgraded to a Medal of Honor 34 years later.

On April 11, 1966, a U.S. Army rifle company was isolated in the Vietnamese jungle, where they were surrounded and attacked by Viet Cong troops near Cam My. Two HH-43F Huskie helicopters were dispatched to help get the men out. A1C Pitsenbarger was on the second helo.

After a few difficult extractions, Pitsenbarger asked the pilot to leave him on the ground to ensure the men were properly rigged and loaded onto the aircraft so the evacuation process could be safer and faster, and so that more soldiers could fit on the helicopter.

After the HH-43 was attacked by enemy fire, his crew mates tried to extract him, but Pitsenbarger declined

rescue so he could continue his work on the ground. He alternated between attending the wounded, arming soldiers with ammunition, and returning fire. Within 90 minutes, he was dead, but many credited their survival to the man they remember as "Pits."

Pitsenbarger was posthumously awarded the AFC in 1966, making him the first USAF enlisted airman to receive the nation's second highest honor for valor in combat. His fellow PJs and those he fought alongside in Vietnam never gave up hope that his medal would one day be upgraded.

On December 8, 2000, A1C Pitsenbarger's Medal of Honor was presented to his parents.

Pitsenbarger's sacrifice and the effort of USAF and Army veterans' in their 30-year fight to honor it by upgrading his AFC to a Medal of Honor, has inspired a feature film, *The Last Full Measure*, written and directed by Todd Robinson.

The movie is based on the quest to secure the posthumous honor for Pitsenbarger and plays out "through the story of a young bureaucrat who was tasked with the job of re-investigating" the Pitsenbarger story. Through the process of interviewing veterans as part of the assignment, the investigator is "transformed from a man of total self interest to a man of total sacrifice," Robinson explains.

"That is the mythology of the William Pitsenbarger story because he was a man who was altruistic and selfless and he went down into a battle he did not have to go into. He put his life at risk and then rejected the opportunity to escape and to hear one of our veterans describe it, everybody who was on the ground would've left if they could, but they couldn't, and the one guy who could leave, stayed."

The film has an all-star cast, including Sebastian Stan, Samuel L. Jackson, and Ed Harris, with Jeremy Irvine playing A1C William Pitsenbarger.

*"The Last Full Measure"* was re-released on October 25, 2019.

## Rescue of *Apollo 11*

by Noel McCormack  
National Reconnaissance Office  
July 16, 2019

This year we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Apollo 11*'s historic voyage.

Captain Hank Brandli knew a terrible secret in the summer of 1969. The USAF meteorologist had classified information indicating danger for the *Apollo 11* crew returning to Earth. They had done it – the *Eagle* had landed. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had walked on the moon, raised the American flag, collected samples, and then blasted off for a perfectly executed lunar orbit rendezvous with Michael Collins in the command module *Columbia*.

Now they were headed home on the final leg of the trip for a July 24<sup>th</sup> splash-down in the Pacific Ocean. However, Capt. Brandli realized that instead of a heroes' welcome, the astronauts could face a watery grave.

Brandli worked at Hickam AFB, HI as a weather tracking and prediction specialist using a National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) satellite known as 417, a program later re-designated as the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP). This weather satellite supported the top secret Corona reconnaissance satellite program, which was one of the Cold Wars' most closely guarded secrets. The Corona satellites photographed "denied" areas, such as the Soviet Union and China, from Earth orbit.

Corona's weather eye-in-the-sky had its beginnings in 1961, when Under Secretary of the Air Force Joseph V. Charyk, who was dual-hatted as the first director of the NRO, arranged the organization, construction, and funding for a weather satellite program. Before long, designers, technicians, and engineers developed a series of very successful defense meteorological "birds" and ground stations.

One was at Tan Son Nhut AB where Brandli worked with the DMSP Block

4 satellite in 1966.

Brandli was not cleared for Corona while he served in Vietnam, so he was told a cover story. "I was always under the impression that we launched those weather satellites and systems for the [Vietnam] war.

It wasn't until after the weather expert left Vietnam to assume duties in support of the Corona program that he learned of DMSP's primary mission. "When I went to Hawaii in '67, it all came together," Brandli recalled. "I say, Holy Smokes, that's what this weather satellite is for – to support Corona! We wanted the best weather information so we could turn the cameras on over the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba [when the weather was clear]."

At Hickam, Brandli's weather reports and forecasts ensured that film-return capsules de-orbited from Corona satellites returned to clear skies over the Pacific Ocean. The film return capsules descended by parachute and were captured in mid-air by specially outfitted aircraft.

Few people were aware of what the Air Force meteorologist really did. "It was so top secret that I wasn't allowed to show anybody. In the 6594<sup>th</sup> Test Group that ran the C-130's that caught the film canister, there was only one guy who knew. It was wicked hush-hush," Brandli recalled.

Brandli discovered that he could use high resolution DMSP satellite data to forecast weather anywhere within the area stretching from the equator up to 25 degrees of latitude, five days in advance, which was unheard of in those days.

"We noticed violent thunderstorm weather patterns: high-level vortexes that were bird-like, almost an eagle shape. We dubbed them Screaming Eagles." In mid-July 1969, in the course of his forecasting duties, Brandli saw clearly that the *Apollo 11* astronauts were scheduled to splash down directly into the path of violent thunderstorms characterized by these destructive high-altitude winds.

"It was a crazy situation," Brandli said. "With just 72 hours to go, I had all these classified photos of a deadly 'Screaming Eagle' thunderstorm, with tops at 50,000 feet, forming over exactly where I knew the *Apollo 11* astronauts were going to come down. The storm would have ripped their parachutes to shreds. They'd have crashed into the ocean with a force that would have killed them instantly. I was the only person who knew this and, because the DMSP program and its technology were strictly classified,



I couldn't warn NASA."

Brandli brought his secret knowledge to the attention of the right people. He found out that the U.S. Navy was in charge of forecasting weather for the *Apollo 11* mission. Brandli contacted the DoD chief weather officer, Navy Captain Willard (Sam) Houston, Jr., at the Fleet Weather Center at Pearl Harbor.

"Thank God it was him, because Houston was briefed on 417 (DMSP)," said Brandli, "We had a lot in common, even though I had never met him." Brandli told Houston, "There's going to be a real problem. I want you to meet me in the parking lot of the 6594<sup>th</sup> Test Group hangar at Hickam AFB."

Houston had just arrived in Hawaii, and wasn't briefed on Corona, but he did have DMSP clearances, so Brandli took Houston to his secure office in the 6594<sup>th</sup> Headquarters building. Houston recalled, "When I got to the vault, Captain Hank Brandli literally yanked me through the door. The DMSP classified images showed all the signs of a major tropical storm forming over the splash-

**Continued on Page 17**



## Apollo 11 (from Page 16)

down site, but due to security and the chain of command, [Brandli] couldn't tell anyone. I'd arrived just in time."

Having shown him the DMSP imagery, Brandli convinced Houston the landing site needed to be changed. Although he had irrefutable proof, "Capt. Houston had to convince [Rear] Admiral [Donald C.] Davis without the photos, which were from a satellite that wasn't supposed to exist."

Houston managed to convince Davis, who responded that now he (Houston) would have to convince [decision-makers in] Washington, saying, "I don't think they'll have any choice. You'd better be right, young man!"

Davis had to reroute the entire *USS Hornet* carrier task force supporting the returning *Apollo 11* crew to the new splashdown area before he received official orders to do so. If Houston was mistaken about the storm, or if the orders didn't come, "it was a 'career-ender' for both of us, and we knew it," Houston said.

"With Rear Admiral Davis moving already, redirecting the carrier task force to a new location, I called the satellite program office to ensure that NASA's chief meteorologist declared a national emergency."

With some difficulty, NASA and the U.S. Navy made last-minute changes to *Apollo 11*'s reentry and splashdown profile, saving the astronauts and their mission.

In 1995, when President Clinton declassified the Corona project, Houston and Brandli could at last reveal their secret. "When you look back," Houston said, "so many things had to happen to make it come out right. They sent reconnaissance aircraft out to check [the weather], and we were right on the money." Brandli added, "I never knew that for thirty years."

We should take a minute to appreciate the important role these people played in support of the *Apollo 11* crew

and mission, described as the greatest technological achievement of all time.

*Noel A. McCormack is a senior research historian in the History Section of the NRO Center for the Study of National Reconnaissance.*

*He based this article on his June 14, 2005 interview with retired USAF Lt. Col. Hank Brandli and a December 13, 2004 Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine "Contrails" article, "Saving Apollo 11," by retired USAF Lt. Col. Hank Brandli and Barbara Honegger.*

## Wrong Way!

by Steve Hassett [458, 68]

In the fall of 1968, I reported for C-7A school. Half of the class was like me, Second Lieutenants fresh from Undergraduate Pilot Training. The other half was rated Majors and Lieutenant Colonels. The Air Force had a policy that no one would have to do a second SEA (Southeast Asia) tour until everyone had a first. We called our class the "infantile" and the "senile."

On one of my early Vietnam flights in December 1968, I was the copilot and one of my "schoolhouse" Lt. Col. classmates was the pilot. We were on a 1<sup>st</sup> Cav shuttle from Bien Hoa to Ban Me Thout (BMT) and back.

As we were headed back to Bien Hoa, the Pilot called for an ADF approach. So, as Copilot, I dialed in the Saigon radio station and watched the arrow spin. As some may remember, BMT was up in the mountains and that afternoon the clouds were building.

The Lt. Col. turned the aircraft and started to follow the TAIL of the arrow! I was immediately stuck in a dilemma. What should a slick wing 2/Lt. Copilot do about a Senior Pilot Lt. Col. going the wrong way?

We were in the clouds with mountains nearby. Should I wait a little while and hope he sees his mistake or say something right away? I was nervous.

He was an O-5 and I was an O-1. I thought it over very carefully and, as tactfully as I could, I said, "SIR, I think we should be following the head of the arrow."

The Lt. Col. replied, "Oh yeah, that's right." Then he did a 180-degree turn and headed in the right direction to Bien Hoa.

An aircraft was saved and my respect for rank continued.

## Hmong Veteran Burial Rights

by Frederick Melo  
St. Paul Pioneer Press  
July 12, 2019

Long Tieng with its 40,000 inhabitants was the second most populous city in Laos, though it did not exist on any map of its era. Long Tieng was the headquarters of the Laotian Hmong leader general Vang Pao with a CIA-supported military base and airfield.

Officially, there was no war in Laos. In reality, men like Pang Mang Thao, president of the Minnesota Lao Veterans of America, spent much of the 1960's and 70's under the tutelage of the CIA as they attempted to block the North Vietnamese from using the Ho Chi Minh Trail supply routes through Laos. The Hmong also prepared to defend the Laotian monarchy from a Communist takeover.

The war against Communism in Laos ended badly, with thousands of Hmong executed, forced to flee across the Mekong River, or sent to Communist re-education camps. Many spent years in massive refugee camps in Thailand before being relocated to unfamiliar new lands like Minnesota.

Since their arrival in the U.S. in the late 1970's, Hmong survivors of the "secret war" in Laos have asked the U.S. government for military veterans benefits, with limited success.

**Continued on Page 18**

## Hmong Veterans (from Page 17)

A “Laos and Hmong Memorial” etched in granite was dedicated at Arlington National Cemetery in 1997 and in 2000 Hmong veterans became eligible for fast-tracked U.S. citizenship through the Hmong Veterans’ Naturalization Act.

In 2018, President Donald Trump signed into law the Hmong Veterans’ Service Recognition Act, which allows Lao-Hmong veterans to be buried in U.S. national cemeteries. The law, however, only recognizes veterans who became naturalized U.S. citizens after the year 2000.

By some estimates, the Service Recognition Act “excludes about half the [Hmong] veterans because of a technical problem in the bill,” said Philip Smith, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Analysis. “We’re looking for a technical correction.”

Pa Lee addressed a small crowd at the Lao Family offices while standing next to her father, William Lee, who had worked for the CIA in Laos from 1960 to 1975. He became a U.S. citizen in 1990. “My father would not be eligible [under the legislation],” she said, calling upon political leaders to expand the Service Recognition Act before too many Hmong veterans pass away.

## Secret War in Laos

Air University Press  
July 9, 2019

Maxwell AFB, AL, Air University Press’s latest book release is *Special Air Warfare and the Secret War in Laos: Air Commandos 1964–1975* by retired Army Col. Joseph D. Celeski.

Through extensive research and interviews with veterans who were there, Celeski captures the story of special air warfare and the Air Commandos in Laos during what had been a U.S. government secret war. He sheds light

on the involvement of Air Commandos serving in Laos as trainers, advisors and clandestine combat forces to prevent the communist takeover of the Royal Lao government. Veterans’ personal documents and pictures offer unique insights to this period.

This story contributes to understanding the wider war in Southeast Asia and lineage of the U.S. Special Operations Forces Command by filling in some of the gaps of the unknown contributions of the Air Commandos.

*The book may be downloaded at:  
[www.airuniversity.af.edu/AUPress/](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AUPress/)*

## Phase Docks at Phu Cat

by Wayne Tuck [537, 70]

There were two C-7A phase docks in use at Phu Cat Air Base during 1970. While both the 459<sup>th</sup> TAS and 537<sup>th</sup> TAS docks were equipped with fixed maintenance stands under both wings, the 537<sup>th</sup> enjoyed the benefit of a full roof as compared to the 459<sup>th</sup> dock, which had just a small roof over each engine.

The phase docks were where the heavy work took place:

Main landing gear capsules were removed for inspection and lubrication which required six men to manually lift them into place while a seventh technician installed the pin.

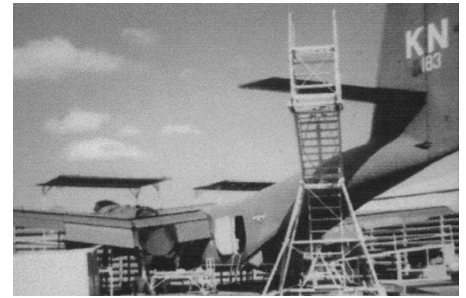
Flight surfaces were removed for inspection and bearing replacement.

Augmenter tubes were removed for carbon removal, inspection and welding as needed.

Sheet metal repairs were made where the regular crew chief could neither reach for inspection nor repair during routine maintenance.

The aircraft had all inspection panels removed and each member of the phase dock crew was assigned a separate area to inspect.

It was routine to find bullet holes, oil leaks, broken safety wire, and defects not visible on regular pre-flight



459<sup>th</sup> TAS Phase Docks



537<sup>th</sup> TAS Phase Docks

inspections.

The schedule to get these inspections accomplished on a timely basis was tight. Phase dock crews worked long hours, usually seven days a week, many times from dawn until the late hours at night to complete an inspection and get the next aircraft in as scheduled.

Phase dock crews were not involved in daily flight operations and usually only heard stories from crew chiefs of the brave men that flew them and the missions they accomplished. Still, they were proud to be a vital part of the overall mission.

## Help with Changes!

Check your e-mail on the Association website by searching your name on the Roster.

If your Newsletter arrives with a **yellow postal address covering the printed address**, the Association does not have your correct address.

Please keep us updated. Send any changes to:

[pathanavan@aol.com](mailto:pathanavan@aol.com)

## Vietnam Vet Grave in Cuba?

by John Record [457, 70]

In November 2016, my wife, Pam, and I took a two-week trip to Cuba. We were traveling with about 20 fellow travelers on a Road Scholar trip. We started out in Camaguey and worked our way west to finish in Havana.

One of the activities in Havana was a visit to Havana's Colon Cemetery. The cemetery is famous for its elaborately sculpted memorials and over 500 major mausoleums. The Colon Cemetery, named for Christopher Columbus, dates back to 1871. Most anyone of any importance or wealth in Cuban or Havana's history is buried there. I have traveled all over the world and visited many graveyards. I have yet to find one that excites me, except for Arlington. I can always think of somewhere else I would rather be.



While I was walking through Colon Cemetery on a very hot and boring day, I saw something that grabbed my total attention.

The group moved on, but I had to stay to figure out the inscription on a stone resting on top of the grave. I am far from fluent in Spanish, but I quickly recognized that this young man died in Vietnam and was in the Cuban army. This blew my mind and I could not let it go. I had to find out about this man.

I caught up with our group and had our American tour director go back to the grave with me. I needed him to translate the inscription on the stone.

It translates, "Your TCAA comrades will never forget your heroic fall in Vietnam."

I was totally unaware that Cuba had sent military personnel to Vietnam. This information aroused my curiosity. I needed more information.

When I returned from the trip, I knew what I was going to do to get answers. I volunteer at the Louisville VA Hospital. One of my fellow volunteers had been in the Navy and was stationed at Cam Ranh Bay. Before he retired, he was a prominent defense and civil trial lawyer. Robert thrives on investigating situations like this. He pulled out his phone and started typing on it. He assured me that he would return the following week with answers for me.

Gonzalo Trelles Rodriguez was probably an enlisted man and the T.C.A.A. may have been an engineering company. Rodriguez was most likely a truck driver, a forklift operator, or dock-worker of some sort. His company was probably unloading ships to support the North Vietnamese war effort. They were also probably moving military support equipment and supplies from Haiphong harbor to North Vietnamese military installations.

There is a very good chance Rodriguez was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He may well have been killed in a U. S. bombing raid against Haiphong or on roads leading from it.

What does any of this have to do with the Caribou? Absolutely nothing. But to this Bou Boy, it shook my conscience. I quickly realized it is truly a small world.

How fortunate I was to come home from Vietnam. My mother cried for joy when I came home. I am sure his mother cried too.

Somehow I could relate to it all. He was a lowly enlisted man doing his job and duty just like I did.

## Cuba in Vietnam

by Diane Short  
2014

The extent of military contributions by communist Cuba and its communist dictator, Fidel Castro, to the North Vietnamese effort during the Vietnam War, is a murky matter that remains officially unresolved. Then and now, neither the communist governments of Vietnam nor Cuba have divulged any information on this matter, while maintaining a cloud of secrecy around their cooperative efforts. But there is no question that at the very least, there was a sizable contingent of Cuban military advisors present in North Vietnam during the war.

Among the Cuban advisors was a large contingent of several thousand combat engineers called the "Giron Brigade," that was maintaining Route 9, better known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the supply line running from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam.

*Editor's Note. In keeping with its interventionist policies in Latin America and Africa in support of Communist movements and organizations, Cuba provided advisors and assistance to North Vietnam, primarily by sending military engineers and medical personnel – but there was more.*

*The above is taken from Ms. Short's article about Cuban involvement in the Vietnam War. She recounts credible evidence that Cuban intelligence operatives interrogated, tortured, and executed U.S. POWs.*

*Several U.S. POWs have testified and published accounts of interrogation and brutality by people they believed to be Cubans.*

*On November 4, 1999, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations held a hearing on "The Cuban Program: Torture of American Prisoners."*

*Both the Cuban and Vietnamese governments deny that it ever happened.*



## Happy Birthday U.S. Air Force

by John "JV" Venable  
September 18, 2019

September 18, 2019 marks the 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday of the U.S. Air Force.

Proud Air Force members today help keep the peace and provide unmatched capabilities from the air to support America's national defense needs, from the skies of Afghanistan to the missile silos in North Dakota.

Conceived in World War I and born out of the Army Signal Corps two years after the end of World War II, the Air Force was established through the National Security Act on September 18, 1947.

While by far the youngest of the four military branches within the Department of Defense, the Air Force crosses the boundaries of, and directly impacts the success of, every other branch and their collective support of the National Military Strategy.

Up until the birth of combat air power, the roles and missions associated with the services were clearly defined. The Army fought on land, and the Navy and Marines concentrated on seaborne and littoral operations. Their collective actions, activities, and interests seldom overlapped.

That all began to change in World War I.

Aircraft showed the ability to see not only over the next hill, but impact an enemy beyond a depth that could be readily imagined by those operating in the other two domains.

The period between World War I and World War II allowed the services to more fully develop and invest in their respective aviation arms, and by the time World War II began, the clear lines of demarcation were gone.

The capabilities inherent to the air domain were seemingly boundless and, by the end of the war, the most senior leaders in the Army felt the United States should establish the Air Force



as a separate service.

The Navy, having already replaced its battleships with aircraft carriers as the pillars of their fleets, certainly recognized air power's potential, and it was equally aware that a new service focused on air power directly threatened that move.

A similar reorganization resulted in the loss of naval aviation in the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Navy in no way wanted to suffer the same fate.

If that weren't enough, nuclear weapons could only be delivered from the air, and if the Navy lost its fleet of aircraft, it would likely lose the opportunity to hold the United States' most powerful weapons in its arsenal.

With that, the Navy openly fought the move.

The National Security Act of 1947 did its best to straddle the issue by charging the Air Force with sustained offensive and defensive air combat operations, while the Army and Navy

were charged with combat operations in their respective domains.

The same day the act became law, the Truman administration attempted to quell the Navy's concerns by issuing an executive order to further clarify the roles and missions, emphasizing the Navy's control of the air over the ocean. But the angst and uncertainty remained.

In April 1948, the four service chiefs met in Key West, FL, to draft the Key West Agreement, which reaffirmed primary service responsibilities and established collateral missions within the three domains that are, in effect, the roles and missions the services have been executing for the past 71 years.

During its formative years, the Air Force was organized along the same missions it flew during World War II. Long-range bombers, fighters, and air-lift assets would be assembled into four components: Strategic Air Command,

**Continued on Page 21**

## Happy Birthday (from Page 20)

Tactical Air Command, Air Defense Command, and the Military Air Transport Service.

That simple structure would change rapidly as the Air Force took on more missions.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles were introduced into the Air Force arsenal in 1958, and the service's first intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance satellite was placed into orbit in 1959.

With them came the Defense Department's competition for preeminence in a fourth domain: space.

Over the next 60 years, the Air Force would certainly launch more satellites into space, but each of the services would establish domain-specific navigation, communications, and intel orbits.

With few exceptions, the efforts were uncoordinated, and no single service would cede ground or authority to another, recharging an underlying roles-and-missions debate.

The creation of a fifth branch of service – for space – similar to the creation of the Air Force has caused its share of controversy.

At the request of the Trump administration, Congress will help the Defense Department to master warfare in a new domain and, before the Air Force celebrates another birthday, Congress will likely establish a new service called the Space Force.

As in 1947, it's reassuring to know the Space Force will have an elder sibling there to make those first steps great ones.

Happy birthday, Air Force, and thanks for always keeping the nation first.

*John "JV" Venable, a 25-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force is a Senior Research Fellow for defense policy at Heritage. This piece originally appeared in The Daily Signal.*

## Tuskegee Airman at 95

by Harry Stewart  
*Wall Street Journal*  
July 3, 2019

I was born on Independence Day 95 years ago. On June 27, 1944, I graduated from Tuskegee Army Flying School, established in Alabama shortly before America's entry into World War II to train young African-American men as Army combat pilots.

My journey to the flight line started in my high school library in the New York City borough of Queens. I came across a magazine article about the first all-black flying combat unit, the 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron. I decided right then that when I turned 18 the squadron was where I wanted to serve. These black flyers had glamour, polish, prestige.

The Army Air Forces accepted me even though I had no high school diploma. The country needed pilots, I was gung-ho, and I had passed the battery of written tests.

The train ride down South was eye opening for a teenager who'd never traveled from New York. When the train crossed the Mason-Dixon line, the conductor came by and pointed at me: "Move to the colored car." It was disconcerting, but I saw it as an unavoidable hurdle to earning my wings. I swallowed hard and kept going.

At Tuskegee Army Airfield, the sky filled with silvery planes emblazoned with the Army Air Forces star-in-circle insignia. The big-barreled trainers emitted a raspy cacophony from their radial engines and fast-turning propellers. You felt you were part of something big, something magnificent. You weren't just learning to fly; you were serving your country; and you were going to fight.

At the controls of P-51 Mustangs, I flew 43 combat missions with the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, known as *Red Tails*. Our commander was the legendary Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who had endured four

years of the silent treatment from white cadets at West Point but nevertheless managed to graduate 35<sup>th</sup> out of a class of 276.

At our mission briefings, he implored us, "Gentlemen, stay with the bombers!" His convictions were encapsulated in his statement: "The privileges of being an American belong to those brave enough to fight for them."



On Easter Sunday 1945, I shot down three long-nosed Focke-Wulf Fw 190's, the best piston fighters in the Luftwaffe inventory. That action resulted in my receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross.

I was thankful that my country had given me the opportunity to fly and fight, and all those years later I am proud that I contributed to the cause. We called it winning the "Double V," victory against totalitarianism abroad and institutional racism at home.

July 4 is my birthday, but I celebrate my country's birthday too. America was not perfect in the 1940's and is not perfect today, yet I fought for it then and would do so again.

*Wall Street Journal* Editor's Note. Mr. Stewart is a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and the subject of a new biography, *Soaring to Glory: A Tuskegee Airman's Firsthand Account of World War II*, written by Philip Handleman.



## Oh Yes He Did!

by Lance Boswell [536, 68]



We were flying a Functional Check Flight (FCF) out over the water after an engine change. The plane checked out okay and I decided to have some fun before heading back to Vung Tau. Without announcing my intentions, I put the nose down into a dive. When the aircraft reached maximum airspeed I pulled straight back on the yoke and up we went. We didn't really "go over the top," but the nose went through the vertical axis and we were definitely "upside down" before rolling off on a wing and recovering.

MSgt. Leland Hicks [536, 69], the Flight Engineer, came scrambling into the cockpit. He was not happy. "What are you doing! I look up and see water! I look down and see clouds!"

Once was not enough for me. The next day we had another FCF and I executed the same maneuver. It was one too many for MSgt. Hicks and the Crew Chiefs and they turned me in. Some said I bent the aircraft. I didn't believe it. If I had, there would have been serious consequences.

I was grounded for two weeks, but it only lasted a day or so. I was an instructor pilot (IP) and the squadron was seriously short of IPs. Operational requirements took precedence over administrative punishment.

The Flight Engineers and Crew Chiefs must have felt bad about turning me in. When I finally rotated home, they gave me a hand-carved, upside

down model of a Caribou, a plaque, and a letter. It was a thoughtful effort and a fitting end to the tour.

The model has lost its propellers and the plaque is long gone, but I still have the letter.

"To: Lt. correction **Capt.** Boswell

Subject: Letter of Invertedness

Be it known that on this day Lt. correction **Capt.** Boswell is presented with the internationally known symbol of the inverted Caribou in recognition of his amazing flying ability.

Signed

MSgt. Leland C. Hicks, USAFR"

Fourteen others also signed the letter.

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## C-7A Accomplishments

### Airlift Accomplishments 1966

Sorties	129,324
Flight Hours	87,125
Cargo Tons	89,010
Passengers	822,432

*The 1966 data is for the Army Aviation Companies, including attached USAF personnel starting in July 1966.*

### Airlift Accomplishments 1967

Sorties	155,938
Flight Hours	100,230.8
Cargo Tons	95,320
Passengers	1,081,629

### Airlift Accomplishments 1968

Sorties	174,702
Flight Hours	119,184.1
Cargo Tons	104,225.8
Passengers	1,308,259

### Airlift Accomplishments 1969

Sorties	176,637
Flight Hours	120,508.5
Cargo Tons	96,410.3
Passengers	1,060,518

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## F-104's in the Fight



From April 20 to November 20, 1965 there was a large presence of F-104's in Vietnam, but they returned to the U.S.

Early in 1966 the supersonic MiG-21 started to appear in the skies over North Vietnam creating a serious threat to U.S. aircraft. The U.S. answer to the problem was to re-deploy the F-104's. So, in June 1966 F-104C's from the 435<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) *Screaming Eagles* started arriving at Udorn Royal Thai AFB (RTAFB).

All the aircraft wore the 3 tone South East Asia (SEA) camouflage that was one shade of tan and two shades of green on the upper surfaces to help blend in with the landscape and jungle foliage. A light gray covered the underside so that from the ground the aircraft would blend with the sky.

The aircraft was armed with a 20 mm M61A1 cannon that was fed 725 rounds stored in the fuselage. To add to their sting the plane could carry a pair of wing tip mounted AIM-9B Sidewinder missiles and up to 2,000 pounds of external ordnance (rockets, bombs, napalm or drop tanks) under the wings and fuselage. A later addition was the ability to put a pair of Sidewinders under the fuselage.

From June 66 until July 67, F-104C's completed over 5,290 bombing and escort sorties into North Vietnam.

The USAF decided to replace the squadron's 104's with the more efficient F-4D Phantoms. The F-4D's began replacing the F-104's in July 1967.

The last F-104 left Thailand around the end of 1967.

The 435<sup>th</sup> TFS, equipped with F-4D's, relocated to Ubon RTAFB and conducted combat operations from there from August 1967 to August 1974.

## 457<sup>th</sup> Hustlers Close Again

by Mike Loughran [457, 71]

For the third time in its storied history, the 457<sup>th</sup> stands down once again. The two previous closures were tied to wars winding down. This time it is to save resources and consolidate the C-21 inventory.

Air Mobility Command is consolidating operations of the C-21 Learjet at Scott AFB, IL. The people and aircraft of the 457<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron (AS) will transfer to another storied squadron from Caribou days, the 458<sup>th</sup> AS. The last C-21's located at JB Andrews were scheduled to arrive at Scott AFB on June 18, 2019 to increase their C-21 fleet to a total of 14.

Just two years after celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the 457<sup>th</sup> AS closed again. Members from the past and current squadron watched the guidon being cased at Joint Base Andrews, MD on June 14, 2019 as another recent chapter closed on their proud history.

The 457<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) closed on 30 April 1972 at Cam Ranh Bay AB, Republic of Vietnam and the 457<sup>th</sup> AS was activated at Andrews AFB on December 1, 1991, flying the C-21 Learjet.

Originally formed as the 457<sup>th</sup> Heavy Bombardment Squadron on July 1, 1942, the unit conducted state-side training of B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator aircrews. The 457<sup>th</sup> then transitioned to the B-29 Superfortress and moved to Guam, engaging in combat operations against Japan. The squadron's forty-seventh and final bombing strike of World War II was in the air at the hour of the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945. Shortly thereafter the 457<sup>th</sup> was inactivated as part of the massive postwar drawdown.

During the Vietnam War, the squadron was re-activated on October 12, 1966, becoming the 457<sup>th</sup> TAS as the C-7 aircraft were transferred to the USAF from the U.S. Army. The 457<sup>th</sup>

TAS Airmen primarily operated the C-7A Caribou from Cam Ranh Bay AB, but also operated from many other forward operating locations, providing intra-theater airlift throughout Southeast Asia, including air, land, and air-drop missions. The squadron was once again deactivated on April 30, 1972.

Over the past several years, the primary mission of the 457<sup>th</sup> AS has been to support senior government official airlift, as well as flying medical evacuation and Mission Capable (MICAP) missions throughout the western hemisphere as part of Air Tasking Order combat operations in U.S. Central Command. By being located in the National Capitol Region, the squadron also had supported U.S. Northern Command during exercises in defense of the region.



The 457<sup>th</sup> AS had completely adopted the Vietnam era 457<sup>th</sup> TAS heritage, including the old 457<sup>th</sup> TAS patch as a morale patch, the "Hustler" call sign, and a ready room complete with "coffee" mugs decorated with the 457<sup>th</sup> TAS "Hustler" patch. This author attended the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and the bittersweet Inactivation Ceremony.

The last commander, Lt. Col. Royce Lippert said, "Getting to command a squadron as impressive as the 457<sup>th</sup> AS has been amazing, but to have it cut short due to inactivation is hard. Serving as a Squadron Commander of a flying squadron has been fantastic and knowing I won't get to serve in this capacity again is tough. My family will miss the 'hustle harder' attitude that

we've seen with each of every member of the squadron, but I also know that as the 'Hustlers' move on to their new units, they'll bring that attitude with them."

The legacy of the 457<sup>th</sup> AS will live on as an illustrious chapter in the history of USAF airlift and bombardment operations. Coming back to active status has happened before and who can say – at some point in the USAF future it could happen again.

It certainly seems that history does repeat itself.

## Over-Gross Takeoff

by Donald Petrosky [483, 69]  
from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. III*

I remember Lt. Col. John Kozey [459, 68] flying an over-grossed C-7A out of Tra Bong after dark, with no runway lights. We had to go in there late one afternoon because one of our planes blew an engine and propeller and they wanted that plane out of there. It was not to be left over night.

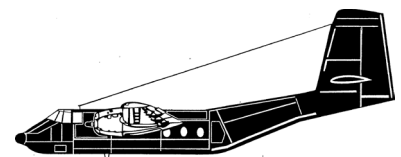
A group of mechanics volunteered to do the engine and prop change there with the help of an Army tank recovery vehicle with a boom and winch. Everybody survived, even the good ole Caribou.

The plane was over gross when we took off, because we had the broken engine, the prop, and a whole bunch of mechanics with their tool boxes. Officially, we were probably just under [the allowable] weight.

I'm not a real religious man, but I said my prayers before that takeoff.

I also remember that the Army guys there parked a jeep at the end of the runway with the lights on to let the pilot know where the end of the runway was.

*Sergeant Donald W. Petrosky was the crew chief of Caribou S/N 62-4146.*



## **The Cold Blue**

by Gary Goldstein  
Los Angeles Times  
May 30, 2019

Fans of classic war stories and aerial action are in for a unique and stirring mix of audio and visuals in Erik Nelson's *The Cold Blue*. The handsome, lovingly reconstructed documentary is based on unearthed footage shot by director William Wyler for his 1944 documentary *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*.

Prior to joining the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF), Wyler had already directed such esteemed features as *Wuthering Heights* and *Mrs. Miniver*, winning the directing Oscar for the last. After World War II (WW II), William Wyler went on to direct the acclaimed postwar drama *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Roman Holiday*, *Ben-Hur*, *Funny Girl*, and others, in a career that saw a record 12 Oscar nominations, including three wins.

In 1943, the 40 year old William Wyler enlisted in the USAAF to record the air war in progress. His goal was to boost spirits at home by showcasing the bravery of American pilots and their crews.

Wyler and his production team flew on B-17 bombers with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force during missions over Europe. The result was a wealth of vivid color footage of the planes, the skies, the fighters, and the fighting at a time when most images coming out of WW II were in black and white. Tragically, one of Wyler's cinematographers was killed when his plane was shot down.

More than 70 years later, director Nelson learned that 34 reels of "Memphis Belle" outtakes existed in the vaults of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and decided to re-purpose them for an all-new film. This noble task required a painstaking, frame-by-frame, digital process to repair the scratched footage and restore it.

The 16 millimeter film was then

transferred to 4K and the images enlarged for wide screen presentation. In addition, as Wyler's work was recorded without sound, the audio also needed to be reconstructed.

Nelson and his editors, Robert Erickson and Paul Marengo, deftly blended a vibrant selection of footage with voice-over commentary from nine surviving veterans of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force: a mix of former pilots, gunners, navigators and bombardiers.



These ex-flyers, all now in their 90s, serve as our guides, offering lucid memories on everything from training, combat, camaraderie, and their brushes with death to the war's aftermath. Their stories and observations are alternately daunting, heroic, ironic, and amusing. The men all agree that their time in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force was essentially a "marriage" between soldiers and aircraft.

What's startling to realize, as is often the case when considering soldiers in combat, is just how young these men were when they were flying on such perilous missions. Recalled one veteran, "I was 19 years old, the war came and we went and did what they told us to do."

It's estimated that these airmen had a fifty per cent chance of survival; more members of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force died than in all of the Marine Corps during World War II. As another former flyer aptly notes, "I look back now and see why young people go to war: Older people got more sense."

*Editor's Note. "The Cold Blue," which runs 72 minutes, premiered May 23, 2019 at select venues.*

*The color footage of the B-17's and their crews in operation is extraordinary. Watching it will be time well spent for anyone interested in military aviation. A search on-line will identify viewing options. The movie is available on HBO.*

## **Not a Scenic Vacation Tour**

by Felix Herrington [535, 68]  
from Newsletter 24-2  
December 2013

On 27 August 1969, I was the Aircraft Commander and we were on short final at That Son (V-173) which had 2,000 feet of PSP. (Pierced Steel Planking) This field was in IV Corps, near the Seven Sisters mountains.

I saw an Aussie Caribou on the ramp being struck by a mortar attack. It lost seven feet of the wing and the crew was exiting the aircraft.

Talking to the choppers nearby on FM, I asked if they would relay to the crew to get to midfield on the airfield and I would help in their evacuation.

My intention was to make a short field landing, have my flight mechanic unchain the load, turn my aircraft around after landing, and LOLEX (Low Level Extraction) the load on the runway during takeoff. Our cargo was rockets and ammo for the troops at the airfield.

The chopper crew said they would evacuate the crew.

On takeoff, leaving the cargo on the runway behind us, I did a tactical departure and turned out of traffic. Tracers from a .50 caliber burst across the windshield, sounding like popcorn. After a successful departure, we returned to base and found about 40 holes in the wing.

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## Not a Vacation (from Page 24)

I was within a couple of months of my DEROS, so I changed my strategy about flying in Vietnam. The squadron leadership was pushing for every Aircraft Commander to fly missions into I and II Corps to “see all of Vietnam.” Most of our crews had never flown in that part of Vietnam and those fields were tricky and unknown to us.

“Seeing all of Vietnam” seemed like a “dumb” approach to me, so I took two R&Rs (Rest and Relaxation) and a 10 day ferry trip to Okinawa instead.”

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## Veterans Legacy Memorial

by Brandi Vincent  
Nextgov.com  
August 26, 2019

The Veterans Affairs Department’s National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has developed and launched an online memorial platform, the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM), to honor millions of veterans interred in national cemeteries across America.

“It is first and foremost a memorialization tool to create something so that veterans, family members, friends, students, history buffs, whoever, can connect with that veteran tradition, keep community, and share memories whenever the moment strikes them,” said Veterans Legacy Program Manager Bryce Carpenter, an Army veteran.

“Our agency has a statutory mission to memorialize all veterans in perpetuity,” he said. “So through VLM, we can use this as a way to make sure that people can access the stories of all 3.7 million veterans in our national cemeteries, which go back through the Civil War, and even to the Revolution. [It is] a way to make sure that the story of every single veteran is not forgotten.”

The public can use the interactive site to search for any veterans who

are buried in the 136 cemeteries that NCA manages. Every veteran interred in a national cemetery has their own memorial page on the site. Individuals can access information about grave whereabouts, as well as basic details about the veterans’ lives and service.

The site will see a variety of future enhancements. Eventually, it will likely offer users the ability to interact with others over comments, upload photos, and access historical documents via VLM. Carpenter also emphasized how security and privacy were a major priority.

The Veterans Legacy Memorial can be accessed at: [vlm.cem.va.gov](http://vlm.cem.va.gov)

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## WAC Six Triple Eight in World War II

by Judy Christie, MOAA  
July 11, 2019

When Indiana Hunt, who later became Indiana Hunt Martin, picked up a magazine at a drugstore in upstate New York during World War II, an article about women in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) caught her eye. At the age of 22, she learned that African American women were being recruited from around the country and she enlisted.

Within months the Army private, who rarely left her hometown of Niagara Falls and had never been outside the state of New York, was on a ship headed to Europe, chased by German submarines and later greeted in England by German “Buzz Bombs.”

Indiana Hunt Martin, who turned 97 on May 30, 2019, is one of the seven surviving members of the historic 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Battalion, also known as the “Six Triple Eight.” The unit was the only African American WAC battalion to serve overseas during World War II.

The Six Triple Eight was deployed in 1945 to help clear a massive backlog of mail sent to service members, U.S.



*Photo of “Six Triple Eight” during WW II (Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration)*

government officials, and Red Cross workers in Europe.

The warehouses storing the mail were filled with disheveled letters, often poorly addressed, and opened packages with rats eating items intended for those serving their country.

“Mail was piling up over there,” Martin said in an interview from her Maryland home, her memories of her extraordinary experiences clear after all these years. “We worked day and night until we got through that mail. They told us we were chosen because of [civil rights leader] Mary McLeod Bethune and [first lady] Eleanor Roosevelt.”

With the motto “No Mail, Low Morale,” the Six Triple Eight cleared about 18 million pieces of mail for Americans in the European Theater of Operations in less than six months, serving first in England and then France. The women worked in austere, wartime conditions, often during bombings in London. “You never knew what was going to happen,” Martin said.

They rose above racism and sexism, enlisting in a time when Jim Crow laws in the military caused discrimination and hardship. “In England and France, they were nice to us,” she said. “They treated us a lot better than where we came from.”

**Continued on Page 26**

## Six Triple Eight (from Page 25)

Despite not being allowed to sleep, shower, or eat with white personnel, Martin felt fortunate to serve her country. "During the wartime, it just seemed like something we needed to do," she said. "I never dreamt I'd be lucky enough to go overseas."

Retired Army Col. Edna W. Cummings is working to see that the Six Triple Eight is recognized. Cummings began with a donation for a monument to the unit in the Buffalo Soldier Military Park at Fort Leavenworth, KS. She has also produced a documentary on the Six Triple Eight.

The first official U.S. recognition came February 20, 2019 when Secretary of the Army Mark Esper awarded the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Battalion the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

Legislation was introduced this year to provide a Congressional Gold Medal for the Six Triple Eight.

## The Picnic

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

I had been in country a little over a month and was on my first extended tour to the C-7A detachment at Da Nang. It was mid-morning on a Saturday. One of the Vietnamese Army NCOs who worked with the Special Forces logistics personnel was obviously getting ready to leave for the day.

I asked where he was going. He said he was going on a picnic. I was surprised. There was a war going on; we (the U.S. forces) were working; we had a full day of support missions to fly. How could he go on a picnic? My righteous indignation was showing.

His reply went something like this: "You new. Here short time. I born here. Always war. Next year – you gone. I still be here. War still be here. I go picnic."

He smiled and waved as he left the ramp.

## Night Alert Mission

by Don Borowski [458, 67]



I completed OTS (Officer Training School) at Medina, TX in February 1964 and went to Reese AFB, TX for UPT (Undergraduate Pilot Training) in class 65-F. I graduated 14 in a class of 44 and chose an EC-121 at Otis AFB as my first assignment – more for the location than the aircraft. I was at Otis AFB for a little over two years. I flew over 2,000 hours and was upgraded to Aircraft Commander (AC). During that time we lost three aircraft and 50 aircrew members. I did not consider myself a very good or natural pilot.

From high school on, I was on school rifle teams and wound up on the Otis AFB and ADC (Air Defense Command) hi-power rifle teams. In 1967, ten of us on the ADC team went to the National Matches in Ohio. As luck would have it, another member of the team was head of rated assignments for ADC. I was overdue for a SEA (Southeast Asia) assignment and did not want to be a FAC (Forward Air Controller) or fly C-121's out of Korat. I told him I would really like a C-7 to CRB (Cam Ranh Bay), if one came along. Two weeks after I returned to Otis AFB I had my assignment.

This was the period when they were really short of pilots for the C-7. They waived "Snake School" (Jungle Survival School) and I arrived at CRB on 15 December 67, assigned to the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS. One day to process in and I started flying 17 December 67. On Christmas Day I had my AC check and on 4 January 68 my Instructor Pilot (IP) check.

On 5 January 68 I flew as an IP. I really learned how to fly in the Caribou.

I was the AC of the night alert crew on 4 February 68. My copilot was a very senior Captain. Up to that date, nobody ever remembered an alert crew being launched. Still, being new, I took it seriously, didn't even have a single beer, and went to bed early.

Sometime after midnight, the operations officer shook me awake and said we had to fly a Tac-E (Tactical Emergency) mission. We were told to fly up to Nha Trang and park at the Special Forces (SF) ramp, where they would have our load already rigged for us and give us further details. At Nha Trang we picked up one pallet of ammunition and water, rigged for airdrop, and a SF troop as a "kicker."

We flew west, over the mountains to Dalat, about 50 miles away. It was a clear moonless night. The Copilot contacted the Army troops on the ground on FM. Then things started getting interesting. They said that their secure perimeter was so small (under 100 feet x 100 feet) they were afraid our airdrop would miss. They were virtually out of ammo and didn't want to take chances with an airdrop. They asked if we could please land.

The runway was marked with a "beanbag" light at each corner. The ramp and compound were not discernible from the air. I told the Flight Engineer we would attempt a blackout landing and to get the load ready for a fast off-load. We would make our final decision whether to land, or not, on final approach.

We saw no activity or tracers while we were on final approach. Passing the two lights at the approach end of the runway, I turned on the landing lights to make sure that the runway was clear. We taxied to the ramp very quickly, seeing the headlights of the truck coming to meet us. The cargo door was open and the pallet pushed onto the truck in probably under 15 seconds. We

**Continued on Page 27**

## Night Alert (from Page 26)

were extremely lucky that there were no enemy troops on the airfield itself. Had there been, we wouldn't have had a chance.

We went directly from the After Landing Checklist to the Before Take-off Checklist. Since we had seen no tracers during our landing from west to east, I elected to take off to the west. The takeoff was completely "blackout" as I aimed for the two lights at the end of the runway. During the takeoff roll and after liftoff we saw tracers arching in front of us from right to left. None came near us. We were very fortunate. Thank you, Lord.

We returned to Nha Trang and dropped off the kicker and the unused airdrop chute. From there, we went back to CRB. That was the only time the alert crew was called out during my entire year with the 458<sup>th</sup>. We heard the next day that C-130's had brought troops into Dalat to retake the area.

During the late summer the three of us received DFCs (Distinguished Flying Crosses), presented by Gen. George S. Brown, Commander-in-Chief of 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, at the 12<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing briefing room. After the presentation, he talked to us, asking about our DFC mission and the Caribou.

I was the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS safety officer. I also was the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW acting flying safety officer for a period. I received a Bronze Star for the safety program I set up, something I was quite proud of.

After Vietnam I returned to Otis AFB and flew C-121's for another year. I wanted no part of SAC (Strategic Air Command). I transferred to the Air National Guard (ANG) and eventually ran the support aircraft program for the National Guard Bureau. First, I did the training and then the Stan Eval for the T-29 and then for the C-131 aircraft. (T-29's were the military version of the Convair 240 and the C-131's were the military version of the Convair CV-240.)

I finally retired in 1988, being the last USAF pilot to have gone through all jet UPT and then flying an entire career in "recips" only. Looking back, it was the year flying the Caribou that really taught me how to fly.

**One footnote.** When I was flying the T-29/C-131 out of Otis AFB, the Massachusetts ANG commander was MG Charles Sweeney, pilot of the B-29 *Bockscar*, also sometimes called *Bock's Car*. MG Sweeney flew the Convair and whenever he wanted to fly, I would fly with him as his IP.

Those were always interesting flights, often going to locations where he would be the guest speaker. It gave me the opportunity to tell people that I'm so old that I was the Instructor Pilot for the pilot that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki to finally end World War II.

## MPs at Dalat –Tet 68

by Don Borowski [458, 67]

I never could figure out whom we delivered the ammo and water to during the night alert mission on 4 February 1968. The Special Forces at Nha Trang, who had rigged the load for airdrop, didn't have any troops at Dalat.

About ten years ago I found a website dedicated to Army Military Police (MP) who had been killed or wounded during the Tet Offensive of 1968, then I finally knew. The website summarizes the many engagements of MP forces during Tet 68. Following is the entry for the fighting at Dalat.

"Another target of the Tet Offensive of 1968 was Dalat. It was probably the scene of the heaviest fighting [involving MPs] outside the Saigon area. Early in the morning of 31 January 1968 large size enemy forces began to attack Dalat. The Viet Cong soon controlled all roads into the town.

The MP villa was demolished by mortar and rocket fire. Two MP were wounded and communications were lost within the city. A military reaction force extracted the MP from their villa. As heavy mortar fire continued in the

city, the MPs who had relocated in a medical villa came under ground attack.

On 3 February 1968, the MP personnel who had been driven from their villa returned to retrieve items of equipment. They were able to recover vehicles, radios, and records, which they had abandoned during the initial attack. Again, they received a small arms attack but sustained no additional casualties. As the remaining activity in the area began to center on the Dalat airfield, the MP in the area responded to the crisis by providing reinforcements to friendly forces at that location.

As fierce fighting continued on 3 February, the city of Dalat became the only critical area in the II Corps tactical zone. With the airfield under Viet Cong control, the local defending elements, particularly the MP, began to run low of ammunition. *Ammunition resupply was completed by air* (emphasis added).

With an enemy battalion believed still to be in the city on 5 February 1968, additional MP replacements were flown into Dalat. Viet Cong elements continued to hold two strong points in the city until 9 February when they finally were forced to withdraw."

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## Share a Story

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

The *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* is a forum to share your stories and enjoy the stories of others. Each of you has stories. I know you do. Please share your stories; others are interested in them.

The stories do not have to be about Caribous or Vietnam. We want to hear stories about your career, the airplanes you flew or supported; the experiences you had that hold a place in your memory; the people you served with who made a lasting impression.

I am asking each of you to submit a story. If you need assistance or have questions, call me at 703-851-6892.

Send your stories to:

**ron.lester43@verizon.net**

## B-17 Navigator's Log



**1-16-44.** Got some Link trainer time this morning. Worked in gym this afternoon and played touch football. At 1230 a gas truck blew up on the line. At 1430 a B-24 crashed a few miles from here. They found 5 bodies in the wreckage. Think four jumped out. Never a dull moment.

**1-17-44.** Ground school. Clear and warm today. On big alert tonight.

**1-18-44, Mission No. 18.** Frankfurt, Germany. MPI (Main Point of Impact) [was] business section of town. City of 500,000 people. Carried 38 incendiary bombs. We were No. 2 in lead squadron in the high group. Pathfinder mission. Briefed at 0230. Took off at 0630 in the dark and had to climb through clouds and assemble at 18,000 ft. Left England at 0900.

Got to IP (Initial Point) and we threw out the carpet (aluminum filings to throw-off the radar). Dropped bombs using the Pathfinder and pretty sure we hit the city. Got past before they could get the flak up. Were attacked by at least 100 German fighters from target on for about an hour. No escort showed up.

A Me-109 hit head-on with a Fort over target. Fighter blew up and Fort went down. Five minutes later Bostwick went down. Five chutes opened. Ten minutes later a Fort broke apart. A few minutes later a Fort went over on his back and went straight down. Fifteen minutes later in the group next to us, one Fort came up under another one and cut its tail completely off. We saw two bodies fly out. It spun down and one chute finally got out. The other plane tore its wing off and went down. Didn't see any chutes.

A while later a Fort pulled out [of formation] a little and a chute came out. [The Fort] struggled along and finally

came back [into formation]. Couldn't figure it out.

P-47's finally arrived. Got back to England 1330. Let down through the clouds on our Splasher. We lost three planes from our squadron.

German fighters sure looked new. All painted up red and black. [They] came straight through the groups.

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## Call Signs

by Ron Lester [459, 67] and Serge Molohosky [459,66]

Call Signs. There were thousands of call signs. Everyone had a call sign: Special Forces (SF) camps, command posts at all levels, airfields, artillery sites, Air Lift Control Elements, squadrons, missions, types of missions, types of aircraft, individual aircraft, on, and on, and on.

Call signs were a critical part of the aircrews' daily life. Call signs identified who you were, what you were doing (mission purpose), and who you needed to talk to in order to complete the mission and get back safely.

Some of the call signs made sense and some were cool, such as *Spooky* for the AC-47's and *Misty* for the F-100 Fast-FACs. Some made you wonder. *Hilda* was the call sign for the C-7A Duty Officer at 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division at Tan Son Nhut. Did that have something to do with a mother trying to keep track of her scattered, wayward children?

Many, especially those for the SF camps, consisted of two completely unrelated words that, when combined together, made no sense whatsoever. The "why" was a mystery. It certainly wasn't for security reasons; the call signs were never changed. They certainly weren't mission related.

Maybe they were selected because they would be hard for the Vietnamese to say – some were hard enough to articulate in English. You could almost visualize a North Vietnamese intelligence officer sitting in his jungle hootch

and scratching his head as he tried to determine the military meaning and significance of the SF camp call signs.

In case you think this is an exaggeration, following are the call signs for some of the SF camps and airfields in I and II Corps, provided by Serge Molohosky [459, 66]:

Lang Vei	<i>Spunky Hansen</i>
Gia Vuc	<i>Macon Weapon</i>
Thoung Duc	<i>Stanley Looker</i>
Ha Thanh	<i>Tuned Gallon</i>
Kham Duc	<i>Brassy Study</i>
Ba To	<i>Strider Insole</i>
Tra Bong	<i>Polite Search</i>
Minh Long	<i>Savage Builder</i>
Tien Phouc	<i>Tricky Misfit</i>
Con Thien	<i>Racing Ticker</i>
Khe Sanh	<i>Baby Study</i>
Quang Ngai	<i>Stray Guitar</i>

If you find call signs interesting and have call signs you would like to share, please send to: [ron.lester.43@verizon.net](mailto:ron.lester.43@verizon.net)

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## USAF 3-D Printer

by Louis Briscese  
AF Office of Scientific Research  
August 21, 2019

The 60<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Squadron (MXS), Travis AFB, CA, is the first USAF field unit to be certified with an industrial-sized, 3-D printer that is authorized to produce non-structural aircraft parts.

The Stratasys F900 3-D printer is capable of printing plastic parts up to 36 x 24 x 36 inches and uses a material called Ultem 9085 that is more flexible, dense, and stronger than typical plastic. The printer, which is certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Air Force Advanced Technology and Training Center, offers new opportunities to create needed parts while saving time and money.

**Continued on Page 29**

### 3-D Printer (from Page 28)

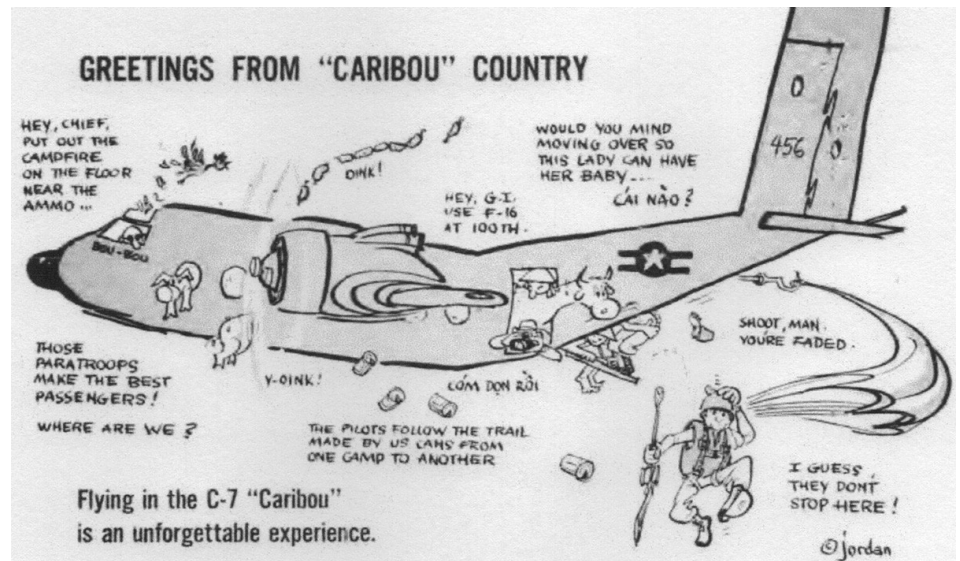
“It brings us a capability that we’ve never had before,” said Master Sgt. John Higgs, 60<sup>th</sup> MXS aircraft metals technology section chief. “There are so many possibilities available to us. We’re just scratching the surface.”

Technicians are able to download blueprints from an online database that the University of Dayton Research Institute has approved. “The Joint Engineering Data Management Information Control System (JEDMICS) is where we go to download already approved blueprints. Now, the University of Dayton Research Institute (UDRI) is working with the engineers to get those parts they developed into JEDMICS.”

The first approved project was printed on the Stratasys F900 on August 12, 2019 and will replace latrine covers on the C-5M Super Galaxy. Typically, parts that don’t keep the aircraft from performing their mission don’t have as high a priority for replacement. “The latrine covers we just printed usually take about a year from the time they’ve been ordered to the time they’ve been delivered,” Higgs said. “We printed two of the covers in 73 hours.”

Getting the printer operational was no easy task. It took eight months from the day the printer was delivered to being fully operational. “There were facility requirements that had to be met, then installation and certification processes to complete. We then needed to decide who could operate the printer and have an UDRI instructor certify them.” Three members from the 60<sup>th</sup> MXS became the first technicians certified in the Air Force.

Since Travis AFB has the only field unit that is operational at this time, requests from outside the organization are coming in. “We already have a list from the Air Force level to help them print and to backfill some supplies. This will ensure other bases can replace items sooner than expected with our help,” Higgs said. “Ultimately, the mainte-



nance shop wants to use the printer for more than just aircraft parts. “We have the capability to print parts on a production scale for a lot more customers. The overall goal is to generate products for every organization to support whatever needs they may have.”

## International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame

October 4, 2019



Jonathan Bird was one of four people inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame on October 4, 2019. The creator of *Jonathan Bird's Blue World* is one of the most influential and well-known ocean educators in the world. His contributions include introducing millions of children around

the globe to the world of scuba diving.

*Jonathan Bird's Blue World* is an educational family-friendly underwater science and adventure series that can be seen on YouTube or [www.BlueworldTV.com](http://www.BlueworldTV.com). The series has won eight Emmy Awards since its inception in 2008. As both the director of photography and the host of the series, Jonathan shares his enthusiastic love of the ocean with audiences as he travels the world exploring marine mysteries and learning about the wonders of nature. The show is the most widely watched scuba-themed program in the world, with more than 150 million views and 320,000 subscribers.

Jonathan has created and produced over 30 films for broadcast and education that have appeared all over the world on networks such as National Geographic Channel, PBS, ABC, USA Network, Discovery, and the SciFi Channel.

He is also an accomplished still photographer and the author of seven books of underwater photography with articles and images published in hundreds of magazines, calendars, and books.

Jonathan Bird's first film for IMAX theaters, called *Ancient Caves*, is about underwater cave science and is scheduled for release this fall.

*Jonathan Bird is the son of Peter Bird [535, 71].*

## Vietnam to Western Airlines



## Vietnam to Western Airlines Volume 2



## Vietnam to Western Airlines

Edited by Bruce Cowee [458, 68]

The three books already published in this series are an oral history of the air war in Vietnam, including stories and photographs, of pilots who all had one thing in common. After returning from Southeast Asia, and separating from military service, they were hired by Western Airlines.

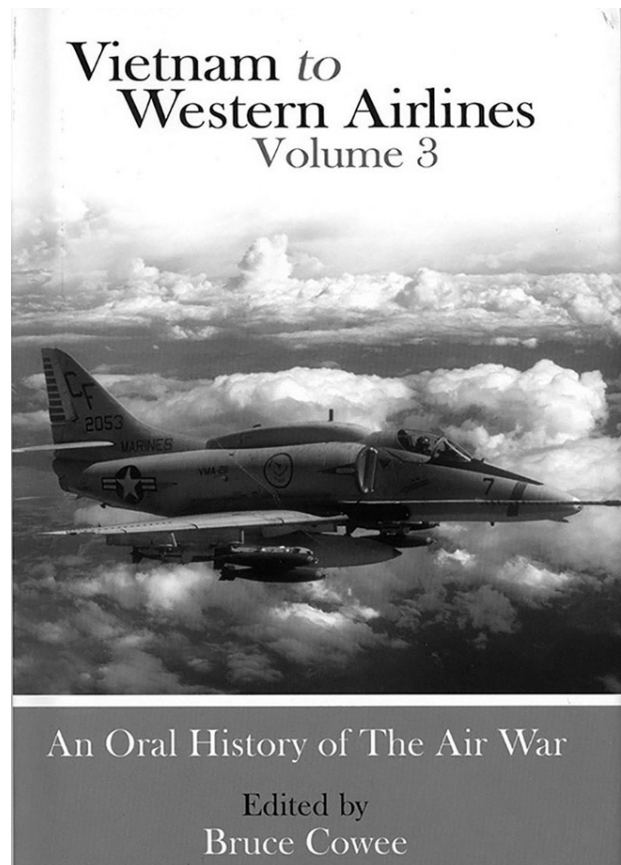
The stories are written by the men who were there and flew the missions. All the uniformed services who provided combat pilots, and all the types of aircraft and missions these pilots flew, are included in these volumes.

These are personal stories. They will capture and hold your attention. They will make you remember and they will teach you things you didn't know before. Above all – they will make you proud.

*Vietnam to Western Airlines* volumes can be ordered from:  
[www.vietnamtowesternairlines.com](http://www.vietnamtowesternairlines.com)

If a personalized inscription is desired, you can also place an order through Bruce at:  
[b2acowee@aol.com](mailto:b2acowee@aol.com)

## Vietnam to Western Airlines Volume 3



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Airman Magazine\Nov 1968  
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Army Air Facilities 1973

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Caribou Sales Brochure  
Caribou SEA newsletters\Caribou Courier and Clarion  
Caribou SEA newsletters\Surfside Sentinel

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DHC-4 Maintenance Manual  
DHC-4\_Type\_Certificate  
Indochina\_Atlas\_1970  
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<http://www.c-7acaribou.com/memorabilia/memorabilia.htm>  
for \$8, shipped.

**C-7A at SF Camp**

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## Memorabilia (Previous Order Forms Are Obsolete)

### MEMORABILIA ORDER FORM

Contact [pathanavan@aol.com](mailto:pathanavan@aol.com) to check availability of items.

Fill out and mail with a check to: **C-7A Caribou Association, c/o Pat Hanavan, 12402 Winding Branch, San Antonio, TX 78230.**

1. Polo Shirt*	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$20.00	Total: _____
2. Colored T-Shirt	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$16.00	Total: _____
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8. 457 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
9. 458 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
10. 459 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
11. 535 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
12. 536 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
13. 537 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
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18. 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary C-7A Coin		Qty. _____ @ \$11.00	Total: _____
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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>