C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 32, Issue 1

U.S. Withdrawal Gains Momentum in 1971

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Caribou operations in 1971 continued in a rapidly changing political and military environment. The reorganization of C-7A maintenance into the 483rd Organizational Maintenance Squadron and the 483rd Field Maintenance Squadron was officially completed on 15 February 1971. The Wing and its tactical airlift squadrons also implemented an "integral crew" program in February. Caribou integral crews consisted of a Pilot, Copilot, and Flight Mechanic.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam was declining steadily. U.S. military head count "in-country" on 1 January 1971 was 335,794 and 272,073 on 1 July 1971. U.S. Special Forces turned their last two outposts, Duc Lap and Ben Het, over to the Government of Vietnam on 2 January 1971. The 3rd Marine Amphibious Force left Vietnam on 14 April 1971 and the last U.S. Marine combat unit departed Military Region 1 on 23 May 1971.

Enemy harassing attacks were a constant threat and were often spectacularly successful. On 23 May, an enemy sapper attack on the POL tank farm at Cam Ranh Bay AB destroyed 1,680,000 gallons of JP-4 and 210,600 gallons of AVGAS. On 30 June, a mortar attack on the ammunition dump at Qui Nhon destroyed 10,000 tons of munitions.

In March 1971, a poll reported that public confidence in President Nixon had dropped to 50%. Support for his conduct of the war was 34% and 51% of Americans were persuaded that the conflict was "morally wrong." *The New York Times* published lengthy excerpts from the *Pentagon Papers* on 13 June 1971. Popular U.S. political support had turned against the war, but fighting continued and there were still missions to fly and troops to be supported. (*from Caribou Airlines, Vol. V*)

Reunion 2021 Is Cancelled.

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Chairman of the Board's Corner

We certainly are living in interesting times. A year ago, I never would have thought that I would still be hunkered down in my foxhole. Some vaccines have finally made it into use, but progress is slow. Plus, there is still risk because no one knows how effective the vaccines will be against the variants of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes the disease COVID-19) that are popping up. With that in mind, as well as other factors, the Board has unanimously decided to cancel Reunion 2021. It is a disappointment to all of us and I am sure it is a disappointment to all of you, but we believe it is the only reasonable course we have.

Even the weather has been unruly this winter. The polar vortex that made it all the way to south Texas and other southern areas was unprecedented, and it gave some of you a taste of what living in New England is like. I have to admit, though, the low temperatures I saw down there were colder than those I have seen here in New Hampshire all winter. I have had a relatively normal winter. There is still snow on the ground, but with the sun getting higher in the sky every day and the temperatures rising, I will soon be in mud season here (sometimes known as spring).

Back in December, we lost one of aviation's legends. Chuck Yeager died at age 97. He was one of my childhood heroes and I will never forget his comment after encountering a Me-262 during WW II, "The first time I ever saw a jet, I shot it down." *Requiescat in pace* General Yeager. Closer to home, we also lost Bob Davis and Bob Dugan, legends in their own right.

With just about everyone and everything locked down for the past year, good news is hard to come by. One exception has been space news. A SpaceX rocket recently set a record by placing 143 satellites in orbit from a single launch. I hope some of you had the opportunity to watch the landing of the 2,260 pound *Perseverance* lander on Mars. The whole operation seemed picture perfect. Among other things, *Perseverance* carried a drone helicopter designed to fly in the thin atmosphere of Mars. I am patiently waiting for it to be flown. We sure have come a long way since that Wright brothers' first flight.

As we trudge forward into the unknown, please remember that COVID is a complex and serious disease, especially for us old-timers. Keep your heads down and stay safe. With any luck at all, we should be able to have a reunion next year.

Reunion 2021 Is Cancelled.

VNAF Pilot Upgrade Training

by Mike Loughran [457, 71]
from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. V*

Mike Loughran, remembered training Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) pilots upgrading to Instructor Pilot (IP) in this recollection provided to Pat Hanavan:

We were still flying full tactical missions every day as the draw down and Vietnamization was in progress. There were the normal challenges of life in the Bou, but there were guys sitting beside you in the cockpit who, in some cases, didn't speak your language very well.

The process of turning missions over to the Vietnamese was happening across the board – air traffic control, logistics, bases, and Special Forces camps too.

A base that had many American advisers on Tuesday might have just two GIs on Friday, but the supply pipeline didn't get the "word" and therefore was almost overwhelmed with excess materials, like rations. We managed to return the excess perishable rations to the source, sort of, by calling the Squadron and getting the truck sent to meet us.

There were occasions where the student with you might be doing well until a stressful moment arrived. The situation might be routine to us, but never seen before by the former C-47 guy in the other seat. The challenge could be one that you had thoroughly briefed, but a dirt runway and a challenging approach a couple of hours later had a totally different effect. Such was the approach and landing at Gia Nghia with 2,000 feet of laterite.

My experience with task channelization or just plain panic happened right then and there. I'm sure today's more sophisticated terminology, like loss of situational awareness, covers it better, but there it was.

Talking through the approach over the hillsides and landing in the touchdown zone seemed to go well. Then came an experience similar to "Buddy" White's failure to try to stop within the length of the runway.

I was somewhat ready for the far end of the runway to come up quickly. So, I overpowered the student, got the throttles into reverse while really getting on the brakes. We stopped in a great cloud of dirt and dust. Just for effect, as well as reinforcement, I walked him over to the edge of the runway to point out the cliff with its drop-off.

Another IP student of mine managed to get lost in Vietnam. I think now that he might have been another C-47 pilot who flew very little within the country, but did frequent "diplomatic" trips to Hong Kong, Thailand, or maybe the Philippines. I seem to recall his telling me his family had a restaurant and/or an export/import business in Saigon.

We were going from an interior airfield to somewhere on the coast well north of our position. When he was unsure of our route or position, he took out an enormous map, which might have been an old Esso road map, but it certainly filled the cockpit when it was opened. There were course lines drawn between nearly every airfield in country with corresponding headings marked on the chart too. Since it was a day VFR (Visual Flight Rules) flight, I gave him plenty of rope to find his position.

I knew it was a pretty useless exercise when he asked me to tune Phan Thiet in the ADF (Automatic Direction Finder navigation aid). We wanted to go almost due north and by now that station was well behind and east of us.

I explained to him that the navigation problem could be solved simply by heading east, getting to the water, and taking a left turn. Keeping the land on the left and the ocean on the right would take us north – and then just use the "Mark 1" eyeballs to find the field. I also introduced my student to the tactical VFR charts with better map scales, navigation aids, and topographic features – at least more appropriate to airborne navigation than an Esso map.

I don't recall that any VNAF copilots flew in the squadrons with any of us, and I didn't think to find out how they were trained in the Caribou. I believe some of them went through the Phan Rang ("Phone Rang") schoolhouse at some point before it closed. It seemed that the "in-country" CCTS (Combat Crew Training School) did not last that long once the VNAF pilots and flight mechanics came to the squadrons at Cam Ranh Bay (CRB). My last couple of months flying was almost exclusively with VNAF students [in] an extensive line check program focused on building their confidence and proficiency in the tactical environment.

Once the VNAF pilots were ready to upgrade to IP, we seemed to focus training there to build up a cadre of VNAF instructors. I did have one very memorable local flight with an upgrade on a clear VFR day at CRB.

This was an IP Emergency Procedures Flight (EPF), which included a bit of time spent operating on a single engine. The goal was to get the pilot familiar with the somewhat limited performance of the airplane, emergency procedures, and a few things that you didn't normally do in flight. The mission profile called for a light airplane, no cargo, and a fairly high altitude near a recovery base. This was important even in the upgrade process since there was not a simulator in which to practice engine-out handling.

The tabletop pre-brief was thorough, covering the Dash 1 procedures as well as a simulated "emergency" leading to engine shutdown. In this case, it was the right or #2 engine, which allowed the right-seater to see the feathered prop. We talked through the engine shutdown checklist, both the bold print and the subsequent steps to clean up the failed engine, like turning off the magnetos.

Once in the air and after exploring some basic handling qualities, we reached a safe altitude of around 8,000 feet. With the IP student flying, I asked

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VNAF Training (from Page 3)

if he was ready to shut down the right engine. He replied, "Yes" and I "turned on" the #2 engine fire warning light. Naturally, we talked a bit about being deliberate in doing the Bold Print items. He closed the throttle, went to cut-off on the mixture, and hit the feather button successfully. Then, of course, he increased power on the #1 engine to experience the flying qualities and we talked about adverse yaw, power limitations, and the need to plan for a field for landing. We had flown a few minutes in this configuration and things were going along just fine.

The shutdown checklist had a number of so-called "clean up" items after the bold print [items]. Checking fuel boost pumps, turning off the magnetos, etc., was underway when the Flight Mechanic came on the interphone with an excited "Holy Crap" call to me.

It seemed that the left, or good engine, was under distress now because its engine oil was streaming down the left side of the airplane in a wild flow. Obviously, it was time to do something different. I terminated the training event by telling my student of the oil issue and the need to restart #2 while I brought the left engine to idle power. He looked out his window and said he did not see anything.

Of course not! But, dutifully continuing the rest of the checklist, he managed to get to the step of turning the mag switch "off." Unfortunately, he got the switch for the left engine and so, now, for a brief moment we essentially had no engines – certainly none at full power.

The only thing left to do was to clearly state that I had the airplane, overcome the language barrier that might have been present, and restart #1, which only took a brief moment. I don't think I looked at a checklist. I flipped the mag switch "on" and she started with a small bang. Then, [I went to] work on the other or really the good engine. A quick move of the fuel cut-off lever, pull the feather button "out," and she came to idle quickly. With two [engines] in idle we started a descent to the field. I used the #2 [engine], as necessary, for an uneventful landing at CRB from a VFR straight-in [approach] on the east runway.

Naturally, we had a thorough debrief of the incomplete mission, although it was a more expansive experience than what was planned.

I believe I also learned the airplane was on its first post-phase flight. From then on, I had a very healthy respect for the first flight after a phase inspection.

Can Tho Airdrops

by Barden Revelle [536, 67]

Much of my tour was at Can Tho, an airfield and military base in the Delta with both regular Army troops and a 5th Special Forces detachment. We kept two Caribous there dedicated to Special Forces support. We flew whatever, whenever, where ever the Special Forces needed us. Each day, we flew missions to the "A" camps, sometimes airdrops, sometimes air-land on dirt or PSP (Pierced Steel Planking) runways.

Can Tho was sometimes peaceful and sometimes under attack. Initially, we were TDY there for 30 days at a time, but due to an attack that damaged two Caribous – one of them extensively, we started taking the airplanes back to Vung Tau at night and rotating crews every other day. I liked Can Tho duty. Some didn`t, so I was allowed to stay there more than most of the other guys.

We could go to town and sometimes went armed. We NEVER left our jeep unattended. Once, when I took our maid to her house with our laundry, I decided to tour an unfamiliar area. The maid bailed out, screaming. She calmed down enough to let me know that "Charlie" owned that area. Mission aborted.

Celebrities occasionally came through Can Tho. I hauled Leif Erickson, Chris Noel, and Connie Francis at different times.

On a sidebar, one of my childhood classmates was a (Red Cross) Donut Dolly, but we never crossed paths in Nam. We grew up in the same neighborhood and the same schools. She spent several years in Nam assisting our guys and is a member of our *C-7A Caribou Association*. Here is a salute to Larry Young Hines, our only Donut Dolly.

We had our own system in the Delta for drops on small DZs (drop zones), which were often surrounded by water. We usually dropped a load of five pallets at 300 above ground level (AGL) and 105 knots, with the "green light" just as the nose covered the impact point.

Normally we dropped two pallets, flew a 360 (degree pattern), then dropped one pallet, another 360, and then dropped the last two pallets. We shifted pallets to drop position during the 360's. Remember, all this took place at 300 feet AGL. We used two Flight Engineers (FE) on drops to re-rig between passes. Each pass was the one-minute warning for the next pass. The northern squadrons sent some guys down to learn our technique, but I don`t know if they ever used it.

On one occasion, we were having a hectic day with one airdrop sortie after another. We were very rushed trying to get all the drops in. During an engine-running load and rig session, I started rigging from the first pallet, my buddy started at the fifth pallet. We met in the middle, gave the AC (aircraft commander) a thumbs-up, and we were rolling before I got my eyes on the engine instruments.

At the DZ, the first two pallets were on the money. The single pallet chute failed to open and it dropped short and sunk a wooden boat (the pallet held four barrels of fuel, which were actually recovered and used). The last two pallets

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Can Tho Airdrops (from Page 4)

were on the mark. I got in the other FE`s ear and asked if he had hooked up the static lines on the middle pallet. NO! He thought I did.

We lied and told the pilots that the cotter pin must have fallen out of the clevis. The guys on the ground never told on us, as they would have quickly seen that the static line was not attached. Anybody else sink a boat?

On another day a Caribou from our sister squadron arrived at Can Tho and requested the loan of an FE to help their FE do a LAPES (Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System) drop. I got the job because I had many drops under my belt. Their FE, a fine feller and Southerner like myself, told me that he had never dropped a LAPES. I said, "No problem."

We rigged the stack of steel panels (PSP) and briefed. I didn`t realize it, but the two pilots probably never dropped a LAPSE or anything else. On the "green light," the load rolled back and stopped. The CG (center of gravity) went to hell. We were going to stall out. I screamed "Max power! Nose up!" The pilots responded immediately, to their credit, and the load exited, but it landed long and was not recoverable. "Charlie" got some free steel.

The pilots wrote it up as my fault because the rollers on the ramp were damaged. They were, but the wheels still rolled fine. All of our rollers were the same and we couldn`t get any more. They worked every day before and after, at least until I left. I took the blame on paper, but no formal action was taken.

Prior to this incident, a similar one had happened with another one of our crew. The load was the same, it rolled back and hung up, and the plane wouldn`t fly out of the ground effect. The FE on that flight (TSgt. Robert Kummerer on 26 April 1967) cut the static line and got a Silver Star. I got a "Time-out," if "Time-outs" had been invented by then. War is hell.

The problem was trying to roll a stack of really heavy PSP on wooden pallets on small steel rollers. The load of steel planking was so heavy the wood pallets dug into the rollers, killed the momentum, and the load hung-up.

To close on a positive note, I made an Emergency Resupply airdrop once without a drop kit, so there was no release mechanism or release strap. I used a tie-down strap on the front and back, cut the back one on "green light," the Pilot went "Max Power," and pulled up. Mission accomplished.

Man, we had some good pilots over there. They treated me very well.

Murderous Hootch Maids

by Tom Smith [458 & 310, 71]

Located about 100 miles to the south of Binh Tuy, Con Son Island has a surprisingly long history. Marco Polo mentioned it in 1292 during a voyage from China to India, calling it Sondur and Condur. Con Son was known to medieval Arabs and Persians, as well as to the Malays and Khmers. In 1702, the English founded a settlement on the island, which was then called Pulo Condore. During the French colonial period, it was called Grande-Condore. In 1954, the island was turned over to the Vietnamese. During the Vietnam War, we knew it as Con Son Island.

In 1966, as part of a project to improve long-range navigation in the area, a LORAN-C navigation station manned by the U.S. Coast Guard was established on the north end of the island. The entire garrison consisted of two officers and 23 enlisted men.

Navigating to Con Son was straight forward, but it was a fairly long over water flight, well out of sight of land. We just held the prescribed heading until we picked the island up on radar. The island itself was stunning. For those who remember the TV show "Fantasy Island," it was just like that. A mountainous jungle covered island rising from the ocean, surrounded by beautiful coral reefs and white sand beaches. We would often make a quick circuit of the island, simply admiring the scenery. It was rumored that the Vietnamese President had a villa there.

For all its beauty, Con Son held a dark secret. As far back as 1861, the French established a prison on the island to house political prisoners. When the Vietnamese took over, they used the prison for the same purpose. According to conversations I had, more serious civil criminal prisoners were held there as well. This differed from An Thoi Island located south of Cambodia, which was exclusively a POW camp for Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) prisoners.

The unfortunate souls imprisoned on Con Son suffered terribly. They were abused, tortured, and received only limited food and water. Con Son Prison was home to the infamous "Tiger Cages," pits in the ground with grates over the top where prisoners were shackled and crammed into the dark, small places.

The runway at Con Son was pretty good with 3,700 feet of asphalt. You landed over the beach sand dunes. The biggest hazards were drifting sand and the 625 foot LORAN antenna about a half a mile to the south.

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Murderous Maids (from Page 5)

The "Coasties" were always glad to see us. I assumed that being stuck on an island 100 miles from land with only 24 other Americans would get pretty tiresome. If we had time, they would pick us up and take us to their compound. The Coasties were all sporting pretty good tans. When asked what they did on their time off, they showed us their motorboat that was moored near by and their snorkel gear.

Something struck me as being strange during our tour of the facilities. The grounds were absolutely immaculate. What grass could grow in the sandy soil was neatly trimmed. The buildings and walks were wonderfully maintained. The Coasties' uniforms were exceptionally clean and pressed. Boots were spit-shined. I noticed Vietnamese gardeners, maintenance men, and hootch maids were omnipresent. While waiting for lunch, a hootch maid asked me if I would like to have my boots shined. Why, thank you! What was going on?

On the way back to the plane, our hosts explained. The laborers and maids were all from the prison. The Coasties had specified they would only take prisoners with the most heinous crimes – generally murderers. Why? Because, if something went awry or missing, a murderer sent back to the prison camp would possibly be executed.

The arrangement provided a highly motivated workforce. It was a great set-up for everyone involved. The prisoners escaped the hell of the camp and got paid, and the Coasties had great workers. I suspect the higher-ups at the prison camp probably received a piece of the action as well.

Today, Con Son is listed on Travel Advisor with beaches, museums, "boutique" hotels, hostels, and a National Park. There probably isn't a booming nightlife, but if you want a truly unique travel destination then you should try Con Son – the beautiful island with a dark past and murderous hootch maids.

CSAF Visit to Phu Cat in 1967

by Steve Croft (459, 66)

I was the squadron Duty Officer one day in the spring of 1967 when some guys from the Communications (Comm) Center came into the Operations shack. They had received an encrypted Top Secret (TS) message they did not know how to decode and were looking for someone who could help them out of their predicament. That would be me.

I asked them if they had a decode book and filmstrip. They said they did, but no one in the Comm Center knew how to use them. Because of a previous assignment related to nuclear weapons, I had plenty of experience decoding such TS messages. We went to the Comm Center and I decoded the message.

The message said that Gen. John P. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, was going to visit Phu Cat Air Base. His primary interest was the C-7A and Caribou operations.

In April 1966, Gen. McConnell and Gen. Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, had signed an agreement that included the transfer of Army Caribous to the Air Force by 1 January 1967.

That agreement resulted in me, and many other USAF pilots, flight engineers, and maintenance personnel, being attached to Army Aviation Companies in South Vietnam in the second half of 1966, which provided us the unique educational experience of flying and working with Army aviators.

I assume Gen. McConnell wanted to see first-hand what he had gotten the Air Force, and all of us, into.

I took the decoded message to the Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Edward Thielen. After a brief discussion, Lt. Col. Thielen told me to "handle it." That is how I became the officer in charge of developing the itinerary for the Chief of Staff's visit.

The focal point was a C-7A flight to demonstrate the airplane's unique capabilities. I thought the pilot should be a field grade officer and recommended instructor pilot Maj. Robert Dubberly as the Pilot. Lt. Col. Thielen agreed. I do not remember who the Copilot and Flight Engineer were.

Gen. McConnell's Caribou indoctrination flight lasted most of the day. After a demo of Caribou STOL (Short field Take-Off and Landing) capabilities was completed on the laterite airstrip at Phu Cat AB, Maj. Dubberly and crew flew the CSAF to several of the Special Forces "A" camps in I Corps and II Corps.

The official CSAF visit went well. The history of USAF Caribous in Vietnam was just beginning.

Chuck Yeager
Legendary Test Pilot

by John A. Tirpak
AF Magazine, Jan/Feb 2021

Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager, iconic test pilot, World War II ace, head of the Air Force's test pilot school, and the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound in level fight, died December 7, 2020, at the age of 97.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. called Yeager "a leader whose innovative spirit had global impact in aviation and air power. His legend will continue to inspire generations to push and break barriers."

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Chuck Yeager (from Page 6)

Born and raised in West Virginia, Yeager enlisted in the Army in 1941, serving as an aircraft mechanic. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he applied to become a "flying sergeant" and flew the P-39 Airacobra after winning his wings. Deployed to Europe in 1943, he was assigned to P-51 Mustangs and shot down one German fighter before being shot down himself over France on his eighth mission.

Yeager evaded capture with the help of the French resistance, and, during his time with them helped assemble bombs. With the help of the Maquis, he made his way to Spain, making a harrowing passage over the Pyrenees and saving the life of a fellow evader, a B-17 bombardier, for which he later received the Bronze Star. From Spain he returned to England.

Pilots helped by the resistance were barred from flying combat again, out of fear that they would, if shot down and captured, reveal information about the underground network. Yeager appealed personally to Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, only a week after the Normandy landings, to let him return to flying combat, arguing that the Maquis was openly fighting the Germans and the no-fly policy was obsolete. Eisenhower relented and Yeager went back to combat flying in August 1944.

It proved a good decision. Over the next five months, Yeager racked-up an additional 10.5 aerial victories, including five Me-109's in one day and four Fw-190's on another. He was also one of the first to shoot down a German Me-262, the first operational jet fighter. He received a commission and was promoted to Captain by the end of his tour in Europe.

When he left the theater in January 1945, he had completed 64 combat missions. He attributed much of his success to exceptional vision that was better than 20/20, which he said gave him an edge in spotting the enemy first.

His combination of flying skills, maintenance experience, and evader status gave Yeager a choice of assignments. He picked being a test pilot of repaired aircraft at Wright Field, OH. He impressed Col. Albert Boyd, head of the Aeronautical Systems Flight Test Division, who urged Yeager to study mathematics so he could advance as a test pilot. Yeager got tutoring help from other pilots. After graduating from test pilot school, Yeager was assigned to Muroc Army Air Field, now Edwards Air Force Base (AFB), CA, and over the next two years flight-tested a wide variety of modified aircraft.

Partly at Boyd's urging, Yeager was chosen for the Bell X-1 research aircraft program, meant to explore transonic flight. Supersonic flight was an unknown. An attempt at it had killed British pilot Geoffrey de Havilland in 1946, creating the mystique of a "sound barrier."

On October 14, 1947, despite having broken two ribs two nights before in a horse-riding accident, Yeager flew the X-1 to Mach 1.05 at 45,000 feet. He later described the sensation as "poking through Jell-O." He told National Public Radio in 2011 that the X-1 experience was more a matter of "being in the right place at the right time" than of being an especially gifted pilot.

[Yeager nicknamed the rocket plane, and all his other aircraft, *Glamorous Glennis* for his first wife, who died in 1990.]

The feat was kept secret until *Aviation Week* revealed the event in late 1947, and it was acknowledged by the Air Force in 1948. Yeager was awarded the Collier and Mackay Trophies in 1948 for the X-1 flght, and became famous enough to be featured on magazine covers.

Yeager became the Air Force's "go-to" test pilot. In 1953, he was picked to secretly fly and evaluate a captured North Korean MiG-15 and compare it with the Air Force's F-86, revealing the MiG's strengths and weaknesses in the air battles then taking place.

Later that year, Yeager became the first man to exceed Mach 2, flying the Bell X-1A to Mach 2.44 on December 12, besting the record of Scott Crossfield in the Douglas D-558 Skyrocket. Due to inertial roll coupling, a problem never encountered before, the X-1A went out of control at about 80,000 feet, spinning violently in all three axes and causing Yeager's helmeted head to crack the canopy. After losing 50,000 feet in altitude in less than one minute, he regained control at 29,000 feet. The following year, he received the Distinguished Service Medal for the record and the airmanship demonstrated in recovering the aircraft.

Yeager returned to the operational Air Force from 1955 to 1960, commanding at the squadron and wing levels, flying F-86H's in Germany and France and the new F-100 Super Sabre at March AFB, CA. He lost command of a squadron at Aviano AB, Italy, after members of his unit trashed a local bar.

After attending the Air War College, he was assigned in 1962 as commander of the USAF Aerospace Research Pilot School. Although only 39, and having flown nearly every high-performance research aircraft the Air Force produced over the previous 15 years, Yeager was deemed ineligible to be an astronaut because he lacked a college degree. During his time commanding the school, he trained astronaut-bound flyers and he, himself, flew the M2-F1 lifting body, a research forerunner of the Space Shuttle, for NASA.

In December 1963, Yeager attempted

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Chuck Yeager (from Page 7)

to take the NF-104, an F-104 fitted with a rocket booster engine, to 100,000 feet. But the reaction control system, which steered the aircraft in the absence of enough air for control surfaces to be effective, failed around 80,000 feet. The aircraft entered an unrecoverable spin, and he had to eject. Struck in the head by the falling ejection seat's smoldering rocket booster, Yeager's face and hands were burned. He avoided permanent damage to his eyes, but lost portions of two fingers. It was his final record-setting attempt.

In 1966, Yeager commanded the 405th Tactical Fighter Wing at Clark Air Base, Philippines, frequently doing temporary duty in Vietnam. Flying mostly the B-57 Canberra as a bomber, he accumulated 127 combat missions in that conflict.

By 1968, he was the 4th Fighter Wing commander at Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, flying the F-4. While there, he took his unit to South Korea during the *USS Pueblo* seizure.

Yeager was promoted to Brigadier General in 1969. He served in a diplomatic assignment in Pakistan, was vice commander of 17th Air Force in Germany, and headed the Air Force Inspection and Safety Center from 1973 until his retirement in 1975.

Yeager returned to prominence with the publication of Tom Wolfe's book, *The Right Stuff*, about the heyday of test flying at Edwards and the Mercury astronaut program, which featured Yeager's exploits. Wolfe wrote that every pilot imitated Yeager's West Virginia drawl and un-flustered response to a crisis in the cockpit.

The 1983 movie version of *The Right Stuff*, in which he had a cameo role as a bartender, made Yeager a household name, which he capitalized on with a two-part autobiography, titled *Yeager* and *Press On*, respectively, as well as TV commercial appearances.

He did not rest on his aviation laurels, however. In 1986, he served as a member of the Rogers Commission, exploring the factors that led to the *Challenger* Space Shuttle accident. He also worked as an aviation consultant and did test flight work for Northrop and Piper into the 1990's.

Across his career, Yeager flew more than 350 types of aircraft, amassing more than 18,000 flying hours.

Yeager's military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, two awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, 10 Air Medals, and the Air Force Commendation medal.

Among his many other awards and honors, he received a special noncombat Medal of Honor in 1976 for his contributions to aerospace science and was presented the Medal of Freedom by President Ronald Reagan in 1985.

Cambodia Evacuation

by Bob Davis [457, 69]
from Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 5, July 2005

Lt. Col. Robert A. "Bob" Davis remembered the evacuation of refugees from Cambodia:

My involvement with the refugee evacuation began with a telephone call from *Colby*, the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) Command Post advising that our squadron send an aircraft and crew, with a field grade Aircraft Commander, to Pleiku AB for three days. The ALCE (Airlift Control Element) Commander would brief the aircrew for the missions to be flown from that location. Since most of the squadron's eligible Aircraft Commanders would be out of crew rest as a result of today's missions, I volunteered to take the mission, with the permission of the Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Russell C. Draper.

While I was preparing for the TDY, the Squadron Scheduling Officer, Maj. Dawson N. White, rounded up a Copilot, 1/Lt. Mark A. McGregor and a Flight Engineer, MSgt. Mathews, to fill out the crew. As the aircrew members were preparing for the sortie, the maintenance troops were re-configuring a C-7A S/N 61-2391 from cargo to passenger carrying capability. Little did we realize at the time the type and numbers of passengers to be transported.

The flight to Pleiku that evening was uneventful. There was, however, some organized turmoil and orderly confusion on the tarmac and inside the ALCE. I was briefed by the ALCE Commander that the 834th Air Division (AD) had been tasked to evacuate many hundreds of Cambodian refugees who were fleeing from Communist insurgents. The refugees were gathering at two airfield locations in eastern Cambodia, Bu Kev (east) and Boung Long (west). Both of them were only about 30 minutes flying time from Pleiku.

Initially, the Air Division had laid the evacuation mission on the C-123 *Bookie Birds* located at Phan Rang. These very sturdy and dependable twin-engine aircraft of *Mule Train* fame could and did transport many refugees on 22 June 1970; however, due to their gross weight and single wheel main landing gear footprint pressure, the landings had deeply rutted the touchdown area of the laterite (red clay soil mixed with rock) runway. As a result, the Air Division discontinued the gallant participation of the C-123's. The 483rd TAW with their lighter, dual-wheeled C-7A was then tasked to continue the rescue missions in spite of the drastically reduced passenger carrying capacity of the C-7A Caribou.

The 483rd TAW Director of Operations, Col. Roger P. Larivee, designated one of his staff members as Mission Commander, who established a command center at the Pleiku ALCE. This office was located on the second floor

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of the operations building. It had an excellent view of the entire airdrome flight line, aircraft parking area, and loading areas.

The Wing operations staff had planned for a Lt. Col. from each of the 457th TAS and 458th TAS to be on-site Commanders at Bu Kev (east) and Boung Long (west) airfields. These site Commanders were to be assisted by a Major. Each airfield would have a *Tailpipe* team which would control the air traffic. A *Tailpipe* team consisted of three highly skilled enlisted aircraft traffic controllers.

Their equipment consisted of a Jeep vehicle and a communications trailer. This team had the capability of communicating with the 834th AD Command Center, *Hilda*, as well as with military aircraft. The Jeep and trailer combination was air transportable in a Caribou.

The morning of 23 June was very busy with flight planning, loading the aircraft with the *Tailpipe* equipment, and mission briefing. Air Division had directed the *Tailpipe* teams to be in position and operational prior to the C-7A rescue flights commencing. As a result, a team was off-loaded at each base of operations, Bu Kev and Boung Long, by late afternoon on 23 June.

As Mission Site Commander at Boung Long, I was to remain there overnight to coordinate ground operations with the Cambodian Station Chief, the *Tailpipe* team, and the many hundreds of refugees who were anxiously awaiting evacuation.

My first priority, upon arriving at Boung Long in the early evening, was to check in with the *Tailpipe* team who had been there since mid-morning. This highly trained team had established themselves in the center of the airfield approximately 150 feet west of the laterite landing strip (runway 09 and 27). Their radio equipment, trailer with power generator, and antennas were functioning. Communications had been established with the Air Division.

My second priority was to inspect the landing strip, especially the touchdown area, to determine the extent and severity of the C-123 rutting. I was not surprised to find at least six deep ruts approximately 8 to 10 inches deep and several more that measured only 3 to 5 inches deep. Any one of these would be hazardous to landing aircraft. I immediately coordinated with the Cambodian Station Chief to make necessary repairs during the night so that early morning air operations could begin. The Station Chief, who could speak English but would rather converse in French, assured me that the most severe ruts would be filled as quickly as possible.

Overhead Boung Long

He did tell me though that the materials required to do the job correctly lay outside the airfield perimeter, under the control of the attacking insurgents. Fortunately, the ground was drying out, becoming firmer, and no rain was forecast.

My third priority was to inspect the pierced steel planking (PSP) in front of the operations terminal that served as aircraft parking and on/off loading spot for cargo and passengers. The PSP was in very good condition and provided ample room for at least two Caribous to load passengers simultaneously. There was, however, a South Vietnamese C-47 parked just west of the terminal building that had to be relocated. The Station Chief stated that the C-47 was not in commission but a crew was expected to arrive the next day to make repairs and evacuate the airplane along with several South Vietnamese military personnel.

The Station Chief extended an invitation to myself and the *Tailpipe* team from Brig. Gen. Neak Sam, Commander of the Fifth Cambodian Region, for the evening meal. The General could not converse in English, consequently the evening was spent with the Station Chief translating Cambodian, French, and English. The meal consisted of a green leafy salad, white rice, and a spicy chicken stew with vegetables. I have recollections of a cider or mild beer, from bottles, as the local water may not have been wise for us to drink. None of the Americans had any ill effects from the meal that could have limited our performance of duty the next day.

The Station Chief insisted that I use his quarters for the night. The room was about 12 feet square with a double bed surrounded by mosquito netting. I do recall being awakened several times during the night by the sounds of gunfire. There was an AK-47 weapon, which provided me with little or no comfort, along the side of the bed. The *Tailpipe* team chose to sleep under a shelter alongside their Jeep and communication trailer. This team was very capable, self-sufficient, and equipped with small arms for their own protection. They needed absolutely no support from the airfield and certainly no input from me. Rather, it was I who was dependent upon them as they controlled aircraft arrivals and departures.

Just prior to daybreak, I was awakened by the changing of a guard to find the Station Chief returning from overseeing repairs to the runway surface. To my dismay, upon making my own inspection, I saw that large pieces of

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concrete had been dumped in some of the deepest ruts. For the most part, this attempt to solve the touchdown area problems was totally inadequate, but it was too late to attempt any further repairs since the airplanes were already inbound. It took me about 20 minutes to remove the larger chunks of concrete which would have damaged the tires of landing Caribous.

I informed the *Tailpipe* team of the touchdown area conditions so that the Aircraft Commanders could be advised to land long, avoiding the first 200 feet of the landing strip. The team advised me that the first Caribous would be arriving from Pleiku at 0730 hours and then about every 30 minutes apart.

At first morning light, I estimated that there were over 200 refugees crowded around the terminal building, however, this number rapidly increased in a very short period of time. There were people of every age, from babies slung in blankets around mother's neck to several very old men who had to walk with a cane. There were only a very few young men or older boys, whom I suspect were being used as a defense against the insurgent overrun. Many of the women were carrying large bundles of their possessions on their backs or balanced on their heads. As the day grew older, some of these bundles would be abandoned as the passengers scrambled to board the aircraft.

I have no recollection of a breakfast meal that morning. It is possible that the first arriving aircraft brought either in-flight or boxed rations with them for the four of us who had remained overnight. I do recall having one of my squadron Aircraft Commanders bring some sandwiches for lunch along with a cooler of ice and several soft drinks that we all shared.

With the arrival of the first C-7A, a Major (whose name I cannot recall) from the 458th TAS, came to assist in the marshaling of aircraft on the ground.

Refugees at Boung Long
Both Boung Long photos were provided by Harvey Argenbright [458, 70].
See his Cambodia evacuation story in *Newsletter 28-1, April 2017*.

After the first plane, loaded with refugees, had departed, our next order of business was to relocate the C-47 out of the turnaround and loading area. The newly arrived Major, who was familiar with the aircraft, released the C-47 parking brake while I recruited about 20 refugees to push the airplane across 150 feet of PSP ramp. That gave us sufficient room to load two C-7A aircraft simultaneously. This proved to be very beneficial since the South Vietnamese maintenance team and the aircrew did not arrive until much later in the day. By that time, we had evacuated approximately 500 refugees.

The first of the aircraft that were to ferry the refugees to Pleiku began to arrive at Boung Long at about 0730 hours on 23 June. Aircraft were then scheduled to arrive at 30 minute intervals. All went well with this plan for the first few hours.

Upon reviewing the Super 8 mm movie film that I took, it was evident that the mass of refugees was not diminishing. In fact, the number of Cambodians awaiting evacuation had increased as the hours passed. It was obvious that word had spread among the citizenry that an evacuation was really taking place at the airfield. The fact that the airfield perimeter was undergoing probing attacks by the insurgents created an increased urgency to our operations. The rear loading ramps of the aircraft were no sooner lowered than the people would clamber aboard, assisting mothers with children and the elderly. The only way that we could stop the hectic boarding was for the Flight Engineer to begin to close the cargo door and ramp and for the Aircraft Commander to begin taxing out of the loading area.

It was shortly after the *Tailpipe* team had coordinated for an air strike on the field perimeter that the urgency to load more people at a faster rate really took effect. The A-1 Spad came directly over the loading area, in a dive, as he fired both rockets and guns at the insurgents just outside the airfield perimeter. There had been some intermittent small arms firing from the probing attacks. All of this sound of battle created a panic of sorts among the women refugees, especially those with infants hung in blankets around their necks.

At this time, I saw a woman who could not get on a plane due to the crush of anxious, frantic people, actually toss her infant into an aircraft as the doors were closing. I can only surmise that

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the mother had pitched the child to a relative or friend who was already in the plane. I do not know if the woman got out on a subsequent flight later in the day.

As the day wore on, the temperature and sun started to have an effect on all of us. My only protection from the sun was a military overseas cap and I could feel the sun burning my face and neck. Many of the refugees were wearing the traditional round, conical, woven reed hats that shaded their head and shoulders. I actually tried one of them on, but it was very small and would have blown away in the slipstream of maneuvering airplanes.

As luck would have it, I saw, in a group of refugees who would be boarding on the next C-7A, a taller woman who was wearing a military style French campaign hat. With a grateful apology, I liberated the woman from that hat and gave her my overseas cap. I have often wondered what comments were made when she got off the plane at Pleiku wearing a Lt. Col.'s rank insignia on an Air Force overseas cap. That liberated French campaign hat was a great relief to me during the rest of the evacuation. After all of this time, I still have that hat and wear it to every Caribou reunion, even though it is sweat stained and slightly odorous.

I am very sorry and somewhat reluctant to relate this next occurrence. Of course, it was of military necessity to load the passengers with the engines still running at idle RPM. At one time, following the strafing run of the Spad, there were two Caribous in the parking area. While I was marshaling the planes and watching the wing tip clearance, the right engine propeller of one of the planes struck an elderly man in the head. He had been sitting on a woven reed mat, blocked out of my line of sight by the right landing gear. I immediately contacted the Station Chief and notified him of the accident. He, in turn, ordered the ambulance, that had been standing by all day, to remove the body.

As I was apologizing for the death, he informed me that the victim had been an old soldier who had served in the Cambodian Army many years ago. He also told me that the victim was almost blind, profoundly deaf, and probably would never have been able to climb aboard an airplane. His *C'est la vie* comment and demeanor did little to appease my feelings of remorse, but we had hundreds more people to evacuate and it was rapidly approaching late afternoon. It was a tragic accident and to my knowledge the only death or injury of the day.

As I recall, it was after 1700 hours when *Hilda* ordered me out on what was the last flight of the day. The *Tailpipe* team was instructed to remain in position as the evacuation was planned to continue the next morning. As I boarded the aircraft and made my way forward to the flight deck, I had to climb over what must have been at least 50 refugees. They were sitting two deep on the canvas seats and packed in elbow to elbow as they sat on the floor of the cargo compartment. Many of them tugged at my flight suit and were speaking French, Cambodian, and an occasional understandable "Thank you" expressed their appreciation for aiding their escape from the insurgents.

Vietnam War Citations of Lt. Col. Robert A. Davis

Distinguished Flying Cross Citation; **Dak Seang, 2-3 April 1970**; Ref: 7AF SO G-0312, 29 January 1971

Lt. Col. Robert A. Davis distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as Operations Officer at Dak Seang, Republic of Vietnam from 2 April 1970 to 3 April 1970. During this period, Col. Davis flew nine emergency resupply missions to airdrop critically needed ammunition, food, and medical supplies to the occupants of the besieged Special Forces camp. Although exposed vulnerably to intensive hostile fire, Col. Davis, with complete disregard for his personal safety, completed the missions without the loss of personnel or equipment. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Col. Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Distinguished Flying Cross, First Oak Leaf Cluster Citation; **Cambodia, 24 May 1970**; Ref: 7AF SO G-0555, 19 February 1971

Lt. Col. Robert A. Davis distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a C-7A Aircraft Commander in Cambodia on 24 May 1970. On that date Col. Davis flew his aircraft on a combat essential mission to deliver urgently needed ammunition and to evacuate wounded personnel. Despite marginal weather conditions and while exposed to hostile fire, Col. Davis courageously accomplished the vital airlift missions without loss of personnel or equipment. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Col. Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Bronze Star Citation; Cambodia, 23-25 June 1970; Ref: 7AF SO G-4436, 6 October 1970

Lt. Col. Robert A. Davis distinguished himself by meritorious achievement as mission site commander while engaged in ground operations against an opposing armed force at a remote site in Cambodia from 23 June 1970 to 25 June 1970. During this period, while exposed to extreme danger from hostile ground fire and mortar attacks, Col. Davis directed the mass evacuation of Cambodian refugees from this remote site to designated safe haven areas. Through his professional leadership, sound judgment and courage in the face of invading hostile forces, Col. Davis successfully directed this vital

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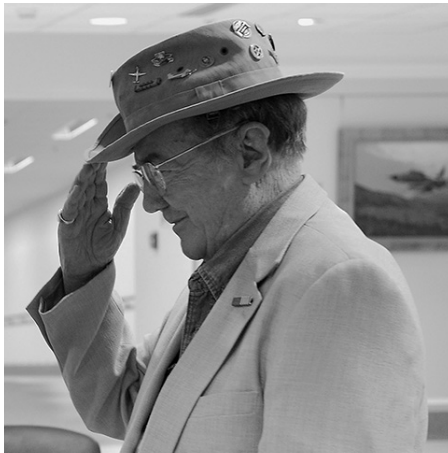
airlift mission with outstanding results. The exemplary leadership, personal endeavor and devotion to duty displayed by Col. Davis in this responsible position reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Lt. Col. Bob Davis at the Pentagon during the C-7A Caribou Association Reunion in September 2016
Bob Davis passed away in 2020.

Reluctant Club Officer

by Dana Kelly [536, 70]

After finishing Caribou training and enjoying Christmas with my family, friends and parents, I headed for Vung Tau via the Jungle Survival School at Clark AB, Philippines. My arrival in the first week of January 1970 quickly brought me to "the real world."

The squadron CO (Commanding Officer), Lt. Col. Givens, called me into his office on the second day after my arrival. He said that he had two things he wanted me to do. First, my records showed that I had many hours as an IP/FE (instructor pilot/flight examiner), so I was to upgrade to the same status ASAP in the C-7A and become the Standardization Pilot for the squadron, and, second, I was to become the "Club Officer" for the squadron's officers billeting facility. (I believe the structure had once been a motel).

There were a couple of things the CO didn't know. I was definitely a "reluctant dragon" regarding being the Club Officer because I had vowed to myself very early in my career that I would **never** be a club officer. Also, I knew that another former IP/FE with more experience than mine had previously declined Lt. Col. Givens' offer of the Standardization Pilot position because he was tired of filling out evaluation paperwork. I realized that I was left "holding the bag" on that one.

I readily agreed to the Standardization position, but before accepting his gracious offer to be Club Officer, I had three stipulations. Lt. Col Givens was hesitant, but he agreed to listen.

The stipulations were:

1. "Lilly," the female Vietnamese bartender, would take no money for each and every drink. My assumption was that sticky fingers might pocket some or much of it. Better to remove the temptation. I would parcel out poker chips to the officers in exchange for cash. They would pay for their liquor and beer with the chips and I would collect the chips "spent" at the end of each day. I would then make purchases to replenish the Club's stock as Lilly identified the bar's needs to me.

2. There would be "no rank" in the bar as each and every customer had to have a place to let off steam and relax from weariness and fatigue that was often aggravated with spattered oil, grease, grit, and sand. The CO nearly choked on this, but he bit his tongue and said nothing.

3. There would be no "bell ringing" for anyone wearing his hat into the bar, for the obvious reasons listed in Stipulation #2. (For the uninitiated, it was a tradition in Air Force Officer's Club bars, especially Stag Bars, that if someone walked in with their hat "on" and someone else rang the bell located at the bar, the offender had to buy a round of drinks for everyone.)

After a couple of minutes grumbling, Lt. Col. Givens agreed – with the proviso that he would reserve final judgment depending on how well it worked.

Lilly did a marvelous job for everyone. However, the men could not resist playing "Liar's Dice" with her. She won sufficiently that about once a month she would go to the fish market and buy a huge amount of fresh crabs. She would then cook them in the small kitchen behind the bar and serve them up free to the troops, complete with melted butter. It was a feast everyone looked forward to and did as much for morale as the booze.

Stipulations #2 and #3 worked out beautifully. Brand new Lieutenants fresh out of jets at pilot training definitely had ideas on how to fly an airplane, but had little experience. "Old Timers" fresh out of flying C-141 and B-52 aircraft liked six or eight mile turns to final and were readily accused of "trolling" for ground fire. At times, the "JO's" (junior officers) and their "seniors" exchanged some very strong words, which cannot be repeated here, but there was never a serious altercation. Lt. Col Givens never voiced any further apprehension and was soon "totally on board."

When the 536th TAS moved to Cam Ranh Bay, I gladly gave up all Club Officer duties to concentrate on my primary duty as a flight examiner.

Caribou Rides Open

from *Caribou Clarion*
June 11,1971

The C-7A Caribou isn't too fast and it doesn't fly any too high, but it does fly everywhere in South Vietnam, and you now have a chance to ride along? Interested? Contact your orderly room.

In a recent move to show Cam Ranh Bay AB how its prime mission aircraft operates, 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing

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Caribou Rides (from Page 12)

(TAW) officials established a flying squadron sponsorship program to give non-flying personnel a chance to see what it's like.

"I would like to take this opportunity to again thank you for yesterday's flight aboard your aircraft," started the letter from an airman who was one of the first to take part in the program."In years to come, I will look on it as one of the highlights of my tour in Vietnam."

The letter was received by Maj. Gerald E. Campbell, an Aircraft Commander from Standardization and Evaluation Section of the 483rd TAW who had piloted the 458th Tactical Airlift Squadron Caribou.

So, as the story goes, sign up and take the opportunity to fly in a Caribou. It doesn't cost a cent.

The Marine's Vietnam Commitment

by John Prados
Naval History Magazine, Volume 29, Number 2 April 2015

When the U.S. Marines waded ashore at My Khe beach, near Da Nang, South Vietnam, they had no idea of the ordeal that was to follow.

The date was 8 March 1965, and the men, members of Brigadier General Frederick J. Karch's 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, were the first American ground-combat troops committed to the Vietnam War – one of the Marine Corps' most costly conflicts and its longest.

On the beach, the bewildered men of the 3rd Battalion 9th Marines were met by local military officials, curious onlookers, and pretty girls handing out flower leis – not enemy soldiers.

Later in the day, the lead elements of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines would arrive by air. Together, their mission was to create a secure perimeter around Da Nang Air Base, where U.S. warplanes were now operating.

Marine combat units would be in South Vietnam until 1971. Some Marines, who were advising the South Vietnamese Marine Corps or guarding the U.S. Embassy, would remain in country through the spring of 1975.

Measured by the length of time during which Marines served as advisers, starting in 1954, the Vietnam conflict is longer than the U.S. military engagements in Iraq or Afghanistan.

USMC Vietnam Invasion 1965

by Dave Ramsey, U.S. Army

It was March 1965 when a few of us had a day off. We decided we needed to drive over to Red Beach and lay in the sun and drink some warm 33 Beer. It was early morning and we saw some ships out at sea, but we didn't know what was going on.

Soon we started to see landing crafts coming ashore with Marines charging the beach. We offered a few Marines some of our warm beer but soon an angry Lieutenant came running over and told us to get the hell out of there, but we just hung around. Crowds of Vietnamese people started coming in along with a bunch from the press.

Then we saw Brigadier General F. J. Karch. Some Vietnamese girls came running over and placed some pretty flowers around his neck. That sure didn't make him happy. Later on, we heard General [William] Westmoreland was pretty "pissed-off" with what went on that day.

We drank our last few hot beers, then left and went back to our Tent City. It sure messed up our day of fun on the beach.

Editor's Note. 33 Beer was a Vietnamese rice beer brewed in Saigon. It is now marketed by the Vietnamese as 333 Premium Export Beer.

BGen. Frederick. J. Karch , USMC, (USNA Class of 1940) arrives in South Vietnam, 8 March 1965.

Time to Renew!

Check the mailing label on this newsletter. If it does not show "**2021**" or later, then it is **TIME TO PAY** your Bou Tax or this will be the **last** newsletter you will receive.

If the year is before 2021, you may have changed your address and the last newsletter went to an old address, or you just sent in your check, or forgot to send your check.

DO IT TODAY!
Make your $10 check to the **C-7A Caribou Association** and send it to:
Tom Snodgrass
2515 S. White Cliff Lane
Wichita, KS 67210-1924

We Will Never Forget

The first USAF Caribou casualties were sustained 4 Oct 1966, when a 17th Aviation Company (AvCo) CV-2, S/N 63-9751, struck Hon Kong mountain west of An Khe, killing all of the crew and all but ten of the 28 passengers aboard. The aircraft was piloted by **Capt. David O. Webster, USAF**, and **1/Lt. Francis H. Bassaillon, USAF**, with flight mechanics **SSgt. Daniel P. Marlowe, USAF**, and SP4 John T. Bird, USA.

When a 135th AvCo CV-2, S/N 62-4167, crashed in the mountains southwest of Tuy Hoa on 20 Nov 1966, pilots Capt. John W. Clayton, USA and **Capt. Anthony F. Korpics, USAF**, and flight mechanics Specialist 5th Class Arnold Pearson, USA and **TSgt. Glendell E. Yates, USAF**, lost their lives.

A1C Willis A. Karickhoff, USAF, was killed when 135th AvCo CV-2, S/N 61-2405, hit a mountain near An Khe in bad weather, 28 Nov 1966.

Ain't No Sunshine

by Bill Withers
1971

Ain't no sunshine when she's gone
It's not warm when she's away
Ain't no sunshine when she's gone
And she's always gone too long
Anytime she's goes away

Wonder this time where she's gone
Wonder if she's gone to stay
Ain't no sunshine when she's gone
And this house just ain't no home
Anytime she goes away

And I know, I know, I know, I know
I know, I know, I know, I know, I
know, I know, I know, I know, I know,
I know, I know, I know, I know, I
know, I know, I know, I know, I know,
I know, I know, I know, I know
Hey I oughta leave young thing alone
But ain't no sunshine when she's
gone, woh woh

Ain't no sunshine when she's gone
Only darkness every day
Ain't no sunshine when she's gone
And this house just ain't no home
Anytime she goes away
Anytime she goes away
Anytime she goes away
Anytime she goes away

Songwriter: Bill Withers
Lyrics © Wb Music Corp.

Born in West Virginia, the youngest of six children, Bill Withers grew up with a stutter and was 13 when his father died. The Navy provided Bill an escape and he served for nine years (1956-65).

Bill Withers' first single, "Ain't No Sunshine" peaked at #3 in the U.S. and won a Grammy award for Best Rhythm and Blues Song in 1972.

Loved ones sometimes seemed a distant dream for troops in Vietnam. In just a few words, Bill Withers expressed the simple truth felt by those with only memories to hold: ***"Ain't no sunshine when she's gone."***

Dak Seang Remembered

by John Tawes [537, 69]

The following comments were prompted by the coverage of C-7A support operations for Dak Seang in the "C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter, Vol. 31-2, April 2020."

In the middle of this whole Covid-19 virus issue I totally forgot that it has been 50 years this month that we were involved in the Dak Seang operation.

I did a night airdrop there (it wasn't supposed to be at night) on 2 April 1970. I was due to rotate home on 9 April and my boss (537th Tactical Airlift Squadron Operations Officer Lt. Col. Errico Giannarelli) would not let me do the airdrop on 4 April.

I did fly my last Vietnam mission that day (April 4) in the aircraft that is now sitting in the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB, GA.

We had just taken off from Dak Pek when the 5-ship formation went overhead to do the airdrop at Dak Seang. I watched five aircraft go into the smoke at Dak Seang to drop and saw four come out. That was emotionally very hard to take.

Five days later I was on a Boeing 707 out of Cam Ranh Bay heading home.

Things I Learned as a Forward Air Controller

by Darrel Whitcomb [537, 70]
from Daedalus Flyer
Spring 2020

As a young U.S. Air Force officer, I served as a forward air controller (FAC) in the later years of the war in Southeast Asia. This included duty with the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron at Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand, where I flew the OV-10, and duty with Detachment 1 of the 56th Special Operations Wing at Udorn Air Base, Thailand, where I flew O-l's and U-17's as a *Raven* FAC on special assignment in Laos.

Through my tours, I flew over northern and southern Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and even a few times over North Vietnam. I spent many hours on interdiction missions searching for targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the hinterlands of all of these countries.

I also had many occasions to perform close air support for friendly forces and, when necessary, participate in search and rescue missions for downed aircrews or Special Forces teams. I directed hundreds of air strikes and learned that the airspace over hot targets was a dangerous arena and pilots had to diligently work to prevent mid-air collisions with fighters and other supporting aircraft. The "Big Sky" concept did not always work. My unit mates and I learned fast. The memories are still strong.

Interdiction

On these missions, our purpose was to find enemy forces and engage them before they came in contact with our allied ground forces. Literally, we were trying to prevent battles by destroying enemy forces before they were a threat to our guys below.

These missions could be long and tedious. We needed to do good preparation with our intelligence personnel so that we could focus our search efforts. We always carried maps, which were updated with the most recent intelligence data on active road segments and potential supply areas. We directed air strikes on any enemy forces or trucks we found.

OV-10 Bronco

However, the tedium was a challenge. We did a great deal of our searching with binoculars. While necessary to spot camouflaged targets, they restricted our over-all situational awareness. Consequently, we quickly learned to turn up the volume on our radios in case we received any calls warning us of enemy actions.

Later in my tours, our OV-10's were modified with radar warning receivers (RWR). They could warn us if any enemy radars were tracking us. I remember vividly searching one day with my binoculars along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, near the Ban Karai Pass, when I heard an unusual " vit-vit-vit" tone on my RWR. Looking quickly behind the aircraft, I saw several very large airbursts and "jinked" out of the area.

When I mentioned this in my mission debrief, I was informed that the North Vietnamese had radar-guided 100 mm anti-aircraft guns east of the pass and loved to shoot at airplanes over Laos. The sound I heard was the RWR picking up the sweep of the radar as its pulse hit my aircraft.

We also did a lot of road cuts by directing fighters to drop bombs with delay fuses on the road segment, thereby cratering them and delaying the movement of the trucks and supplies. Generally, though, the enemy forces would quickly repair the damage or plow a road around the damage and the flow would resume. I discovered that it is very hard to destroy a dirt road.

Close Air Support (CAS)

During my time as a FAC, I did a lot of close air support (CAS) for South Vietnamese, Laotian, Hmong, and Cambodian ground forces. This was facilitated by the assignment of U.S. military or CIA advisors to the units to facilitate critical communications with the FACs.

We provided this support by directing artillery, fixed or rotary-wing gunships, or fighter aircraft as they delivered bombs, rockets, cluster bombs, or direct fire in close proximity to our allied troops. And in doing so, I discovered one over-riding fact – there is no such a thing as friendly artillery or a friendly airstrike. All of it is unfriendly and designed to kill, break, and destroy whatever it hits. That certainly includes friendly forces because the weapons don't care who they kill, break, or destroy.

Therefore, the "control" part of the FAC mission was absolutely critical. The artillery fire had to be accurately plotted and directed. The fighters had to clearly understand the position of the friendly units and clearly see where their ordnance was supposed to be delivered. This could be a real challenge in a confusing battle with fighters or gunships who were low on gas and needed to get in and out quickly. I do believe that every FAC has at least one horror story about sloppy fighters on a CAS mission.

Years later, I flew A-10's and discovered a corollary to this point. In Europe we trained to fight Warsaw Pact forces if they ever invaded Western Europe.

We knew that they had strong, sophisticated air defenses with modern surface-to-air missiles and radar controlled anti- aircraft guns. We had plans for dealing with these weapons. How-

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ever, our allied ground forces also had strong and sophisticated air defenses, and we also had to have very precise procedures for avoiding them as we attacked the Warsaw Pact forces.

That was a two-edged threat and taught me that there is no such a thing as a friendly surface-to-air missile or air defense gun. They are all designed to kill, break, and destroy aircraft, regardless of what patch is on the tail. At one point, 1 recall listening to a U.S. Army air defense officer brag that his battalion would defend his division and kill anything which tried to fly though the airspace above.

I reminded him that our A-10's would be using that airspace to directly support his division. He smiled and told us to be careful.

Search and Rescue (SAR)

All FACs were trained and equipped to conduct rescue operations, and almost all of us were an on-scene commander (OSC) at least once on our tours.

I learned that this capability was critical to our overall mission because our aircrew members were highly trained and costly to replace, and they were highly exploitable by our enemy. But more importantly, by this late stage or the war, it was clear that our nation was retreating from the war, and our airpower was covering that retreat. Nobody wanted to be the last guy shot down or the last POW.

Consequently, when somebody went down, we scrambled our best assets, the *Sandy* A-1's and the HH-53 *Jolly Greens* to fly into harm's way to bring our guys home. Some veterans have claimed that the "war would stop for a SAR." I don't believe that because the tempo of our larger combat operations was unrelenting, and our enemy took advantage of any pause in our operations.

But, some of the SARs were massive multi-day battles with literally hundreds of airstrikes and participants. FACs were players in many or these events. We would be working a flight when someone was shot down, or hear an emergency call on the UHF radio "Guard" frequency and divert to the downed aircraft's location to initially serve as the OSC until the rescue task force arrived. Then we stood by to provide support to the focused rescue operation as the *Sandys* needed.

I don't know if it was luck or planning, but all U.S. military aircraft in the theater had a UHF radio with a "Guard" auxiliary receiver. Consequently, in an emergency, it was possible to contact just about anybody very quickly to do what needed to be done. A lot of fighter guys were rescued through the timely use of "Guard" frequency, many by U.S. Army or Navy helicopters who just happened to be in the area and heard the plaintive call. From this, I learned that the simplest expedients are sometimes the most effective.

Preventing Mid-air Collisions

This could be a real challenge because when the fighters arrived they had to be quickly briefed on the tactical situation below so that they could properly deliver their ordnance. This meant that they would be looking at the ground as the FAC briefed them on enemy and friendly locations, and any necessary run-in restrictions.

To prevent a collision, we would require the fighters to report visual contact with us, confirmed by a wing rock, and then we would generally restrict the fighters to an altitude above until it was time to deliver ordnance.

We FACs would then position our aircraft so that we could clearly see the fighters as they delivered their weapons, holding final clearance to release until we could determine that they were running in as desired. Additionally, we would position our aircraft so that we would not be at the fighter's 12 o'clock position as he pulled up from his delivery.

We did this because we knew that any good fighter pilot would be looking back over his shoulder to see if his ordnance hit the target as he was pulling up. The safety concern here was self-evident.

I violated this rule one day in early December 1972, with almost disastrous results. I was flying an O-1 over the Plain of Jars in northern Laos, when the pilot of a USAF A-7 checked in on freq. He had just lost his flight lead over North Vietnam, was low on fuel, and needed a target to expend his ordnance before returning to base.

Okay. So I had some trucks below and briefed him for the strike. He sounded a bit shaken-up and asked me to hurry so he could proceed back to Korat. I cleared him in to strike the target. I could see that I would be in front of him as he pulled off and instructed him to come off with a hard turn to the right so that we would not conflict. He acknowledged, rolled in, and delivered his bombs on the trucks.

As he pulled up, though, he went into a hard left turn. I saw it and determined that we would be clear. However, a few moments later, he remembered my instructions and came back hard right and on a collision course with my aircraft. I could see directly down his intake and screamed at him on the radio to "pull hard" as I pushed my control stick full forward.

His A-7 roared directly over my aircraft. I don't know how close it was, but I remember immediately smelling his exhaust. I had the windows of my O-1 open and the negative G's caused my flight kit, code cards, and maps to fly out the window. We had a one-way conversation on the radio as he headed south.

The next day, I discussed this with my fellow *Ravens*. We were working more frequently with the USAF A-7D's and I did not want a repeat of this event. Unfortunately, I was not successful in that effort. Three weeks later, another *Raven*, Capt. Skip Jackson, was working in an O-1 in almost the same area with a flight of A-7's and had a mid-air

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collision with one of the jets.

The A-7 pilot ejected and was captured by North Vietnamese forces below. He was released and returned home three months later. Skip Jackson was killed and his remains were never found or returned. From this, I discerned that the laws of physics are immutable. I just wish that Skip had come home too.

These are a few of the things that I learned back in my youthful days as a forward air controller.

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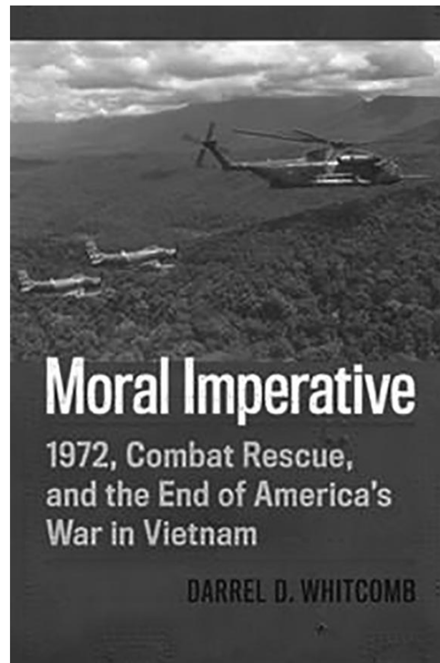
Moral Imperative
1972, Combat Rescue and the End of Americas War in Vietnam
by Darrel Whitcomb [537, 70]

Moral Imperative, Darrel Whitcomb's latest book on search and rescue (SAR) was released in mid-December 2020 and can be purchased on-line.

In 1972 America was completing its withdrawal from the long, divisive Vietnam War. Interdiction operations against North Vietnam and the bombing raids of *Linebacker II* backed diplomatic efforts to reach a peace agreement in Paris. Air power covered the departure of ground forces, and search and rescue teams supported the airmen and soldiers still in the fight. Under these circumstances, SAR was not just a mission. It was a moral imperative.

The book relies on a trove of declassified documents and unit histories to tell its story. *Moral Imperative* combines stories of soldiers cut off from their units, advisors trapped with allied forces, and airmen downed deep in enemy territory, with the narratives of the USAF, Army, Navy, Marines, contract pilots, and special operations teams ready to conduct rescues in Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam.



Editor's Note. After graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1969 and completion of pilot training, Darrel served in the 537th TAS (1970-71) and was one of the pilots to fly the first group of Caribous home in September 1971. He then served second and third SEA tours flying OV-10's and O-1's in 1972-74.

Darrell has written extensively about search and rescue. His previous books are: (1) *The Rescue of Bat 21,* (2) *Combat Search and Rescue in Desert Storm,* (3) *Call Sign Dustoff: A History of U.S. Army Aeromedical Evacuation from Conception to Hurricane Katrina,* and (4) *On a Steel Horse I Ride: A History of the MH-53 Helicopters in War and Peace.*

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Vietnam War Symposium
Atlanta 2019

On November 2, 2019, the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association (AVVBA) hosted a symposium on the Vietnam War: Truth and Factual History at the Atlanta History Center with over 350 attendees.

R.J. "Del" Delvecchio, Executive Secretary of the Vietnam Veterans for Factual History (VVFH) moderated the symposium. The speakers were Dr. Robert F Turner, professor of International Law and National Security Law at the University of Virginia; Dr. Mark Moyar, a former Director of the Office for Civilian-Military Cooperation at the U.S. Agency for International Development; and Dr. Michael Kort, professor of Social Sciences at Boston University who has written extensively on the history of the Soviet Union.

A video of the symposium is available on YouTube. The entire video is over four hours long, although there are 18 sections that can be selected individually. The link for the symposium is: **https://youtu.be/xTGtf2g8tAA**

The introduction contains contradictory news clips of Walter Cronkite's famous report on the 1968 Tet Offensive to illustrate why the symposium was needed more than 50 years later.

In the first clip, reporting from Saigon on February 14, 1968, Mr. Cronkite states the Tet Offensive was a disastrous defeat for the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. In the second clip, which was broadcast from the U.S. and was aired nationally on February 27, 1968, Mr. Cronkite states the Tet Offensive demonstrated that the war was a stalemate and the U.S. was mired in a war that could not be won.

Editor's Note. While lengthy, the symposium video is worth a look. Watching the first 10 to 15 minutes will be sufficient to determine whether or not it sparks your interest.

Doomsday Plane

by Tom Orwick [483 CAMS, 69]

A few years after fixing C-7A radios in the Comm/Nav shop at Vung Tau, I found myself serving as a Post Attack Command and Control Systems Inflight Communication Technician (or Radio Maintenance, RM) on the E-4A Airborne Command Post. I was assigned to the 55th AMS (Avionics Maintenance Squadron) out of Offutt AFB, but we pulled alert duty at Andrews AFB, MD.

The E-4A was the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP), also known as the "Doomsday Plane."

It was built on a Boeing 747 airframe and provided an airborne platform for the National Command Authority (the President or whoever might be left) to direct the retaliation after a nuclear attack. All three E-4A's were later converted to E-4B's.

The E-4A had UHF radios with multiplexers to provide multiple telephone lines to each UHF unit, HF radios, and a Very Low Frequency (VLF) transmitter with a Trailing Wire Antenna (TWA) that had 28,000 feet of wire available.

The flight crew had three RMs and three different RM positions: the tech controller who monitored signal levels in and out of the plane, the TWA operator, and the RM. Each RM was trained in all three positions.

There was always one E-4A on hot alert at Andrews AFB with a skeleton crew consisting of a Battle Staff team member, a radio operator, a crypto operator, and an RM. The plane was continuously powered up with ground power and had a communication cable with circuits to monitor messages to the Pentagon.

At the beginning of an exercise the RM on duty would key up a UHF transmitter, establish contact with the local ground station, and switch calls in progress from the ground cable to radio (RF). Other RMs arriving at the aircraft would disconnect the ground cable. If done properly, calls in process would not be dropped. The aircraft would then taxi to the runway, start a take-off roll, then shut down and taxi back to its parking spot and resume alert status. On rare occasion, the plane would take off, fly a short training flight, and then land and resume alert.

Early in the morning of 9 November 1979 the Klaxon blew. I ran to the airplane, pulled the comm cable, boarded, and went to tech control to make sure all was going well. We taxied out and took off. As I said, this did occasionally happen. But a rumor started circulating around the plane that this was not an exercise. Although we trained for this all the time, the thought that we could be going to nuclear war sent chills down my spine.

A few minutes later the Battle Staff team chief came on the intercom. His announcement went something like this, "This is not an exercise. We received a call from NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) saying there were 250 missiles headed for the U.S. and then the call dropped. Not knowing what was going on, we took off. I need to see the head RM NOW!" That was me.

I saw the Colonel and he wanted to know why we dropped the call. Fortunately, we had a 14 channel tape recorder to monitor incoming calls. We played the tape and found that the call was hung up on the other end. In other words, NORAD sent a call out on the world-wide alerting system that the U.S. was being attacked and then hung up.

We were eventually told that NORAD was having an in-house exercise. Due to a failed computer chip, the test tape went to the outside world. Bombers were on the end of runways and missile operators had their launch keys inserted, all waiting final word from the National Command Authority. Thankfully, that did not happen.

This was my most memorable Cold War experience. It was enough.

Flying High

by Barden Revelle [536, 67]

One day, operating out of Can Tho on a dedicated mission (call sign *Iris 456*) supporting the 5th Special Forces, we were loading for an air-land mission to the To Chau Special Forces camp.

The last piece of "cargo" was a senior Special Forces (SF) NCO of considerable rank. He was also considerably inebriated. So much so that he was escorted by a couple of other SF guys who were keeping him vertical. I guess he had enjoyed his R&R up to the last second.

We loaded him on the floor behind the cargo, started engines, and took off. During the After Takeoff check he was still in the same spot. Hadn`t moved or even twitched.

Coming in to To Chau, I saw no reason to give him a landing briefing, as he had missed the first briefing anyhow. Plus, he was still "out."

To Chau was a short dirt strip with a high bank, or cliff, on the approach end and a high hill on the departure end. We always came in over the cliff for landing. Before takeoff, we always turned the aircraft around and also took off over the cliff due to the threat of ground fire from the hill. We did it that way regardless of the wind direction.

On this particular day we came over the cliff with a strong tail wind. The bird would not set down. Here comes the hill. You did not want to make a go-around close to that hill due to Charlie being on it. The windscreen is now full of the hill. I`m standing with my feet on

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Flying High (from Page 18)

the radio racks behind the pilots. The Aircraft Commander's throttle hand goes up, the two blue prop reverse lights come on. We were still flying several feet in the air. I dropped to the floor, but not fast enough. We slammed into the runway with reversed props and locked brakes. I pushed the radios back under the dash and I struggled to my feet. Dirt and bushes were flying everywhere, including inside the airplane, which had the pilots' side windows and the cargo door open.

I looked back at my load, which was still in place. Way down the dirt runway, I saw a now sober, formally non-sober, Special Forces Sgt. hauling a** away from the "crash" scene.

Our bird was okay, though. We backed up, inspected her, and turned her around for home. The local SF troops brought the now sober Sarge to us for farewell guffaws. He said he thought we crashed and that he was dead.

Fastest dead man I have ever seen.

What Are The Odds?

by Frank Godek [537, 69]

Upon retiring from the Air Force, I continued to fly by joining the CAF (Confederate Air Force). We restored World War II (WW II) aircraft and traveled around the country doing air shows.

At one air show in 1991 at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH, I went to Pilot's Registration to pick-up a package. While there, I observed a pilot filling out his paperwork. I looked at his name tag, "Tibbets," and asked him, "Any relationship?" He replied that he was Paul Tibbets IV, the grandson of Paul Tibbets, Jr., pilot of the B-29 *Enola Gay* that helped end WW II. I told him that I knew his grandfather at MacDill AFB years ago and that I had played golf with him one day. I invited Paul Tibbets IV to come down to the B-17

Frank Godek on the left and Col. Paul Tibbets IV on the right

Texas Raiders at 5 PM when we were doing a public relations (PR) flight.

Upon arriving back at *Texas Raiders*, I looked up and saw a KC-10 tanker pulled up right behind us. The crew deplaned and walked over to us. They asked if they could go through the *Texas Raiders*. I said, "Sure, go ahead."

Looking up at a 6'5" pilot, I noticed his name tag read "Oppenheimer." I asked him, "Any relationship?" He stated that he was the grandson of J. Robert Oppenheimer. (J. Robert Oppenheimer was the Director of the Los Alamos Laboratory during WW II and was responsible for the research and design of the atomic bomb.)

WOW!!! Both Tibbets' and Oppenheimer's grandsons at the same air show. What are the odds!!! I invited him to return at 5 PM for the PR flight.

When they both arrived at 5 PM, I introduced them to each other and had them board the aircraft. I instructed them to go up to the cockpit and introduce themselves to the pilot, Buddy Cooksey, who was in the left seat.

With some very elite individuals on board the *Texas Raiders*, away went the aircraft off into the "wild blue yonder."

The grandson of the man who developed the A-bomb and the grandson of the man who dropped the first one on Japan in August 1945 were flying on the same vintage WW II airplane, at the same time, 46 years later.

What are the odds?

C-47 PSYOPS Pilot

by Jerry Peterson

One of my best friends is former Caribou pilot John Westman [535, 68]. While John was flying C-7A's out of Vung Tau, I was flying C-47 psychological operations (PSYOPS) warfare missions out of Binh Thuy in the middle of the Mekong Delta.

We were getting the crap kicked out of Binh Thuy nightly, so we flew our Gooney Bird (C-47) up to Vung Tau each evening to protect our airplane. We stayed overnight at the Caribou quarters and flew our next day missions out of Vung Tau, returning to Binh Thuy between sorties.

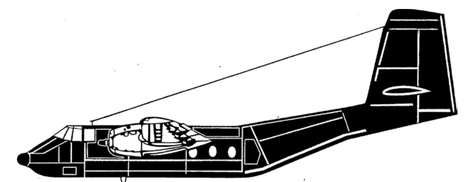
We had a huge speaker mounted aft of our cargo door and a 1000 watt amplifier to play the *Chu Hoi* (safe conduct pass messages) to the Viet Cong.

On a couple occasions I plugged in a tape of an F-100 in afterburner on takeoff roll from Vung Tau. Everyone within many miles would hear an F-100 taking off, but those on the base who were looking for an F-100 only saw a C-47 lumbering down the runway. I was asked/ordered not to do that again.

I flew both the C-47 psychological warfare mission and the AC-47 *Spooky* gunship mission. I did a YouTube presentation of my experiences with the C-47 for the Museum of Flight, which can be accessed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEKihV2jsbc&list=PL05BDN7vYdtrM7ih5SZcTvvzuMfPXpC3r&index=68&t=8s

I was always impressed by the Caribou's ability to operate out of very short landing strips in the Mekong Delta and always appreciated the Caribou hospitality.



The Lady Was a Test Pilot

by Richard A. Morley
from USAF Museum Friends Journal, Volume 20, No. 4 Winter 97/98

Ann Gilpin Baumgartner was born in the U.S. Army Hospital, Augusta, GA, August 27,1918. She graduated from Walnut Hill High School, Natick, MA, in 1936 and from Smith College at Northhampton in 1940.

She learned of the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) organization while working as a writer at the *New York Times* and conducting research prior to entering medical school. Ann was interested in flying before World War II started. Her father, Edgar Baumgartner, was an engineer and patent attorney. He was involved with development of the Joy Stick. He had taken Ann, on several occasions, to see the airmail planes come into Newark Airport at night and to watch Clarence Chamberlain train for his attempt to fly the Atlantic. She was inspired further by Amelia Earhart who spoke at her grade school, an incident she would never forget.

Ann learned to fly in 1940 at Somerset Hills Airport at Basking Ridge, NJ, under the tutelage of instructors Lew Penn and Ted Sefton. Flying came easily to her. Using a brakeless 50 horsepower Piper Cub, she soloed in just eight hours. She purchased another very old Piper Cub which she used to build flying time. When the eastern seaboard was closed to private flying as a wartime measure, Ann commuted to Easton, PA. The trip took four hours each way on a bus just to fly two hours.

The war in Europe was in full swing, and the British were hanging on for dear life. The United States, as the "Arsenal of Democracy," was providing Great Britain with fighting airplanes under the terms of a 1941 "Lend Lease" agreement. A problem arose. There were not enough pilots with experience to deliver these airplanes over the North Atlantic. To further complicate the matter, there were not enough pilots to deliver airplanes from British manufacturers. To compensate for the shortage of male pilots, the British started the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), a program to train women to fly military airplanes, and thus relieve male pilots for combat.

Jacqueline Cochran, noted record-breaking race pilot and avid proponent of female participation in aviation, was unsuccessful in several attempts to establish a similar program in the U.S. She was in England where she observed the training going on. Cochran had recruited 24 or so American women pilots for the ATA. When Cochran returned to the U.S. she was confident she could persuade Army Air Forces (AAF) officials to train female pilots to perform the same duties as the ladies of the ATA – to fly anything anywhere at anytime.

She soon found out a program had already been started by the Army's Air Transport Command known as the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). Its director was an experienced pilot, Nancy Harkness Love.

Cochran managed to persuade General "Hap" Arnold to start a second program, which would train female pilots and thus prepare them for military flying service in the WAFS, however, as civilians. The original requirements were rigid. Age limits were set between 21 and 35; minimum flying time of 200 hours; and at least a Commercial Pilot rating.

Eventually, both programs were combined into the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) with Cochran in charge and Nancy Love as Executive Officer.

Ann volunteered for service in the WASP organization in January 1943. Her first assignment was in the third WASP class at Howard Hughes Field, Houston Municipal Airport. She and the other volunteers were told to "forget what you have been taught, and here you'll learn to fly the Army way."

The ladies were viewed with suspicion. Even as civilians, their flight training paralleled that of male aviation cadets, which included military discipline and a rigorous physical training program. In addition, they studied meteorology, radio, physics, mathematics, Morse Code, aircraft recognition, and learned the mysteries of dead reckoning navigation.

They spent many hours in Link trainers learning to "fly blind." They also digested the intricacies of maps and charts. All this while learning to fly the "Army way." Training emphasis was on cross-country flight but no time was spent on gunnery and very little on formation flying.

Ann contracted measles while stationed at Hughes Field and departed for home to recuperate. When she resumed her training, she learned that Avenger Field in Sweetwater, TX, out in the middle of nowhere, had been designated as the main base for the WASPs. The trainees were housed in regular GI barracks instead of the motor courts they lived in at Hughes Field.

Many "emergency type forced landings" were made at Avenger by transient male pilots when they learned of the female flight training program.

Finally, Ann received her coveted

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Lady Test Pilot (from Page 20)

silver wings as a full-fledged, civilian military pilot on September 11, 1943. She was assigned to Camp Davis, NC. Ann flew Douglas A-24's, Lockheed B-34's, Cessna UC-78's, and Curtiss A-25's, all converted to tow targets for gunnery practice by the Army's artillery battalions. While there were many close calls, few of the tow target aircraft were hit by flak. Several women were killed in other accidents, mostly due to mechanical failures.

Ann was temporarily assigned to the Wright Field Flight Test Division, Dayton, OH, in January 1944 and worked for Col. Randolph Lovelace, Chief of the Aero-Med Laboratory. Using a B-17, she flight-tested equipment such as high altitude oxygen masks, cold weather flight suits for the WASPs, and she also designed and tested a relief tube for women.

Wright Field was the largest and most dynamic test center in the world and Ann wanted to be where "the action is." She asked Col. Ernest Warburton, Flight Test Chief, to assign her to the Flight Test Division. She was accepted with a stipulation. She would do no flying until she proved herself as assistant Operations Officer.

As one might expect in the 1940's, it was somewhat difficult for some of the other pilots and engineers to accept a woman on equal terms. Ann was assigned to Fighter Flight Test (FFT). The boss of FFT, Col. Harvey Estes, was in England, so Maj. Fred Borsodi and Maj. Chris Petrie were in charge.

The FFT pilots, gentlemen all, were sympathetic towards her desire to fly fighter aircraft and to become a test pilot. Maj. Petrie finally assigned Maj. Gus Lundquist to give her a flight test. She was told that although Lundquist disapproved of women fliers, he was heard to say, "She actually did okay."

According to Col. Ken Chilstrom, "With time, Ann earned her acceptance." As she remarked, "One of the first tests involved zooming in on the rear of a fighter, flown by one of the FFT pilots, to test a tail warning device. That was a show of trust, I thought."

Soon after, Maj. Petrie said she could fly the Republic P-47, however, no aerobatics. Chilstrom, then a Captain, gave her the usual cockpit checkout and Ann took off. Her thought at the time, "I felt the lightness of the powerful P-47 as it nosed up towards the clouds. What a thrilling sensation." Other fighters followed and she became the first and only female test pilot at Wright Field during World War II.

She performed flight tests on an electronic navigation device that predated LORAN. This test involved starting off on a cross-country flight in a P-47. Tuning in on the system, she would try and home in on the signal truck. Ann would buzz the truck when she found it.

Using a P-51, Ann tested a new gun sight over Lake Erie. She fired the machine guns at a target on a small island. First she cleared the area of fishermen by firing short bursts at close proximity to them.

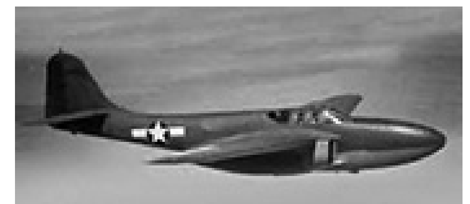
When Col. Estes returned from England it was obvious he did not have an affinity for female flyers. "His" FFT pilots, like Borsodi, Lundquist, Johnston, Ritchie, and Chilstrom, were performing important tests such as compressibility and flat spins. Ann was suddenly transferred to Bomber Flight Test (BFT).

Maj. Bob Ruegg was the Commanding Officer of BFT. Ann flew copilot with him and other BFT pilots. On early in-flight refueling tests with Maj. Russ Schleeh, they kept a converted B-24 in slow flight while a prototype fuel nozzle was extended. Maj. Borsodi, in a P-38 with one engine feathered, slipped underneath and connected. The test was successful.

Ann was also copilot with Maj. Fred Bretcher for long flights in a B-29. They were testing the capability to fly the weight of the atom bomb *Little Boy* for its future mission. Bretcher and other BFT pilots checked out Ann as first pilot in the C-47, B-25, B-26, B-l7, and in engine-out takeoffs and landings in the B-29. Ann flew copilot in various British and German bombers.

Ann was recalled to FFT when many new and unusual airplanes were on the line to be tested. Among these were the canard Curtiss XP-55, nicknamed the "Ass-Ender" (real name *Ascender*) and Bell's tiny XP-77.

While she was checked out in all U.S. fighters, Ann's assignment was to execute flight characteristic and speed performance tests on the XP-47E a modified P-47B and the first fighter to have a pressurized cockpit. [The XP-47E was the last P-47B produced.] The pressurizing equipment made the airplane very heavy. After climbing to altitude and running the tests, there was so little fuel left that each landing was close to being "dead stick."



By far the epitome of Ann's Wright Field career was her involvement with the Bell YP-59A, the first U.S. jet-powered fighter. Competition to fly this airplane was so fierce that a priority list was prepared with FIT (Flight Instructor Test) pilots first. Ann was on this list and on October 14, 1944, she became the first woman to fly a jet. This "first" by Ann is duly noted and displayed at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Ann stated, "Capt. Wally Lien had the 'crouch-on-the-wing' detail, to explain how the jet ran and what temperatures were red-lined. The most surprising particulars about the YP-59A were that you didn't hear the whine of the jet engines behind, and there was more of a throttle lag than in a propeller driven

Continued on Page 22

Lady Test Pilot (from Page 21)

airplane. I'll admit, as I made the landing approach, I had a brief thought that maybe a reporter would be there to greet me. Instead, however, I taxied to the line, climbed out and signed in. I was told I was scheduled to fly some general to Indianapolis. Later, I found out that Col. Estes and Maj. Borsodi had watched the flight of the precious jet from the control tower."

Ann did not perform any aerobatics in the YP-59A, as any flight other than straight and level was prohibited.

There were 1,074 active WASPs, and they were disbanded at the crest of their productive vocation on December 20, 1944. Combat losses were less than predicted and AAF pilots were returning from overseas assuming the flying duties formerly assigned to the WASPs.

The WASPs delivered over 12,600 airplanes of 77 different types, flying 60 million miles, with a loss of 38 women. The WASPs returned to civilian life without veteran's benefits. On November 23, 1977, President Carter signed a bill, granting the WASPs full Air Force veteran status, making them America's first women military pilots.

After the demise of the WASP organization, Ann moved into Wright Field's Public Relations office where she prepared articles on the "heroes" of the Flight Test Division as she had writing experience.

Maj. Bill Carl, the Air Force liaison officer, and Ann were married May 12, 1945. They had two children, Peter and Peggy, and Ann assumed the usual housewife duties of Scouts, PTA, etc.

While the children were in school, Ann worked as a flight instructor, performing instrument training for United Airlines third pilots at Zahn's Airport on Long Island. Her [FAA pilot] ratings included: Private, Commercial, Instrument, Multi-engine, Flight Instructor, and Instrument Instructor.

She continued her pre-war occupation of writing for *Newsday* and other publications. An avid sailor, she and her husband sailed the Atlantic twice and cruised the Mediterranean, the British Isles, and the French canals. Ann has written a sailing book, T*he Small World of Long Distance Sailors* and a flying book, *A WASP Among Eagles* about her wartime experiences.

Editor's Note. In addition to the many U.S. aircraft she flew, Ann Baumgartner also flew foreign aircraft including the Avro Lancaster, de Havilland Mosquito, Supermarine Spitfire, Junkers Ju-88, and the Canadian C-64. Ann Baumgartner died in March 2008.

Honest Aussie Evaluations

provided by Pat Hanavan
[535, 68]

The following are actual quotes taken from Australian federal government employee performance evaluations:

1. "Since my last report, this employee has reached rock-bottom and has started to dig."
2. "I would not allow this employee to breed."
3. "This employee is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definite won't be."
4. "Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap."
5. "When she opens her mouth, it seems that it is only to change feet."
6. "He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle."
7. "This young lady has delusions of adequacy."
8. "He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."
9. "This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."
10. "This employee should go far, and the sooner he starts the better."
11. "Got a full 6 pack, but lacks the plastic thingy to hold it all together."
12. "A gross ignoramus – 144 times worse than an ordinary ignoramus."
13. "He doesn't have ulcers, but he's a carrier..."
14. "I would like to go hunting with him sometime."
15. "He's been working with glue too much."
16. "He would argue with a sign-post."
17. "He brings a lot of joy whenever he leaves the room."
18. "When their IQ reaches 50, they should sell."
19. "If you see two people talking and one looks bored, he's the other one."
20. "A photographic memory but with the lens cover glued on."
21. "A prime candidate for natural de-selection..."
22. "Donated his brain to science before he was through using it."
23. "Gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming."
24. "He's got two brains; one is lost and the other is out looking for it."
25. "If he were any more stupid, he'd have to be watered twice a week."
26. "If you gave him a penny for his thoughts, you'd get change."
27. "If you stand close enough to him, you can hear the ocean."
28. "It's hard to believe he beat off 15,000,000 other sperm."
29. "One neuron short of a synapse."
30. "Some drink from the fountain of knowledge; he only gargled."
31. "Takes him two hours to watch *60 Minutes*."
32. "The wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead."

Pat Hanavan added another: An Army General was overheard at a cocktail party telling about an Officer Evaluation that he had received as a new platoon leader in WW II. His Company Commander had written: "The only possible reason I can see for this officer's men following him into combat would be perhaps out of idle curiosity".

Supersonic *Air Force One*

by David Slotnick
Business Insider
September 11, 2020

Faster-than-sound travel is the way of the future for the U.S. government. Aerospace company Boom Supersonic (Boom) announced a contract with the USAF to develop a supersonic plane for transporting diplomats and high-ranking government officials.

The contract will fund research into building new configurations of its conceptual supersonic passenger plane, called *Overture. Boom*. Boom has designed the *Overture*, which is still in development, as a single-aisle business class plane, with seats laid out in a 1-1 configuration. With the new funding from the Air Force, the company plans to explore ways to customize the plane for government work.

"By cutting travel times we make it possible for U.S. diplomats and executive leaders to connect more frequently in person, meeting challenges and defusing potential crises with a personal touch," said Boom CEO Blake Scholl.

Boom plans to introduce a demonstrator airplane [late in 2020], with flight tests beginning in 2021. Once the technology and engineering is proven, the larger *Overture* airliner will begin test flights. Those flights are expected to begin in 2025 with final certification of the plane targeted for 2029.

Thanks to improved economics achieved through newer, more efficient technology, the plane should be able to operate more safely, quietly, and cost-effectively than the *Concorde*, while cutting trans-oceanic travel times in half compared to today's passenger jets.

Boom is not the only company that the Air Force has tapped to develop faster-than-sound travel. In August 2020, the Defense Department awarded a contract to another startup, Hermeus, to develop a new *Air Force One* that can travel at hypersonic speeds, or Mach 5.

It Was a Sign

by Dave O'Meara [535, 67]

Vung Tau was my first duty assignment out of tech school. One never knows what is next. Maybe if my plane (S/N 61-2399) had not been blown up on the ramp at Vung Tau in April 1968, I might have re-upped.

I, and the other Crew Chiefs, usually worked on the aircraft all night. If we finished early, then we would sleep on the aircraft so we could pre-flight them early in the AM. I got done around midnight that night and someone "twisted my arm" to go have a beer. An hour later the rockets came in. The rest is history.

S/N 61-2399 hit by 122 mm Rocket.
Copyright © 2005 Chuck Harris

By the time my four years were up, I was married and we had had our first son. I figured the Good Lord only gives us so much luck in life and I used almost the whole bucket full that night.

From Caribou Airlines, Vol. II:

"On 23 April 1968, C-7A S/N 61-2399 was destroyed by a direct hit from an enemy 122 mm rocket while it was parked on the tie-down ramp for the night. A/1C David M. O'Meara was the crew chief of this aircraft."

Caribou's 45 Years of RAAF Service

The Pathfinder
Airpower Development Centre Bulletin
Issue 125, December 2009

On 27 November 2009, Caribou A4-140 flew into Canberra from Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Richmond on the last flight before this aircraft type ceased operations with the RAAF. In a small ceremony, which followed, A4-140 was handed over to the Australian War Memorial.

The transfer marked the end of the DHC-4 Caribou's remarkable 45 year career with the RAAF, encompassing service during the Vietnam War, several peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, and multiple disaster relief and humanitarian missions across Australia and around the world.

A total of only 29 airframes served with the RAAF, in No. 35 and No. 38 Squadrons, and [the Caribou] holds the unique distinction of the longest record of constant operational service in the RAAF.

The Canadian-built Caribou has made a major contribution to Australia's ability to project air power since 1964. The aircraft's robust construction and exceptional Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) capability enabled it to operate from the most rudimentary of airstrips. The aircraft gave the RAAF considerable flexibility in the conduct of air mobility operations, enabling the tactical airlift of personnel and cargo across a wide variety of environments and conditions.

The ability of the Caribou to sustain a high operational tempo in arduous conditions was quickly demonstrated at the very outset of the aircraft's service life. In May 1964, just five weeks after the first three aircraft (including A4-140) were delivered to Australia, the Government announced the decision to

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RAAF Service (from Page 23)

deploy the Caribou to Vietnam.

Such was the sense of urgency to get the Caribous into theatre, that the third and fourth delivery ferry flights from Canada to Australia were redirected to South Vietnam, both arriving at Vung Tau during August 1964 to form the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV). The deployment of additional aircraft the following year brought the number of aircraft on strength to seven.

On 1 June 1966 the RTFV was re-designated No. 35 Squadron and colloquially known as *Wallaby Airlines*. The Caribous supported allied military operations throughout Australia's commitment to the war in Vietnam, until their final withdrawal on 19 February 1972.

During service in Vietnam, the Caribou quickly demonstrated the air power capabilities and operational versatility that were to characterize the aircraft's service with the RAAF over the next 45 years. The design of the Caribou enabled the rapid loading and unloading of passengers and cargo from short, rough semi-prepared airfields that were inaccessible to most other aircraft. Range and payload considerations made the Caribou a better option than the rotary wing assets then available. While the Caribou was primarily engaged in short-haul airlift operations, it also performed paradrop, aeromedical evacuation, and tactical troop insertions and extractions.

The Caribou's ability to utilize rudimentary airstrips meant the aircraft and crews were often operating at the forward edge of the battle space and under enemy ground fire. The cost to the Caribou fleet was high, with two aircraft lost to accidents and a third to enemy mortar fire. During the deployment to Vietnam, the Caribous transported 42,000 tons of freight and 679,984 passengers in 81,500 operational sorties utilizing 115 airfields across South Vietnam.

Within three years of withdrawing from Vietnam, the Caribous were involved in the first of many international deployments. During a brief civil war in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, a Caribou (A4-140 from August to October, and later A4-199) was deployed to support Red Cross relief operations by ferrying supplies around the country.

During that deployment, armed East Timorese soldiers forced the crew of A4-140 at gun point to take off with 54 people on board and fly themselves and other refugees to Australia. A4-140 has the dubious distinction of being the only RAAF aircraft ever hijacked.

In the same year, No. 38 Squadron also contributed an aircraft to the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). This commitment lasted until late 1978, but in later years the Caribous continued to be used on similar humanitarian tasks, providing support for peacekeeping, nation building (such as survey mapping) and disaster relief efforts throughout South Pacific region.

The demanding flying environments of these remote localities often tested the ruggedness of the Caribou. In total, a further four RAAF Caribous were written off as a result of accidents overseas. On one occasion, the accident included the tragic loss of 27 people when a Caribou crashed in the mountainous terrain of Papua New Guinea.

The Caribou continued to work hard to the very end of its career. In 1999, the Caribou was at the forefront of the ADF's (Australian Defence Force's) peace enforcement mission to East Timor.

No. 86 Wing, Detachment "C," composed of aircraft and personnel drawn from No. 35 and No. 38 Squadrons, operated two aircraft out of Baucau and later Dili. They remained in country from October 1999 until February 2001, conducting airlift sorties, aeromedical evacuations, information operations, and surveillance missions.

Not long after returning to Australia from East Timor, the Caribous were once again involved in the ADF's response to an international crisis. Two Caribous formed part of Operation ANODE, the peacekeeping mission to restore civil order to the Solomon Islands. The aircraft returned to Australia a year later, in July 2004, after completing its last international deployment on active service.

The service of the Caribou to Australia has not just been confined to international missions. For almost half a century the Caribou's capability has been on hand to serve Australia in both military and non-military applications. The aircraft has been one of the RAAF's leading assets in response to natural disasters, search and rescue, aeromedical evacuations, and even security patrols over Bass Strait oil rigs. It has transported state police, fire fighters and visiting royalty. Throughout its entire service life, the Caribou has provided extensive support to the entire ADF, particularly airborne and tactical transport support to Army and Special Air Service training exercises.

The Caribou's service to Australia is significant beyond just the airlift roles that characterized its main employment. The effects generated in its deployments have underscored domestic security and safety, and provided strategic reach into the wider international region, enabling Australia to demonstrate its commitment to supporting peace and stability throughout South East Asia and the South Pacific.

In the carriage of hundreds of thousands of people and tens of thousands of tons of humanitarian aid, from first flight until last, the Caribou provided Australia with a tactical airlift capability second to none.

RAAF Caribou Patches

Invite to an Aussie Road Trip

by Trev Benneworth
[No. 35 Squadron, 69]

I'm the Secretary/Treasurer of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Radschool Association. Our group was trained by the RAAF to maintain and operate its electronics equipment. I was a Radio Technician posted to Vung Tau to work on the Caribou in 1969/70.

The 100th anniversary of the formation of the RAAF is in June 2021. To celebrate the event, the Radschool Association had planned a road trip for 2021. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19 we have had to delay the start date until March 2022.

The plan is to ride twenty 50 cc mopeds from the RAAF Base in Brisbane up to the RAAF Base in Townsville – a bit over 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles). There would be two riders to each scooter, one riding and the other following along in a bus. Every hour or so, the riders will change over. The journey will take 13 days.

We are inviting people from other Air Forces to join us. We have invited Brits from the Royal Air Force and also some Kiwis (New Zealanders). It would be good if some of your blokes, or ladies, could join us. We think four from each country would be perfect.

[Participants] will be responsible for their transport to and from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, but the event will have heavy media coverage, so it may be possible to find sponsors.

We will provide the scooters, accommodations along the way, and morning and midday meals once participants [arrive in Australia]. You can find information on the road trip at:

https://www.radschool.org.au/magazines/Vol71/Page13.htm

If you want to participate in this road trip, contact Trev Benneworth via e-mail at: ***trev@radschool.org.au*** *and please copy John Tawes (**jtawes@gmail.com**) on your e-mail to Trev.*

Editor's Note. If participants need more reasons to "lift a glass," 2022 will mark 50 years since the return of RAAF Caribous and personnel from Vietnam and 50 years since the final USAF Caribou flight in Vietnam.

Bridges Approach

by Chuck Jordan [535, 67]

I backed into my Caribou assignment. I was originally assigned to F-4's out of pilot training and was about to start F-4 ground school and simulator training at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, when I was informed to pick up my new orders for C-7A school.

It was bad enough to go from supersonic fighters to cargo aircraft, but when I found out it was a twin-engine propeller aircraft with a cruising speed of 120 knots, it was even more disconcerting. Fortunately, I enjoyed my training at Sewart AFB, TN. My Caribou instructor pilot had been an instructor at Fort Benning, GA, and, with great patience, he taught me the mechanics of the seemingly (to me) unfriendly large propeller airplane. At the time, it was something entirely foreign to me.

After attending survival schools and traveling to Vietnam, I arrived in Vung Tau early in the summer of 1967. The squadron still had pilots who had been attached to Army Aviation Companies and flown Caribous in 1966, before the Air Force took over the airplane in January 1967. This meant I had the opportunity to fly with some very experienced, if somewhat unorthodox, aviators when I arrived.

Months later, after I had flown numerous sorties as a Copilot, I was scheduled to fly with a very experienced standardization pilot, Capt. Wells G. Carswell, as the Aircraft Commander. I didn't realize it at the time, but the squadron badly needed some new aircraft commanders, and I was one of the more experienced Copilots

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Three Bridges (from Page 25)

being considered for upgrade.

Capt. Carswell had flown many different aircraft types in his career. He was eligible for promotion for Major and was completing a successful combat tour. I was at the other end of the spectrum as a young Lieutenant pilot with little experience except pilot training and my months in Vietnam. Consequently, when he announced we were going to file an IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) flight plan to Saigon that morning because the weather was bad, I really had no idea what he was talking about. I couldn't remember the last time I had filed an IFR flight plan. I certainly hadn't filed one in Vietnam.

After coordinating our flight plan with Air Traffic Control (ATC), we went out to the aircraft. The weather looked bad enough with low ceilings and misty rain. If I had been the Aircraft Commander, I would have followed the example of several of the other pilots I had flown with and departed Special VFR (Visual Flight Rules) "feet wet" over the water. In this case, however, we took off on an IFR departure that somehow connected directly to the ADF (Automatic Direction Finder) approach at Saigon. We expected an ADF/ILS (Instrument Landing System) approach into Tan Son Nhut.

As we sped toward Saigon at 120 knots, Capt. Carswell made all the radio calls himself, impressing me with his knowledge of the appropriate IFR procedures.

We started our descent into Tan Son Nhut, then the inevitable happened. The ADF needle started swinging in circles and we soon realized we had no idea where we really were. Our IFR clearance rapidly became worthless as we listened to a non-stop multitude of radio calls on Approach Control.

I had an idea. I had caught a glimpse of the fuel tanks and depot at Nha Be on the river during our descent and suggested the "Three Bridges Approach" into Saigon. Capt. Carswell looked at the still continual spinning ADF needle, and slowly nodded.

I quickly canceled our IFR clearance and, without waiting for an acknowledgement from ATC, told Capt. Carswell to continue his descent and turn to a heading of 320 degrees. As we broke out of the clouds, we saw the proper bridge checkpoints, turned to final, called Tower, requested Special VFR, reported the runway in sight, received landing clearance between two other aircraft, and landed safely. It was an exciting and very gratifying experience! Capt. Carswell later recommended me for upgrade and gave me the check-ride himself several weeks later.

Looking back after over 40 plus years of flying professionally, the maneuver that day was a potentially dangerous approach. What I had done was a somewhat arrogant thing for a young Copilot to do. Yet it worked and was typical of those days when I was young, single, completely indestructible, and learning new flying tricks every day.

My time flying the C-7A taught me many lessons that carried me through my future Air Force and civilian flying careers. I am always grateful to have flown that slow, twin-engine propeller aircraft, and to have associated with the many different characters I met during my Vietnam tour.

Over the years, I have given many talks to various audiences about my experiences in the good old C-7A. The talks have always met with enthusiasm and many questions, since most of the people had not heard of the aircraft, and certainly had no idea what we did.

While many publications dwell strictly on stories and exploits of more popular airplanes and their crews, we are fortunate to have our *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* to continue our special historical perspective.

Thanks to all Association members for your service and participation! Keep up the good work and keep telling your stories.

Welcome to Vietnam

by Bob Ingerson [535, 68]

I was a Crew Chief assigned to maintain the C-7A Caribou for the 535th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Vung Tau.

When I arrived at the base in October 1968, the guys told me where I could bunk. I was excited to put my things in a locker and get settled in.

Over my shoulder I thought I saw a movement in the top bunk. It appeared to be a man's arm. As I turned around, I was face to face, eye-level with the head of a 13 foot boa constrictor!

I made a fast retreat out the door to find a bunch of guys laughing their heads off. They told me I had just meant Oscar, their pet snake.

Welcome to Vietnam!

Bob Ingerson with Oscar

Oscar with unidentified C-7A personnel. Photos provided by Bob Ingerson.

Editor's Note. Of the approximately 200 snake species found in Vietnam, over 40 of them are venomous and dangerous, including many varieties of cobras, kraits, and vipers.

Direct Action

by Dana Kelly [536, 70]

Shortly after the 536th Tactical Airlift Squadron moved to Cam Ranh Bay, because Vung Tau was being shut down, I happened into the Officer's Club after a long day in the air. The Field Maintenance Squadron (FMS) had recently been "blessed" with a new Lieutenant and he was also in the club bar.

The Lieutenant's presence was always immediately noted because he had an unfortunate way of annoying others by constantly voicing one complaint after another. Loudly and vociferously, he always identified the tired and gritty pilots as the causes of all his problems at work.

That day, there happened to be two tall, muscular pilots in the club from two different Caribou squadrons, who were friends. Like most of the others at the bar, they had become annoyed at the Lieutenant's whining. The two pilots looked at each other, nodded, and decided that it was time to take some action.

Briskly leaving their bar stools, they proceeded to pick up the 150 pound noise maker. They marched him across the room, turned him upside down, and deposited him into an empty trash can. The roar and applause from the bar room could be heard out in the street.

Share Your 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 and want to read 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.

Please send your stories to:
ron.lester43@verizon.net

B-17 Navigator's Log

2-4-44. Mission 21. Frankfurt, Germany. Got us up at 0300. Briefed at 0400. Took off at 0800 and made a clear assembly. We carried ten 500 lb. demolition bombs. [We] were in #2 position in the high squadron and the second Wing over the target. M.P.I. (Main Point of Impact) was the old business district of town. Left England from Clacton-on-the-Sea at 1004.

On the way in we got north of course and over the Ruhr Valley. We were in heavy flak for six minutes. One Fort on our left got hit and went down burning. It exploded just before it hit the clouds. A few minutes later another Fort got hit and burned. It flew straight for a few minutes and then spun down

Over the target the flak was heavy and accurate. [There was] a 10/10 (complete) undercast, so we dropped on the *Pathfinder* plane.

On the way back the Group ahead got to the right of the course and led us directly over the Ruhr Valley once more. We were in it for about five minutes this time. It was more accurate this time and at exactly our altitude. We came out ten miles south of Rotterdam and got back to England an hour later.

[We] let down over Splasher through 2,000 feet of clouds. Landed at 1500. We lost one plane. He aborted about 50 miles inland and didn't come back. Had P-38, P-47, and P-51 escort and didn't have any enemy attack.

2-5-44. Our Squadron did not fly today. The Group went to a Focke-wulf factory in southern France. Easy raid, so, of course we didn't go! They had no fighters and no flak. We lost two crews in yesterday's raid instead of the one we thought.

Selby finished today. Soubart finished his 25 missions yesterday. Good for them!

Arty at Tra Bong

by Tom Dawes [537, 70]
from *Newsletter Vol 27-1, February 2016*

In the spring of 1971, control of Tra Bong (V-112) was being assumed by the ARVN.

There may have been some Americans remaining, but I just remember working with an ARVN *Tailpipe* [Combat Control Team] during that period.

We were landing at Tra Bong where they were firing their big guns. All of us remember the picture of the Caribou being hit by artillery at Ha Thanh in August 1967, so we were extra cautious when we confirmed that there was a check fire.

The ARVN *Tailpipe* cleared us to proceed inbound and land. The check fire was confirmed again when we were about to turn downwind.

Turning base leg, I was looking right down the barrel of a very, very big piece of artillery when it fired! We could feel the shock wave as the shell passed.

When we asked about the check fire, the ARVN guy on the radio said "It okay, *Soul*, we see you – we shoot over top."

Well, we couldn't argue with that, they did miss – so not much [else] was said and [it] was soon forgotten.

Memphis Belle Restoration

from Daedalian Foundation
Aviator Newsletter
November 30, 2020

Bomber aircraft have played an important role in the legacy of military aviation and will continue to be critical to the force of the future. In October 2020, PBS aired a new documentary featuring its thirteen-year restoration before it was displayed in 2018 at the National Museum of the United Sates Air Force.

The B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator formed the backbone of the U.S. Army Air Force's strategic bombing force. Strategic bombing was essential to victory in crippling Germany's war industry. However, it was one of the most dangerous missions in the war. The *Memphis Belle* was a B-17F Flying Fortress that flew in the European Theater in WW II. The plane and its crew become iconic symbols of the heavy bomber crews and support personnel after being the first to successfully complete twenty-five combat missions over Nazi Germany.

After completing their twenty-fifth combat mission on May 17, 1943, the *Memphis Belle* and its crew were selected for a 31 city war bond tour during the summer of 1943 and were celebrated as national heroes. With the high casualty rates experienced by bomber crews, their story helped inspire and boost morale on the home front and continued to propel the war effort. Additionally, legendary director William Wyler released a documentary featuring the *Memphis Belle* in 1944.

Though a celebrated airplane, the *Memphis Belle* nearly succumbed to the scrap heap. Memphis Mayor Walter Chandler heard that the B-17F was slated to be chopped-up with other bombers in Altus, OK, via a reporter. Mayor Chandler purchased the aircraft for $350 and the plane was relocated to the city of Memphis.

The *Memphis Belle* was placed on display at the city's National Guard armory into the 1980's. In addition to the damages incurred in combat, which included a splintered tail, hundreds of holes from German flak, and the loss of five engines during the war, the plane succumbed to weather corrosion and vandalism.

An effort was made to keep its location in Memphis by the Memphis Belle Memorial Association. However, they had difficulty raising the funds to restore it. In 2004, the Air Force decided to relocate the plane and begin restoration efforts so the *Memphis Belle* could be displayed at their national museum in Dayton, OH.

The documentary details the story of the crew and the incredible effort required to restore the aircraft to its original glory. Featuring testimony from the aircrew recounting their journey toward the twenty-five mission milestone along with original footage from William Wyler, it uniquely captures the challenges and heroism of the WW II bomber crews in their treacherous task. The context provided regarding the impact of heavy losses on morale emphasizes the critical nature of the *Memphis Belle* crew's public affairs mission as well.

The story of the thirteen-year restoration is just as inspiring. Nearly the entire interior of the plane had to be completely restored, in addition to a complete overhaul of the exterior of the aircraft. Only about 100 B-17s remain in the world today, making sourcing parts extremely difficult. Many had to be fabricated in order to complete the restoration. It was a labor of love for many on the restoration team, including a member who was inspired to become an Air Force crew chief after meeting one of the *Memphis Belle* crew at an air show as a child, and one whose father was a B-17 tail gunner.

The aircraft was put on display on May 17, 2018, seventy-five years to the day that its aircrew flew their final combat mission. It remains an iconic and celebrated piece of military aviation history.

Videos of the "Memphis Belle" restoration are available on YouTube.

Last Landing, First Love

by Tom Smith [458 & 310, 71]

In November 1971, four of us, fresh out of the C-7A schoolhouse at Dyess AFB, TX, stumbled off the aircraft from Clark AB, Philippines onto the ramp of Cam Ranh Bay AB (CRB).

After a few days of "Snake School" (Jungle Survival School) and evenings at the Clark O' Club, we weren't sure what to expect when we arrived "in-country." What we really didn't expect was:

"What the HELL are you doing here? They said we were not going to get any more replacements!"

Fast forward to the following year. My time at Cam Ranh Bay lasted until March 1972 when USAF Caribou operations from there were phased-out. I, along with some other Caribou person-

Continued on Page 29

Last Landing (from Page 28)

nel, was then sent to Tan Son Nhut AB to the 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS), a C-123 outfit that became a composite squadron with some Caribous added.

The 310th Squadron Commander was a C-123 *Bookie* pilot, and the Operations Officer was a C-7A *Cuddy* (457th TAS) pilot. "Vietnamization" was in full swing.

The C-123's eventually left and we were down to just a few Caribous. Missions consisted of training Vietnamese crews and covering airlift requests throughout the country. We all knew the end was coming – for our unit, our aircraft, and the war.

The last "official" flight for American Caribous was scheduled for 28 October 1972. It was to be a ceremonial "around the flag pole" flight, followed by a ceremony and celebration. Of course, the final flight was to be flown by the brass.

Out of habit, I checked the schedule and saw I was flying that same day on a mission running down to the Mekong Delta, then to Can Tho, and returning to Tan Son Nhut. We would be arriving back in the late afternoon and would miss the party! Darn it!

The Can Tho ALCE (Airlift Control Element) team knew this was the last USAF C-7A flight. We had gotten very close to those guys over the many times we had operated in and out of the base. They were absolutely first-rate folks.

As we were getting ready to ferry the aircraft home for the last time, they all showed up on the ramp to see us off. There was a rumor that a fizzy adult beverage was involved in the impromptu celebration, but I wouldn't know anything about that.

It was quiet on the intercom on the way back to Saigon. All of us were deep in our own thoughts. As I taxied Caribou S/N 63-9735 back to the chocks, hardly anyone was there.

A few paper napkins and plates were drifting across the ramp – a little crepe paper too. We had missed the "official" last landing, but it dawned on us that *we had made the actual last landing of a U.S. Air Force Caribou in Vietnam.*

As we shutdown for the last time, watching the props slowly wind down and listening to the pop and creak of hot metal cooling, I started thinking.

It was the end of an era. There were no more Caribou flights. This would never come again for me. So many things would never come again for me:

The joy of firing up that cantankerous R-2000 engine; the smell of oil and smoke; the glorious noise; flying with your elbow out the window; challenging airfields and weather; navigating with our eyes, VFR charts, and, occasionally, a TACAN or NDB – if in range; true gratitude expressed when you delivered mail or badly needed gasoline, food, or ammunition; the satisfaction you felt when you were able to get casualties to medical care; two Lieutenants and an Airman out for the day on their own in a war zone – What could possibly go wrong with that?

The Caribou matured me as a pilot and a man – and I loved her. She certainly wasn't pretty or fast, but she was honest, hard working, capable, and tough. She always had that alluring aroma of *nouc mam*, barf, sweat, and pig poop lingering about her.

She had her little playful moments too, like that little trickle of rainwater that ran down the throttles to your hand and then down your arm when landing in a rainstorm, and that little dribble of oil that she would playfully deposit on your flight suit during the walk around. Plus, after what you thought was the perfect start, she would give you a little backfire – just to make sure you owed the Crew Chief a case of beer. But, once those R-2000's coughed to life, she was all business.

We have all had loves in our life. During my career, I was fortunate to fly many types of aircraft. Some I really didn't care for, some I liked, and some I loved. Regardless of all the others, that first love in aviation, or in life, is always special.

Few have been privileged to know the Caribou and not many are even familiar with what she did. She was not flashy or famous, but for those who flew her and maintained her, she will always have a special place in our hearts.

She certainly has a special place in mine.

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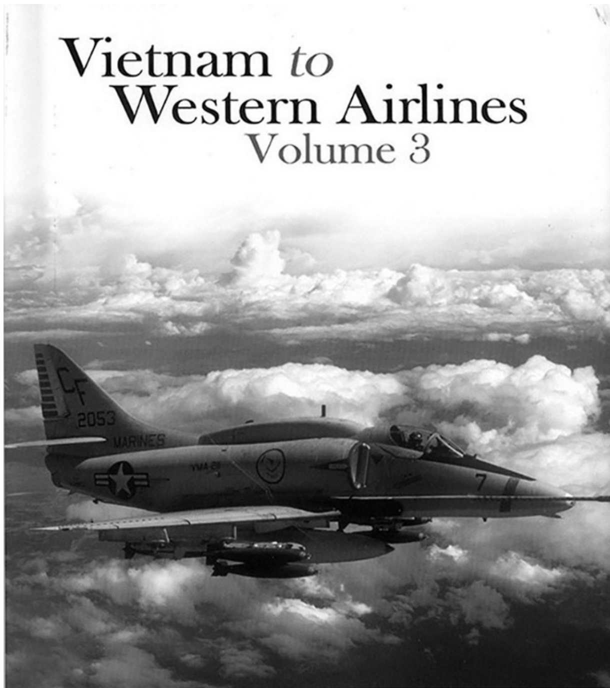
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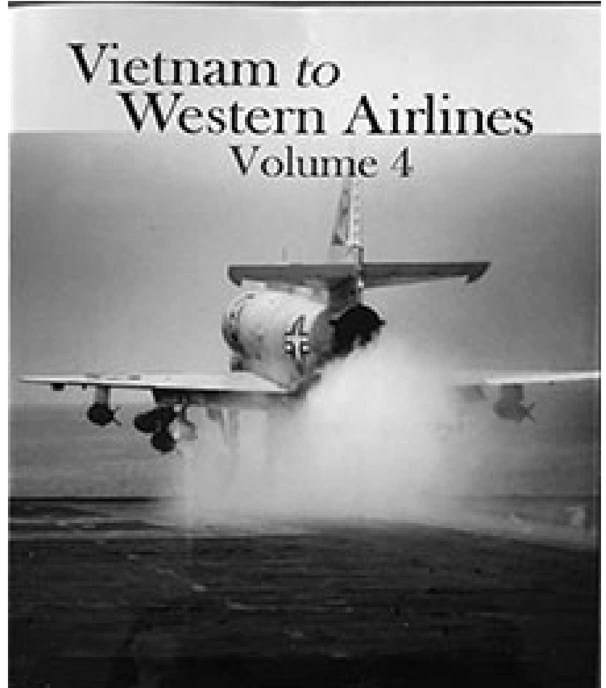
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