

C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 34, Issue 1

Operation Homecoming 50th Anniversary

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For the past six years the *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* has tracked the history of the USAF C-7A in Vietnam, recalling events and actions that occurred fifty years ago while liberally using information and stories from *Caribou Airlines*. The deactivation of USAF Caribou units and the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from South Vietnam in 1972 did not mean the end of the war – or of U.S. casualties. Therefore, there are more 50 year anniversaries to come, few of which provide reasons to celebrate.

However, there is one 50 year anniversary worth celebrating. In February and March of 1973, U.S. Prisoners of War were repatriated to the U.S., their families, and freedom. Some had spent more than seven years in brutal captivity. We should remember their sacrifice, perseverance, and courage, and we should celebrate the anniversary of their return. Welcome Home.

Others still have not come home. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency lists 1,581 U.S. military personnel as “unaccounted for” in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The search and the waiting continue.

One more USAF Caribou combat fatality has been “accounted for.” Late in 2022, the C-7A Caribou Association confirmed that SSgt. Dale Wayne Farris was killed in a 122 mm rocket attack on the Phu Cat AB flight line in May 1972. He is the 41st fallen USAF Caribou brother-in-arms.

The questions endure. Does what we did in Vietnam matter? Was the sacrifice worth it? When asked, these questions typically focus on U.S. involvement and ignore the effort and sacrifices of the South Vietnamese and our other allies. The world has “moved on” in the last fifty plus years. If younger generations think about the Vietnam War at all, most probably consider it a foreign policy mistake best forgotten or ignored. Maybe. Maybe not. But to those who have memories as vivid as if they had occurred yesterday and those who knew someone who did not come home – it will always matter.



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Chairman of the Board's Corner

Ron Lester, Editor,

C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter

I must begin this column by informing everyone that Peter Bird, Chairman of the Board, has been in intensive care for several weeks. We do not have details and ask everyone to respect the family's privacy. They will provide us information when it is appropriate. We ask you to keep Peter in your thoughts and prayers.



Peter would tell you that the snow has given way to the rains in New Hampshire and that, despite the furry prognosticator in Pennsylvania, spring will arrive soon. We can all look forward to warm, sunny days.

Crazy stuff dominates the international news. Zealots are apparently using gas to poison schoolgirls and teachers in Iran – terror unleashed on children. China has staked a new claim in international diplomacy by brokering an agreement to renew diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Two Russian Su-27 jet fighters intercepted a U.S. MQ-9 surveillance drone over the Black Sea. One of the Russian fighters collided with the drone, which crashed into the sea. The U.S., U.K., and Australia announced a complicated, decades-long plan to provide nuclear powered submarines to Australia. All of this occurred within a ten day span in March! Putin continues to implement his primitive style of warfare in the belief that the Ukrainians and their Western allies will run out of bullets and political will before Russia runs out of conscripts. Who would have thought any of this was possible two years ago when COVID-19 dominated our attention and the news?

Here is the good news. Although it is still tentative, it appears that there will be a C-7A Caribou Association reunion in 2023. Efforts are in progress for Reunion 2023 to be held in in Orlando, FL, on November 1-5. The Association is still negotiating with the hotel. Until a contract is signed with the hotel, the dates and other details for Reunion 2023 are not final. The *Reunion Flyer* this summer will provide detailed information on Reunion 2023 hotel, activities, and schedule.

Finally, the Association has been discussing an initiative with the Museum of Aviation to improve their ability to preserve and display C-7A artifacts. The C-7A Caribou Association Board needs guidance from the membership. Please read the article on page 27 and consider how this initiative could be of assistance to you.

Reunion 2023

Orlando, FL

Tentative Dates: November 1-5

Caribou Airfields

by Tom Hansen [535, 71]

I was supposed to depart in November 1970 for SEA (Southeast Asia), but due to extenuating circumstances I didn't have to actually leave until January 1971. The Air Force, in its benevolent wisdom, started my one-year tour from when I was originally supposed to leave!

During my nine months at Cam Ranh Bay (January – September 1971) I flew as a C-7A Flight Mechanic on 122 missions hauling just about anything that could be jammed into a Caribou.

The airfields we flew into ranged from major world-class airports to open grassy fields. Many of the places were pretty humble as far as being an airfield or a base was concerned.

The names often sounded exotic: Vo Dat, Bac Lieu, Gia Nghia, Thien Ngon, Polei Kleng, Bou Dop, Ban Don, Soc Trang (a World War II Japanese fighter strip), Tay Ninh, Tieu Atar, Dak Pek, Rach Gia (pronounced “rock jaw”), Dalat, Cheo Reo, That Son, Song Be, Phu Hiep, Phu Loi, and Moc Hoa (where one of our Vietnamese passengers stole my camera while I was fixing a flat nose tire).

The majority of these airstrips were classified Type 2 for C-7A's. Type 2 (limited operational) airfields were defined as meeting the minimum construction requirements for sustained operations.

Some of the places had asphalt runways, but most of the forward airstrips were laterite, a mixture of rock and clay. Some of them had what looked like cheap blacktop. Called bitumen, it was basically stabilized dirt. Asphalt had been mixed with local dirt and graded so it wouldn't rut or wash away. A few places had the World War II style PSP (Pierced Steel Planking) runway. The sound it made as you landed on it reminded me of someone sliding on their butt down a tin roof, across the corrugations. When the PSP was wet, it was pretty slippery.

Here are a few things I remember about some of those places:

Gia Nghia was a Vietnamese airstrip on a flattened hilltop. The approach reminded me of a carrier landing. It was a dirt strip with no tower and no facilities. About midfield, a crashed C-123 sticking its nose up the embankment looked like a sounding whale.

Thien Ngon (pronounced Thee-yen Nee-yon) was way out in the weeds at an Army firebase only a few clicks (kilometers) from Cambodia. An absolutely forbidding, desolate looking place, it gave me the creeps every time I went there – which wasn't often and was usually an artillery ammo run.

Polei Kleng was not an airfield! It was just a big, grassy meadow very near the Laotian border. (We were the only ones who cared about where the borders were.) There were local defense forces at Polei Kleng, along with their families. It was a very homespun place.

Whenever a C-7A landed at Polei Kleng, which was seldom, everybody – I mean everybody – wanted on that airplane! This was one place where, when the people who were authorized to get on, got on, the Flight Mechanic would then have to stand on the ramp and block everyone else from getting on with his M-16 at the ready! Of course they didn't speak English and we didn't speak Laotian, or whatever their dialect was, but everyone understood M-16. The kicker was, those people looked so peaceable, humble, and innocent. What a screwy war.

Bu Dop was literally a wide place in the road. The airstrip was a widened, straightened stretch of a one-lane dirt road. The Army firebase was decorated by a crashed and gutted C-130 off to one side.

Ban Don was a Vietnamese Army airstrip with a U.S. Army outpost. A jeep with an FM radio in the back served as Ban Don's tower. We didn't have to raise Ban Don on the radio. When we would get near enough for them to hear us, they would raise us and almost beg us to land. Those guys

were really isolated from civilization. They would ask on the radio if we had anything along to read – anything! They didn't care if it was several weeks old.

Dak Pek was a serious place. Getting in and out was so hairy that the Pilot had to be specially certified for that airstrip. Tricky wind shears from different directions were always a concern during landing and takeoff.



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Dak Pek was in the hilly, rugged Central Highlands near the Laotian border about halfway between Pleiku and Da Nang. The airstrip ran along the side of a hill with tall trees along one side. One end of the runway had a steep, cliff-like drop-off with no overrun. An Army U-1A Otter was sticking out of the cliff about halfway up. The remains of an upside down Caribou sat on the side of the runway about midfield.

All around the Dak Pek area were knobs [hilltops] dotting the landscape and each one was a virtual fortress. The brush and trees had been cleared away and each knob was covered with bunkers, trenches, concentric rings of concertina wire, and machine gun and mortar pits. Dak Pek was a nasty place in a nasty area.

Tieu Atar was a forward area strip with no facilities whatsoever! It too, was only a few clicks from Cambodia.

The approach coming in from one direction crossed over a bend in a small river and was relatively clear. There were 80-foot trees growing 1,000 feet from each runway threshold. The engines had better be good on takeoff or you would be eating toothpicks!

Continued on Page 4

Caribou Airfields (from Page 3)

Tieu Atar was an occasional staging point for the USAF 20th SOS (Special Operation Squadron) with their Hueys to take teams of indigenous forces across the fence for over-the-border forays. We didn't know what nationality those guys were, but they were on our side. They always had two Green Berets with them and they were armed to the teeth with Soviet weapons and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) gear. We would fly them from places like Ban Me Thuot (large field, C-130 type) to Tieu Atar (postage stamp, C-7A, Huey, and O-1 size field). The 20th SOS choppers would then take those dudes out on their picnics – and later pick up what was left.

Here are a couple of notes about our Standard Operation Procedures.

Many of the little places we flew into were so insecure that they would (or could) change ownership overnight. If the site didn't have a radio link, we would first overfly it and visually scrutinize what was going on below. We would look for normal activity: people walking or working in the fields, kids, dogs, pigs, motor scooters, etc. If we saw normal activity, it was probably okay to land. If there were no signs of rural life in the Nam, that was a bad, bad sign and it was on to the next stop.

When we landed at a firebase in the boonies where there was a good likelihood of picking up ground fire on approach or takeoff, we would make a spiraling descent and climb-out right over the middle of the strip. It was tricky for the pilot to time the rollout to coincide with being somewhere near the end of the runway on approach, but it was a cool ride! On takeoff, it was an immediate spiral climb at maximum power until we had about 2,500 feet of altitude above ground level.

One time we were doing a tight spiral climb right after takeoff and I bent over to get something out of my flight bag, which was right under my troop seat. I

could not straighten up until we leveled out. The centrifugal force prevented me from straightening-up! That was a weird sensation. However, it was much better than getting shot if we had made a straight climb out.

I closed out my Vietnam tour with the ferry flight of fifteen Caribous that departed Cam Ranh Bay for the States in September 1971.

Lt. Col. Rupert S. Richardson, our squadron commander, was the mission commander. He was absolutely the finest commanding officer I ever had. As mission commander, he was also the Pilot in the lead bird of the ferry flight. I was his Flight Mechanic on that trip and I will never forget it.

It was a fitting grand finale to my twelve years in the Air Force.

Attack at Pleiku

Author Unknown

92nd Aviation Company, 1965

The following account is courtesy of the Army Otter-Caribou Association and the de Havilland Canada Caribou (DHC-4) and Buffalo (DHC-5) website maintained by Wayne E. Buser at:

<http://www.dhc4and5.org>

Early in the early morning hours of 7 February 1965, two days before my twenty-sixth birthday, the Viet Cong (VC) launched a mortar attack on the MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) compound at Pleiku. At the same time, sappers penetrated the perimeter at nearby Camp Holloway and placed satchel charges on or near most of the aircraft and at key locations on the airfield. The enemy also lobbed dozens of mortar rounds into the barracks area.

The attacks killed eight Americans and wounded another 104. The flight line was turned into a graveyard of destroyed and heavily damaged fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

On 10 February 1965, the hotel in Qui Nhon that housed the members of the 140th Transportation Detachment

(our direct support maintenance detachment) was destroyed by a powerful explosive charge, which was placed on the first floor of the building. Twenty-seven members of the 140th Detachment were killed.

Later in the month, enemy mortar rounds heavily bombarded the air base at Ben Hoa. On 30 March 1965, the U.S. Embassy in Saigon was severely damaged by explosive charges placed by the VC. Throughout February and March, enemy attacks against Special Forces camps throughout the country also increased. The VC attacks signaled more aggressive actions against American installations throughout South Vietnam. The acceleration of the Vietnam War had begun.



In less than an hour of the attack on Camp Holloway on 7 February, our platoon's standby airplane was airborne on its way to Pleiku to help evacuate the scores of seriously wounded to the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang.

Later that morning my airplane flew to Camp Holloway to fly missions originally assigned to S/N 63-9724, the 1st Flight Platoon's Caribou stationed there. We learned that S/N 63-9724 was damaged in the ground attack and it was out of action, but we did not know how badly it had been damaged.

When I saw the airplane I was stunned by the extensive damage it had suffered. There were approximately 20

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Attack at Pleiku (from Page 4)

bullet holes in the right forward portion of the fuselage. Several feet from the airplane, the ground was littered with spent cartridges from an AK-47 assault rifle. It was evident that one of the sappers stood at that location and fired a full 20-round magazine at the airplane. The airplane was also severely damaged by a satchel charge.

One of the Special Forces sergeants I talked to that morning gave me his theory of what happened, based on his experience and the evidence at the scene. He said the evidence led him to believe the sapper approached the airplane from the right, fired his AK-47 at the airplane, and then tossed the satchel charge under the airplane.

In his haste, the sapper threw the satchel charge so hard that instead of coming to rest beneath the airplane's fuselage, the charge slid or bounced clear of the airplane and then detonated. The Sgt. pointed out that the darkness might have contributed to the satchel charge being thrown with too much force because it is more difficult to judge distances when the target is not clearly visible.

The airplane had to be flown to the general support maintenance company in Vung Tau for repair, which was approximately 275 miles southeast of Pleiku. Temporary repairs had to be made in order to make the airplane airworthy so it could make the flight to Vung Tau.

The main gear tires were replaced and some temporary sheet metal repairs were made to the airframe. The trusty "green tape" played an important role in the temporary repairs, as it helped cover some of the bullet holes and helped hold temporary cardboard covers over the missing cabin windows. After a couple of days, the airplane was cleared for a one-time flight to Vung Tau.

After weeks of extensive maintenance, the damage was repaired, components were replaced, and Caribou

S/N 63-9724 joined her sisters in the sky over South Vietnam.

Caribou S/N 63-9724 and the other aircraft of the 92nd AvCo were transferred to the USAF 459th Troop Carrier Squadron on December 31, 1966.

My Kind of Guy

by Barden Revelle [536, 67]

I believe all of us enlisted aircrew members have favorite officers we flew with. I have several favorites from my time with the three aircraft I flew on: C-124's, C-7A's, and C-130's.

During my C-7A tour in Nam, I had the pleasure of being on Lt. Col. Fay French's crew quite often. Many times we drew the *Iris 440* mission, flying out of Vung Tau. Colonel French was a high-speed go-getter. We always completed 25 sorties, minimum. We hauled mail, food, ammo – whatever needed moving - on short hops. His actual rank was Lt. Col., but he was always "Colonel" to me.

On the mail runs, at each stop some of the mail was offloaded and outgoing mail was put onboard. We kept the fuel level low to maximize cargo weight, so we had to refuel several times a day. Slingshotting bags of mail in the heat was rough. Stopping for fuel and oil was actually a break. Some stops we left engines running during load/unload.

Now, we all know that there is a demonic being in the Air Force whose job it is to dream up new rules. We had gotten word from this entity that the Flight Engineer would install the landing gear pins every time we landed, even for an engine-running on-load. This was a surprising new requirement. Maybe the rule-maker believed that somewhere, sometime, a pilot would pull the gear handle while the engineer was slinging mailbags, just to see if the gear would retract.

The first day of this new rule, I was on the *440* mission slinging mail, tying down cargo, briefing passengers

(who heard not a word I said since the engines were running), running a checklist, closing the ramp, etc.

We take off and Colonel French puts the gear handle up. The gear lights don't change. I look back. The gear ain't moving. My brain kicks in (happens sometimes). I put the gear handle back down and said "Gear's stuck down, keep it below 120 knots." To erase the funny look on Colonel French's face I said, "I left the gear pins in." He grinned and said "Okay" or something like that. For the rest of my tour he called me "Pins" Revelle.

One day we got a call to halt our scheduled cargo run and start hauling ammo to Song Be, which was under fire and low on munitions. On approach to Song Be I heard the pilot of a C-130, loaded with ammo, complain about the caliber of bullets Charlie was throwing at him. Said pilot turned tail and went home.

We showed off the Bou by coming in high, dumping gear and flaps, and delivering the goods with a short field landing. We made several deliveries, all cargo being "ground-lexed" on the runway. The Army was deeply appreciative. We took no hits. We had changed the approach each time to confuse Charlie. Colonel French was really good on the stick.

On another mission we were diverted to Bien Hoa to move some people and cargo to Cam Rahn Bay. This was stretching our crew duty day to the max allowable for us to be able to return to Vung Tau. Each morning I flew with Colonel French, the last part of the crew briefing directed at me was, "Don't get in a shouting contest with the Army. I will fight your battles for you." And he did just that.

We landed at Bien Hoa and I rushed the passengers, cargo, and luggage aboard while the Pilots assisted by topping off fuel and oil. We started engines, closed the ramp, and started

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My Kind of Guy (from Page 5)

to taxi, when we were ordered to stop and receive another passenger. The plane was already maxed-out and over-grossed somewhat, but I was willing to let one more pax (passenger) on.

Well, the new pax was an Army Lt. Col. with some assistants and their luggage, footlockers, and golf clubs. I didn't lower the ramp. I told the Army Lt. Col. I would take him, his B4 bag, and nothing else. I explained the situation. We had to leave NOW or not at all. He flew into a rage. He said he was the airfield commander and that we weren't leaving without him and his entourage.

I was keeping Colonel French abreast of all this over the interphone. Colonel French told me to tell the Army Lt. Col. to walk around #1 engine, stay away from the prop, and approach the pilot's side window. I went back to the cockpit to get a ringside seat on the coming discussion.

The Army Lt. Col. managed to miss the prop, then started yelling at Colonel French, who made the Army Lt. Col. aware that the two of them were equal rank. Next, Colonel French leaned back and pointed to the overhead throttles, and said to the Army Lt. Col. "You see these throttles?" Army Lt. Col. shakes his head – affirmative. Colonel French says, "Everything in front of these throttles is MINE. Everything behind these throttles is HIS, (pointing to me), so, when HE says you aren't getting on, then you aren't getting on. Now move out of the way." The Army Lt. Col. stomped away while we made a very quick getaway. Colonel French was the best.

My last day in Nam, I flew to Saigon as a passenger. After we stopped on the ramp, Colonel French climbed out of his seat, came back, shook my hand, and said farewell. He started out with "Well, Pins, ..." and we both burst out laughing.

He was my kind of pilot and fellow airman. Rest in Peace, Colonel.

An Unusual FCF

by Manfred Kimball [536, 68]
Caribou Airlines, Vol. II



Two weeks before my rotation back to the world, I was on a maintenance FCF (Functional Check Flight) due to a couple of engine changes. We did our [engine] shutdowns and restarts at eight thousand feet as prescribed, after which the Pilot said "Let's roll this b****." He did, and we bottomed out at about three thousand feet. The Bou stayed in one piece, but that's not the end of it.

Six months after my rotation back to my new assignment, I ran into a Crew Chief I had known in Vietnam and we shot the bull about Vung Tau, and the 536th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) in particular. The conversation turned to a particular tail number that would never fly straight or stay trimmed up and flew "cockeyed." It was the same tail number I was on during the "roll." We must have bent the wing box structure. Stupid things you do when you are young and bored.

Manfred "Mani" Kimball's military service covered 34 years including the Air Force and the Air Force Reserves. He retired in 2001 as Chief Flight Engineer on the C-130 Hercules.

Initially serving in the Reserves at Maxwell's 908th Air Force Reserves Command in Alabama, he was later stationed at the 357th TAS and the 700th TAS at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, GA.

Mani passed on February 13, 2023. His name is etched on the inside of the left front hydraulic panel near the nose gear of Caribou S/N 63-9756 at the Museum of Aviation, Warner Robins, GA.

Versatile Caribou

by Stephen Skinner

Key.Aero

November 16, 2017

De Havilland Canada (DHC) worked closely with the [U.S. Army] to develop the Caribou into an aircraft that could be used in many roles where its ruggedness and ability to use short airstrips was advantageous. The aircraft can trace its roots to the period after World War II when manufacturers needed to diversify.

The company was established in 1928 as a wholly owned subsidiary of de Havilland Aircraft to assemble British-built members of the "Moth" family of aircraft at Downsview, Toronto.

The outbreak of war in 1939 brought large orders for Tiger Moths. Three years later, the first of 1,135 Mosquitos flew during a time of frenetic activity. After the war, cancelled orders and job losses forced DHC to take on refurbishment of various aircraft types.

New Designs

The DHC staff started working on a low-wing, tandem-seat trainer, which became the DHC-1 Chipmunk and first flew on May 22, 1946. As the Chipmunk's design was being finalized, the company was working on the DHC-2 Beaver. This design was prompted by the Ontario Government's requirement for a "bush" plane to provide services to remote and undeveloped areas. Given the go-ahead in December 1946, it flew just six weeks later. The great size of Canada made flying the only viable means of transport and, within a few years, demand was so strong that the production rate reached one a week.

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Versatile Caribou (from Page 6)

In 1950, the U.S. Army took an interest and, despite severe competition from other types, the Beaver [was the clear winner]. Its short takeoff and landing (STOL) capabilities and general strength swayed the service.

The Beaver's success showed there was demand for single-engine STOL aircraft. In 1950, factory engineers set about devising a scaled-up version with the same performance, double the payload, and 150% greater cabin volume.

The prototype DHC-3 Otter took off on December 12, 1951 using the same 600-foot stretch of runway the Beaver normally used. To achieve this stunning airfield performance, the Otter had double-slotted flaps and drooped ailerons. Ordered straight into production, purchases from both the U.S. Army and Navy soon followed.

Based on the success of its brand as a manufacturer of rugged STOL aircraft, the DHC designers considered a twin-engine Otter in 1954, but found it was not viable. The later successful DHC-6 Twin Otter of 1965 was a redevelopment of the Otter with twin turboprops.

DHC-4 Caribou

The U.S. Army, a major customer for the Beaver and Otter, revealed the need for a STOL aircraft capable of lifting three tons with a rear-loading capability. A detailed plan was put forward in early 1957 and the Army, at a cost of \$500,000, ordered five of the new design, with delivery in two years. A production line was set up initially to produce 20 aircraft, including two prototypes and five evaluation aircraft for the U.S. Army whose interest was paramount – Canadian bush operators could not afford such an expensive aircraft.

Named the Caribou, the new airplane had a high wing, a large tail, and was powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-2000 piston engines of 1,450 horsepower each. The STOL performance was achieved by incorporating double-

slotted flaps over the entire span, low-erable to a maximum of 50 degrees. Double-slotted drooped ailerons were also fitted in two sections each side, with the rear parts of the outermost portions of the flaps serving as ailerons. There were doors on each side for passengers, while a [DC motor-operated] rear door at truck-bed height under the very high tail allowed rapid loading of freight or vehicles using a short integral ramp.

The Caribou's structural design and construction was rugged, simple, and durable while it was maintainable using the same techniques as general aviation types.

As a multipurpose aircraft, it was able to carry 24 stretcher cases, 32 fully equipped paratroops or 32 passengers on tip-up seats along each side of the cabin that could be folded away to provide an uninterrupted cargo space of 1,150 cubic feet.

Flight Test

On July 30, 1958 the first prototype DHC-4 Caribou took off on a successful two-hour maiden flight from Downsview. The second prototype joined the test program in September.

During testing, it was decided to lengthen the forward fuselage by 42 inches to improve the center of gravity range. This change was incorporated into the third aircraft, which was the first for U.S. Army evaluation. This aircraft crashed only a few days after its maiden flight on February 24, 1959, when it suffered uncontrollable flutter and structural failure. No one was injured, and the problem was easily solved.

Stall clearance proved a problem for the aircraft. The U.S. authorities insisted the Caribou [had to comply] with Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) procedures. It was only after more than 1,000 stall tests and aerodynamic modifications that the aircraft was finally cleared. These issues delayed the program and DHC was financially extended. It had an order for five from the U.S. Army, but more Caribous were

under construction, for whom there were no customers. The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) stepped in and ordered four Caribous and the banks showed confidence in the company, tiding it over.



U.S. Army YAC-1A's at Downsview, Toronto. A Key Collection photo.

The U.S. Army was satisfied the Caribou's problems had been solved, but the Pentagon insisted there should be a competition to choose the aircraft for the Army, even though there was not a competing type. The U.S. Army's five evaluation aircraft YAC-1's, S/N 57-3079 to 3083 were delivered between October 1958 and March 1959, but no mass order was forthcoming.

To press the Caribou's case, permission was requested from the FAA for a demonstration using a 900 foot grass area of a parade ground in Washington D.C. The aircraft made a dynamic demonstration in front of military observers, landing and loading first 32 soldiers, then landing again to take on vehicles. This sealed an initial U.S. Army order of seven YAC-1 Caribous.

Marketing

DHC was not banking on all its sales emanating from the U.S. Army. Between 1959 and 1964 the aircraft was sent on three extensive sales tours, operating from tiny runways normally the preserve of DHC's Beavers and Otters.

The ninth Caribou started from de Havilland's United Kingdom headquarters at Hatfield on December 12, 1959 with a series of demonstrations to civil operators and British and other NATO forces. It showed its STOL performance on grass, loaded with paratroopers, a jeep, and a trailer. An extensive tour

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Versatile Caribou (from Page 7)

of Europe and the Middle and Far East followed, with a return to Downsview after five months and 479 demonstration flights.

From October to December 1961, there was a tour of Latin America and a final one from March to July 1964, which crossed the Pacific and toured Southeast Asia, then Africa, returning home across the Atlantic.

The U.S. Ballistic Missile Early Warning System program set the Caribou a tough task to deliver heavy loads into the Arctic airstrip of Resolution Island on Labrador in February 1960, a task that would have been too much for the Otters normally serving the airstrip. The single gravel runway, without landing aids, was 1,300 feet long and 100 feet wide and, in winter, was formed of compacted snow and a very slippery surface. The runway sloped upwards with a sheer 800-foot drop at the eastern end into the sea. DHC provided the second prototype Caribou for the job and for 15 days it made six return trips per day from Frobisher, Baffin Island, airlifting 23,100 pounds.

Operators

The U.S. Army eventually purchased 159 Caribous; 56 were production YAC-1A's while the final 103 were YAC-1B's that could fly at higher weights and had weather radar. In 1963, reversible-pitch propellers were introduced to improve their landing performance even further.

The Army Caribous were re-designated as CV-2A's and CV-2B's, respectively, in 1962 and, on transfer to the USAF in 1967, became C-7A's.

The U.S. Army flew Otters in the Vietnam War and they were soon joined by their larger stable-mates in 1962. Eventually, six Caribou [Army Aviation Companies, and subsequently six USAF squadrons] were in service in Vietnam. Some 15% of all Caribou flight time [worldwide] was logged in actual warfare, notably with the U.S. Army, the USAF, and the RAAF (Royal

Australian Air Force) in South Vietnam. During the Vietnam conflict [more than] 20 U.S. Caribous were destroyed in combat or in accidents.

The Caribou was used for in-theater personnel and equipment transport to forward landing strips. The final USAF Caribou mission in Vietnam was flown in the fall of 1972. The final U.S. military use of the Caribou was to support the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Demonstration Team from 1973 to 1985.

Air America, a CIA-sponsored "airline," operated various aircraft in covert operations during the Vietnam War. It bought two Caribous because of the impressive STOL performance and there were reports of more Caribous being used by the CIA for supply missions in Southeast Asia. In the 1980's there were reports that Caribous were used [to support the Contras] against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

In 1971-72, South Vietnam received 60 former U.S. Caribous, but none were in use after the country's defeat [in 1975].



This RAAF Caribou's markings highlight 45 years of service.

Photo by Sgt Rob Mitchell

© Commonwealth of Australia

The RAAF was a major operator of the Caribou and bought 29 aircraft between 1964 and 1971. Their service record included eight years in Vietnam, where no Australian servicemen were killed on the aircraft, despite intense enemy action and several accidents. RAAF aircraft losses were three destroyed and four damaged. The aircraft provided dependable support to military personnel and the civil communi-

ties alike in northern Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and East Timor. The RAAF finally retired the Caribou in 2009 after 45 years of distinguished service.

The RCAF's initial order for four Caribous helped DHC when it was in an awkward financial position. Four more joined the fleet in 1964. They were put to good use in the all-white livery on UN (United Nations) work, first in Egypt and in later years flying missions in Cyprus, India, Pakistan, Peru, and Yemen. The eight RCAF aircraft were sold to Tanzania in 1971 when the Canadians bought 15 Buffalos.

The Caribou's qualities met the needs of many air forces. Newly independent Ghana received eight in 1963, which sold four to India in 1975. Those four were added to the 20 purchased from DHC bringing the peak Indian Air Force Caribou fleet to 24.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force had a fleet of 20. Spain was another large user and received 12 in 1968-69. Needing more after production had ended, the Spanish Air Force bought 18 from the U.S. Army.

The Tanzanian Air Force, benefitting from Canadian aid, purchased Otters and eight Caribous. Other air arms that had small numbers [of Caribous] included Abu Dhabi, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Kenya, Kuwait, Liberia, Oman, Sweden, Thailand, and Uganda.

The civil Caribou market was limited and former military aircraft were used to fill most requirements. For example, Caribous proved invaluable for FIFO (Fly in-Fly out) mine support operations in Canada where Propair and Kelowna Flightcraft were operators. Similarly, SEA Air and Greatland Air Cargo employed Caribous in Alaska.

Production of the Caribou ended in 1968, at number 307.

DHC-5 Buffalo

As production of the Caribou continued, DHC sought to capitalize on its investment and developed an improved

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Versatile Caribou (from Page 8)

version, the DHC-5 Buffalo which first flew on April 9, 1964. The U.S. Army received four evaluation aircraft but did not acquire any others. The Buffalo was used predominately by air forces in countries such as Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Mexico, and Tanzania among others. A total of 121 Buffalos were produced before the production line closed in 1988.

Turboprop Caribous

An RCAF Caribou was re-engined with General Electric T64's (2,344 shaft horsepower) in a joint U.S.-Canadian program and flew on September 22, 1961. Despite the benefits offered by increased thrust, the test bed had to be handled with care so it would not exceed design speeds. The aircraft was converted back to Pratt & Whitney R-2000's.

New Cal Aviation, which operated seven Caribous, instigated a program to convert a former Kenyan aircraft to Pratt & Whitney PT6A-67R power. Aircraft N400NC flew on November 16, 1991 but crashed during testing on August 27, 1992.

On October 3, 1996, Pen Turbo of New Jersey flew DHC-4T Turbo Caribou N600NC with Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-67T turboprops. The Pen Turbo test bed was based on New Cal's proven, flight-tested, and certificated turbo conversion, which improved the aircraft's takeoff performance, lowered maintenance and fuel costs, and improved reliability.

Unlike many re-engine programs, the Turbo Caribou maintained the power rating of the original R-2000 piston engines, with the PT6A-67T an exact fit to the existing nominal power ratings. Choosing an engine with an identical power rating and thrust significantly reduced risks and the design effort required in development and the flight test. There would be no need to update the structural design, or expand the aerodynamic envelope.

Pen Turbo stockpiled dozens of airframes for future conversion and N600NC was soon called into service with the U.S. military and began dropping supplies in Afghanistan in 2011.



DHC-4T resupply, Uruzgan, Afghanistan, February 27, 2013.

*Photo by U.S. Army
Sgt. Jessi Ann McCormick.*

Final OEM

Bombardier bought DHC in 1992. In 2005, Viking Air acquired the Original Type Certificates for the entire range of out-of-production de Havilland Canada aircraft, including the DHC-4 Caribou. It became the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) for these aircraft with ultimate responsibility to operators for all aspects of the aircraft, from parts support through to design engineering and technical information.

The Versatile Caribou

The Caribou was a sound investment for DHC which built 307 over ten years. With its excellent STOL performance it was an invaluable tool for the U.S. and Australian forces during the Vietnam War, but was also used in peaceful ways by other air forces and civil operators throughout the world. The versatility of the Caribou has made it a challenge to replace.

Editor's Note. See an excellent video of DHC-4T airdrops, "Aerial Resupply in Marzak, Afghanistan, February 17, 2012" by David Axe on YouTube. Video runs 1 minute 28 seconds.

Aussie Fun

by James R. Hope [536, 66]
Caribou Airlines, Vol. 1

The Aussies were flying Caribous too, out of Vung Tau. Their squadron commander landed one short and wrecked it. He came to Lt. Col. Zwiefel, our commander, and asked if he could borrow an airplane for a few days until he could get a new one flown in. The boss told him he'd have to check with higher headquarters, but meantime we would fly some missions for him. We never did get permission to lend him a plane, but we got to be good friends with the Aussies.

The Aussies came over to our squadron for a party and went into great detail about a drinking race. We lined up on each side of the bar. The first guy was to chug-a-lug his beer and to be sure it was all gone, he was to turn it upside down over his head then put his glass down and the next guy was to proceed. They went over the rules several times and then said GO! All the Aussies picked up their beer, poured it over their heads and said, "We won."

One of their party tricks was to stand on a chair and put their heads into the revolving fan to see how quickly they could stop it. Jack Saux was about 5 foot 4 inches. When he stuck his head up, the fan blades almost scalped him.

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“I Tried to Always Make Things Better”

by Tobias Naegele
Air Force Magazine
 August 2022

Beginning in August 2022, as part of its commemoration of the U.S. Air Force’s 75th birthday, Air Force Magazine published interviews with each of the ten living former U.S. Air Force Chiefs of Staff.

The following is the magazine’s introduction and conversation with Gen. John P. Jumper [459, 67].

In its 75-year history, 22 Airmen have led the Air Force as Chief of Staff. Each came to the post shaped by the experiences – and sometimes scar tissue – developed over three decades of service. Each inherited an Air Force formed by the decisions of those who came before, who bequeathed to posterity the results of decisions and compromises made over the course of their time in office. Each left his own unique stamp on the institution.



Gen. John P. Jumper,
CSAF No. 17 (2001-2005)

Gen. John P. Jumper was holding his first staff meeting in the Air Force Operations Center in the Pentagon’s basement when the first plane hit. It was Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, and whatever plans he may have had as he began his tenure as Chief, the next four years were going to play out very differently than he could have imagined. The intelligence briefing was paused and the screens were switched to CNN, which had live video of the

burning Pentagon on the screen. That was when the second plane struck the World Trade Center.

“That was the point of max confusion, of course,” Jumper recalls. “We took off from our command center to go up and warn our people away from the E-ring,” the outer offices of the Pentagon. In the Secretary of the Air Force’s office, Jumper found Secretary Jim Roche “sitting on his phone and sort of physically tugged him away from his phone back toward the middle of the building.” Then the third plane struck, exploding into the West side of the Pentagon.

Jumper was an experienced four-star. He had commanded U.S. Air Forces Europe during the Kosovo War in 1999 and had run Air Combat Command for 18 months after that. He hadn’t expected to be the Chief, an assignment he attributes as much to luck and timing as to talent, but he had a ready list of ideas he’d been “harboring” and was ready to start right in on them when 9/11 reworked his agenda in a flash.

The first order of business was America’s response, and it began with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “The cooperation was remarkable,” he recalled. When we started the planning ... there was no infrastructure to really go after. ... We were developing targets, figuring out the logistics. We knew we had to have ground bases over there [but] we had no good history of ground basing in that area. We had a lot of coordination to do. And so I went to Vern Clark, who was the Chief of Naval Operations, and I said, ‘Vern, in order to get this done, we’re going to need aircraft carriers.’ And he put everything that he could generate out there, ready to go and fly sorties.”

The Navy would launch the first aerial strikes on Afghanistan in October 2001, learning in the process to fly six-to-eight-hour sorties, longer than the typical Navy deck cycle, and leveraging Air Force tankers to make the journey. It took time to seize ground and open bases in Afghanistan and the vicinity

and to bring in Air Force F-15’s, F-16’s, and A-10’s. Bombers were launching out of Guam.

“Because Afghanistan is landlocked, and we didn’t have a history of basing, it took some development time to get that done,” Jumper said. “The bomber force reacted well, I think: We had the processes and procedures for that kind of deployment worked out, basing and all that, from our time in Kosovo.” Air Force C-17’s went to work as tactical airlifters, flying in and out of makeshift airfields. “I think we rose to the occasion,” he said, noting that there are lessons to be applied today, as the Air Force experiments with Agile Combat Employment that were tested and proven in the months after 9/11.

But Jumper said the Air Force could have been quicker to see the value of its unmanned platforms. “The biggest thing we could have made better use of, more rapidly, is armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV’s),” he said. “We didn’t have them in great numbers at the time, and the ones we had were extremely effective from a strategic point of view.”

Jumper knew something about UAV’s. He’d employed them in Kosovo, seen their potential. But he’d also seen their shortcomings. “This was what we, at that time, called the dialogue of the deaf,” he said. “The Intelligence Community, who owned the Predators, were looking at streaming video through sort of a soda straw, [and were] trying to communicate in this very dysfunctional relay system to the A-10 pilot in the cockpit about where the target was.”

To target a tank behind a building, for example, they would say, “It’s right behind the red roof building.” But as Jumper explained, that made little sense to the A-10 pilot who was looking out over 50 miles of red-roofed buildings. “So then they say, ‘Well, it’s beside the small stream that goes by the red roof building.’ I called it the dialogue of the

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Gen. Jumper (from Page 10)

deaf because nobody was understanding, because there was no common frame of reference.

The heart and soul of the Airman embraces the warrior spirit of America, bringing to bear kinetic firepower on the enemy, and all the things that go into that as part of a warrior culture. . . . And I think we have to take care to make sure that is emphasized in today's world."

Predators had been built to be an ISR asset, to collect, analyze, and report [intelligence]. Jumper and Mike Short, the Air Component Commander operating out of Italy, shared their frustration. "It became evident that if nothing else, we needed to put a laser designator on the Predator," Jumper said.

Within weeks, the Air Force's 645th Aeronautical Systems Group, better known as Big Safari, "made that happen magically in a couple of weeks," Jumper recalled, but "by the time we got it over there and ready to use, the conflict was over."

The idea, however, remained. Jumper's next assignment was to head Air Combat Command (ACC). When he got there, he discovered, much to his surprise, that ACC's acquisition and requirements teams had removed the laser designators. "It wasn't part of the program. And there was no money in the program to do that. "I sort of blew my top about that, and we got ourselves on the road. But it occurred to me that as long as we're doing that, why don't we put something on there that can do something about these targets when we find them?"

Jumper had been a weapons officer in his younger days, and he knew something about armaments. The Hellfire missile wasn't an Air Force weapon (it was developed by the Army), but it seemed the perfect fit. "It would be the most lethal and light enough to put on something like a Predator – or at least I thought it could be, but we had to check it out."

The Air Force got over the technical

hurdles in a couple of months, Jumper said. "But the bureaucratic system decided that this Predator with a Hellfire missile would have to be designated a cruise missile under the missile control regime, and it would require us opening up negotiations with the Russians again. Well, I thought that was ridiculous, and [then-Air Force Chief of Staff] Mike Ryan helped."

The battles weren't over. The intelligence community was worried that their intel asset would now become a weapon instead. "The biggest thing about the Predator is that we brought it into the inventory." Jumper reached back a little further into his history. In 1996, when he became deputy chief of staff for operations (the A-3) under Gen. Ron Fogleman, the Chief at the time, Jumper was sent to evaluate three systems, Dark Star, Global Hawk, and Predator. "General Fogleman knew we needed the Predator. He was trying to decide on the other two," Jumper said.

"On the Predator side, it was obvious that this was something that would help us find targets precisely and be able to stare at targets over a long period of time, to make the job of those carrying the weapons more certain when they arrived that they were hitting exactly the right thing, exactly the right spot."

The problem, he recalled, was that the ground station controls were built as if for a remote pilot. "It was based on the premise that you had to pretend you were at a station flying the Predator like a pilot with stick, rudder, pedals – I mean, like a pilot – that flying the airplane was more important than taking the picture. . . . In fact, we should have built this thing around the cameras."

Had it been up to Jumper, he'd have changed the entire thing right then. But the rules didn't allow that. "We couldn't change anything for two years."

In time, Jumper would help organize a Predator 9-1-1 project to speed up the process of getting the weapon into the inventory, with spare parts and operating procedures. "I remember hosting a group from the Pentagon about rap-

idly putting the Hellfire missile on the Predator," he said. "And the message to me was clear, that this is going to take tens of millions of dollars and is going to take not months, but years. And I just simply refused to accept that answer. Because I knew that Big Safari had had a different answer. So therein lies some of the friction. Big Safari – if we don't embrace that as an Air Force, even today, if we don't embrace that kind of rapid prototyping and fielding today," the Air Force will fail.

That lesson stayed with Jumper throughout his tenure. "I had a little sign on my desk when I was Chief that said: 'Never accept no from somebody not empowered to say yes.' There are way too many people that have the power of the veto, or think they do. We need to be able to challenge and ask the second and third question. . . . We have to be always ready to challenge the system, and not confuse a responsible challenge to authority with insubordination. We've got to be able to cross that line. It's always a delicate line. But it's just a responsible leadership point of view."

"It took a while to get to the things like the Air Expeditionary Force idea . . . which needed to be matured," he said. "And of course, carrying forward with the whole idea of the remotely piloted vehicles, Predator, and how best to integrate that into the force more completely."

Another project Jumper had been involved in long before becoming Chief was the development of the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF), the Air Force's 1990s-era deployment model.

The Air Force didn't deploy in the same way as, say, an Army division or brigade, because air power is typically shaped and sized to the mission at hand. The AEF was a system for addressing that, enabling the Air Force to identify ready forces and assemble mission packages on a rotational basis. That meant that units could work through

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Gen. Jumper (from Page 11)

readiness cycles.

“The original concept was actually four months of a deployment,” Jumper said. “But it was designed to be rapidly deployable. You had nine buckets of capability, fairly similar capability, and depending on the contingency, you could draw capabilities that weren’t in the bucket forward to be able to join that AEF to get the right kind of capability over there. That was based on the assumption that you could pull Airmen that were trained exactly the same way to exactly the same standards by the same checklists and various weapons systems. And they could join a unit, if they had to, to augment that capability.”

But under Jumper’s watch, in the wake of 9/11, the rotations broke down. “It was designed to use tactical equipment, tactically deploy, for a tactical amount of time – not to become a rotational practice for a 10-year war. It was never designed to do that.”

In Kosovo, USAFE opened 18 bases for tankers and other operations, and the AEF was employed. “We went over there, got it done, packed up, and went home,” Jumper said. “We loaded up Aviano [AB], put special ops in certain places, put tankers all over the place. It worked just fine.

But when we transition into this 10 years of constant combat, then another policy has to be developed to deal with the necessities of experienced commanders staying in place longer, knowing the problems more deeply, and being able to do more than come in and just generate combat power for short periods of time. ... [That requires] a more permanent rotational policy.”

He notes that the short deployment cycles anticipated for Agile Combat Employment (ACE) by today’s Air Force also has short deployment cycles. Like the original AEF, the focus is on agility. “If ACE transitions into longer engagements like we had in the Middle East, then that process is going to be challenged as well.”



CSAF Gen. John P. Jumper at Aviano AB, Italy.

Photo by SRA Priscilla Robinson.

Jumper was the last Air Force Chief to work alongside an Airman as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. His tenure and that of Gen. Dick Myers as Chairman were almost perfectly aligned. That might have been an advantage for Jumper in the early 2000’s, before the occupation of Iraq went sour and the occupation of Afghanistan grew old. Jumper’s success as Chief was built on a cooperative approach; his successor, Gen. T. Michael Moseley, was more aggressive, and perhaps aggrieved, in his dealings with his fellow Chiefs. His bluntness ultimately cost him his job.

Over the past two decades, the Air Force shrank in size and prowess. Readiness slipped. Political leaders reasoned America had so great an edge in air power after the first Gulf War that the nation could afford to throttle back.

“We heard terms like ‘we’re over-matched with air power, with air superiority – that means we have too much of it.’ We were told we didn’t need as much training, we could have tiered readiness. We were essentially too good. ...

[Now] we have eroded away our technological advantage, and our training, and our readiness, to the point that it has begun to affect morale. I think the Chief would agree with that, and I think they’re working as hard as they can to resurrect that, but that’s what happened along the way.

So how do we re-instill that [confidence]? We have to start internally first.

We have to make sure that our force sees themselves as the world’s greatest Air Force, one that is ready to go fight, that is proficient. They have to feel themselves that they’re flying 20 hours a month, that they feel like they’re the dominant power and nobody’s going to be trained any better than I am, in my specialty, no matter what my specialty is. And that I can go anywhere, I can do anything, I can do what I’m going to be asked to do, and nothing – no contingency that arises – is going to surprise me, because I have a training program that ... gets me familiar with the part of the world I’m most likely to go to, gets me out there so I can see it and touch it and feel it. I’m flying off and I am proficient: I’m good. I know how to set up a base. I have the right people who know how to run a deployed operation. I have the right security forces that can protect that base, inside and outside the fence.

That’s the Air Force I had.”

Editor’s Note. All ten of the former USAF Chief of Staff conversations can be found on-line by searching on: “Chiefly Speaking/Air and Space Force Association.”

Mekong Airdrop

by Wayne I. Hollrah [536, 66]
Caribou Airlines, Vol. 1

We were just finishing a rather long day, and had to make one last delivery to Can Tho. The 536th had a small detachment at Can Tho, but they were all busy. I was not part of that detachment. We landed at Can Tho and off-loaded when Lt. Col. James R. Hendricks, the detachment commander, came running out of operations and said to me that he just got an Emergency Resupply airdrop mission of the highest priority. I told him that we could do it, but how long would it take to get rigged? He confirmed that it could be done quickly. He also knew that we didn’t have much daylight left.

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Airdrop (from Page 12)

True to his word, the Army delivered a half pallet of small arms ammo, just after we got the aircraft set up for the airdrop. We loaded, took off, and headed for the mountains. A small Special Forces squad was trapped and surrounded in a rice paddy just south of the southern end of the [Nui Coto] mountains. It was a short flight to get there, and we soon made radio contact.

It made a tremendous impact on them, just to hear that we were not only on the way, but close. I had them throw smoke, and was surprised that we had enough time to descend and get ready to drop. This was done in good time and we flew straight in on the drop run. It was a good thing, because we didn't have enough light to look for them. We could hear the small arms fire at us, but didn't take any hits. Having done these drops many times, the challenge of dropping the load right on top of them was fairly typical. This one was the same, and they didn't have to leave their position to reload and respond to their attackers.

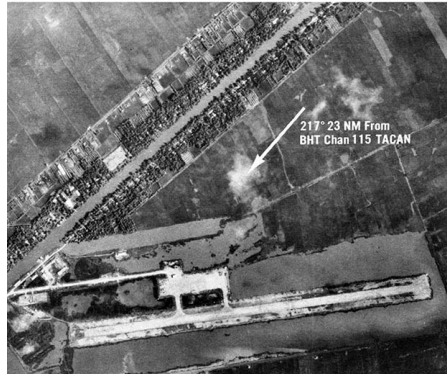
Mission complete, with success. We didn't even return to Can Tho, but flew straight back to Vung Tau. It was dark when we got back there.

Shaved Props

by Pat Ford [535, 68]

He saved us. He really did. That would be SSgt. Jerry Benedum. He kept us from spending the night in the "boonies" at Vi Thanh. (I think it was Vi Thanh, but it could have been Rach Gia. It was a long time ago.)

We had been diverted from our scheduled run late in the day for a Tactical Emergency (TAC E) resupply mission. So, we found ourselves carrying a load of ammunition and 55-gallon drums of POL from Tan Son Nhut to Vi Thanh on the last sortie of the day. The



Pilot was 1/Lt. Staton Tompkins and I was the Copilot.

The runway at Vi Thanh was 2,000 feet of dirt and rock with an east-west alignment. We made a right-hand base leg to land on runway 26, heading west into the setting sun. An O-1 FAC (forward air controller) aircraft had just taken off in the opposite direction. Because of the glare from the sunset and the dust generated by the O-1, we did not see the runway marker.

A temporary runway marker had been placed in the middle of the runway approximately 150 feet from the leading edge of runway 26. The marker was a large sheet of tin that had been painted white and was attached to three wood triangles - one in the middle and one each end of the tin sheet.

The propeller on the #1 engine struck the marker and two of the blades were seriously bent.

There was a *Bookie* C-123 on the ramp and we used its radio to communicate with *Hilda* (834th Air Division). We were told there was no way they could get maintenance support to us that night. If we couldn't find a solution ourselves, then we were stuck until at least the next day. We were in trouble.

A local Marine Corps advisor rummaged around in his bag and found a hacksaw blade. He offered it to us, and asked if it would help. SSgt. Benedum told him it certainly would.

The tips of the prop blades were painted yellow. SSgt. Benedum wrapped 100 Mile an Hour tape (military duct tape) around one end of the hacksaw blade

and went to work. It took him two-and-a-half hours to saw all three of the prop blades on the #1 engine down to the beginning of the yellow paint line.

We started the engines and ran a power check at max power. There was no unusual vibration. We called *Hilda* and told them we were coming home and took off about 9 PM. It was a smooth ride to Vung Tau.

I was not sorry that I did not get to overnight at a forward base in the Delta. Thank you, SSgt. Benedum.

Editor's Note. At the major bases in Vietnam with long concrete runways suitable for jet fighter operations the overruns were made of a different material than the runways and were clearly marked. The difference between the overruns and the runway was visually easy to recognize. Not so at the airfields at forward operating areas and the Special Forces camps. The Tactical Aerodrome Directory (TAD) may have said that there were overruns, but in most cases those "overruns" were made of the same material as the runway and the overruns were not clearly marked. From a pilot's view, there was no discernible difference between the overruns and the runway.

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We Will Never Forget

3 October 3, 1968, 537th TAS C-7A S/N 63-9753, flown by **Capt. Wayne P. Bundy**, aircraft commander, **Capt. 1/Lt. Ralph Schiavone**, copilot, and **SSgt. James K. Conner** and **SSgt. Donald G. Cleaver**, flight engineers, took off from Camp Evans and collided with an inbound CH-47 at 1,100 feet. The Caribou spiraled into the ground and exploded. The C-7A crew was killed, along with their ten passengers and the thirteen people aboard the CH-47.

SSgt. Dale W. Farris [AFAT 2, 71]



SSgt. Dale Wayne Farris is the 41st of our USAF brethren who gave their lives while serving with Caribou units in Vietnam. SSgt. Farris was killed in a 122 mm rocket attack on the flight line at Phu Cat AB on 31 March 1972. The C-7A Caribou Association knew a maintenance person had been killed in that attack, but it wasn't until last year that Dale Wayne Farris was confirmed to be that person.

The *We Will Never Forget* feature on page 14 of *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter*, Vol. 33-2, November 2022, has been revised to include SSgt. Dale Wayne Farris. The revised newsletter has been posted on the Association website.

Rocket Attack Remembered

Duane L. Brown [AFAT-2, 72]

"Every morning, the U.S. maintenance personnel would gather at the last revetment on the flight line and

wait for the truck to come by and take us back to our quarters where we would stay until just before the aircraft were due to return. This morning, the truck came by about ten minutes early. One of the planes had not launched, so that crew chief and specialist had to wait until it departed.

The rest of us got on the truck and headed back off the flight line to our quarters. We were not more than three minutes away when a 122 mm rocket hit the exact spot we had just left. Of the two people who stayed behind, one was killed and the other injured. That tells you how much intelligence they had on what we did on the base and where we were." from *Caribou Airlines*, Vol. V, Bernard Baker [537, 66 and 72]

"The worst thing that happened in my three tours was on [Good Friday] in 1972. TSgt. Bellows and I were riding on the flight line in a 4-wheel drive Dodge power wagon truck with our two Vietnamese trainees. We heard the whistling sound of "in-coming" and we could tell it was going to be really close. We all ducked. The explosion rocked the truck, but we didn't suffer any serious damage.

Not everyone was so lucky. The mortar or rocket, not sure which it was, made almost a direct hit on an Air Force aircraft electrician on the ramp who worked with us. He was killed instantly. I believe his name was Sgt. Dale Fariss (*sic*)." from *Three Tours and 35 Months*, *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter*, Vol. 31-1

Tom Bilger [483, 71]

"I was at Phu Cat AB in Binh Dinh province the day Dale was fatally injured. We were assigned to the 377th Air Base Wing at Tan Son Nhut (Saigon),

but were physically assigned to the Air Force Advisory Team at Phu Cat. Dale was killed on Good Friday 1972. This rocket attack along with others in country signified the start of the 1972 'Eastertide Offensive.'" from *virtual-wall.org* 18 March 2004

Band of Brothers

by William Shakespeare

King Henry V speaking to his troops prior to battle:

That he which hath no stomach to this fight,

Let him depart... But we in it shall be remembered;

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he today that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother.

from *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene III

Corrections!

There are two corrections to the *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* 33-2, November 2022, "We Will Never Forget," page 14.

In the entry for 25 July 1968, **Capt. Kenneth J. Hoffman** was incorrectly identified as Capt. James Hoffman.

In the entry for 11 September 1969, **1/Lt. Robert P. Wiesneth's** last name was spelled incorrectly.

A revised, corrected version of the newsletter has been posted on the Association website.

A Moment of Clarity

by John Record [457, 70]

In February 2008, my wife, Pam, and I took an Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT) trip to Vietnam. My goal was to observe what types of changes had taken place and what had not changed. We visited Hanoi, Da Nang, Halong Bay, Hue, Hoi An, Nha Trang, Dalat, and Saigon. Saigon is now officially Ho Chi Minh City. In Saigon I hired a driver and interpreter to take us to Can Tho for a day-trip on our own.

The Vietnamese tourism people wanted U.S. visitors to not only see that things had changed, but also to experience how things had changed. I am sure things have changed even more since 2008.

One experience on this trip still stands out to me on a personal level. While staying in Nha Trang we visited Tam Island and some fish farms off the coast. We had some beach time and visited with some locals there on the beach. I noticed the Vietnamese were still not big on getting in the water, but they loved socializing at the beach. They were primarily picnicking with friends and family. Everyone was enjoying their outing, which provided them with an opportunity to use the camera on their cell phones.

I had planned before the excursion to have Pam take a photo of me in things I wore in Vietnam and Cam Ranh in 1970. I opened my backpack and pulled out my old BDU (battle dress uniform) shirt that was faded and frayed and sleeveless, a headband that said “Vietnam,” and some trinket jewelry that I acquired in Vietnam in 1970. I also had one of the old olive drab towels from 1970. It was really worn and ragged. Pam still threatens to throw it away.

As Pam was taking the photo of me – of this old man relic of a Vietnam veteran, a small group of Vietnamese gentlemen in my age group gathered off to the side to watch. When they saw she



was finished, they politely approached me and gestured to ask if I would pose with them so one of their wives could take a photo of the men with me. The Vietnamese wife used her cell phone camera. They were all smiling and respectful. Then we all said goodbye and I thought the encounter was over.

As they departed, another gentleman approached me and stood beside me so his wife could take a photo of the two of us. While she was holding her camera up, he took his left hand and firmly clutched my right bicep. He never smiled and I could sense that he was rather sad. When she was finished, he let go of my arm and gave a very weak salute, shook my hand, and appeared to be shedding a tear. I awkwardly returned a faint salute. I really did not know what to do. I put a hand on his shoulder and nodded my head to say goodbye.

I realized at that moment not only do we have feelings and deep memories about the war, but so do the Vietnamese. Not only did many American vets return with PTSD and with emotional scars. They too have PTSD and emotional scars.

I have no clue if the first group of gentlemen and the solo gentleman were former VC (Viet Cong) or ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam), or if any of them were even veterans. But I now understand that all of us will have, and keep forever, our own individual memories and experiences of war.

Echos of Vietnam, 50 Years Later Interview with Jim Webb

by Barton Swaim
The Wall Street Journal
January 21, 2023

Arlington, VA

When I was a teenager in the 1980’s, popular culture had basically one message on the Vietnam War: that it was conceived in American arrogance, was perpetrated by American savages, and accomplished little but psychological devastation and national disgrace. Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), Brian De Palma’s *Casualties of War* (1989) – these and a thousand other productions, documentaries and articles told my generation that the war had been a gigantic fiasco that turned those who fought it into war criminals and frowning, guilt-ridden drug addicts.

The war ended officially [for the U.S.] on January 27, 1973, with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. That’s 50 years ago next Friday – an anniversary that will likely occasion a round of retrospective think pieces and cable-TV segments on the war’s legacy. More will follow in 2025 to mark the final American pullout from Saigon in 1975.

The country has moved on since the ’80’s. The Vietnam War no longer elicits the sort of ostentatious regret it did a generation ago. To confine the discussion to Hollywood, *We Were Soldiers* (2002) was one of the first major films to portray the average American soldier in Vietnam as decent and valorous; more recently *The Last Full Measure* (2018), though indulging in the usual antiwar pieties, acknowledges the bravery and decency

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Echos (from Page 15)

of American soldiers. We've moved on in politics, too. The great scourge of supposed American war crimes in Vietnam, John Kerry – the man who averred in 1971 that American soldiers serving in Vietnam perpetrated war crimes “in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan” – was the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2004. He felt obliged to refashion himself as a war hero, and he lost.

The Vietnam War doesn't lend itself to unambiguous interpretations in the way many wars do. But with media-generated myths no longer dominant, and with the pain of losing 58,220 servicemen subsiding, are Americans ready to think about the whole thing anew? “Maybe,” Jim Webb answers after a thoughtful pause. Mr. Webb, 76, who served as President Reagan's Navy secretary (1987-88) and a Democratic U.S. senator from Virginia from (2007-13), commanded a Marine rifle platoon in the Vietnam bush in 1969-70. “Maybe,” he says again, looking unconvinced.

The biggest myth, to my mind, holds that the ordinary Vietnam combat veteran was so scarred by the experience that he couldn't get his life together back home. Think of Travis Bickle, the lonesome, deranged vet of Martin Scorsese's 1976 film *Taxi Driver*.

Is there any truth to the stereotype? Mr. Webb recalls an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1986 claiming to find that Vietnam veterans were 86% more likely than everyone else to commit suicide. “I read it,” he recalls, “I broke down all the authors' numbers and figured out how they came to this conclusion, and it was total bulls***.” The paper considered only men born during 1950, 1951, and 1952, and only those who died in Pennsylvania and California between 1974 and 1983. That didn't stop the press from touting the study, “in essence claiming if you served in Vietnam, you're probably going to kill

yourself.”

In 1979 Congress hired the Harris polling firm to survey Americans on what they thought about the war and its veterans. At the time Mr. Webb was counsel to the House Veterans Affairs Committee. “Of Vietnam veterans,” he recalls, “91% said they were glad they served in the military, and 74% said at some level they enjoyed their time in the military. And 2 out of 3 said they would do it again.”



Jim Webb at platoon command post.

Was the war worth fighting? Mr. Webb thinks on balance it was. He recalls a meeting with Lee Kuan Yew, founder of modern Singapore. “I asked him a similar question,” Mr. Webb says, “and in his view, America won – only in a different way. We stopped communism, which didn't advance in Indochina any further than it reached in 1975. We enabled other countries in the region to develop market economies and governmental systems that were basically functional and responsive to their people. That model has stayed, and I like to think it will advance, even in Vietnam.”

But clearly a lot did go wrong between 1963 and 1975. In his autobiography, *I Heard My Country Calling* (2014), Mr. Webb writes of “the arrogance and incompetence of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and his much-ballyhooed bunch of civilian Whiz Kids whose data-based ‘systems analysis’ approach to fighting our wars had diminished the historic role of military leadership.” He repeats the same criticism of the war's civilian leader-

ship, and he insists the military tacticians in the field – American and South Vietnamese – did their jobs superbly.

Mr. Webb describes two problems the U.S. military was largely powerless to solve. First, the North Vietnamese government's policy of sending assassination squads into the South. “Bernard Fall, a great French journalist, writes about this in *The Two Vietnams*,” a book published in 1963, Mr. Webb says. “It had been happening since at least 1958. The Vietminh started sending these squads back into the South, particularly central Vietnam. They were extremely smart and ruthless about it. These guys would go in and execute anyone with ties to any part of the South Vietnamese government – government officials, teachers, social workers, anyone.” Over time, these murders sapped the population's loyalty to the government in Saigon, and there was very little the U.S. military could do about it.

The second problem was the one many readers will remember well: the radical left's successful use of the war, with the news media's complicity. “Take Students for Democratic Society,” Mr. Webb says. “They were founded before there was a Vietnam War. The Port Huron Statement of 1962,” the document that founded the SDS, “doesn't say anything about Vietnam. The goal of these revolutionaries was to dissolve the American system, and they thought they would accomplish that through racial issues. They didn't get any traction – until about 1965 and the Vietnam War.”

Mention of the news media raises the subject of class. The journalists reporting on the war, interpreting events for the American public, “were articulate, were from good schools, had important family connections,” Mr. Webb says. “You could see it all coming apart.”

Coming apart?

Mr. Webb describes a “divorce” between “upper strata” Americans and the military's base of enlistees. That

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divorce didn't begin with the Vietnam War, but the war accelerated and exacerbated it. "The military draws mainly from people within a certain tradition. It's a tradition of fighting for the country simply because it's their country." Mr. Webb's first novel, *Fields of Fire* (1978), is in many ways an imaginative portrayal of this fragmentation.

The book, which captures the war's brutality but carefully avoids criticism of its policy makers, follows the war experience of three American servicemen. One, a Harvard student, means to get a spot in the Marine Corps band as a horn player but winds up as a grunt. He begins his tour by viewing the whole conflict through the lens of Jean-Paul Sartre ("Suffering without meaning, except in the suffering itself") and ends, permanently maimed, shouting into a microphone at antiwar protesters back in Cambridge: "I didn't see any of you in Vietnam. I saw...truck drivers and coal miners and farmers. I didn't see you."

The military's present-day recruitment difficulties, Mr. Webb says, have a lot to do with this cultural stratification. When civilian political leaders announce they're "going into the military to purge 'whites with extremist views,' do they know what they're doing? A lot of the U.S. military comes from a certain cultural tradition, and right now a lot of parents are saying to their kids, 'Don't go. You want to have your whole life canceled because someone said you were at a meeting where there was a Confederate flag or whatever?'"

Mr. Webb sought the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, although he dropped out before the end of 2015. At a CNN debate Anderson Cooper asked each of the candidates: "You've all made a few people upset over your political careers. Which enemy are you most proud of?" Others answered predictably: the National Rifle Association, the pharmaceutical industry, the

Republicans. Mr. Webb's response: "I'd have to say the enemy soldier that threw the grenade that wounded me, but he's not around right now to talk to." The liberal commentariat disparaged him for boasting that he'd killed a man, but Donald Trump won the general election by appealing to the sort of swing voters who weren't offended by Mr. Webb's remark.

Max Hastings, in *Vietnam: An Epic Tragedy* (2018), writes of the Paris Accords that the U.S. "eventually settled on the only terms North Vietnam cared about, whereby its own troops remained in the South, while the Americans went home." Mr. Webb, who speaks Vietnamese and has visited Vietnam many times as a civilian, agrees: "We did the same thing there as we did in Afghanistan: We cut our allies out of all the important decisions."

"In 1972" – here he becomes animated – "the South Vietnamese military was really starting to grow and become a lethal fighting force." In the Easter Offensive, the North Vietnamese "hit the South with everything they had."

He picks up some nearby papers and reads figures: "14 divisions, 26 independent regiments and several hundred Soviet tanks hit South Vietnam. The Americans – we were nearly all gone by then. South Vietnam lost 39,000 soldiers; the communists admitted in their own records that they lost 100,000. They tried to take the South, and the South beat them. And then, at Paris, we cut them out."

Soon afterward, Richard Nixon resigned, Congress cut off funding, and Saigon fell.

"Then, of course," Mr. Webb goes on, the communists "did the Stalinist thing – they put hundreds of thousands of the South Vietnamese finest into re-education camps. Two hundred forty thousand stayed there longer than four years. I have a good friend who was in a re-education camp for 13 years."

Recalling a visit to Vietnam in 1991, Mr. Webb describes a night when hundreds of South Vietnamese Army

veterans who had spent years in re-education camps gathered in a park near Saigon's old railway station. "My Vietnamese friend told me many of these guys had been high-ranking officers. We could see some of them shooting heroin through their thighs. I thought to myself, 'Wait a second – these were our people.'" Mr. Webb pauses for a moment, then recovers.

What have we learned from Vietnam? Not much, if the Afghanistan pullout is anything to go by. "The way they left was horrible, disgusting," he says. "People said it looked like the fall of Saigon. No, it did not." As a military procedure, "the evacuation from Saigon was brilliant. In 1975, we had refugee camps all over the place ready to take people in – Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania, Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Operation New Life in Guam. These places were ready to go before the fall. We got 140,000 people out of there. What this administration did was a disgrace. There was no excuse for it."

Before I leave, Mr. Webb shows me various pictures and artifacts in his office. The leg injured by that grenade still troubles him; he walks around the office with a slight but discernible limp. One black-and-white photograph he particularly wants me to see. Taken in 1979, it shows a much younger Jim Webb with two pals from his rifle platoon. Tom Martin, who enlisted in the Marines while a student at Vanderbilt and served as a squad leader, is in a wheelchair. Mac McGarvey, Mr. Webb's fifth radio operator – three of the previous four were seriously wounded – has no right arm. All three men in the photograph are smiling.

James H. Webb, Jr. graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968. During his service in Vietnam as a U.S. Marine Corps 1/Lt. platoon leader in 1969-70, he was awarded the Navy Cross, two Silver stars, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts.

Mr. Swaim is an editorial page writer for "The Wall Street Journal."

Korean War Dogfight: Classified

by Max Hauptman
Task & Purpose
June 24, 2022

On November 18, 1952, during the Korean War, Navy Lt. Royce Williams, along with three other pilots from his fighter squadron, VF-781, launched from the *USS Oriskany* (CVA-34) into the stormy skies over the Sea of Japan. There were more than 250,000 sorties flown by the Navy during the Korean conflict, but the ensuing engagement would end in one of the great feats of aerial combat, even if it were covered up for decades due to the tense political environment of the Cold War.

On this mission, Williams squared off against seven pilots from the Soviet Air Force, who were flying one of the most advanced jet fighters of the time, and walked away with three confirmed kills and one probable that was later confirmed.

The *USS Oriskany* was part of Navy Task Force 77, striking at logistics centers in North Korea. The target that day was the city of Hoeryong, right along the Yalu River where the borders of China, North Korea, and what was then the Soviet Union met. That made the bombing missions a risky proposition, given the possibility of violating each nation's airspace.

Williams, on his second mission of the day, was flying as part of the combat air patrol in a Grumman F9F-5 Panther.

"We started to rendezvous with each other as we climbed out of the clouds," Williams recalled, "And that's when we heard from the combat information center that there were inbound bogeys from the north."

Flying above the clouds at more than 12,000 feet, Williams spotted seven contrails high in the sky above him. They were MiG-15's.

Comparable to the U.S. Air Force F-86, the MiG's outclassed Williams' Panther in speed, maneuverability,

climb rate, and the weapons range. While Navy pilots had scored some early kills against the MiG's, their mission had switched to one of mostly ground attack. Williams had been training as a Navy fighter pilot since 1944, but the primary mission of the Panthers in Korea was air-to-ground engagements.



The aerial combat was generally confined to the western half of the Korean peninsula, where the Air Force's F-86 Sabres would patrol the approaches from China known as "MiG Alley." This was one indication that let Williams know the planes he was facing were almost certainly launched from the Soviet Union.

Williams fired a quick burst to test his guns, but at the same moment, his flight leader reported a warning light flashing for his fuel pump and headed back toward the fleet. Before the engagement began, it was down to seven MiG's vs. two Navy Panthers.

As Williams and his wingman, Dave Rowlands, climbed past 26,000 feet, the MiG's split into two formations, with four of them diving and firing towards the Navy jets from Williams' 10 o'clock. Williams turned and pulled towards the MiG formation, firing a short burst at the "tail-end Charlie" of the group. It fell away, marking Williams' first kill of the day. His wingman pursued one of the MiG's out of formation, leaving Williams to deal with the others.

As the two MiG formations gained altitude to make their attacking dives, Williams found himself on the tail of one MiG and downed a second aircraft.

Because the Panther carried less ammunition than the MiG's, Williams had to choose his shots carefully. "In the moment I was a fighter pilot doing my job," said Williams. "I was only shooting what I had."

The remaining Soviet jets were now taking turns climbing and then making passes at Williams. He could only twist and turn the Panther to the limits of its abilities, engaging a Soviet jet when it passed in front of his sights or rapidly turning to face them head on.

Williams fired at another MiG and it banked out of the fight. As that Soviet pilot's wingman turned towards Williams, he fired a long burst as the two jets passed belly-to-belly, with the Soviet aircraft crashing into the sea.

In more than 30 minutes of aerial combat, Williams had downed at least three of the MiG's, with a fourth one heavily damaged.

His plane, though, had suffered plenty of damage of its own.

"I was turning and one guy hit me with the 37 mm cannon that knocked out my hydraulics," said Williams.

With no ammunition and a plane that could barely fly, Williams was headed back towards the *USS Oriskany*, using his remaining flight controls to maneuver the aircraft.

Diving low into the clouds, Williams considered ejecting but decided to keep flying.

"I wouldn't say I was worried, but I was aware of my situation," said Williams. "...I knew the airplane was in bad shape. It took two hands on the stick to really control it and I knew there was an option to bail out. ... But if I did, in those conditions, I would have survived for maybe less than 20 minutes."

As Williams approached the Navy task force, the ships at first fired on him, mistaking him for an enemy aircraft. Coming around for a second attempt to land, Williams couldn't control the

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Korean War (from Page 18)



Lt. Royce Williams inspects damage to his F9F-5 Panther sustained on 18 November 1952. Photo courtesy of U.S. Naval Institute.

aircraft below 170 knots, which made the approach precarious considering the Panther's normal landing speed was 105 knots, or roughly 120 miles per hour. Still, he managed to land the jet.

On the deck, there were 263 holes counted in Williams' Panther, although he never saw it again. The plane was supposedly pushed off the deck into the sea, with the gun camera footage taken away for analysis.

It was then that the national security implications of the encounter began to take hold. While Soviet volunteers were known to be flying in Korea, Williams had engaged the actual Soviet Air Force. Furthermore, his flight had been made aware of the Soviet jets based on intelligence from a small detachment from the National Security Agency, then less than a year old, operating on one of the other ships in the task force.

Williams was informed by Navy Adm. Robert Briscoe, commander of Naval Forces Far East, that while it was confirmed he had shot down three and possibly four MiG's, he was not to discuss the engagement with anyone, ever.

That is exactly what Williams did. Through the rest of his career, another 23 years including 110 missions in the Vietnam War, the only official record of

the engagement was a Silver Star and Williams' one confirmed kill.

Four decades later, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, records began to emerge from Moscow confirming the engagement. The dogfight was covered in a 2014 book by Russian historian Igor Seidov, *Red Devils Over the Yalu: A Chronicle of Soviet Aerial Operations in the Korean War*. According to Seidov's book, only one of the seven MiG's who encountered then-Lt. Williams and his wingman, then-Lt. j.g. Dave Rowlands, made it back to Russia.

More than 70 years after his daring aerial exploits against seven Soviet MiG's, Capt. Royce Williams, USN (Ret.), was awarded the Navy Cross on January 20, 2023. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro presented the Navy's second-highest honor to the 97-year-old fighter pilot in a ceremony at the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

One-off Caribou Cold War Warrior

by John van Waarde
2010

The following is excerpted from "Target: Iron Curtain" by John van Waarde, which is a comprehensive history of USAF reconnaissance aircraft and missions flown from Wiesbaden and Rhein-Main Air Bases during the Cold War. The article was written with the help of John Bessette, 7499th Support Group Association Historian.

The 7406th Support Squadron aircraft and missions described in "Target: Iron Curtain" were declassified by the National Security Agency (NSA) in 1997.

An interesting sideline is the short-time use of a former U.S. Army Caribou, S/N 61-2600. [The aircraft] was originally used as an SIGINT (Signals Intelligence) aircraft by the 507th USASA (U.S. Army Security Agency) Group, but when the USAF gained control over the former Army C-7B's (or

CV-2A's as the Army called them) on 31 December 1966, the role was transferred to the 7406th Support Squadron [at Rhein-Main AB, Federal Republic of Germany] as "Project Creek Moose."



Caribou S/N 61-2600 at Rhein-Main AB, 23 May 1970. Photo by Lindsay Peacock

A separate flight was formed within the unit to operate the aircraft, which was flown and maintained by USAF personnel, but the operators in the back were U.S. Army personnel, who lived in the same barracks as the USAF squadron members.

Army maintenance procedures differed from those in the USAF and the aircraft had several inspections due when it was received in February 1969. Upon completion of these, the Army demanded a receipt and received a standard USAF laundry receipt, which they accepted! Operational SIGINT missions started in January 1970 and usually lasted 3 hours, taking them all along the Iron Curtain.

On 31 July 1970, the aircraft was reassigned to the 516th Tactical Airlift Wing at Dyess AFB, TX, ending Caribou operations for the unit.

Editor's Note. In "Target: Iron Curtain," and other articles, there are references to C-7B's. All Army Caribous transferred to the USAF were designated C-7A's by the Air Force. There were never any USAF C-7B's.



Beats Working for a Living

authors anonymous

Submitted by Marty Hillman [459, 67]

The older I get, the better pilot I was.

God does not subtract from a man's allotted time on Earth the hours spent while flying, but He extends harsh penalties for those who do not learn to fly properly.

Many young, inexperienced pilots have delusions of adequacy.

The difference between fear and terror: Fear is when your calculations show you may not have enough fuel to make it to your destination. Terror is when you realize you were right.

I wore my mask while pulling 9 G's, checking my six, pumping out flares, telling #2 to "BREAK LEFT," selecting auto guns, locking up a bandit, selecting the AIM-9, keeping visual while gaining a tally, getting a 1500 MHz tone, watching my altitude, planning an egress, shooting the bandit, telling #2 to "bug-out south," reforming into tactical formation, pushing it up, taking it down, short range radar, and resetting the CAP (Combat Air Patrol) – was your day interesting?

Mommy, I want to grow up and be a pilot. Honey, you can't do both.

When you see a tree in the clouds, it's not good news.

Heaven is crowded with civilian pilots who did not get their Instrument Rating.

My junior high school teacher told me no one would pay me to look out the window. Now I'm an airline captain.

I am at the age when I realize the best thing about flying fighters was free oxygen.

Never fly the "A" model of anything.

Pilots have been looking down on people since 1903.

The average fighter pilot, despite a swaggering personality and confident exterior, is capable of feelings such as love, affection, humility, caring, and intimacy. They just don't involve others.

When everything else is going against you, remember an aircraft still takes off into the wind.

Pilots in their SR-71's, "Yeah, though I fly through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for I am at 80,000 feet and climbing."

Pilot dictum: Remember, in the end, gravity always wins.

You can only tie the record for flying low.

Black boxes may be replacing pilots, but pilots can be maintained easily and produced by unskilled labor.

Optimists invented the airplane. Pessimists invented the parachute.

I was 14 when I wanted to be a pilot. I'm now 80 and still want to be a pilot, but I'd rather be 14 again.

Elderly lady to airline captain, "Are you sure you are safe to fly?" Answer, "Lady, how do you think I got this old?"

The three most useless things in aviation are the altitude above you, the runway behind you, and the fuel you left on the ramp.

Valor: The "Stadium" at Duc Lap

by John L. Frisbee
Air Force Magazine
August 1994

Outnumbered ARVN (Army Republic of Vietnam) troops were surrounded by enemy regulars within 100 feet of their inner defenses. Their salvation lay in precise resupply airdrops.

After the failure of Hanoi's Tet offensive in early 1968, the North began building up forces for another wide-spread attack throughout South Vietnam. One of Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap's targets was Duc Lap, a Special Forces camp in hilly, forested territory near the Cambodian border. More than 4,000 North Vietnamese regulars were committed against Duc Lap's defenders. By August 23, the enemy had breached the camp's outer perimeter, cutting the

ARVN troops off from the rough airstrip that had been used to supply them.

In the center of the camp was an open area about 200 feet square where supplies would have to be airdropped. Hitting that small drop zone called for a low-altitude run-in at 200 feet. Making an airdrop at Duc Lap was roughly comparable to flying into a stadium with the surrounding stands occupied by unfriendly spectators, all armed with AK-47's. This was a job for the Air Force's rugged, maneuverable C-7A Caribou.

The C-7A was a light, two-engine short takeoff and landing transport built by de Havilland Aircraft of Canada; it was sold to the U.S. Army in 1962, and turned over to the Air Force in January 1967.

The Air Force formed six C-7A squadrons in Southeast Asia. They were unique in several respects, not the least in their level and variety of manning. About half the pilots were recent flying school graduates on their first cockpit assignments. Most of the others were older men, some with World War II or Korean War experience. In the spring of 1968, more than 50 C-7A pilots were Lieutenant Colonels, two were World War II fighter aces, and six had Ph.D.s. With all that varied talent and experience, these were well-run units.

One of the C-7A pilots who came directly from an operational outfit was Maj. Hunter Hackney [458, 68]. Having earned his wings in 1955, he had accumulated several thousand hours of flight time as a T-33 instructor and as an aircraft commander and instructor in KC-97's and KC-135's. He had refueled fighters over the Gulf of Tonkin and Laos, but he wanted an assignment closer to the shooting. Maj. Hackney requested a Vietnam tour and ended up in January 1968 flying C-7A's with the 458th Tactical Airlift Squadron based at Cam Ranh Bay. Flying four to six sorties a day, he soon logged several hundred hours in the Caribou.

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Valor at Duc Lap (from Page 20)

At Duc Lap on August 24, ARVN troops and their American advisors were running out of medical supplies, ammunition, and water. To get them through the night, Hackney's roommate, Maj. George Finck, volunteered to fly the first-ever C-7A operational night drop, guided by tracer fire and one white light that identified the tiny drop zone. He was awarded the Air Force Cross for that mission.

At noon on August 25, Special Forces officers reported that Duc Lap's survival was doubtful without prompt help. Maj. Hackney and his crew immediately took off from Cam Ranh Bay, stopped to load cargo at Nha Trang, and were forced to land at Ban Me Thout until the fighting at Duc Lap subsided enough for the friendlies to retrieve dropped supplies. A few hours later, Maj. Hackney took off again and orbited east of the camp until air strikes lifted. He then took up a run-in heading and descended to 200 feet above ground.

Heavy ground fire began two miles from his release point. The C-7A took several hundred hits but completed an accurate drop on the first pass. Maj. Hackney then made another run from a different direction, again flying through a hail of ground fire to make another drop "on the money." Incredibly, none of the three-man crew had been hit, and the C-7A operated normally as they returned to Ban Me Thout. After landing, they discovered that all cells of their "self-sealing" tanks were leaking.

Maj. Hackney and his crew picked up an undamaged C-7A, loaded four pallets of ammunition and water, and flew back to Duc Lap. Taking fire from all sides, they dropped the pallets in the center of the small drop zone. Miraculously, they emerged again with an uninjured crew and made it back to Cam Ranh Bay, their C-7A riddled with bullets. Duc Lap survived the siege, which was lifted several days later.



Duc Lap Special Forces camp

For tenacious heroism in penetrating the "stadium" at Duc Lap three times, contributing so notably to the survival of the camp, Maj. Hunter Hackney was awarded the Air Force Cross and the RVN Gallantry Cross with Silver Star.

In December 1968, Hackney returned to KC-135's and, shortly, to Southeast Asia. He retired as a Colonel in 1981, after serving in several senior posts, including deputy director for Command and Control, 8th Air Force.

Dave Hackney, son of Hunter Hackney, is an Honorary Associate Member of the C-7A Caribou Association.

Cheo Reo Medevac

by Tom Hansen [483, 70]

Some of my C-7A experiences were humorous, some were scary, and most were routine – but some were just bad stuff.

One day we had a mission to Cheo Reo, which was a little hamlet or village with an airstrip and a small local defense garrison. We approached Cheo Reo, overflowed it, and prepared for landing. There was another Caribou already on the ground and they contacted us to ask how much room we had available. We were empty.

Our fellow Caribou driver told us the place had been hit the night before. The enemy's intention had been to slaughter every living human being in the village and totally wipe it out, which they almost did. The other C-7A crew said we were needed to evacuate the wounded

survivors to the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay. They then took-off and we landed.

There were only about twenty people, of all ages, left alive at Cheo. Everyone else had been killed during the night. The wounded waiting at the airfield were the few that escaped the barbaric slaughter by hiding in the nearby woods until morning.

The other bird had taken out half of them and we took the remaining eleven – all wounded. We're not talking about soldiers. We're talking about old guys, mothers, kids, babies, and grandmothers. Medevac was not part of our original mission that day and there was nothing planned or prepared on our part, but these people needed help now. We quickly set-up litters and seats in the cargo compartment, helped load the survivors on-board, and flew them to Cam Ranh Bay. Of the eleven we brought back, three died of their wounds in the hospital.

There is no glory in war.

After seeing that, I had no problem hauling artillery shells for firebases and "Willy Pete" (white phosphorus) rockets for Hueys. I didn't have a problem with it before, but after Cheo Reo I was glad to do it.

More in Space than B-2

by David Rosa
Task & Purpose
July 18, 2022

That's right, more people have left Earth's atmosphere than have piloted one of the most powerful weapon platforms on the planet. As of November 2021, more than 600 human beings have been to space, according to *The New York Times*. While, according to the USAF, there have been only 550 numbered pilots of the B-2 Spirit [to date] – the \$2 billion long-range stealth

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More in Space (from Page 21)

bomber whose iconic flying wing design makes the jet look more like a spaceship than an airplane.

Yuri Gagarin, the first man to fly into space, did so in 1961, while Bruce Hinds and USAF Col. Richard Couch, the first two people to fly the B-2, did so in 1989. Still, the number of people who have flown the bomber is so low that each lucky pilot gets assigned a “Spirit Number,” which officially enters them into that rarified club. The numbering system started with the USAF’s first stealth aircraft, the F-117 Nighthawk, which uses the “Bandit Number.”

“Each [of the stealth programs] realized there would be a very limited number of assigned pilots and sensed a need to catalog that history and legacy,” said former B-2 pilot and Spirit Number 78, Frank Cavuoti. “These are one-of-a-kind numbers, like a numerical fingerprint that are unique and will only be assigned once and never reused.”

Not all “Spirit Number” holders are pilots. Honored guests such as senior military leaders, cabinet-level secretaries, members of Congress, and exceptional enlisted service members have been invited to ride in the cockpit on special occasions and have received Spirit Numbers as a result.

“It’s an honor to be one of the few, still less than 800 people, to receive a Spirit Number,” said TSgt. Elizabeth Lambert, Spirit Number 760, who took part in an incentive flight in 2021 after receiving the Thomas N. Barnes Award and being named the 509th Bomb Wing Crew Chief of the Year. “This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I love that I get to be a part of history,” Lambert said. “Being the first female enlisted crew chief to fly in the B-2 was incredible.”

If anyone deserves a ride in the Spirit, it’s the crew chiefs who keep the twenty B-2 bombers in America’s inventory running, despite the aircraft’s average

age of 26 years. A good chunk of that maintenance is spent just keeping the aircraft’s stealthy coating intact. “Our top maintenance driver is the [low observable] system,” said SMSgt. Steve Napier, a B-2 maintainer. Napier estimated that every flight hour on the B-2 requires about 114 maintenance hours on the ground.



B-2 over Missouri
Photo by SSgt. Jonathan Snyder,
USAF

All that maintenance is worth it though, because the B-2 is one of the most fearsome arrows in America’s quiver, and stealth is the reason why it’s so scary. The B-2 can take off from its home in the middle of the country at Whiteman AFB, MO, take on fuel from airborne tankers while crossing oceans, then slip past enemy radar to drop up to nearly 60,000 pounds of bombs on critical targets.

Those bombs could be 500 pound unguided “dumb bombs” or precision-guided munitions, long-range cruise missiles, nuclear bombs, and much more. Precision-guided munitions allow a bomber to fly to a single point and release several weapons that then shoot off in different directions to hit their targets. The capability opens up a lot of possibilities for war planners, but sorting them out can be a headache.

“It’s somewhat easy to allocate 12 bombs and go ‘what are my highest priorities,’” when working with smaller aircraft like fighters, said B-2 pilot Maj. Nick “Wolf” Anderson. “But when you start bringing in a 4- or 8-ship [flight of B-2’s] and you’re in the 400+ [range of available weapons] ... how do I pick

400 points over the space that I want to drop on?”

Depending on the desired effect on the enemy, those targets could be a runway, fuel depots, infrastructure, fighters on an open ramp, or more. Nailing down a final list of targets and how to destroy them is part of what makes being one of the two B-2 pilots in the cockpit so demanding.

According to Anderson, flying the B-2 is fairly simple, despite its unusual flying-wing design. What takes up most of the crew’s brainpower is communicating with planners back home and other pilots in the strike package as the targets are planned out literally on the fly.

Sometimes the cockpit feels “like a stock-trading floor.” The cockpit is “controlled chaos in the sense of everyone’s typing as fast as they can,” Anderson said, referring to the laptops B-2 pilots plug into their aircraft to stay in touch with commanders back home. “You’re talking on the radios before the fight, you’re sending emails for updates on target sets and threats, you’re changing your game plan, you’re relaying that to the fighters.”

Unlike fighter pilots, who usually fly a handful of hours at a time [on operational missions], a B-2 mission might last 24 or 40 hours as the bomber travels from Missouri to the other side of the world and back again. Anderson said the cockpit is the size of the interior of an average family sedan, with the front half taken up by ejection seats and flight controls, the back-right taken up by a toilet, and the back-left holding a sleeping bag or a blow-up mattress and a few other creature comforts.

“It’s definitely not five stars but we do bring a cooler and we have a convection oven that’s built into the aircraft, so it’s honestly not bad,” Anderson said. “And it’s got the best view in the world. You look out the windows and the sun’s rising or the sun’s setting and

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More in Space (from Page 22)

the amenities don't matter."

But all the chatter, shut-eye, or "controlled chaos" stops when the B-2 emerges from its trans-oceanic voyage over enemy territory, where it's time to stay quiet. The B-2 is a relatively slow aircraft that can't outmaneuver or outrun most threats, so maintaining stealth is the only way the pilots will get home alive.

"The whole mentality of the B-2 [is] if I'm doing anything that highlights myself, then that's bad," Anderson explained. "We're not talking on the radio, we're not emitting virtually anything unless we absolutely have to. We practice completely silent com-out strikes. We're breaching into that country and we don't need to talk on the radios and really no one does because everyone has a plan and a task and they execute that task."

"To a B-2 pilot, the Spirit Number represents a shared sense of connection to a very special program and signifies the spirit, pride, tradition, heritage and *esprit de corps* shared among the very few fellow B-2 Spirit pilots," said Cavuoti, Spirit Number 78.

Astronaut Scobee Honored

by Meg Godlewski
FLYING Magazine
October 5, 2022

Very rarely do pilots visit an airport to see a particular hangar – unless there is something unique and striking about it, such as a large mural that honors a notable aviator with local ties. That may soon happen at Auburn Municipal Airport-Dick Scobee Field (S50) in Auburn, Washington, south of Seattle, as a mural honoring space shuttle commander Dick Scobee [535, 68] was recently unveiled.

Dick Scobee was born in Washington

and, in 1957, graduated from nearby Auburn High School.

Scobee, a U.S. Air Force test pilot, engineer, and astronaut, was the pilot on the space shuttle *Challenger's* last flight in 1986. The *Challenger* exploded 73 seconds after takeoff, killing all seven crew members. In the years that followed, there were several honorifics granted in honor of the crew. In 2004, the *Challenger* crew was named to the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame and the Auburn airport was renamed Dick Scobee Field.

The mural is on the air side of the airport, on an exterior wall of a hangar next to the taxiway. The project was the result of collaboration between Silvana Vasquez, airport management intern, and artist Myron Curry.



"The significance of the mural on the hangar is not just to beautify the airport, but also [to] memorialize and honor Dick Scobee, *Challenger* Space Shuttle Commander, who lived in Auburn, Washington, in his early life," says Vasquez. "Our airport was honorifically named Dick Scobee Field to celebrate the life and achievements of a great Pacific Northwest native. This mural added color and an identity to the hangar wall and the airport, which is a treat for pilots who get to see it when they operate at our airport."

The mural depicts a larger than life image of Scobee in his space shuttle commander's uniform in the foreground, and the space shuttle *Challenger* behind him. The space images are embraced on a wall that is a riot of color with a larger letter "A" and the slogan, "Welcome to S50 Dick Scobee Field."

Francis Richard "Dick" Scobee

NASA Biography

Personal: Born May 19, 1939, in Cle Elum, WA. Died January 28, 1986. He is survived by his wife, June, and two children.

Education: Graduated from Auburn Senior High School, Auburn, WA, in 1957; received a B.S. degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Arizona in 1965.

Organizations: Member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, Tau Beta Pi, the Experimental Aircraft Association, and the Air Force Association.

Awards: Awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and two NASA Exceptional Service Medals. Posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

Experience: Dick Scobee enlisted in the USAF in 1957, trained as a reciprocating engine mechanic, and was subsequently stationed at Kelly AFB, TX. While there, he attended night school and acquired two years of college credit, which led to his selection for the Airman's Education and Commissioning Program. He graduated from the University of Arizona with a B.S. degree in Aerospace Engineering.

He received his Air Force commission in 1965 and, after receiving his wings in 1966, completed a number of assignments including a combat tour in Vietnam [535, 68].

He returned to the U.S. and attended the U.S. Air Force Aerospace Research Pilot School at Edwards AFB, CA. After graduating in 1972, he participated in test programs for which he flew such varied aircraft as the Boeing 747, the X-24B, the transonic aircraft technology (TACT) F-111, and the C-5.

He logged more than 6,500 hours flying time in 45 types of aircraft.

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Dick Scobee (from Page 23)

NASA Experience: Lt. Col. Scobee was selected as an astronaut candidate by NASA in January 1978. In August 1979, he completed a 1-year training and evaluation period, making him eligible for assignment as a pilot on future space shuttle flight crews. In addition to astronaut duties, Scobee was an Instructor Pilot on the NASA/Boeing 747 shuttle carrier airplane.



He first flew as pilot of STS 41-C, which launched from Kennedy Space Center, FL, on April 6, 1984. Crew members included spacecraft commander Capt. Robert L. Crippen, and three mission specialists, Terry J. Hart, Dr. G.D. (Pinky) Nelson, and Dr. J.D.A. “Ox” van Hoften.

During this mission, the crew successfully deployed the Long Duration Exposure Facility (LDEF); retrieved the ailing Solar Maximum Satellite, repaired it onboard the orbiting *Challenger*, and replaced it in orbit using the robot arm called the Remote Manipulator System (RMS).

The mission also included flight-testing of Manned Maneuvering Units (MMU’s) in two Extravehicular Activities (EVAs); operation of the Cinema 360 and IMAX Camera Systems, as well as a Bee Hive Honeycomb Struc-

tures student experiment. The mission duration was seven days before landing at Edwards AFB, CA, on April 13, 1984. With the completion of this flight, Scobee logged a total of 168 hours in space.

Lt. Col. Scobee was spacecraft commander on STS 51-L, which launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, at 11:38:00 EST on January 28, 1986. The crew onboard the Orbiter *Challenger* included the pilot, M.J. Smith (USN) (pilot), three mission specialists, Dr. R.E. McNair, Lt. Col. E.S. Onizuka (USAF), and Dr. J.A. Resnik, as well as two civilian payload specialists, G.B. Jarvis and S.C. McAuliffe. The STS 51-L crew died on January 28, 1986 when *Challenger* exploded after launch.

USAF Lt. Gen. Richard W. Scobee, son of Lt. Col. Dick Scobee, is an Honorary Associate Member of the C-7A Caribou Association.

Hypersonic Update

by Darren Orf
Popular Mechanics
January 25, 2023

Hypersonic flight (speeds faster than Mach 5) is the perceived future of human aviation.



In order to achieve that vision, engineers need to develop hybrid engines capable of handling subsonic, supersonic, and hypersonic speeds. Aviation company Hermeus has successfully demonstrated mode transition between turbojet and ramjet engines for the Air Force’s Quarterhorse hypersonic aircraft – a major hypersonic flight milestone.

Capable of flying in excess of Mach 3.2 (around 2,200 mph), the SR-71 Blackbird has been the pinnacle of

aviation speed for nearly half a century, but the Atlanta-based aviation company Hermeus thinks it’s time for a little competition.

In 2021, the Air Force awarded Hermeus a \$60 million contract to develop three uncrewed concept aircraft, including the hypersonic Quarterhorse. Late last year, Hermeus passed a major milestone by successfully firing a turbojet-ramjet hybrid engine, known as “Chimera.”

The air-breathing monster behind the powerful SR-71 is a Pratt & Whitney J58 turbojet engine, which maxes out at speeds around Mach 3. In Hermeus’s hypersonic design, a ramjet, which can only operate at high speeds as it uses this air to pressurize air and fuel in the combustion chamber, kicks in and carries the theoretical Quarterhorse aircraft to Mach 5 and beyond. For any plane hoping to dethrone the Blackbird, its engine needs to somehow seamlessly transition between turbojet, ramjet, and back to turbojet – and Hermeus has pulled off that delicate piece of aviation engineering.

“We just demonstrated a mode transition, which means we went from turbojet mode to ramjet mode,” Hermeus cofounder and Chief Technical Officer Glenn Case said. “This is probably the most critical challenge in unlocking hypersonic flight.”

In order to test its Chimera engine, Hermeus needed to simulate the high-speed pressures of Mach 4 flight, so the company shipped its engine to the Notre Dame Turbomachinery Lab, a high-Mach test facility. There, Hermeus demonstrated the Chimera’s ability to transition between engines by guiding supersonic air around the turbojet and into the ramjet.

The hypersonic engine for Quarterhorse joins similar initiatives to unlock the era of hypersonic flight, including the Air Force’s Project Mayhem, which hopes to deliver a hypersonic bomber

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Hypersonic (from Page 24)

in the future. Project Mayhem is the Air Force's secretive program to develop a hypersonic weapons and sensor platform for strike and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. In December 2022 the Air Force awarded Leidos a \$334 million contract to design and prepare a production-ready technical data package to produce prototypes. After award, Leidos said it will team with Calspan, Draper, and Kratos for the digital and model-based systems engineering program.

One Damned Island After Another

by Clive Howard and
Joe Whitley
1946



Espiritu Santo

Naval Base Espiritu Santo was located on the island of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, now Vanatu, in the South Pacific.

Navy Seabees landed on Espiritu Santo on 8 July 1942 and were given just twenty days to construct a 6,000 foot runway that had to be cut through the jungle, cleared, levelled and surfaced with coral. However, heavy grading equipment was not available and they had to make do with six tractors, two scrapers, one grease truck, one petrol wagon, three weapons carriers, and a generator. Assisting them were 90 Marines, 295 Army infantrymen, and 50 Ni-Vanuatans – who all worked day and night.

On 28 July 1942, the first fighter squadron landed, followed by a squadron of B-17's the next day. On July 30, the B-17's, with fighter escort, bombed the Japanese on Guadalcanal, 558 miles

northwest of Espiritu Santo, in preparation for the Marine landing on August 7.

Bombers Become Fighters

On August 18, 1942, Capt. Kermit Messerschmitt [not a typo] of Ft. Collins, CO, and his B-17 crew were plodding home to Santo after a long flight when they found themselves within range of a huge Japanese [Navy] four-engine Mavis. Both planes let fly at each other. The Jap lost his No. 3 engine and disappeared into a cloud bank.



Japanese Navy
H6k Mavis seaplane

Two days later Capt. Walter Lucas of Starkville, MS, flying a mission from Santo, met another Mavis. "The crewmen were having sandwiches and coffee when I spied the Jap, and I yelled at the crew to get him," Capt. Lucas said.

"Our airplane was more maneuverable than the Mavis and I came up on him from below and the gunners cut loose. The Jap began to weave from side to side in an effort to bring us in range of his 20-mm cannon in the tail. I saw what he was trying to do and whipped our plane up broadside to the Mavis.

"Sgt. Vernon Nelson, one of our waist gunners, lowered his sights on the Jap tail gunner and you could see his tracer bullets go in. That knocked out the cannon."

Lucas now pressed home his attack to even closer range. "Capt. Lucas handled our B-17 like a fighter plane," Sgt. Nelson said. "First we'd be on one side and then the other. The Jap was trying to get down to the water and he'd side-slip under us. Once our wings were almost tip-to-tip. It was like formation flying."

For twenty-five minutes the two Gargantuas of the air traded blows. The Mavis, its guns firing wildly, twisted and turned, trying to escape the B-17. Finally Nelson and TSgt. Chester Malizeski, engineer and top-turret gunner, shot out the Jap's No. 4 engine. The American gunners hit two other engines, starting a fire, and the Mavis went down for a water landing near an island.

"The Jap was taxiing toward shore and shelter when Capt. Lucas flew low across his wing," TSgt. Edward Spetch, another gunner said. "I'd been griping because I hadn't had an opportunity to get in any licks, but now I caught him in my sights and gave him hell. The Mavis exploded and burned."

A few days later another Fortress, piloted by Lt. James W. Lancaster of Temple, TX, with Lt. Jay Gordon as Copilot, met another Mavis off Rendova Island.

"Sgt. Rollin Hefferman, Cpl. Bernard Cowgill, and Sgt. Hugh Hayward cut loose on him and within three minutes he exploded in the air and went into the sea," Lt. Lancaster said.

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

Chu Lai Challenge

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

In early 1965, the U.S. Marine Corps selected a wide, open expanse of white sand on the Vietnamese coast, about 60 miles south of Da Nang, to build the Chu Lai Air Base.

Construction began in May 1965 on a Short Airfield for Tactical Support (SATS). The SATS runway was configured like a carrier deck on land and was equipped with a catapult system, arresting gear, and carrier lighting system. Originally 3,000 feet long and 72 feet wide, the SATS was later expanded to 8,000 feet by 102 feet. USMC A-4's began operations from the Chu Lai SATS in late May 1965.

The main concrete runway, completed in September 1966, was 10,000 feet long and 150 feet wide. Landings were almost always to the southeast on Runway 14.

Marine A-4's, F-4's, and A-6A's operated out of Chu Lai, but the air traffic was not nearly as hectic as the traffic at Tan Son Nhut, Cam Ranh Bay, or Da Nang.

Ammunition and supplies to support U.S. field operations were often staged at Chu Lai and Caribous would shuttle the ammo and supplies to the Special Forces camps in the mountains to the west and southwest of Chu Lai. The staging area was usually on the ramp near the north end of the runway.

Chu Lai was also a convenient place to stop for oil and gas in the middle of the day. Besides, they had a mechanical cow (milk machine) that made a product tasting almost like real milk – plus they had ice cream – but I digress.

Only a few dared to accept the Chu Lai Challenge, and fewer succeeded.

The taxiway onto the northwest end of the runway at Chu Lai was 200 feet wide. The Challenge was to touchdown in the first few feet of Runway 14, come to a full stop, make a 90 degree left turn, and exit the runway on the north entry taxiway.

Touchdown on the northwest overrun was a Fail – even if the aircraft could exit the runway at the entry taxiway. Having to make a turn of more than 90 degrees to exit the runway was a Fail.

With a properly executed STOL approach, bringing the Caribou to a stop within 400 to 500 feet of touchdown was not a challenge, even without reverse – as long as you were prepared for it. Stopping within 200 feet of touchdown – now THAT was a challenge.

All the Challenge attempts I witnessed as a Copilot were made when the aircraft was empty or lightly loaded and always occurred early in the morning before fighter operations got underway. A stiff headwind was a definite plus.

The key to a successful Challenge was to touchdown in the first fifteen feet or so of the runway. If the touchdown was fifty feet from the end of runway, then a successful Challenge was impossible.

The Tower operator was the Joker. If the Pilot failed the Challenge and stopped the aircraft passed the end of the taxiway, it was then necessary to request a “180” on the runway in order to exit the runway in the shortest time. Usually the turn around and a quick exit from the runway would be approved. However, if there were no other aircraft inbound or in the traffic pattern, the Tower operator would sometimes reply, “Negative,” and require us to taxi all the way to the next taxiway, which was almost 4,500 feet farther down the runway – then we had to taxi all the way back to the north ramp for loading. It was the longest taxi ride ever. You could almost hear the Tower operator laughing himself silly.

As a Copilot, I flew with a couple of Aircraft Commanders when they each made several attempts at the Chu Lai Challenge. I only saw one of them complete it successfully. Unfortunately, I do not remember who it was.

Once I became an Aircraft Commander, I did not have the guts to take the Challenge myself.

How Chu Lai Got Its Name

by MSgt. Ray Bows, USA

From his book, *Vietnam Military Lore, Legends, Shadows and Heroes*:

Although few things were named in Vietnam for living serviceman, there is a known story of one location named for a living Marine in Vietnam.

Chu Lai, in Quang Tin Province, was not even a town when the U.S. Marines constructed a major base there. When then Maj. Gen. Victor H. Krulak selected the site for an airfield, a naval officer accompanying him remarked that the site was not marked on the maps. Krulak replied that the name was Chu Lai, giving the officer his (own) name in Mandarin Chinese characters – thus Gen. Victor Krulak named Chu Lai for himself.

Palm Springs Air Museum Presentation

Bruce Cowee [458, 68]

January 14, 2023

As part of the Palm Springs Air Museum Commemorative Program, Bruce Cowee [458, 68] presented a talk on his four volume set, *Vietnam to Western Airlines – An Oral History of the Air War*, on January 14, 2023. Approximately 200 people attended the presentation that Saturday afternoon.

Bruce discussed his personal journey of almost 40 years in collecting and editing the stories of U.S. pilots in Vietnam who later flew for Western Airlines. He talked about the failure of the U.S. leaders to develop effective military strategies while their policies and micromanagement needlessly risked U.S. lives and placed a military victory beyond reach.

He also talked about the shameful receptions Vietnam veterans received

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Palm Springs (from Page 26)

when they returned to the States.

But the focus of Bruce's talk was the individual pilots from all military services and their stories of missions flown in aircraft ranging from helicopters to supersonic jet fighters, and all the varied aircraft types in between. The pilots' perseverance, dedication, comradeship, professionalism, and courage were, and still are, the story.

When he was invited to be a guest speaker at the Palm Springs Air Museum, Bruce decided to invite the pilots who had contributed stories to the four books to attend. The result was a mini-reunion of almost 50 former Western Airlines pilots accompanied by family and friends. The group celebrated together during a dinner at the museum Saturday evening.

One of the attendees was Dave Hackney, son of C-7A pilot Hunter Hackney [458, 68] who was awarded the Air Force Cross for missions at Duc Lap on August 25, 1968.

Caribou pilots with stories in *Vietnam to Western Airlines* who attended the Palm Springs activities were:

Ron Allen [92 AvCo, 66], "Caribous and Bird Dogs," Vol. 4;

Bruce Cowee [458, 68], "Bu Prang," Vol. 1;

George Harmon [537, 69], "Ben Het Air Drops," Vol. 2;

Larry Stuppy [536, 71], "Vietnamization," Vol. 2; and

Bob Whitehouse [459, 68], "Bou Tales," Vol. 4.

Other Caribou pilots with stories in *Vietnam to Western Airlines* are:

David Cormack [458, 68], "Vietnam Bush Pilot," Vol. 3;

Marty Hillman [459, 67], "Khe Sanh," Vol. 3; and

Charlie Tost [537, 68], "War – The Lighter Side," Vol. 2.

Note. Bruce's Palm Springs presentation on "Vietnam to Western Airlines – An Oral History of the Air War" is available on YouTube and runs 1 hour 10 minutes.



Gathering of Vietnam to Western Airlines pilots, Palm Springs Air Museum, January 14, 2023.

It Is Time to Think About It

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

What will happen to your Vietnam artifacts and other mementos that you have of your military career? It is one of those things we don't think about much, but it is getting time that we should. The years are catching up with all of us. Many of us have kept things from our past that have significance for us, but will have less importance to others when we are gone. Will they be protected and displayed or will they be "tucked away" or discarded?

Artifacts you have from Vietnam and your time with the Caribou are part of our history. One of the basic objectives of the USAF C-7A Caribou Association is to preserve the USAF C-7A history for future generations. One initiative being considered by the Association is to establish an agreement with the Museum of Aviation, Warner Robins, GA, to improve their ability to preserve and display C-7A artifacts.

To enable the Association to determine if this is a worthwhile project, it is necessary to assess what members are willing to donate and whether they would donate them now or later.

If you have items you are willing to donate, please send a description of the item(s) and whether you would donate them in the near-term or at some future date to both: pathanavan@aol.com and to ron.lester43@verizon.net



These artifacts often have meaning for you because there is a story attached to them. Not knowing that story diminishes the items' value to others. Preserving the story is as important as preserving the artifact itself. If you would like assistance in writing the story of your item(s), contact Ron Lester by phone 703-851-6892 or e-mail at ron.lester43@verizon.net

We are not getting any younger. Think about it.

Note. The offer to assist with artifact stories stands whether you intend to donate the artifact or not.



Rockets at Katum

by Bruce Wells [535, 70]
Caribou Airlines, Vol. V

The only thing I remember with any clarity is that day at Katum. We made the usual tactical approach and landing and were at the off-load area, engines running, when the rockets came in. The Army guys said something like “Get that damned target out of here!”

I yelled to the Flight Mechanic (FM) that we were going to roll off the last pallet as we got the hell out of there. I took off for the end of the runway only to find that the load had cocked and was stuck on the ramp. The FM secured the load as best he could and we took off with it that way! We got safely (questionable) airborne and circled the base until we got the “All clear” [from the ground].

The FM and Copilot were able to straighten the load and get it off the ramp, so we landed again, and dropped off the rest of our load. The [Distinguished Flying Cross] citation made it sound like a stroll downtown, but it was exciting at the time.

Operation Homecoming

nationalmuseum.af.mil

The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 included provisions for exchanging prisoners of war. The plan to bring American prisoners home was called Operation Homecoming. Prisoners were to be returned to U.S. control during February and March 1973, with the longest-held generally returning first.

The North Vietnamese assembled the POWs and told them the war was over. As the POWs prepared to leave, the North Vietnamese tried to issue them brightly colored sweaters and suits with ties – another of their endless propaganda attempts. The POWs did not want to look well treated or like civilians, but they compromised



Takeoff from Hanoi. POWs return on C-141, 12 February 1973. USAF photo.

to keep from jeopardizing their release. They accepted low-key outfits of dark pants, shirts, and windbreakers. They were also issued tote bags for the few personal items they had.

At Hanoi’s Gia Lam Airport, the men were thrilled to see USAF C-141A Starlifter aircraft landing to pick them up. The happiest moment came when the aircraft left the ground – and POWs knew for certain that they were free.

The ex-POWs first stopped at Clark Air Base in the Philippines for medical exams, good meals, and new uniforms. After stops in Hawaii and California, they finally returned to their families and their lives as free Americans.

Operation Homecoming returned 591 U.S. POWs from Hanoi: 325 Air Force personnel, 77 Army, 138 Navy, 26 Marines, and 25 civilians. Those who were not freed at Hanoi – POWs held in South Vietnam by the Viet Cong, mostly Army and civilians – left from Loc Ninh, the scene of the North Vietnam-South Vietnam prisoner exchange. A total of 660 American military POWs survived the war.

About eighty percent of the military POWs who survived the war continued their military careers. Most of the re-

turning airmen retrained and resumed their aviation careers. These ex-POW airmen adopted the motto “Three’s in,” signifying an aircraft, number three in a four-ship group, rejoining a “missing man” formation.

The first group of POWs to leave Hanoi on February 12, 1973, flew on a C-141 later dubbed the *Hanoi Taxi*. This historic aircraft is part of the National Museum of the USAF’s collection. The *Hanoi Taxi*, though modified over the years, was also maintained as a flying memorial to Vietnam-era POWs and MIAs.

Recalling his own journey out of North Vietnam on February 18, 1973, Maj. Gen. Ed Mechenbier, the last Vietnam POW to serve in the USAF, said, “When we got airborne and the frailty of being a POW turned into the reality of freedom, we yelled, cried, and cheered.”



“Stay Connected. Don’t Be Alone.”

by Patrick Reardon
Air & Space Forces Magazine
March 7, 2023



*1/Lt. Lee Ellis with his F-4C,
shortly before his capture.*

Lee Ellis was one of three Vietnam veterans who spoke at an AFA Warfare Symposium held in Aurora, CO, on March 6, 2023.

1/Lt. Lee Ellis’ F-4C Phantom was shot down on his 53rd bombing mission over North Vietnam. Captured immediately on November 7, 1967, he was taken to the notorious Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi, where he stayed for the next five and a half years.

“That cell in the Hanoi Hilton ... was six and a half by seven feet,” Ellis told a packed house at the AFA Warfare Symposium. “That’s like a bathroom in a gas station. I was in there with three other guys for the first eight months.”

Despite the cramped conditions, Ellis and his fellow American POWs endured, helping each other maintain their collective spirit by offering encouragement and moral support. And when they were isolated from one another in attempts to break their wills, they did what they could to remain connected.

“We tapped on the walls,” Ellis said. “These walls were about 16 inches thick. We tried to communicate ... because you’ve got to stay connected. The

key to resilience is ‘Don’t be alone.’ We had to collaborate [with each other]. We had to come up with ways to defeat the enemy and offset them. We had to support each other. You can’t let somebody who’s alone be alone.”

“We would risk our lives to get to somebody in solitary confinement and say, ‘Man, we’re proud of you. We’re not going home without hanging in there. One more day.’”

Among the 591 prisoners who eventually made it home in 1973, leaders emerged, setting an example of positivity for the rest of them. Lee Ellis cited three in particular: USAF Lt. Col. James Risner, Navy Cmdr. Jeremiah Denton, and Navy Cmdr. James Stockdale.

“They got there two years before ... I got there and they had been through hell,” Ellis said. “They spent more than four years in solitary confinement, and they bounced back and bounced back.”

To help all endure, Risner reshaped the Code of Conduct to fit the conditions:

Be a good American.

Resist up to the point of permanent physical or mental damage, and then no more.

Give as little as possible, and then ... bounce back to resist again.

Stay united through communications.
Pray every day.

Go home proud. Return with honor.

Risner’s direction gave the men a codified culture to live by, and by reinforcing that every day, the POWs could believe it when they told each other, “One more day.”

Wives and families at home ultimately were as decisive to their survival, Ellis said, as their own resilience. They wouldn’t give up, and they took their quest public.

“The military didn’t know what to do with [the wives of MIAs],” Ellis said. “They were told to keep quiet, and they did for a couple of years. And then they said, ‘No more. You’ve got to do something for our men, because [North Vietnam is] not following the Geneva Conventions on the treatment

of POWs.’”

Sybil Stockdale, Phyllis Galanti, and the National League of POW/MIA Families campaigned to bring attention to North Vietnam’s treatment of POWs, Lee said. Their relentless campaigning – and refusal to remain silent – built international pressure on North Vietnam to change their policy.

In 1969, their efforts succeeded and the torture at Hanoi mostly ceased.

“That’s why we were able to come home so healthy,” Ellis said. “The women changed our lives. It’s amazing what they did.”

Inspired by the impact the wives had on foreign policy and a hopeless situation, Ellis ultimately felt compelled to tell these stories of love in a new book. Collaborating with relationship expert and author Greg Godek, his newest book *Captured by Love* tells the love stories of 20 Vietnam War POWs. It is scheduled for release in May 2023.

Leon F. “Lee” Ellis, Colonel, USAF (Ret.) has written several books including: “Leading with Honor: Leadership Lessons from the Hanoi Hilton” (2012) which discusses his POW experience and the leadership principles that helped him and his fellow prisoners resist, survive, and return with honor; “Leading Talents, Leading Teams” (2003); “Engage with Honor: Building a Culture of Courageous Accountability” (2016), “Leadership Behavior DNA: Discovering Natural Talents and Managing Differences” (2020) co-authored with Hugh Massie. He has also co-authored several books on career planning.



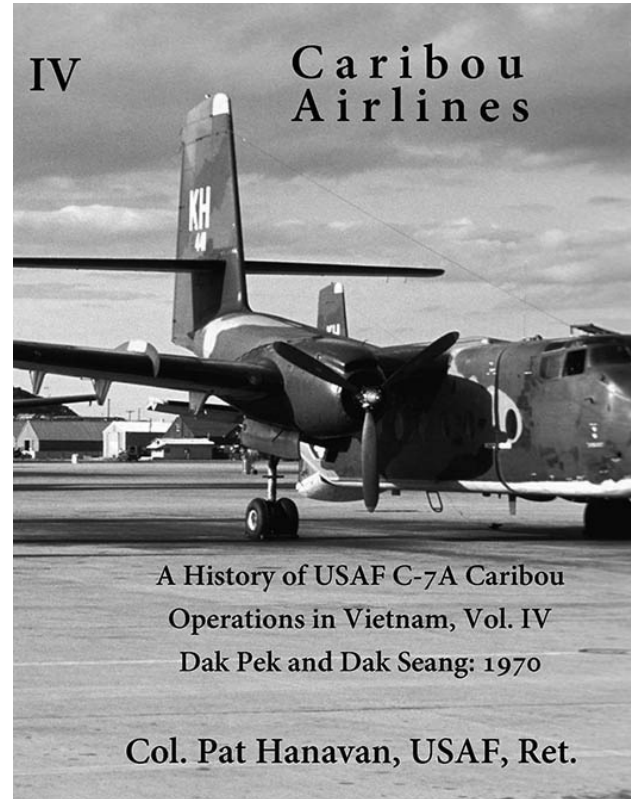
Caribou Airlines Volumes I - V

by Pat Hanavan [535, 68]

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

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

Signed individual copies of the book can be ordered from the author for \$20 and a set of all five signed for \$80, shipping included: **Pat Hanavan, 12402 Winding Branch, San Antonio, TX 78230-2770**. The books are also available from Amazon.



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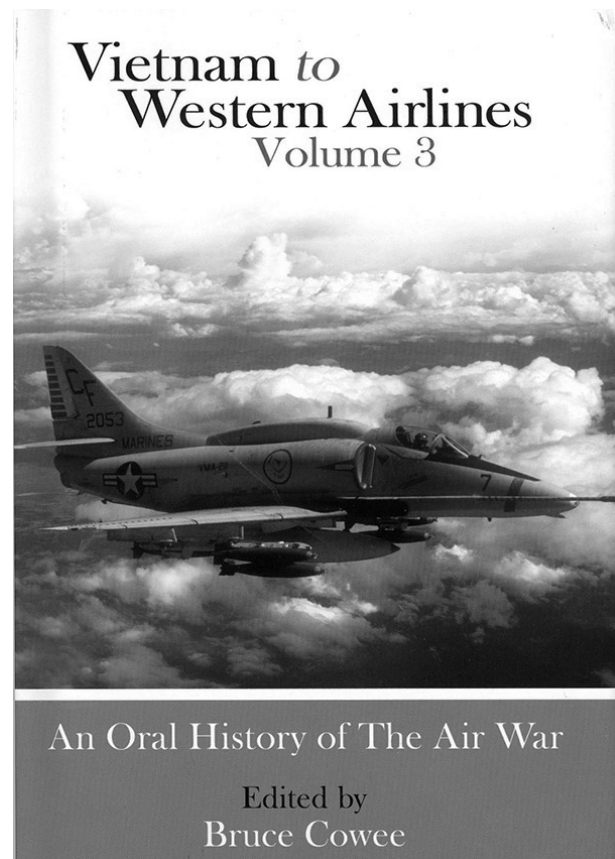
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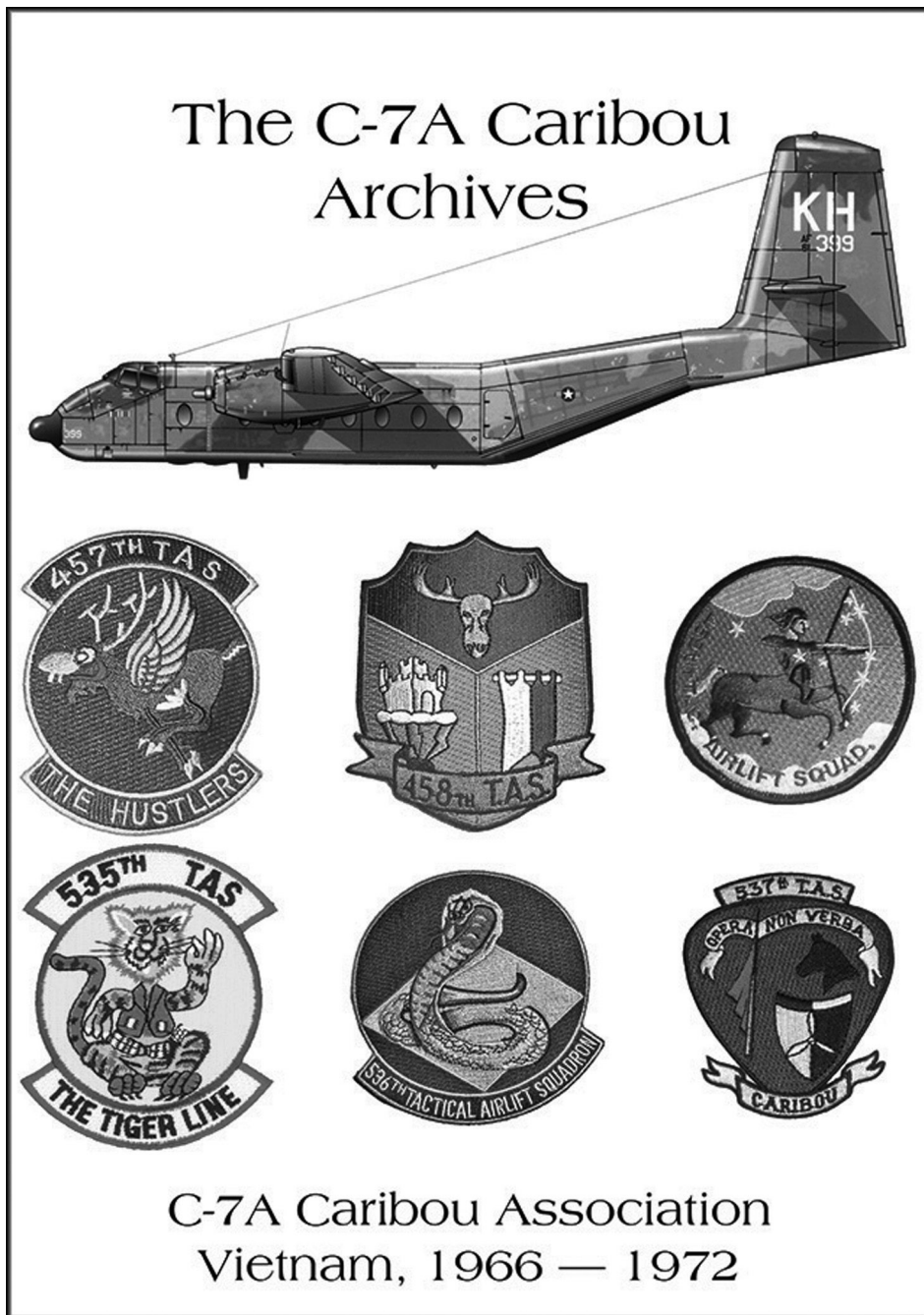
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