

# C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 1, Issue 20

Newsletter

June 2004

## C-7a Caribou Association 15th Annual Reunion Sept 30 - Oct 2, 2004, Odessa, Texas

The 15th C-7A Caribou reunion is still about four months away, (September 30th – October 2nd) but that's not very long before we will be gathering once again for our annual get together; to meet old friends and acquaintances, to renew friendships, to toast our longevity and health, to have fun and to exchange a few new and a few old war stories.

This year we have made a change in the way we selected our reunion destination. Ordinarily we make the selection based on a site that offers an appealing city or a desirable location of the country with all of the proper amenities for holding a successful reunion. In the past the decision for a location was made simply because someone was willing to host the reunion. This year we have selected an appealing activity, the Commemorative Air Force AIRSHO, an annual event held in west Texas in the Midland/Odessa area.

The Commemorative Air Force AIRSHO (formally named the Confederate Air Force) is one of the country's premier aviation events. It is a fitting tribute to those who fought for and secured America's freedom. For over 35 years, the CAF has continued to preserve and present the heritage of World War II aviation at its annual air show.

People come from around the world to attend the AIRSHO. The annual event attracts large crowds of 60,000 to 70,000 people to the Odessa/Midland area. This large event puts considerable strain on the available lodging facilities in the Midland/Odessa area. That is probably the reason the Elegante Hotel, our reunion headquarters, requires registration/cancellation procedures different than what we are normally accustomed. Please read the articles in the Reunion News section regarding hotel

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### Charlie Steadman - Newsletter Editor

*Charlie Steadman answered our call for a new editor and volunteered to take on the responsibilities and duties of Association Newsletter Editor. As a means of introducing Charlie to the association I asked Charlie to prepare a biographical sketch that we could put in the newsletter. As you will see in reading the following article, Charlie can write, he is not stingy with his words, and above all, he is enthusiastic about taking up his new job with the association.*

*Charlie is a newcomer to our association, having just found us a year ago. He has yet to attend a reunion, but fortunately he will be with us in Odessa. We will introduce Charlie at the membership business meeting. Please feel free to introduce yourselves to Charlie. From then on he plans to be as close and as regular as he can to cover all of the association activities and to report all of the news.*

*I want to say on behalf of all the members of the C-7A Caribou Association, "Welcome aboard, Charlie."*

*Dave Hutchens, Retiring Newsletter Editor*

### Biography: Melvin "Charlie" Steadman

Due to a stereotypical (liked to drink) country doctor, Charlie's legal name is Melvin, but family and friends know him as "Charlie." Born in the budding metropolis of Addison, Alabama on 20 September 1944, Charlie grew up in several states, but remembers central Florida best because of spending most of his teen years there, just East of Tampa. For any history buffs, Addison, Alabama is located in the "Free State of Winston", so called because Winston County remained staunchly pro-Union throughout the Civil War, with not a single vote for secession (as a matter of fact, the entire Winston County delegation to the Secession Congress was thrown in jail for their outbursts against leaving the Union). Charlie had always thought it was because no one knew there was a war going on.

Being classified as "1A" for the draft (also known as "NEXT"), Charlie enlisted in the Army and completed Basic Training and, much to the surprise of his basic train-

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C-7A Caribou Association Web Site  
www.C-7Acaribou.com

### Officers, Board Members, Committee Members

**Bob Markham** -President/Board Member  
459th 69  
**Peter Bird** -Vice President/Board Member/Webmaster  
535th 71  
**Stoney Faubus** -Secretary/Board Member  
458th 68  
**Earl Reynolds** - Treasurer/Board Member  
537th 66  
**Jim Collier** - Chairman of Board /Roster Chairman  
537th 67  
**Paul Phillips** - Board Member  
459th 69  
**Bill Avon** - Recruitment Chairman/Veterans Magazine Advisor  
537th 68  
**Dave Hutchens** - Board Member/Asst. Newsletter Editor  
459th 69  
**Bob Davis - George Spurger** - Co-Chaplains  
457th 69            537th 68  
**Charlie Steadman** - Newsletter Editor  
834th, 67  
**Robert Blaylock** - Historian  
457th 70  
**Bob Markham** - Bereavement Committee Chairman  
**Jim Collier - Bob Markham** - Nominating Committee  
**Wayne DeLawter** - Reunion Advisor  
458th 66  
**Nick Evanish** - President Emeritus  
457th 66  
**Christine Phillips** - Reunion Coordinator

Please advise the Association of any change of address, phone number, or e-mail address. Send your changes to:

Jim Collier  
5607 Jolly Ct.  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2707  
jascoll@pacbell.net

Dues are payable annually. Enclose your check with your registration form for the annual reunion or send your check to Earl Reynolds

We would like to encourage members who might have a humorous incident, interesting anecdote, or an exciting story, to share it with all members of our association. E-mail, snail mail, airmail, or pony express mail it to me, & we will see that it gets published. Pictures are welcome. We will return the originals if specified.

Dave Hutchens 17916 E. 96th Street North Owasso, OK 74055 printhat@aol.com 918-272-3518	Charlie Steadman 9 Carey Lane Lucas, TX 75002-7400 cb/stead,am@verizon.net 972-442-5443
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## Association Business

### Bereavement Committee Report

The bereavement committee needs everyone's help. The committee has no means of learning of a member's death other than word of mouth. The committee must rely on our members to forward relevant information concerning the death of a member, or a member's spouse. However, once the committee learns of a death it takes action to gain more information, to obtain an obituary, and, in some cases to contact the family. Bob Markham is an expert in searching the web to find the relevant information. He just needs a starting point.

At present the bereavement committee is composed of Bob Markham, Pete Bird and Jim Collier.

#### Steps taken by the bereavement committee.

When the committee is informed of the death of an association member, whether a current member or not, an effort is made to obtain an obituary. Once an obituary is obtained it is posted to our web site on the Missing Man page.

If the deceased was a current association member, the committee will contact his spouse and offer her an honorary membership (Friend of the Association). As an honorary member the spouse would receive the association newsletter and she would be welcome to attend association functions as well as annual reunions.

When the committee learns of the death of an association member's spouse, a sympathy card is sent to the member.

The association feels that this is, in a small way, a means of saying goodbye to lost members.

### Official Word on 483<sup>rd</sup> Unit Awards

A couple years ago at our Las Vegas reunion someone floated a document, unofficial but well done, the subject being the awards of the Air Force Outstanding Unit with Combat "V"; the Presidential Unit Award; and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross w/palm to the six squadrons of the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW. Also, members of the 834<sup>th</sup> Air division, Headquarters, 483<sup>rd</sup> Wing, and the earlier 6252<sup>nd</sup> share in these awards.

I spoke to several association members at that time and they, like me, had no remembrance or knowledge of these unit awards having ever been officially presented or recorded in individual service files. There didn't seem to be a whole heck of a lot of interest in the subject or in pursuing it so I put it on the back burner of my feeble mind and turned my thoughts to getting back to California in my old and not-so-faithful eleven year old motor-

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## This and That...About Association Business

The board has taken several actions to improve the functioning of the Association. It is working on controlling the buying and selling of association merchandise, i.e., hats, t-shirts, mugs, key rings, etc. By its own momentum, or lack of control thereof, the association wound up owning about three thousand dollars worth of merchandise that it did not necessarily need. This is a problem that seems to grow from its own momentum when there is no one particularly in charge. Definite steps have been taken to bring this situation under control.

Another item that is receiving attention is the need for a parliamentarian to assist in the conduct of the business meetings. The association laboriously wrote and adopted a new set of bylaws which incorporated a detailed set of "C-7A Caribou Association Rules of Order." These Rules are not really unlike the traditional Robert's Rules of Order. But, what we find is that, although most of us claim to be familiar with the Robert's Rules, we are not adequately familiar to strictly apply them in our business meetings. What we are hoping is that someone who has experience with the "rules" will step forward and offer to assist the "Chair" in conducting the meetings. Once we are confident that that person who volunteers will likely attend most of the meetings, we will immediately bestow upon him the honor and the title of Parliamentarian. Now, wouldn't that be a nice item to add to you resume? Seriously, we need a Parliamentarian. Please contact Bob Markham or me

Now, we, the board I mean, haven't stopped working. As you will know by reading the article in this newsletter, the 537<sup>th</sup> raised the funds to paint our noble lady, A/C #757 at Hill AFB. Upon learning of that feat a motion was made and carried to designate \$1800 to establish a pedestal and plaque and to conduct a dedication service in front of the Hill AFB C-7 in May, 2005, as we did at Dyess AFB. For me this brings up an interesting idea. Salt Lake City/Ogden/Hill AFB would certainly be a wonderful place to hold a reunion. Would the idea of holding a reunion in May 2005 appeal to anyone? Or would a reunion built around the dedication of the memorial and plaque later in the year – September or October – be more appealing. Or would just a memorial occasion, like that in Abilene, TX be more appealing. Jim Collier and Bob Markham are making a trip to Hill AFB around the end of this month to scout out the possibilities for a reunion site. They will report their findings to us in Odessa. You might want to be prepared to present your views at the business meeting in Odessa.

A business meeting agenda has not been prepared for the business meeting in Odessa. It is open. If anyone has

an item they wish to raise at the meeting, please forward it to me so that we can place it on the agenda as the agenda is being developed.

Of special concern to me is the election of officers. As of this printing I know of no nominations for elections. I feel that it is most important to develop a slate of candidates to be published in the newsletter so that we can consider them for election. Granted, it is hard to develop a slate. There certainly are members out there that have an interest in association activities, and who feel that they can contribute to the cause of the association. Anyone so motivated please forward you name to Bob Markham or Jim Collier or me so that we can put you name on the slate. Positions for election are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Board Members at large. All positions are up for election.

An item that I think should be included on the business meeting agenda is a discussion about the use or distribution of the sum of money the association holds in its accounts. We are talking about some twenty thousand dollars. The Association has no apparent need for the cash it has on hand. As far as I know it has not, over the past seven years that we have been a formal organization, planned for the use of the money.

There are many possible purposes for which the money could be used. One such use is the subsidization of reunion expenses. Another is establishing endowments for education, disabilities, or other such charitable causes. I am not proposing any specific actions or causes. I am suggesting that the issue should be brought up for discussion, and I would suggest that a finance committee, or some such committee, be established to study the situation. Get your thinking hats on and come prepared to discuss these ideas.

Dave Hutchens, [459, 69]

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## An Update on the Painting of #757

Last fall at the Charleston reunion the 537<sup>th</sup> squadron, spearheaded by George Harmon [537, 69], decided to raise funds to give the C-7 A/C #757, which is permanently parked at the Hill Aerospace Museum at Hill AFB, a new paint job. The tired bird is in dire need of a new make over. In fact, at the 2001 reunion in Las Vegas, Jerry York [537, 67] had asked the association to make a contribution of \$5000 to paint the old bird. That contribution never materialized so the 537<sup>th</sup> took it upon themselves to raise the money and get the lady painted.

Thirty eight association members made donations

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amounting to \$6285; thirty four members of the 537<sup>th</sup>, as well as three members from the 459<sup>th</sup> and one member from the 458<sup>th</sup>. Special recognition must be given to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Bob Strang [537, 69] (Capt. Federal Express, Retired) who made a grand donation of \$400.

But this story has more roots than that. A/C #757 was actually assigned to the 537<sup>th</sup> TAS at Phu Cat. Jerry York, in Las Vegas back in 2001, wasn't just wanting to paint any old 'Bou. Jerry had crewed #757 and she had a very special meaning to him. And Bob Strang, who flew in the Dak Seang campaign, reckons that he might have very well have flown #757 on one of those Dak Seang missions. George Harmon checked his flight logs and he flew #757 many times during his tour in Vietnam, as did many of the other members who contributed to the fundraiser. No, this wasn't just any old 'Bou that needed a paint job. This was their very own 'Bou. This was one of the airplanes that a lot of those younger guys, 30 some years ago, sporting their brand new wings, fresh out of pilot training, actually learned to fly in the real world (Vietnam – real world?) and then went on to extended flying careers. Yes, #757 had a very special meaning to all of these men.

George has noted that during the Charleston reunion, when he was doing the actual arm-twisting, of the 30 members who pledged to support the effort, they all came

through with their pledges. But that still wasn't quite enough money. So George sent out some letters to some other members of the 537<sup>th</sup>, both personal friends and others. Eight more people contributed for a total of thirty eight in all. And this reveals a very strange and spooky fact: we lost thirty eight airman in the Caribou mission in Vietnam. Coincidence?

The actual painting of A/C #757 will be accomplished by volunteers of the 419<sup>th</sup> Consolidated Logistical Support Squadron (a reserve unit). They will use a latex paint, which is more environmentally acceptable, and they will duplicate as far as possible the camouflage paint scheme, to include all special markings and numbers.

The next airplane on the 419<sup>th</sup>'s painting schedule is an F-106 that should be completed in a few weekends. After that is finished they will start on #757. Hopefully the paint job will be completed by the end of the summer.

As of now the Hill Aerospace Museum plans to permanently display the Caribou out doors. The Museum has approved the association's request to place a memorial plaque in front of #757 as we did at Dyess AFB in March 2002. The association has approved the funds for the plaque and is now making plans for a dedication service to be held at Hill AFB, Utah in May 2005. I would imagine that many of our members will want to attend those dedication services as we did at Dyess.

## Bob Blaylock Association Historian

In 1968 I dropped out of college and enlisted in the Air Force. I had an intention of becoming a loadmaster. My test scores were high, the Air Force and Navy were both happy to have me and so I joined the Air Force. My recruiter, of course, lied to me about the odds of a loadmaster's job and, as fortune would have it, I ran into him in the passenger terminal at McGuire about four years later. By that time I had as many stripes as he did and a hell of a lot more ribbons. I kidded him about lying to me and then told him it was the best decision I had ever made.

I did basic at Amarillo and then went to tech school at Sheppard. I learned about the "dream sheet" and put in for loadmaster school, picking maintenance specialist school as a second choice figuring that gave me a shot at flight engineer at some point. I ended up in Recip maintenance and

filled out my next dream sheet, asking for Alaska. I ended up in Charleston, South Carolina, assigned to C-124s with the 618th OMS. I then began a strange Air Force career of being assigned to airplanes leaving the inventory.

I had seen pictures of the C-124s on the ice at McMurdo Sound, Antarctica in my Weekly Reader magazines in grammar school and was amazed that now I worked on them. I was lucky. My squadron had a mustang commander who knew how to motivate men and senior NCOs, and they became mentors to me. I watched and listened and learned how to be a man.

We worked hard and we played hard. We had a game we played when we were spotting the 124s coming back to base. We would put quarters around the spot and the closest quarter to the center of the nose wheel

won the pot. I had just gotten there so the wands were passed to me and I got to park the plane. It was a humid night and the big 4360s were revving and the props were throwing a visible vapor spiral. The sound and vibration were so strong that it felt like it had actually become part of my body. The smell of avgas and oil just added to the spell. For the first time I understood why the instructors had been stressing the danger of getting hypnotized by the props. I didn't win the pot but I still figure I won the game. I've been in love with big round motors ever since.

I volunteered for a program called Palace Dragon which was flight duty in SEA in gun ships. In the meantime, the C-5 was on its way to Charleston and the C-124s were phasing out. No more "Old Shaky," no more oyster, burger, and beer squadron parties at

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registration. And if you haven't registered at the hotel yet, the cut off date is July 31st, after which time the rate goes to \$134. Better get with it so that doesn't happen to you.

The activities at the Commemorative Air Force AIRSHO will be different than what we normally associate with just ordinary air shows. To start with, there is too much to do in one day. Almost everyone will want to visit the American Airpower Heritage Museum. The ramp will be full of airplanes and that could take hours to view. And of course – the AIRSHO. It will take both Saturday and Sunday to see all of the events.

Tiny Malm, our fellow association member, is on the General Staff of the Commemorative Air Force. He has arranged for our association to share the "Officer's Club" tent for the event. The "Officer's Club" is a large 12,600 square foot tent located right up front on the flight line. It is the center of all of the social activities and that is where the "Brass" will be. Our group will be seated in our separate area of the "Club" and we will be right in the middle of all of the activities. With this arrangement there will be ample opportunity to visit or mingle, or go outside to look at the iron. We can watch the aerial activities in the shade or we can go outside on the ramp. We will have a buffet dinner served there in the tent and there will be drinks available (cash bar). Also, there will be live entertainment; a band and a USO show.

This is pretty much an all day affair. The gates open about 0800 hours and will close at 1100 or 1200 hours when the show is over. Be sure to have appropriate clothing available. It can be hot out in Odessa in October, but beware, it snowed during the 2000 AIRSHO and the temperature was 20 degrees. That year they called their event the Arctic Air Show.

The Commemorative Air Force has a pretty neat web site at [www.commemorativeairforce.org/](http://www.commemorativeairforce.org/). If you have an interest, it is worth the time. Also, Odessa and Midland have good web sites where you can pick up the local goings on. [www.midlandtx.com/](http://www.midlandtx.com/), [www.odessacvb.com/](http://www.odessacvb.com/). Also you can see the hotels web site where we will be staying at <http://www.mcmelegante.com>.

So far we have 111 attendees who have already signed up and paid their registration fees. We anticipate more will be signing up after receiving this newsletter with more information on the reunion. We are looking forward to a very fun and successful reunion in September/October. Hope to see you all there.

**OVERHEARD IN THE "WAR ROOM"**

Charleston, S.C.

While roaming the "War Room" with camera in hand, Lee Schiff (Larry, 459<sup>th</sup>/66) came upon these ladies talking like it was a family reunion instead of the Caribou reunion. The conversation and questions continued for about 15 minutes with responses including, "Oh yes, I know him" and "She's a cousin."

First-timer, Sue Riggelman (Russell, 536<sup>th</sup>/68) Waynesboro, Va on the left, and Eula Mae Hopkins (Robert, 458<sup>th</sup>/66) Warner Robbins, Ga, on the right, discover that after "playing" 20 Questions, they are related.

Only at a Caribou reunion.



Larry Schiff, [459, 66]

**CRB Men Record 500 'On-Time' Days**

*From the Seventh Air Force News dated 6 August, 1969*

For 500 consecutive days the men of the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing here have launched their C-7A Caribou aircraft of the runway on time.

During this period men of the 483rd have logged more 4,000 takeoffs flying men and supplies throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

Missions flown while setting the on-time mark have included air drops of equipment to the recently besieged Ben Het Civilian Irregular Defense Group Camp, where the flight crews braved enemy ground fire as they placed their cargo on target.

The job of keeping the Caribous ready to takeoff daily goes to the maintenance men of the wing. Day in and day out the men race against the clock, keeping the aircraft in a combat ready status.

Most of the flights by the wing are made to remote airstrips, usually little more than a grass field or a dirt runway with as little as 1,000 feet for landings and takeoffs.

Next on the schedule, according to a 483rd official, is an attempt to make it two consecutive years without a delayed takeoff.

# Reunion News

## C-7A Caribou Association 15<sup>th</sup> Reunion

### Odessa, Texas & CAF AIRSHO

### September 30 – October 2, 2004

We have a great reunion planned in Texas during the Commemorative Air Force's (CAF) AIRSHO! Because of the type of reunion we are able to price it the same for everyone. This year we are offering the reunion events at below the actual cost by subsidizing it from the Association's reserve account. The reunion registration fee of \$85 will cover your banquet dinner, welcome reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres, bus transportation to reunion events, the Hope USO Show on the same day as the airshow, your lunch and BBQ dinner on the airshow day and the airshow. If you fly to Odessa, you shouldn't need to rent a car because courtesy transportation is provided.

As you have seen from our hotel's registration form, you must register by July 31<sup>st</sup> to avoid incurring an increased nightly charge of \$134.47 – the corporate rate. The same principle will apply to the Association registration - if your Association registration with payment is not on file by July 31<sup>st</sup> your fee will be \$100 per person. Just as with the hotel, if a conflict requires your cancellation, your registration fee will be refunded in full if you cancel with Earl Reynolds, [C7ACaribou@Reynolds-Law-Firm.com](mailto:C7ACaribou@Reynolds-Law-Firm.com) or 225-673-1886 by September 23<sup>rd</sup>. After September 23<sup>rd</sup> no refunds will be made where our costs are fixed by contract.

The planned schedule of reunion events follows:

#### **Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>**

**1800-2200** Welcome Reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres

#### **Friday, October 1<sup>st</sup>**

**0900-1000** General Business Meeting

**1000-1400** Mini Air Show, or

**1000-1400** Museum visits

**1400-1600** Social/Show & Tell time

**1600-1730** Group Photos

**1730-1830** Cocktail Hour

**1830-2030** Banquet

**2030-2230** War Room Show & Tell

**2230** War Room Closes – adjourn to bar area

#### **Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**0830-2000** Transportation is available all day between our hotel and the Midland-Odessa airport for the Commemorative Air Force AIRSHO. See [www.airsho.org](http://www.airsho.org) for the Saturday's airshow information.

**2000-2200** Show & Tell social hour in the War Room.

Don't forget to make your own reservations with the Elegante Hotel and the Association by July 31<sup>st</sup>. Toll free number for hotel reservations is 866-368-5885. Be sure to tell the hotel that you are with the C-7A Caribou Association. Your hotel rate inclusive of taxes is \$89.27 per night until August 1<sup>st</sup> when the nightly rate increases to the corporate rate of \$134.47 per night IF there are any rooms available by then.

Be sure to complete the reunion registration form and mail it and your check to Jim Collier, 5607 Jolly Ct., Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2707; phone 916-966-4044 or email Jim at [jascoll@pacbell.net](mailto:jascoll@pacbell.net).

#### **Optional attractions**

This year's reunion's planned events are on just 3 days. Many core Caribou Association attendees like to come for a full week. The brochures that have been provided by the Odessa Chamber of Commerce give you many ideas of interesting places to tour or visit. In addition to places of interest in Odessa, Bob Markham will coordinate a trip from Odessa to Dyess AFB near Abilene to see the C-7A and its memorial plaque on Thursday, 30 September. If there are enough people interested, Bob will arrange for the round trip transportation that would depart early on Thursday. This trip will be scheduled to arrive back to Odessa in time for the welcome reception Thursday night. Some members that are driving through Texas that day are planning on meeting us at the air park before noon. Contact Bob at [markhambob@juno.com](mailto:markhambob@juno.com) or via phone (909) 792-0848 to sign up.

#### **January newsletter correction**

Correction to the information that was in the January newsletter about hotel cancellations: The newsletter said that if you fail to cancel your reservation by 23 September that you would not be reimbursed for 3 nights. In fact, as you can see from the MCM Elegante Hotel reservation form, in this case you would lose only one night's cost (\$79 + tax = \$89.27). To avoid this, just cancel NLT 23 September.

#### **Hotel registration clarification**

The hotel reservation form states: *This form must be received by the hotel by 7/31/04 to guarantee availability!* What this means is if you are not calling your reservation in via the toll free 866 number, you must mail this registration form to the hotel with your payment. Mailing this hotel reservations form is not required if you call them to make the reservation.

#### **Our group rate is good for 5 days before through 5 days after the reunion**

For those contemplating more than the 3-night stay for our reunion, the hotel has agreed to offer early arrivals as

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well as those who would like to stay after the reunion, the rooms at the reunion group rate.

**Merchandise**

We have a good supply of C-7A merchandise available for purchase at this reunion. Our hope is to sell it all, so if you want embossed shirts, caps, mugs, or throws come early and shop quickly. The only payment method accepted for merchandise is via a personal check.

**Form of Payment**

The hotel will accept payment of charges by credit card. The bartenders in our private rooms (War Room & banquet area) and bar will accept cash. Any C-7A Caribou Association payments for merchandise or other purchases for individual attractions or reunion registration, annual dues (taxes), etc. will be only via personal checks, so don't forget your checkbooks.

**Where to mail or call for registration or cancellation**

Reunion registration forms and payments are to be mailed to Jim Collier, 5607 Jolly Ct., Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2707.

Annual dues (tax) payments are to be sent to Earl Reynolds, C-7A Caribou Association, 11813 Market Place Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70816. Multiple year payments accepted.

Notification of reunion cancellations after registration will be to Earl Reynolds from whom you will get any refund due.

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• Just came across this exercise suggested for seniors, to build muscle strength in the arms and shoulders. It seems so easy, so I thought I'd pass it on to some of my young at heart friends. The article suggested doing it three days a week.

• Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 5-lb. potato sack in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides, and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, then relax. Each day, you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

• After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb. potato sacks, then 50-lb. potato sacks, and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb. potato sack in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute.

• After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each of the sacks; but be careful.....

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**You Don't Want to Miss This One!**

This reunion will make some of us who no longer get at the stick wish that we could. The AIRSHO (that's the way they spell it in Texas) will be great!

From me as a planner, I would simply state that everything is on-track as listed in the flyer. The important thing is to register with both the hotel and the Association by 31July to avoid the steep price hike and for assurance of getting a room.

For those folks who are first timers - most people usually dress up for the pictures and banquet but if you want to show up in fatigues or a flight suit, that will be a hoot. If I could fit into my old flight suit, I'd do it. You can go on-line to our website and see the pictures taken just before we went into the banquet in previous years.

Looking forward to seeing you in Odessa.

Wayne DeLawter

**THE CARIBOU AND ITS CREW**

The Caribou is the workhorse of Vietnam.

Its capability to land at out of the way places is matched by none.

It airlifts every type cargo imaginable, sometimes it carries happiness, other times its cargo will make your heart ache.

Time means nothing to the Caribou, it will fly as long as it is needed, be it daybreak to daybreak.

For it there is no such thing as a holiday or day off.

It is flown by a dedicated crew doing a job not soft.

It flies 365 days a year, delivering the desperately needed items.

When it appears over a camp under siege the ground troops know the parachutes contain life saving goods for them.

Some have left on missions never to return.

Their faces, voices and smiles embedded in our minds will forever burn.

Who will be next, you, him, me, when will it cease?

**S.Sgt Eugene E. Cramer  
483 USAF Hospital**

A few important facts about Odessa, Texas. Of first importance, Odessa is known as the Jackrabbit Capital of Texas. Odessa is named after the city in Russia; oil was discovered here in 1926; it is the site of the "Worlds Largest Jackrabbit," a 10 foot statue; Larry Gatlin, country singer and songwriter once lived here. There, that's probably all you need to know to get you started in learning all about Odessa.

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home – arriving home on 9-11-01.

Later at my old and beat up antique furniture store at Capistrano Beach I picked up an old newspaper article I had clipped and saved concerning the suicide of Admiral Mike Boorda, an ex-enlisted man who rose to be the Chief of Naval Operations – a personal feat unsurpassed in military history I might add.

It was understood the Admiral had been displaying the tiny Combat “V” devices on his Naval Overseas Ribbon and his Sea Service Deployment Ribbon. He had previously declared that he had justifiably earned these devices but it was later revealed by some media freak that the awards were not a part of his official navy records and he should not be wearing them on his uniform. The Washington D.C. news media hotly pursued the issue and the Admiral, not wishing to embarrass the Navy, killed himself. After all of this the secretary of the Navy entered the award of the Combat “V” devices into the admiral’s military records...too little – too late leading to the loss of a highly respected and dearly loved officer and man.

Note: Admiral Boorda, shortly before his death, was the prime mover along with my boyhood friend, ex-Navy Firemen Paul Thurman, from Chillicothe, Ohio, in saving the Battleship Missouri from the scrap heap.

So... In Admiral Mike’s memory, we now have the official information on the several awards the Caribou troops so justly earned and I encourage you all to have them entered on your history-making official records. (Make your grandchildren proud.)

1. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-458, 20 Dec 1967.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award w/combat “V” to the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division including the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW and six squadrons for period: 1 Jan 1967 to 30 Apr 1967.

2. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-571, 1 Nov 1968.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award w/combat “V” to the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW including 483<sup>rd</sup> Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance squadron and six TAS Sqdns for period: 1 May 1967 to 30 Apr 1968.

3. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-724, 6 Oct 1969.

Presidential Unit Citation for Extraordinary Gallantry to 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division (PACAF) including the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW and the six TAS units for period: 21 Jan 1968 to 12 May 1968.

4. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-613, 3 Sep 1971.

Presidential Unit Citation for Extraordinary Gallantry to 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division (PACAF) including 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW and it’s 6\* TAS units for period: 1 Apr 1970 to 30 Jun 1970.  
\*Note: 459<sup>th</sup> TAS period is: 1 Apr 1970 to 31 May 1970.

5. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-663, 28 Sep 1972.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award w/combat “V” to the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW including 457<sup>th</sup>, 458<sup>th</sup>, 535<sup>th</sup>, 536<sup>th</sup> and 537 TAS units and all assigned Aircraft Maintenance and Sup-

port Squadrons. Period: 1 Jul 1970 to 31 Dec 1971.

6. Dept of Air Force S. O. GB-336, 14 May 1975.

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross w/Palm to 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW. Period: 1 May 1967 to 31 May 1972.

For those of you who wish to have your personal DD Form 214 corrected to show these awards, that you earned, it is suggested you first contact: Dept of Air Force, Historical Research Agency (AFHRA/RSO), Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424. Request a copy of the special order covering your period of service during the effective periods indicated in this newsletter. Upon receipt of the special order (or orders) you must take the following action: First obtain a copy of DD Form 149 and the governing Air Force Instruction, AFI 36-2603. Air Force retirees can get this form from their Retiree Activities Office that serves their particular area. Example: I am retired in Southern California and the nearest Air Force activity is the Los Angeles Area Station. (From which my AF Retiree Newsletter is mailed.)

For you who are former AF members who did not retire and are not conveniently located near an Air Force activity you can request a copy of DD Form 149 and it’s accompanying instruction, AFI 36-2603 from: Dept of the Air Force, Air Force Board of Military Records, AFBCMR 1535 Command Drive, EE Wing, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Andrews AFB, MD 20762-7002.

In order to provide you further information I am quoting from Dept of Air Force letter dated 3 Nov 2003, subject is Military Records Correction; “In accordance with our statute, Title 10, USC 1552, no correction to a members record can be made unless the member himself files a completed and signed DD form 149, along with all supporting documents.” Concerning the supporting documents, that would be: 1) copy of the special orders awarding the specific unit citation. (From Maxwell AFB, AL.) 2) Supporting documents placing you in the award-winning unit during the time period cited in the special order. These could be; assignment orders, TDY or transfer orders, squadron letters or other references placing you there at that time.

Mail all the aforementioned documents to: SAF/MRBR, 550 C Street West, suite 40, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4742. Good Luck, Guys!

Wearing of organizational awards.

Individuals assigned to an organization at the time of the award are eligible to permanently wear the award. Individuals that were not assigned to the organization at the time of the award are eligible to wear the award only while assigned to that organization.

Bob Bowers, [536, 66]





Hi Dave!

I spoke with you back in September about some old "Bou" news and I promised I would get back to you. Well, any more six months doesn't seem to be that long. A letter writer I am not so you will have to read between the errors. I majored in hunting, fishing, girls & beer in that order, not high school work. (*We must have been in the same class together. Ed*)

I just finished the January '04 newsletter and another name popped up so I can't hold out any longer.

Vietnam is still hard for me and it goes back a long way – 43 years. I launched a C-47 from Osan, Korea with my best friend and four other crewmembers I knew aboard, to Vietnam, and I didn't even know where it was. In March of 1961 they were shot down and their names are in the first panel on the Wall. I can still see them like it was yesterday, and I had to pack my friends gear to send home to a wife and four daughters, and it still breaks my heart today. After I got out of the Air Force, and many years later, I visited the Wall and it was a big mistake for me because I discovered four more names from my days at Stewart AFB, New York. And one of these was a very close friend. I hope you understand when I say that it is not easy for me. Besides those I have listed I can add four more I knew from my hometown that was wasted in that hellhole.

Sergeant Westerman and I were the flight mechs with Capt Piety when we had the engine loss on take off at Dau Tieng on February 28, 1967 on aircraft 745. Just one big bang and the engine froze at about 200 feet in the air. I thought we had been hit with arty or a mortar until I saw the prop stopped; it didn't fall off like the old stories I had heard. Maybe the good Lord was up there with us. No, no maybes about it. Capt Piety brought it around as

## Mail Call

quickly as possible while we cleaned up the engine. As pilots go he was one of the best, he made a good landing and to look at him and to talk to him you would think all of this was just normal stuff.

While we waited for a Huey to pick us up for the flight back to Vung Tau I pulled the sump screen. That engine stopped so fast no metal ever made it there. Later an engine man told me that the crankshaft sheared in half.

I saw SSgt Troy Shankle's name come up in the September newsletter. I knew him at Vung Tau and I also visited him at Stewart AFB after I got discharged.

Back to the January issue, page 10. I saw Walt Simons' name. He was Colonel Simons to me and I think he or Major Zellmen was the pilot in another incident when I was the flight mech. It was January 31, 1967 and we had just taken off from Long Xuyen and on my walk around inspection I noticed a lot of hydraulic fluid coming from near #2 engine. I reported it to the pilot and waited for his command to activate the hydraulic by-pass behind the pilots seat. He gave the order and we turned around and landed with nothing but some smoke in the cockpit, but I knew right then that the pilot knew his aircraft. We waited from 11:30 until 18:30 for help and none came, so in the meantime a navy version of the C-47 came in and I bugged some hydraulic fluid and fittings off of them. I capped the hydraulic line to the flaps and rigged it up to get home and we made a no flaps, one shot gear down, low on hydraulic fluid, landing at Vung Tau.

I can go on with quite a few stories from my diary, like the tracer round that was found next to a fuel cell, on post flight after we landed. Close, but no cigar. Or the time at Chu Lai we were flying around in the soup at 500

feet looking for the airstrip and I stepped off of the radio rack rails going up into the cockpit and told Sgt Nirk that we were about to get our butts shot off. If I had stayed on those rails another five minutes my tour would have been cut short from ground fire.

Some more with a little humor, then I will close. Sgt Sprunger and I were on an ammo re-supply. I don't remember if it was airdrop of ground offload. On the way over Sgt Sprunger laid down on a pallet of ammo and had his legs dangling down over the front of it towards the cockpit. I heard a crack and turned around and a 30 cal round had gone right up through the airplane right between his legs, missing the ammo by less than a foot. He had the funniest look on his face and he just laid right back down on the ammo. I guess it wouldn't have made any difference where you were in the plane if that round had hit the ammo.

A couple of funny stories from the ground. Do you remember throwing aerosol shaving cream cans in the 1/2 55-gallon latrine cans when Papa San was burning them off with rags and fuel oil? It was a big joke to us and I think Papa San even smiled when the dung was flying and he was yelling. Also the time the old run-down outhouse by the 535<sup>th</sup> burned down one night late after that red-headed Sgt from maintenance said it wasn't fit for humans and it should be burned. Or when you were lucky enough to have a day off and we had water for a shower to get the dirt and manure off you and a mama san would be showering right there beside you.

Dave, I have to stop for now. A lot of this info is starting to get dim and I may have some of the facts mixed up, but its close.

Dave, I can't stop now that I got started so I will add another page, some from memory and some from

Davis from page 9

my diary, some funny and some not.

Vietnam was the crossroads for all service people. I ran into people all over the place who I had known over the past eight years. That would be a story all in its self. A very long one! A flight mech at Cam Ranh was one of my tech school instructors even.

I hauled a news guy who was from near here and who had family real near. He was a KIA shortly after he flew with us. I saw Hugh O'Brian up at Phu Bai. We hauled Jonathan Winters and he did Maud Fricket over the aircraft radios for the troops. When we hauled Henry Fonda he had Edgar Bergen's wife and some other lady in the travel troop and in those days we flew with the back door open. Well, I put cargo straps around the two ladies and hooked them to a floor ring, let the ramp down and they viewed the country from 2500 feet. The next day H. Fonda made the crew close up the doors. At Bien Hoa we had a bad lightning storm and right after I finished fueling the pilots and I sat on the aircraft rear ramp and lightning came down through one wing all the way to the concrete and blew a hole there plus it burned holes in the wing and killed two guys with steel pots on in sight of us. At Bien Hoa we used to beg fresh milk from the airline stewardess on the incoming flights from the States.

I wonder if any of the 535<sup>th</sup> people knew where the one flight crew jeep came from? It started from a Special Forces camp to some place for repairs but somehow ended up at Vung Tau for those repairs...and transportation for us.

Our gunroom man "Erdy" kept pythons, one big and two small. He teased them and one day the big one got even and bit him good and really messed up his face. They sent MP's TDY to us, I guess to guard us, and they didn't know about the snakes. One of the snakes came from under the mess hall on a rat hunt. The MP's

almost killed the poor thing, even putting out its eye.

Speaking of eyes, does anyone remember the big old shiner Lt. Miller got when he tried shooting one of those cross bows we got from the mountanyards (or how ever you spell it). It is a wonder he didn't lose an eye when the bow broke. One time at one of the "Yards" Special Forces camps I was admiring a necklace this Aussie troop had. It sure looked different, and it was. It was dried up VC ears and a little bag full of gold teeth.

One of the pilots I flew with, Capt...(?), gave us a show one time. We low leveled over water from DaNang to Vung Tau and it was quite dark and he would buzz every Sampan. He added a little more to the game. He would shoot at them out the pilot's side window with his .38 revolver. Oh well, that was the early days. I also had another flight mechanic with me who shot at those fish trap shacks that ran out into the water by Vung Tau. I gave him hell for that. He really got with it when we were over free fire zones and burned up ammo until his M16 was really hot. He would throw five-gallon cans out of the aircraft and shoot at them. Once he threw a grenade out the back door and he must have held onto it for a while to long because some it hit the aircraft and the pilot chewed his ass good.

I hated hauling the live eels and that stinking fish oil nuc mam. When we hauled the locals sometimes they got sick before we even got airborne.

Do you guys remember how the beetle nut juice stained the local's mouths and teeth so bad? And how about the camphor oil they rubbed on. It sure did smell when it got hot in those airplanes. It was a long time before I could even look at fruitcake after hauling mail at Christmas time in that heat. The fruitcake smell came right through the badly handled mail sacks.

One more Dave and then I think I

will stop. I was teaching one of the FNG's how to run up and we had an aircraft that had just come from the maintenance docks. I didn't know it but they had changed the power brake control valve and the system wasn't 100%. The man on the ground was one that liked his booze and other things real well. He wasn't in very good rig and when we went up to max power the aircraft let loose and even jumped the chocks before I got it under control. Well you should have seen his eyes. They looked like saucers. I was glad I had the aircraft and had been in a similar rout before and not the FNG, or else we might have had another body to send home. I would like to know how many augments tubes got changed on the Bou's while they operated over there. It was a bunch.

Time to go Dave. I hope you can make this out and unscramble it for a little news and maybe some laughs.

Sincerely,

Paul G. Davis, [535, 66]

p.s. Did you ever fly all day with the gear down because they wouldn't retract, or fly all day with fire warning lights on? It's all true and from the early days.



Good Morning Dave:

I was intrigued by the two recent articles mentioning Harl Piety. (Sept 2003, page 16 and Jan 2004, page 10.) I did a little net snooping and found at least three references to a Harl Piety. Two reference "V" as his middle initial and one references "O". The "Advanced Radar Instrumentation Aircraft History and ARIA 328 Memorial Web Site" ([www.flyaria.com](http://www.flyaria.com)) shows a sandy haired picture of Harl as an adult.

The "Bushy Park High School, London England" shows a young Harl "Van" Piety. He's listed as deceased, but it's definitely the same

See **Tom** on page 11

**Tom** from page 9

man as the above photo. (www.bushypark.org) This site lists Harl as being from Texas and wanting to be an engineer.

The "Bendix Field Engineering Corp" homepage referencing USAF radarwork(<http://gshultz.members.atlantic.net>) lists Harl "O" as deceased.

Anyway, in case any of the Caribou Association members who actually knew Harl want to see a photo of their old buddy, the first two sites above may prove helpful.

Time to get back to work.

Tom Finkler [459, 69]

*Mrs. Lewis Gifford is the wife of Lewis F Gifford Jr [458,66]. Lt Col Gifford was the former commander of the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS. Mrs. Gifford has a collection of over 400 pictures that Lewis took during his tour in Vietnam. She sent a good number of them to our webmaster Pete Bird who posted them on our web site. I put Mrs. Gifford in touch with Dr. Richard Verrone at the Vietnam Center in Lubbock, Texas. As you can see by the following letters the Vietnam Center is happy to receive them.*

*As a truly wonderful gesture of her support for the C-7A Caribou Association Mrs. Gifford's has continued to pay her late husband's yearly Caribou Tax. Ed.*

March 18, 2004

Dear Dave,

Thanks for the Vietnam Center address. I'll contact them to see if they want any of Lewis' pictures. Pete posted them on the Caribou Web site early March and returned everything to me including a CD-Rom.

Sincerely,

Mrs. L. F. Gifford Jr. [458, 66]

April 26, 2004

Dear Dave,

I have been in contact with Dr. Richard Verrone at the Texas Tech

University in Lubbock. He is very interested in the pictures my husband Lewis made in Vietnam. It appears to be a safe place to store them and, with the approval of our three daughters, I have agreed to let the Vietnam Archive take possession. There are about 400 slides and pictures that should benefit their collection.

Thanks for the information,

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lewis F. Gifford Jr. [458, 66]



Jim & Dave:

I read the current newsletter with interest and enjoyed it immensely. As for the articles: (1) I was the pilot that flew the Caribou from Can Tho to TSN with the gear locked down. I don't recall the maintenance folk telling me anything about a suspected oil leak. (2) The pilot of the Caribou (later nick named "Sweet Pea"), was Frank Duran. He was conned into hauling the load of RVN (in body bags) from (I believe) the Special Forces Camp at Cao Lanh (25 miles N of Can Tho) back to their homes near Vinh Lac (50 miles NW). As I recall, the mission was an add-on request to Can Tho operations and approved locally. I remember flying "Sweet Pea" after it got cleaned up locally and it did have a distinct aroma about it. Anyway, it makes a good story and it did bring back memories. I do recall that the wing decided that the name "Sweet Pea" should be removed. I confirm that the aircraft looked like a new one inside when it returned from IRAN, the entire floor had been replaced.

For Jim: As for the convention, I do plan on attending and will look out for the flyer that was mentioned in the newsletter. I live in Albuquerque, NM and that's not too far down the road.

Cheers, Ron Ham, [536, 67]

PS: I'm mailing my T04 & T05 Tax tomorrow to the address provided in the NL.

**Must Be The New Math**

Dave, while looking over the "Reunion Demographics" for the 2003 reunion in Charleston, something caught my eye.

The chart for "Members by State" shows only one from Pennsylvania. Paul Phillips (459<sup>th</sup>, 69) and myself are from Pennsylvania. Then glancing at the numbers again found the total in that section was only 77 vs. the 110.

Out of curiosity I checked out the other categories. Members by Organization - 108 vs 110. Members by Date in Country - 74 vs 110.

Larry Schiff

459<sup>th</sup>, 66

*Thanks, Larry. I sometimes mess around with the numbers just to make sure people are reading the "Statistics." But I must say, you are the only one that let me know you caught my little trick! Ed.*

**Subject: Sappers**

I was assigned to the 457th from Jan 1970 to August 1971. I inherited aircraft 62-4192, when Sgt Barry Goodell went back to the world. I think this happened around the time we lost a crew at Dak Seang. The crew chief on that plane was Sgt Lucano. We had all our aircraft ready for the next days missions and we were doing our favorite job (paperwork). I was standing by while Sgt (Pop) Sommerville checked my 781, when the fuel dump blew up.

In one leap Pop Sommerville was out of his chair and crouched at the doorway of Bldg # 4710. He looked like he knew what was going on, so I followed him. At that time there was a bunker at the edge of the PSP (later torn down as base beautification). We were hanging around this bunker watching the fuel dump burn. TSgt

See **Ferguson** on page 12

**Ferguson** from page 11

Carl Linder told us not to move from the bunker because there were sappers running around the base. Hours later we got word we could leave, so we put on our helmets-flak jacket and headed back to the house. The people I remember being there were Sgt George Winchester, SSgt Gary Nemec, and SSgt George Truskowski. We were the last row of hoochs and mine was near the end of the row. Everyone had gone into their hoochs before I got to mine. The next thing I know there is this gook on top of me. I don't know if he jumped me or crashed into me because he was running like hell. He jabbed his hand under my ribs, knocking most of my air out. Right about that time, SSgt Gary Nemec came out of his hooch. The door slamming shut took this gooks attention off of me long enough to get him off of me. We were standing there glaring at each other. I was hoping he didn't come at me again because I still didn't have any air. Then I heard Gary scream Get That SON OF A BITCH!

In one leap this gook was thru the front door of my hooch and out the back. That was the second time that night I witnessed a championship leap.

When the fuel dump blew up, a lot of un-burnt fuel ran into the main well. I remember standing in line at the chow hall to get a box of c-rations. I don't remember how long we were out of water and fuel.

p.s. I Take medication, see a shrink every 60 days. I promise to be a good boy. I remember things in bursts, some days nothing at all. If OK with you I will send as I remember.

Bill Ferguson, [457, 70]

**An older gentleman was on the operating table awaiting surgery and he insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. As he was about to get the anesthesia he asked to speak to his son. "Yes Dad, what**

**Sleeves**

A slightly humorous anecdote from very early in the program. It was early September 1966, a few days after Labor Day. A1C Larry Schiff was walking from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Company Mess Hall to get to the Morning Formation (by agreement between Army and Air Force people, the Morning Formation would be discontinued when there were more Air Force people than Army people – but that's another story).

Army dress code at Qui Nhon allowed rolled up sleeves on fatigues and most Air Force people followed the Army lead – the heat had some input on that. (Larry's sleeves were rolled up Army style).

Coming from the opposite direction, either a TSgt or MSgt stopped Larry and yelled loud enough to be heard at the flight line, "Didn't I just tell you over by the tents (our sleeping quarters) to lower those sleeves?" Larry told him, "No" and mentioned he had been in the mess hall for the last half hour or so. Well, Larry rolled down his sleeves and went to work in Operations

When SSgt Wolfgang Behr came into the Ops office they noticed they both had their sleeves down. Comparing notes, they concluded that Sgt Behr was the first "victim" and Larry the victim of mistaken identity. They had a good laugh over that incident – but still can't figure how Larry was mistaken for Wolfgang.

Do a comparison – both Wolfgang and Larry are the subject of a few pictures that were posted to the website last March – maybe we'll have a "Caribou Poll" – "Could these two be twins?"

**is it?" "Don't be nervous, son and do your best but just remember, if it doesn't go well, if something happens to me .. your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife...."**



Also, can anyone from the 459<sup>th</sup>, who was there in early September 1966 that may have witnessed the incident, ID the accuser?

Larry Schiff, [459, 66]

**Pre-Sealed Envelopes**

This one is short (that's what they all say). About everyone ever assigned to Vietnam or any other tropical country, knows that the humidity plays havoc with everything. This includes mail envelopes – every box opened came with "pre-sealed" envelopes.

One average type day (cloudy, drizzle and 130% humidity), a 459<sup>th</sup> pilot comes into the Operations Tent next to the temporary ramp at Phu Cat. He asked the Ops Clerk for an envelope he could use to send pictures home. The clerk reached into the supply cabinet, grabbed a large mailing envelope and handed it to the pilot.

A few seconds later, the pilot returns, saying, "This envelope is sealed shut." "Yes sir," replied the clerk "they all are." And without batting an eye, added "All you need to do is address the envelope, put a stamp on it and drop it in the mailbox."

(This item was rejected by Readers' Digest when it was submitted for the "Humor in Uniform" feature.)

Larry Schiff, [459, 66]

Charlie from page 1

ing Drill Instructor, Radio Operator School (Morse Code) at Fort Knox, Kentucky in 1963. (His DI always said he was going to make a fine "Leg" or Infantryman). Charlie's first and only assignment in the Army was to Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (HHC 1/34<sup>th</sup> INF) of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Augsburg, Germany, where he served the rest of his three year commitment.

Originally assigned to Battalion Headquarters as an S3 Clerk in Plans and Operations (the Army had created too many CW Radio Operators), Charlie transferred to the Communications Platoon in the Radio Maintenance Section and attended the Organizational Radio Maintenance School in Langries, Germany, near the Austrian border. In addition to learning to repair any type of communications equipment, Charlie specialized in a cultural exchange in Munich at every opportunity, the highlight of which was Oktoberfest and a personal German guide named....well, never mind that.

During his tour of duty, the 1/34<sup>th</sup> pulled two 90 TDYs to Berlin, patrolling the Berlin Wall as part of their duties, but the main purpose was to exercise the right to use the Helmstedt Autobahn across East Germany to prevent the Russians from closing it, which they did on several occasions, the worst case resulted in the Berlin Airlift. Closings during the sixties mostly stopped civilian traffic between Berlin and West Germany.

After 1965, all the experienced officers and NCOs were drained from the unit, either through promotions to higher headquarters or assignments to someplace called "Viet Nam". Discipline and order gave way to general chaos, with the HHC commanded by a lieutenant male nurse (good man, but not a clue, as to be expected, given his background and training) and the Battalion Commander (Lt. Colonel replacing a Major) with his first field command and no Infantry experience. After volunteering for Viet Nam three times (he was young) and being turned down as indispensable to the Battalion, Charlie decided to return to the land of round door knobs and the Big PX (Post Exchange) rather than re-enlisting for a promotion to Platoon Sergeant and staying in the battalion.

After a seven month sojourn as a civilian and working for Honeywell in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Charlie enlisted in the Air Force as a SSgt under a prior service program that allowed him to keep his previous rank since both his Army skills were critically short in the Air Force. Hating all the paperwork associated with maintenance, Charlie chose Ground Radio Operations. This resulted in cultural shock at all levels on a grand scale:

Air Force did not have Reveille at 0500 (his first room mate thought he was nuts).

Air Force did not have daily formations, PC, or

Command Reveille (full dress parade and review at 0500). Did have Retreat, but that's another story for later.

Air Force did have semi-private room with central heat and air conditioning.

Real bed (with innerspring mattress!) and refrigerator in which BEER could actually be kept without getting an Article 15!

Maintenance was a better career path in the Air Force.

Assigned to the Comm Squadron (think it was the 2047<sup>th</sup>) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, in October, 1966, Charlie's duty station was the Base MARS station for the first couple of months while awaiting a security clearance. This allowed too much free time for a 22 year old to get into mischief, which he did, volunteering for Viet Nam and flying duty on RC-121s (forerunner of the AWACS). Oh, yeah, he also managed to get engaged to be married. Then things happened fast. First came orders for RC-121 training at Otis AFB, Massachusetts. While still celebrating, orders came down for Viet Nam under Operation Limelight, which canceled all previous orders and gave a seven day notice to be in Viet Nam due to a critical shortage of Radio Operators. He did get a seven day delay, just enough time to get married (over the advice of friends and family) to his first wife.

Upon arrival in RVN in May, 1967, Charlie was greeted by two NCOs from the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Div ALCC (remember Hilda?). When asked his AFSC, their response was "Oh, no! Not another Radio Operator!" (remember the critical shortage?). Yes, folks, our Air Force retained some of their Army traits - Personnel is run by crisis management. Only by volunteering for permanent mid shifts was Charlie able to obtain meaningful employment in lovely South Viet Nam, working in the ALCC as a radio operator and part time traffic following when things were slow. Sometime during this time, it was decided to send him to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Amphibious Forces at Da Nang as a TALO (Tactical Air Liaison Officer). The enlisted member of the two man officer/NCO team was actually called a TALA, but in general anyone in the position was called a TALO. This lasted three days and then back to Hilda because the Marines wanted to use their own operators. Talk about cultural shock! Love those Marines, but they are different.

Barely settled in at the ALCC back on Ton Son Nhut, Charlie was asked to "volunteer" once more for TALO duty, this time to the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division base camp at Bearcat. Upon arrival, his training consisted of the 30 seconds or so it took the departing NCO to hand him the note pad with frequencies and call signs and to congratulate him on his assignment as he was getting on board the C-130 Charlie came in on, which departed post haste. Standing there alone and looking toward the base camp

See **Charlie** on page 14

Charlie from page 13

with columns of smoke rising from it, Charlie thought “help me, Momma, I’m in the war!”.

Turns out, Bearcat had never been hit at that point (that later changed) and the columns of “battle damage” was the daily smoke pots from the latrines. For those who resided on established Air Force bases, let’s just say not everyone had indoor plumbing, and since there was no place to dump the contents of the outhouses, it was burned each day, usually by some Army troops who had recently impressed their superiors with their military bearing and dedication to duty (or lack thereof).

This was also Charlie’s introduction to the C7A Caribou. The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry was assigned an aircraft each day to support the forward bases located at Dong Tam (the 9<sup>th</sup> later moved the division headquarters there) and Tan An. The daily Caribou had the call sign Iris 426 and was out of Vung Tau, but other squadrons were sometimes called on for additional support, especially during Tet 1968. The daily “milk runs” consisted of mail, passengers, medical supplies, and a couple of POW airlifts to Can Tho. No “dumbo drops”, although the FACs occasionally reported monkeys, pigs, and chickens as “KIA”.

The TALO call sign was Tamale 09 and the TALA (Charlie) was Tamale 09 Alfa. Tamale was the overall call sign for the 19<sup>th</sup> TACP (Tactical Air Control Party) of the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS, which provided the FAC support to the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The Command Post was Tamale Control and each of the FACs used Tamale with a numerical suffix, i.e., Tamale 51. Life soon settled into a routine of work, eat, sleep, and occasional panic (like when he ran out of cigarettes or a VC battalion came by the location-CP forgot to pass on the word until first contact).

Thanks to good security provided by the 9<sup>th</sup>, Charlie had a relatively quiet tour. After a friend discovered some TALOs were being involuntarily reassigned to RVN after only sixty days or so in the states, he and Charlie decided to look for a career change (the friend, Jerry Carter, was even more motivated: he was the TALA at Khe Sanh). After checking with Assignments during a TALO meeting at Ton Son Nhut, they discovered the best chance for a controlled tour was MTI duty (Military Training Instructor). Both qualified and reported to the 3720<sup>th</sup> Basic Military Training School at Lackland AFB, Texas, in June, 1968, after their tour in Viet Nam was completed.

Toward the end of the academic portion of the school, Charlie and several other students were recruited for duty in the 3726 Special Training Squadron under the newly implemented Project One Hundred Thousand (another of Robert Strange McNamara’s ideas). This was a program to bring in persons who normally because of physical condition, weight, or education did not meet the normal standards for military service (each of the services had a quota,

er, I mean an objective). Instructors in this unit had three months to get them into shape or pass a sixth grade reading level, as appropriate. Interestingly enough, fully 80% of the troops failing to meet the minimum reading standard were high school graduates (statistics from around 1970).

After MTI duty, Charlie was assigned to the 2064<sup>th</sup> Comm Squadron from February 1972 until February 1973. Located on the “Black Pearl of the Pacific”, Shemya is an atoll measuring four miles by two miles sticking up out of the water (barely) where the Bering Sea meets the North Pacific. This results in some of the world’s worst weather. It is now in caretaker status, after the Russians became our friends.

Charlie’s first orders after Shemya were to Travis AFB, California, ...as a cook. Another critical manning situation lead our fearless personnel folks at Randolph to decide that all the Radio Operators coming back from remote/isolated tours should go into food service to alleviate a shortage of NCOs in food service. This after being told they could not cross train into another career field because they were too critical! Fortunately, Charlie was put in contact with a Chief who was trying to fill his critical shortage of Radio Operators in SAC and being told by Personnel that none were available (sounds more like the Army all the time). This led to an assignment in February, 1973, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Command and Control Squadron (3<sup>rd</sup> ACCS) at Grissom AFB, Indiana, flying as an airborne radio operator on the Eastern Auxiliary Airborne Command Post (EC-135C) and Radio Relay aircraft (EC-135L/G). In June, 1973, Charlie was sent on a “Bullet Shot Rotation” to Utapao, Thailand to “gain experience quickly”. This was at that time a classified unit designated “Combat Lightning” flying radio relay/rescue support missions for the bombing of North Viet Nam or support of ground forces within South Viet Nam, depending on the orbit. The primary orbit was between Hanoi and Hainan Island with an escort of Navy fighters to discourage the boys up North from coming out to play. The aircraft was designated as a KC-135A (tanker) and were called “Razorbacks” because of looking like a flying antenna farm. The front end call sign was Luzon 1/2/3, depending on which shift (1-morning/2-afternoon/3-evening) and the “back end” call sign for the communications crew was Wager. Wager worked with Red Crown, Blue Chip, and Disco (RC-121) aircraft. Charlie flew the last Combat Lightning combat mission on August 15, 1973, but remained in Thailand until October. He then returned to the States and resumed training with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACCS.

Charlie was reassigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> ACCS at Andrews AFB, Maryland in February, 1975, flying on the National

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Charlie from page 14

Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP) EC-135J models, which were replaced that year by the new E-4A aircraft (military version of the Boeing 747). This unit supported the National Command Authorities and played a WWII scenario with SAC and the WWABNCP, part of the Post Attack Command and Control System (PACCS). Charlie's crew became the first NEACP crew to fly the President, flying President Carter and his family to Georgia on his first visit "back home" after being elected. While with the 1<sup>st</sup> ACCS, Charlie was qualified as an Instructor Radio Operator on both the E-4A and E-4B models.

In 1977, Charlie and the 1<sup>st</sup> ACCS were reassigned to Offutt AFB, Nebraska when the Headquarters Command was deactivated and the NEACP mission placed under SAC, AFCS, and the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS). The chain of command looked very much like a spider web, especially for the communications crew. For aircrew duties, they reported to SAC (who had been given the care and feeding of the airframes), for operational (alert) duties, they reported to the OJCS, and administratively, they fell under the 1<sup>st</sup> Comm Group, who treated them like red headed step children. This resulted in his being reassigned to Air Rescue, spending three months in training at Kirkland AFB, New Mexico, and being reassigned back to the 1<sup>st</sup> ACCS because the rescue school had a severe shortage of flyable aircraft (C-130H/N/P). Charlie was upgraded to Communications Crew Team Chief and continued his duties with NEACP at Offutt until November 1980, when he applied for and was accepted for duties with the 1<sup>st</sup> Military Airlift Squadron under the 89<sup>th</sup> MAW.

Charlie's new duties were to support world wide VIP missions, flying everyone from Congressional Delegations to the Vice President and foreign heads of state. The aircraft he qualified on were VC-135 and C-9, with two versions of the C-135, one with secure communications and one without. The C-9 was used almost exclusively for VP and First Lady missions. Charlie and the other two C-9 crews became intimately acquainted with the Vice President during the 1984 Presidential campaign, a gentleman by name of George H. Bush, who seemed to never sleep, requiring two crews a day to support him (the C-9 did not have room for an augmented crew). The Squadron also had VC-140 and VC-137 airframes (the VC-137 were true Boeing 707s). Most VC-135 and VC-137 missions had augmented crews and a normal 27 hour crew day, which could be (and was) extended by the 89<sup>th</sup> MAW commander. The unit was directly under the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force. This was also the only unit in the Air Force that the crew was authorized to trouble shoot and repair the aircraft on the road, and carried critical

spare parts for just such an occasion. Want to convince a congressman you need new systems? Let him visit the flight deck (in flight, for even more fun) and find an RO "modifying" an HF radio with a ball peen hammer in the middle of the North Atlantic. Charlie says the spare radio's chassis was damaged when received from repair and had to be reshaped before it would fit in the rack. Anyway, that's his story and he is sticking to it! Before retiring in November 1985, Charlie was an Instructor RO on both the C-9 and C-135, and Flight Examiner on the C-135. Charlie says the 1<sup>st</sup> MAS was the best assignment he ever had. Not bad for a potential "Leg".

After the Air Force, Charlie went to work for a telecom company in Texas as a Technical Training Instructor, where he worked until the telecom crash in 2002. His first duties were as a combination trainer, installer, and technical support engineer for microwave radios, eventually migrating to fiber optic and digital telephone equipment as the company grew. His last job was as a Proposal Manager with the same company. Charlie and his wife, Billie, live near Dallas, Texas, with their children and grand children nearby.

Charlie is looking forward to working with the C7A Caribou Association, individually and as a group. He says he appreciates the opportunity you all have bestowed on him to publish the Association Newsletter and will strive to justify your confidence in his abilities. His only question is: was he really the only one to volunteer?



## Allies Kill 496 Near Besieged Dak Seang

*Stars and Stripes, Vietnam Bureau April 1970*

Siagon – Vietnamese military officials reported 496 enemy troops killed Monday in bitter fighting around the Dak Seang Special Forces camp, seven miles from Laos and 282 miles north-northeast of Saigon, where the Communist forces reportedly have positions within 35 yards of the camp.

According to highly placed Vietnamese sources in Kontum, Allied troops turned up another 330 enemy bodies Tuesday, bringing the unofficial total to 945 Communists dead since the nearly continuous enemy attacks on the camp began April 1.

The sources said reports indicate there are 10,000 North Vietnamese Army troops comprising two main-force NVA regiments in the western sector of Vietnam's central highlands, mostly around the outpost at Dak Seang. The two regiments are thought to be the same that fought at Bu Prang – Duc Lap last fall and Ben Het last spring, the sources said.

Since April 1, the sources said, the base at Dak Seang has absorbed more than 2,000 enemy rounds, mainly 82mm mor-

See **Allies** on page 28

**Historian** from page 4

Lake Moultrie. It was a very sad thing being a part of the end of something as important as the C-124 had been. I ended up in Transit Alert and discovered that to be a paradise for an airplane nut. It didn't hurt that Charleston had a huge Navy base at that time and we launched and landed a bunch of C-1s, S-2s, and other Navy aircraft. I fell in love with the P2V Neptunes and they are still a favorite. Other memorable birds were the Lockheed Connies—for my money the prettiest big airplane ever built—and Rescue HU-16 amphibians. We also worked the commercial carriers like Trans International, World, Seaboard World and Airlift. One by one, the younger guys who hadn't been to SEA were getting orders to FAM (Aircraft Familiarization School—basically systems school) and going to the war. Finally, my orders came.

I didn't get orders to FAM school like my buddies and couldn't figure it out. I went to a weapons school at Hamilton AFB, California and then on to Vietnam from McCord. The older guys had ragged me some about getting orders to Nha Trang, the Riviera of Vietnam they said. I met my first Caribou flying to Nha Trang from Cam Ranh and still remember that the landing approach felt weird, too steep or something. Years later I was teaching at the University of Tennessee and had Neil Sheehan as a guest lecturer the year he published *A Bright, Shining Lie*. We had taken him to dinner and we were talking about Vietnam (who we were with, what year, where, the usual vet questions) and when I mentioned Caribous he looked at me and said, "You guys used to scare the s—out of me." He began to fly with his hands and showed how airplanes land and how helicopters land and then he mimicked the Caribou approach. He remembered it pretty well.

Anyway, I end up in a long line in-processing to the 14th Special Op-

erations Wing at Nha Trang and as I move up the line I start hearing mumbles about something called Crash Recovery and how that is not a good thing to get. Sure enough, when I get to the front of the line they send me to Crash Recovery and give me directions to the hooch on the flight line. As soon as I get there, they say "hello," point me to the back of an International six-pack truck and we launch off through the middle of Nha Trang. At Charleston, we had had racial problems off base and I generally went armed to and from the base. Now I am finding myself one day into the 'Nam, in a war zone, riding in the back of an open truck, totally unarmed, and wondering how I could have hooked up with this band of lunatics, all of whom were very tanned and seemed pretty happy. We end up in a villa which was either officer or senior NCO billet, and someone handed me a plate with a large steak, potato salad, baked beans, the whole nine yards, and about a half a bottle of Crown Royal. I am still not believing any of this and figure I'm asleep in the World Airways DC-8 on the way to Vietnam. Later I met a lovely Vietnamese lady—but that is another story. Such was my introduction to the world of Crash Recovery.

The next morning I discovered that they worked harder than they played. They also had some seriously cool toys. There was a 50-ton LeTourneau crane, complete with siren and red lights, an oblique steer Oshkosh crash truck, various tugs, and a trailer crammed with rescue and salvage gear, six-pack four wheel drive trucks and other neat stuff. The 14th SOW supported 5th Special Forces group, also headquartered at Nha Trang, and the C-123 and C-130 Blackbirds of the 15th SOS Special Operations Squadron) and the CH-3s and UH-1s of the 20th SOS were a part of MACV-SOG (MACV-Studies and Observation Group). The wing also

flew AC-47 and AC-119 gun ships, EC-47 ELINT (stands for electronic intelligence gathering) birds, and O-2B and C-47 "bullshit bombers." The VNAF had A-37 and F-5 jets there as well as H-34 helicopters and the Army had a Huey unit which was pretty much dedicated to Special Forces. All in all, it was a very interesting place.

Crash Recovery was located next to the Fire/Crash Rescue hanger and we ate our meals with them. We were also the equivalent of Aero Repair and took regular maintenance assignments as well as providing the Crash Recovery function. We all got to the point where we could hear the phone from base ops even when in a deep sleep, and I still get a chill when I hear the phrase "...souls on board." Both parts of the job were interesting. We got scrambled on a regular basis for hung bombs and rockets on the A-37s and the F-5s. We had a very bad day one day when an F-100 tried to land with battle damage and it ran off the runway across Highway One and buried itself on the beach. I will never forget the body parts and the strange juxtaposition of numbered pieces of bright clothing with the wrecked Hun. I had to dig out under the fighter to get the lifting straps around it and was told to feel for bodies under the jet. Thankfully, none were there. I also learned about the smell of runway foam in a belly landing. Today I work with firefighters and police officers and I can use some of those lessons learned to help another generation.

The curse returned about the time I was getting the hang of crash recovery and Nha Trang and the Air Force stood down the Spooky gun ships that were our bread and butter. We now moved to Phan Rang. I flew down on a Spooky and we got shot up flying up Happy Valley during the approach to Phan Rang. They already had a Crash Recovery shop and we were awaiting the arrival of the AC-119K



Stinger gunships. They were late coming so I ended up crewing the last of the Spookies. It was also my first opportunity to go on flying status. We also worked with the "jet weenies" from the F-100 unit until they told us not to work the jets. I can tell you that you "ain't lived" until you have lain on your back, under an F-100 at take-off power, trying to disengage the barrier wire after an emergency landing. At least I finally found a jet I liked.

There was very little happening at that point and a friend of mine, a Staff Sergeant named Ron Schrock, decided I needed to see Taipei. He was an "old Asia hand" and so we got ourselves a leave. Before we could go we all got orders to new squadrons at Cam Ranh. We arrived and in-processed and I went to the flight line. A maintenance sergeant told me to go replace the augmentor tubes and handed me a maintenance checklist. I didn't even know what an augmentor tube was until a guy named Ken Pampell, from Giddings, Texas, saw my look of bewilderment and showed me how to access the wing and how to change out the tubes. He developed into a great friend and I developed a love for the Caribou.

I got there either just after Christmas of '69 or just after New Year's Day of '70. I can't remember exactly. The hoochs were just above the hospital in a line and I lived with several other transfers from other units.

I got into the groove of afternoon recoveries and evening maintenance and got on flying status almost immediately. We had somehow gotten some real live hogs from Special Forces and built a hog pen in the middle of the hooch area. We named one hog Rufus and painted his name on him. I pulled a rotation to Don Muang and when I got back the hog pen was gone and I had missed quite a barbeque. Apparently the base veterinarians had closed us down. I remember very distinctly the start of the

Dak Seang operation. I had been on the crew bus with Gaylord about a week earlier and he had had a premonition or something. That whole thing bothered me for a long time. Word on the flight line was that Captain Black had developed night tactics and shortly after that we switched to night drops and quit losing people and airplanes. A friend of mine was the crew chief of Jaeger's aircraft and he took it really hard. I ran into a former "donut dolly" at the Wall in Washington when they dedicated the statues and she had been in Cam Ranh and was engaged to the Caribou pilot I was hoping to find, Mike Morganroth. She told me that she had helped the crew chief through the loss of the airplane and crew.

There are so many stories. When I started writing this, I called Dave Hutchens and told him it was too long. He wisely reminded me that now that I have found the Association there is plenty of time to "tell 'em all." And the neat thing is I can tell them to people who actually know what I'm talking about. And at some point I hope to find out who came up with the "Yossarian Lives" stickers that we found on the windscreens.

I hope to see everyone at the reunion and look forward to working as your historian.

Bob Blaylock, [457, 70]

*(After leaving Vietnam and the Caribous, Bob Blaylock was assigned to McGuire AFB and worked C-141s as a configuration team chief. Bob then left the Air Force in 1972 and went back to North Carolina to finish college. After receiving his degree he went on to graduate school at the University of Tennessee and took a double masters in Social Planning and Administration, and Psychiatric Social Work. Bob worked ten years with the VA's post-traumatic stress disorder program. That led to team-teaching in a Vietnam War history course that led to a consultancy in a*

*program called the Center for the Study of War & Society at the University of Tennessee. Bob is currently the program director of Employee Assistance Programs at the Behavioral Medicine Network in Lexington, KY. Ed.)*



## Cam Ranh Hospital Toll Now 2 Dead, 98 Hurt

S&S Vietnam Bureau

*If you change the names of the towns, people and places, this article, taken from the 10 August 1969 Stars and Stripes, reads just about like our dispatches from Iraq today. Ed.*

SAIGON — U.S. Officials Friday revised the casualty toll from the Communist sapper at-tack on Cam Ranh Bay's convalescent center to 98 wounded and two killed, while Vietnamese police reported five civilians had been killed Thursday by a Viet Cong mine.

Spokesmen said 54 of the wounded had been taken to the Air Force hospital at Cam Ranh, while the rest were treated for minor injuries and released for duty.

National police reported five persons were killed and two wounded when their cart hit a mine near Gio Linh in Quang Tri Province.

In an incident earlier that morning the Nha Trang-Tuy Boa train triggered an enemy mine eight miles north of Nha Trang City. The engineer was wounded, the locomotive badly damaged and five meters of track destroyed, police said.

In delayed reports released by national police Friday, Red terrorists were blamed for the deaths of seven other civilians last week. Seventeen more were wounded and 11 persons kidnaped.

The most serious of the incidents occurred Aug. 3 when Viet Cong troops entered O-Ro ham-let in An Xuyen province and killed three members of the Peoples Self Defense Force. One person was injured in the attack and eight others were unaccounted for.

## Hutch on Intercom...

This being my last newsletter (no, really!! Ignore my statement in the September 2003 issue where I started this column, "With this being my last issue of editing the newsletter...") I am writing this column with a lot of joy and a little sadness. The joy is announcing that we have a new newsletter editor, Charlie Steadman, and a new historian, Bob Blaylock. The sadness is that I won't be talking directly to our members on a regular basis.

Both Charlie and Bob have written articles for this edition. Charlie first contributed a piece that appeared in last September's issue #18, in the Mail Call section on page 12. (You might want to go back and reread his article. It is very different and very interesting.) At the time that Charlie sent in his piece he hadn't even thought of the idea that he might wind up being the newsletter editor. Charlie, little did you know that we were just waiting for you. You changed from "I might" to "I will" with out the need of too much physical force. Charlie, I wish you the greatest success in fulfilling your new duties and responsibilities.

Now Bob has come to us from a little different angle. He innocently enough sent in an item he thought Pete Bird might like to put on our web site. It just happened to be an article on the history of the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW and the 457<sup>th</sup> TAS (If you haven't read it, it sure is worth the visit to the web site). Now Pete Bird, our ever watchful webmaster, didn't let Bob slip through his net. Oh no! He collared Bob instantly. The rest is history. Bob Blaylock is our new Historian.

There is an awful lot of work that needs doing in our history department. I have a considerable amount of documents that I have accumulated that I will get to Bob. And now that we have an official historian, I'm hopeful that many of our members will funnel items to him to help com-

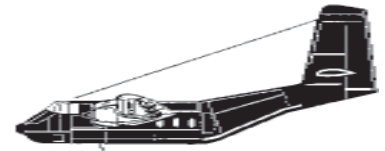
pile the C-7A Caribou Association's history. And I might suggest that there are two possible paths to our Association's history; the "sort of official AF path," and the "unofficial path." That is the path of the fun filled, sometimes near mythical machinations of a dedicated, professional, patriotic group of people known as the Caribou People. Bob, I wish you great success.

On numerous occasions members have taken me aside to impress on me how important our newsletter is to the well being of our Association. I always have something to say about the importance of our membership contributing articles and e-mails and letters and pictures and anything else of interest. Most anything you send will be interesting. And I want to truly thank each and every one of you who have sent in articles, e-mails, letters, large envelopes full of good stuff, phone calls, and for the many conversations and suggestions discussed during our reunions and get togethers. Those contributions are the only things that keep a newsletter alive. One person runs out of ideas, things to write about, and stories to print very soon after he starts. You must continue to contribute.

I can't emphasize strongly enough the importance of continuing to feed the newsletter your articles, stories, e-mails and anecdotes. There must be a bazillion (or gazillion) of them out there. Really, everyone has one. And from the feedback I receive all of our members are overly anxious to read them. Our new editor will need all the help you can give him. And most importantly, the newsletter is yours and will only be as good as the input that all of you provide.

Adios, my fellow Airmen. It's been great fun.

*Editor for the last time, Dave Hutchen*



A biker stopped by the Harley Shop to have his bike fixed. They couldn't do it while he waited, so he said since he didn't live far, he would just walk home. On the way home he stopped at the hardware store to pick up a few things that he needed. He bought a bucket and an anvil. He stopped by the feed store/livestock dealer and picked up a couple of chickens and a goose. However, he now had a problem: how to carry all of his purchases home.

The owner said, "Why don't you put the anvil in the bucket, carry the bucket in one hand, put a chicken under each arm and carry the goose in your other hand?"

"Hey, thanks!" the biker said, and out the door he went.

In the parking lot he was approached by a little old lady who told him she was lost. She asked, "Can you tell me how to get to 1603 Mockingbird Lane?"

The biker said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I live at 1616 Mockingbird Lane. Let's take my short cut and go down this alley. We'll be there in no time."

The little old lady looked him over cautiously and then said, "I am a lonely widow without a husband to defend me. How do I know that when we get in the alley you won't hold me up against the wall, pull up my skirt, and ravish me?"

The biker said, "Holy smokes lady! I'm carrying a bucket, an anvil, two chickens, and a goose. How in hell could I possibly hold you up against the wall and do that?"

The little old lady said, "Set the goose down, cover him with the bucket, put the anvil on top of the bucket, and I'll hold the chickens."

## So That Was A Lapes?

Colonel Mascot and I were coming up on the "DZ" in the late twilight (in Viet Nam that's a 15 second period between sunset and pitch darkness); But I guess I better start back at the beginning of this "BOO-BOO" war story.

There I was at MAC HQ around the first of December 1965, a brand new bored entrant on the new field grade promotion list (finding out about the good news cost me a five mile Turkey Trot across the Jump School College Campus at Ft. Benning, GA) when all of sudden a message came over the horizon advertising for a whole string of AFSCs (I held about four of them) for immediate PCS pipeline to South East Asia (SEA).

Hot Dang! A graceful exit from headquarters and a little excitement thrown in - and it couldn't hurt the resume either.

I raced over to my local flesh peddler (that's Human Resources these days) and said "Sign me up, where am I going?" and in that order.

Well it was back to Ft. Benning to learn about take offs and "sight picture" landings - mostly a lot of fun and games, and we did learn something about a Canadian built 6-by that had wings, made short field takeoffs, very short field landings, and could turn on a dime then give you 9 cents change.

Yeah! It was fun. But all things go to a purpose and our next stop was Clark AB in the shadows of beautiful Mt. Penatubo, an old inactive (at the time) volcano where we did PJSS (Pacific Jungle Survival School) learning all about how to cook rice in a bamboo cup and sleep in elephant grass infested with ants big enough to wear saddle bags. Yeah, lotta' fun that.

We finally got to that place called "in-country." You could tell us neubys by the bumps on our noggins from setting bolt upright and bump-

## War Stories!

ing our heads on the upper bunk when the 155s would launch another round downrange out there at NUI-BADEN. You got used to it after a while (usually around 365 days) and after that anything smaller than a satchel charge under your bunk would even get your attention.

Anyhow, after hanging around Tan Son Nhut for a few days we were all ready to rip into "Charlie." We started bugging Lieutenant Colonel Yelton for orders to the field. We were in luck. Col Yelton told us to kindly pack our bags and be ready to catch the dawn patrol that very next morning.

I drew a Place called Vung Tau and was billeted with the "Hallmark" Caribou Company ("When you care enough to send the very best") and as I recall it, was the Army's 61st Aviation Company.

That first three months was an exercise in throwing pearls to the hogs, but the old hard nosed blue suit professionals won over the "dabblers in aviation" with things like "maintenance control," "prop shop," "preventive maintenance," and would you believe, "quality control." Oh yeah! We did a job on 'em and we even fixed the radars. It sure was a lot smoother navigating the delta after it became a "blue suit" operation.

Rest assured, one and all, we didn't take any instruction on how to operate an airborne motor pool. Instead, we got out the well worn tech data and applied it toward an organized, close support airlift that was second to none; and we made a big difference. None of this "measure it with a micrometer, mark it with chalk and cut it with an ax" stuff for us! We learned from it all and hopefully they did too. So much for all of that.

After we became a fully integrated USAF operation as the 536th Tactical Airlift Squadron, the Commander

wanted me, as his Chief of Standardization, to certify all of his pilots as they came in country. I only mention this to back up why my name was associated with so many "hit" reports. A hit report tells the commander the how, what, when and where you got your airplane punctured with a foreign object. That is what triggers this story in the first place.

I had been flying a lot; almost every day. A wily old Colonel was reading all those "hit" reports tagged with my moniker and he was getting the wrong idea about me being a reckless "hot pilot," taking too many chances out there in the field. This wily, not so old, Colonel was named Mascot. He decided a "reply by endorsement" for each hit would be appropriate. This could mean a couple dozen, or more letters after each days flying. Whoa! I had to do something 'cause this "flying all day and writin' all night" was making an old, and not so bold, aviator out of me in a hurry.

I caught a ride to beautiful down town Cam Ran Bay and met this Colonel Mascot whom I liked immediately, as most people did. We got on a first name basis right away; he was "Colonel" and I became "Jim." Not knowing what else to do, I invited him down to spend the day at the 536<sup>th</sup>. To my amazement he literally jumped at the opportunity.

The following paragraphs will attempt to describe one of the most fascinating days I have ever spent in aviation.

Colonel Mascot's coming to the 536th was a major event for all us hicks out in the field, and I was viewed as someone who had dragged an enemy corpse into our unprepared camp. Well, be that as it may, we finally got the boss bedded down after tea and crumpets in the club (oh yes, we had a club). At the preflight briefing the next morning Colonel Mascot made it very clear that he was to be treated as a regular crew member

See **Lapes** on page 20

Lapes from page 19

- no favors or any of that stuff (I thought-"yeah right!"). I was in for a lesson in nearly everything that day except dying – so here we go.

At briefing I asked the "old man" if he wanted to fly. What a brilliant question! He then responded with the question of how do you run your missions, to which I explained that one pilot sat left seat and flew the morning while the copilot helped hustle the loads - barrels, rice, ammo, you name it, even corpses. Then in the P.M. the other guy got to fly. The Colonel then asked what was the most exciting half, (he already knew the answer to that) and I explained that most remote re-supplies occurred at dusk and that we had a good possibility for the evening. So with all this knowledge we depart on the day's task, with me in the left seat. Colonel Mascot worked his tail off, sweated like a Turk and I think, enjoyed the morning. He flat earned an afternoon/evening of exciting flying, that's for sure.

As fate would have it, there was a Special Forces Lieutenant at Dzion (pronounced zzion), located over near the Cambodian border on about 40 acres (it looked like 40 square yards from the air), and, let me tell you, this kid was out of everything but guts. He didn't have beans, bombs, bullets or anything that goes "BANG" except his critter makers. Oh! Never heard of a critter maker? It's a barrel with a claymore antipersonnel mine at the bottom filled with gasoline treated with stuff to make napalm out of it, to be used when "Charlie" got in too close. When ol' Charlie got to the burm you simply had to pop the claymore and watch the napalm clean up the mangled remains of whatever came over the wire.

Don't ask me why, but this frag (an order for execution) came screaming in about 1500 hours (3:00 p.m.) so we knocked off, put in to Can Tho and rigged the airplane for low alti-

tude parachute extraction (LAPES). Believe me you could see the excitement start to build in the Colonel; course it hardly phased me at all (in a pig's eye). The atmosphere could be cut with a knife; the tension was so high that it was almost oppressive. By the way, I should have, but failed to mention that our friend, Colonel Mascot, was a red hot pilot. He gave you that "Father is taking you flying" impression. From a guy who's seen a lot of pilots I was firmly convinced that Colonel Mascot could fly the box that the C-7 came in, and he was about to prove it beyond question.

We got the load on, checked it out; first I looked it over then the "chief" ran his check and we were ready to romp. This little place is pretty close to Can Tho so we did most of our briefing before Colonel Mascot poured the coal to our old Boo-Boo to get us headed into harms way. Dzion lays in the Northeast corner of crossed canals with ol' Charlie owning three of the four corners. To say that Charlie was active there could be likened to saying Times Square has a few people each December 31st. I mean that this Lieutenant has to have at least fourteen pound cajonies to stand up there with 15 or so people (that would be 8 regular army and 7 natives) and spit in their eye. Let me tell you mama, he lives up there with a whole Battalion of Charlie Bad-Asses. There's a rumble going on up there all the time and all you need do to be totally involved is to just drop in. We configured the airplane for L. A. P. E. S. about 20 minutes out; to do this you set the propellers to high R. P. M., lower about 20 degrees of flaps, and put the landing gear down. I guess the reason you do this is to let everybody know you are coming - believe me, it makes enough noise to wake the dead; then you fly with the wheels rolling right down in the banana leaves (that night I was praying we could hide all the way to the LZ (LANDING ZONE). We made

our first run at the LZ at about equal distance from each canal or klong. Turns out Charlie thought we'd do just that and started putting up lots of rounds (judging from the amount of tracers) and our hide was getting pierced by lots of small arms fire - so much in fact that we broke off to seek another way to die. We kept the airplane configured for LAPES as we attempted a run from the south of our last track. About the only difference on our next run was that there were more tracers, but they were prettier; a brilliant green-usually noting - "made in the USA." On our third and final pass the Colonel and I looking at each other, saw blood in our eyes and knew that this was IT. So we slid over to the West side and headed in, finding Less fire (at least fewer tracers) so we pressed on in.

I knew that Charlie was setting up at the South end across the canals and that he would have a hot reception for us as we came off the LZ. Knowing this, I briefed the Colonel that I would be on the controls with him and for him to just follow through with me and we'd maybe get out of this thing after all. Colonel Mascot flew her steady and true, unflinching, then put the load on the ground smack dab on the money (you could almost hear the troops filling their bellies and lobbing out mortar rounds). Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that "Charlie" was thicker than hair on a dog's back just a few yards out from this crazy Lieutenant's little camp. As luck would have it, I got on the controls about the time the load hit the ground, and helped Colonel Mascot get ALL the power on (I think we bent the throttles), pull the nose almost vertical while watching the airspeed bleed off to somewhere above stalling (very important that) and kick the airplane over while your still at or above stall speed, all the while cleaning the bird up (gear up, flaps up, open cowl flaps, etc.) If it all turns out to the good you

See **Lapes** on page 21

are flying your bullet riddled machine home, and if it didn't Charlie's picking over your bones. Due to Colonel Mascot's skill, the Grace of God and some luck, we were on the way home. We didn't say anything for a while. Then he politely asked, "What the hell was that maneuver?" I explained it was a semi-crop dusting 180 degree turn invented to keep us from getting the balance of our asses shot off. I could tell from the looks he was giving me that he was thinking "is this guy nuts or what?" and re-evaluating me all over again. We flew on in silence with the Colonel terminating our mission with a perfect landing (not unlike I would have done!). We parked the bird, dropped off our reports at operations and headed for a big 'ol orange coke at the little gathering place. Colonel Mascot asked me if what he heard was true that I had a nickname. I said that they did indeed call me the GOMH, for Good Old Major Hagler, to which he replied "Don't send me any more of those stupid stories about bullet holes."

Speaking of those, we had acquired 136 holes along the way for the day.

I have only one regret-Colonel Mascot should have received a DFC for his courageous and skilled performance under fire that night. And I should have written his recommendation.

James E. Hagler, [536, 66]



## Midnight Venture

It's a stroke after midnight and someone's banging on the door. My roomie and counterpart, Loui De Marco, Line chief of the 535<sup>th</sup>, gets up. It's Msgt James Brown, first Sergeant, 536<sup>th</sup> saying to me, "The MPs have picked up two of your men and we have to go downtown and get them." Loui laughs and gets back in bed. Silently cursing the outer dark-

ness, I'm into my jungle fatigues and kick Loui's bed as I leave.

Waiting outside, Sgt Brown has his sidearm with him. Unarmed, I'm thinking maybe I should wear my track shoes. Nah! Sgt Brown's driving and I ask him, "You know how to get there?" I get a surly grunt..."Yep." He's been down this road before.

We get to scenic downtown Vung Tau, a.k.a. the "Waikiki of Vietnam" (stateside version) and head for the MP/Vietnamese police shack. Two burly MPs are standing behind a dimly lit counter, looking rough and ready. Once they see all the stripes we're wearing, they lighten up. They tell us that they picked up two Air Force personnel in civilian clothes in an off-limits area, and are holding them in the slammer. We listen to the details and they say we have to identify them first.

The slammer turns out to be an iron conex container out back. Its pitch dark back there, no lights, just foul-smelling water and some huge local vermin. We're not talking mousy rat here. These guys are really big, with extra long tails. The MP puts a beam of light on them but they don't move. They would just as soon stare you down rather than back off.

There's a small opening cut out on the conex door. Sgt Grown gets the flashlight and we peer in there. Sure enough, there are two of my finest, scared out of their wits. Can't blame 'em. But before they can come out we have to get the paperwork done and sign for their release. Then one of the MPs brings them out. They look none the worse for wear except one of them is sporting a freshly minted monkey bite. You know the kind.

I get behind the wheel as Sgt Brown turns to them and says, "what the hell happened?" "We got lost, Sarge!" "Yes you got lost! You might lose even more than you got now!" End of conversation.

We're rolling now, heading for the base. Once inside the gates, Sgt Brown says to go over to the dispensary. Straight down the main drag, a left turn and a hard right and we're there. We pile out and go in. Sgt Brown begins talking to the nurses and corpsman. Then as a precautionary measure, the two wayward lads are given a shot. Guys can never be too careful while serving in SEA and go off looking for a good time.

At the barracks, Sgt Brown flips on the lights. Guys stir in their bunks and look at the two adventurers. Sgt Brown is making a statement and punctuates it by saying, "...and were not going downtown at midnight again to bail anyone out of the slammer." Enough said.

Heading back to the villa, its almost 0230 hrs. Soon it'll be time to head back out again to get the first 'Bou off the ground. Loui is already up, working on a pack of Salems. On the Air Force radio station the DJ is spinning out the Beatles, "It's been a Hard Days Night, I've been a working like a dog." Yeah...yeah.

Ken Kimsou, [536, 67]



## What Did You Do in the Vietnam War, Daddy?

### My Assignment

One day back in the winter of 1966 when you kids were going to school in Grand Forks ND, your Mother was busy running the Base Youth Center and I was doing my thing as Maintenance Supervisor tending missiles scattered over eastern North Dakota. Without warning I was called into the Commander's office and informed I was to serve a one year tour of duty in Vietnam.

A talk with my neighbor Lt Col Clifford Marsh, Base Personnel Officer, revealed I was headed for an assignment to fly F-100s. Hot

See **Daddy** on page 22

**Daddy from page 21**

Doggie, I thought, a fighter jock. I'd always wanted to be a fighter pilot. I'd flown fighters before but never in combat. I envied those F-102 drivers screaming around the skies of North Dakota while I was down there tinkering around with boring, lifeless Minuteman missiles and getting my four hours a month in an old fashioned C-47.

I spent three weeks at the SAC Survival School at Fairchild AFB, WA. It was a change, but I couldn't stop thinking, with great anticipation, I'm going to be a fighter pilot, a hero, maybe even an Ace

Its tragic, Col Marsh informs me my orders to Vietnam have been changed, I'm going to C-7s instead of F-100s. "What in the world is a C-7?" I said. Nobody at Grand Forks AFB knew what a C-7 airplane was. I even checked with the base tech order library to see if they knew, no nothing. I found a guy who was supposed to know about all the new airplanes, he said he thought it was a new version of the C-5 only bigger. Well whatever it was it wasn't a fighter airplane. (I learned later the reason the USAF did not know about the C-7 was that the "Weapons System" had not yet been turned over to the USAF from the US Army.)

**Mission of the Caribou**

Our mission in Vietnam was clear cut. "Supply the US Army Special Forces camps with the essentials of life and the materials necessary to fight the war". There were over 100 of these small camps scattered throughout the remote jungles of Vietnam, most of them having a short unpaved airstrip adjacent to camp. That's where we came in, as air was their only means of supply with the outside world.

FM radio was their primary way to communicate with the Caribous and air navigation facilities were nil. We dead reckoned to the camps in bad weather.

There were six squadrons of Caribous operating out of three bases in Vietnam.; Cam Ranh, Vung Thu and Phu Cat, with our Wing Hqs at Cam Ranh. We serviced all the remote camps about once each week. Fresh food, US mail and PX items were always eagerly anticipated. It was a good feeling to see those isolated troopers come rushing out to greet the Caribous when we landed. Ammunition was almost always on their want list but much of our cargo was unique. Plus freight and passengers we carried live pigs, chickens, turkeys, cattle, we even delivered a small live elephant one time.

**The Officers and Airmen**

My seniority almost automatically made me a squadron commander. Soon after my arrival in Vietnam I was selected to lead the 458th squadron at Cam Ranh. I had two great Wing Commanders during my tour, Col Paul Mascot and Col William Mason. Working close to the Wing Hqs had its advantages but the disadvantages of being under the critical eye of a well staffed hierarchy was always present.

The rank-age structure of all of the Caribou squadrons was lopsided. We had an abundance of Lt. Cols and M/Sgts, then 2nd Lts and airmen basics started pouring in; we went from grandpas to high school grads. At one point our Squadron had 11 Lt Cols and 9 2nd Lts with a total of only 27 officers assigned.

Housing was comfortable. We scrounged furniture from every source imaginable and most all of us had a hi-fi or tape recorder. The officers holding key positions lived in mobile homes, rank and file in 6 to 8 man quonset huts. Enlisted personnel lived in tents with wooden frames and floors, called "Hooches". Latrines and showers, with hot water, were scattered thru-out the living areas.

The food was excellent. Compared with what we had in WWII or Korea, it was outstanding. Both officers and

enlisted ate in central dining halls, most were air-conditioned.

Some of the Squadrons constructed their own private club houses to host parties and get-togethers. We went to extremes to make these dwellings as luxurious as possible. Nurses were our target.

There were plenty of locals from the surrounding villages to do the manual labor and housekeeping. Everyone had a maid. Local Vietnamese were not allowed to remain on the base after dark.

**Wild West Rodeo**

We were loading about 6 live steers at Nha Trang for delivery to a special forces camp in the central highlands. The job became difficult when one stubborn animal decided he did not want to go. He resisted everything we did to get him up the loading ramp. We had suggestions on "how to" from everybody who even spent a weekend on a ranch. The steer broke loose and we chased him for several blocks down the main streets of Nha Trang until we finally cornered him in the town market place. It seemed like every human being in town had come out to watch this event.

He kicked and snorted all the way back to the airplane and all the way to our destination. After we landed, he got loose again and was galloping down the landing strip when the Green Beret in charge of the camp started shooting at him. Soon it was open season for everyone with a weapon. By the time we unloaded the rest of the cargo and got ready for take off the stubborn steer had been shot dead and they were dressing him for a feast.

**Touch Down on an Army Truck**

The Green Berets in the camp at Bu Krak were glad to see us, they had not received any mail or tasted fresh food for a couple of weeks. We circled the camp to let them know we were there and going to land but

the excitement of our arrival was

**Continued on page 23**

a little too much for the camp personnel. They came dashing out to the airstrip in their vehicles, including a six-by truck, right down the center of the dirt runway. As we touched down I felt a strange bump as our wheels touched the rough surface.

We taxied back to the parking area to unload. In conversation with the camp chief honcho he said our right landing gear had wiped the windshield completely off his truck and left two black skid marks on the hood. Luckily that was all the damage because the truck was evidently directly under the aircraft when we landed.

#### **Four Hands and One Pair of Gloves**

It was about three pm. We were flying in the hot Mekong Delta area and had a couple more missions to fly before our day's work would be over. The Command Post was calling us. They wanted us to land at Tan Son Nhut Airport and pick up Col. Mascot on our way back to Cam Ranh.

This did not bother us as it would be right on our way home. But Oh!, Col. Mascot was a stickler for gloves. He wanted all his pilots to wear them when they were flying, especially the Squadron Commanders who were to set a good example. I felt in the pocket of my flying suit, no gloves. I hated to fly with gloves on, especially in hot weather.

I asked my copilot if he had his gloves? Yes, guess he was setting a good example for me. I thought of an idea. If I wore one of my copilot's gloves on my right hand and he wore his left glove on his left hand and we kept our opposite hands out of sight, the Colonel would think we were complying with his wishes. On our next couple of missions that day we rehearsed this deceiving procedure. Our engineer was to watch and grade us on how we looked. He said we looked

great but what are you going to do if the Col wants to fly the airplane? That was academic, who ever ended up in the right seat would wear the copilot's gloves

We landed at Tan Son Nhut only to find out that Colonel Mascot had already found a ride home.

#### **Cave-man Avionics**

It was our first mission of the day with a load of supplies for Duc Xuyen, a remote Special Forces Camp in the flat delta about 50 miles north of Saigon. The morning weather was clear except for a solid layer of low stratus clouds covering the entire area. There was no way to know the cloud ceiling and no navigational aids to make a safe instrument approach.

We felt the clouds would burn off before we reached our destination so the weather was not a concern. We departed Bien Hoa using good old dead reckoning. When we calculated we were about over the camp, a call to the camp below confirmed we were close to our destination. The Beret on the radio said he could hear us up there circling and to come on down, the weather was fine, over a 500' ceiling. Experience had told us Green Berets were good fighters but not so good as weather men. A 500' ceiling could be anything from 50' to 1000'. We replied "no thanks we would just circle until the clouds burned off."

After about 5 minutes of circling, he called us back saying, "We have an idea, we will shoot a mortar shell straight up through the overcast and then you will know exactly where we are". Needless to say, we did not accept their offer. The weather soon improved and we were able to safely deliver our cargo.

#### **The Armed Saint**

I learned a simple rule of management from my career in SAC. Don't waste any time on any subject that your boss does not care about. If he keeps a chart on late take-offs, you keep one. Colonel Mason kept a chart on number of passengers carried and tons of

cargo. hauled for each of his squadrons

We had just finished a quick off-load at Duc Lap a busy little Special Forces camp in the highlands. A monk wearing the usual orange robe asked me if he could catch a ride back to wherever I was going. He didn't seem to care where he went and to me he just meant another passenger on the chart in my office.

The Special Forces NCO of the camp saw me loading the monk on the airplane and asked "Have you frisked him?" I replied that I was not in the habit of searching the clergy. He said you had better, as you never know who the enemy is around here. Well, the NCO did a search and found six live hand grenades in his hand-bag. He didn't get a ride in my Caribou and we did not wait to see his fate.

#### **The Rock and Roll Chicken Delivery**

A little old Vietnamese woman climbed aboard my Caribou at Tay Ninh, a small RVN base. She had a large round basket, so large it took two ladies to get it through the Caribou entrance door. The basket was filled with about two dozen noisy, live chickens.

The flight went as expected with the usual chatter among the 20 or so Vietnamese passengers when all of a sudden the lid came off the basket. The chickens starting flying in all directions inside the airplane, people were screaming and the bright sunlight from the cockpit attracted the birds forward to visit the crew. Feathers were flying everywhere, even my forward visibility was compromised. The "Fasten Seat Belt" sign had been turned off so the passengers felt free to run around and chase the chickens. With such a small airplane, this rapid movement of people created a noticeable weight and balance problem for the pilot.

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With the help of the engineer, it wasn't long before the chickens were all rounded up and tucked back in their basket and the passengers back in their seats. It was lucky for me the whole thing occurred at a safe altitude and in good flying weather.

**The Loss of Caribou No.175**

On November 30, 1967, we lost one of our Caribous along with two of our new and most promising pilots, an experienced engineer and 22 passengers. Major Tom Moore, a young but experienced airman with over 2000 flying hours, was the pilot, Major William Clark, was the copilot and S/Sgt Arturo Delgado was the engineer.

The crew had taken off from Pleiku and were attempting a landing at Qui Nhon to discharge passengers. The weather was unusually bad, heavy rain, visibility poor, and there was a strong off-shore cross wind. The Vietnamese control center was directing the airplane on a long final GCA approach with a cross wind of 30 to 35 knots. There were hills on the downwind side of the glide slope. About 5 miles from touchdown the control center lost contact with the airplane. It was here the Accident Board found the airplane. It was all over, no survivors.

I had flown by Qui Nhon about an hour earlier that day and intended to land but after listening to some of the disturbing conversations on a crowded tower frequency like, "look out for the masts on those sailboats, they stick up pretty high", I decided it wasn't worth it and flew on to my next destination..

It is a deep emotional feeling to me to visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington and see the names of those 25 Americans who lost their lives that afternoon.

This was the worst accident, in number of lives lost, the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing experienced during the Vietnam war.

**The Tet Offensive of 1968.**

This attack by the Communists came as a surprise to us. Col Smith and I were rudely awakened at 0330 on January 30th 1968 with the sound of sirens and the heavy vibration of artillery. A bit much for the folksy Chinese New Year's celebration we were expecting. Outside our mobile home the sky was alive with brilliant flares. We dressed and headed for the flight line to check the airplanes. None of the Caribous were damaged. Then a visit to the Command post to find out what was going on. Pleiku, Qui Nhon, Thy Hoa and Nha Trang were under attack. Nha Trang was special to me because we had 4 men stationed there and I was scheduled to fly one of the Special Forces missions out of there this day at 0630.

At about 0830 things started to quiet down and I felt I could make it to Nha Trang safely. It was only a ten minute flight. We found the airdrome quiet but the town was alive with activity. Helicopter gun ships were strafing, bird dog L-5s were shooting rockets right in the center of the city and A-1 Fighters were conducting air strikes in the hills west of the airdrome. Continuous automatic weapons fire filled the air. A Special Forces sergeant was shot in the leg while we were standing in a line for hot coffee.

Our load out of Nha Trang was a large diesel generator urgently needed at Da Nang. We were about half way up the coast when the Command Post called, ordering us back to Nha Trang; Da Nang had been closed due to enemy action. In addition all regular airlift missions were cancelled.

For the next few days the Caribous did what they do best; evacuating wounded, dropping paratroops, expediting the delivery of blood and medical supplies and delivering munitions to troops engaged in battle. Saigon was invaded and the Viet Cong had surrounded Tan Son Nhut airport cut-

ting air traffic to a dribble. The situation was serious, the enemy had taken the offensive.

MACV called on our Wing to furnish a C-7 to evacuate some high ranking dignitaries out of Saigon to a safe haven in Bangkok. Wing operations selected me for this mission. It was kind of like getting MacArthur out of the Philippines to Australia during WWII. I left Cam Ranh about 0600 on February 4th with a full load of fuel for Saigon ( all refueling had been suspended at Tan Son Nhut). After long delays of circling Saigon and then waiting for the VIPs to work their way through enemy activity in Saigon we took off for Bangkok. I don't remember much about the long flight to Bangkok; my complete attention had been devoted to the fuel gage. We landed at Don Muang (on fumes) with a Military Band to greet us.

**Jump Start**

It was Song Be, a camp due north of Saigon, bordering on Cambodia. This place got mortared almost every night. It was our last mission for the day and it was getting late. I knew the area well, dense jungle, a few hills and the camp located about two miles from the landing strip. To save time it was imperative that we get out of there before dark so I didn't take the time to make the usual 360 approach with a buzz of the strip before landing. Instead I used the landing lights to affirm we intended to land.

We shut down the engines. Every drop of fuel was needed to get us back to Cam Ranh. We didn't waste a minute off loading the airplane and loading the supplies into a six-by truck that had come from the camp to meet us. The troops from the camp were aware of the high danger of being mortared and started home in their hastily loaded truck..

We hopped back into the Caribou. I hit the starter switch and the worst happened, the battery was dead. I had

**Continued on page 25**



forgotten and left the landing lights on. I flipped on the HF radio to call our command post, one weak squawk and it petered out. We were in deep trouble.

The engineer scrambled to the top of the aircraft, yelling and waving with all his strength to the departing truck. By some stroke of luck one of the Green Berets on the truck saw him and the driver turned around and came back to see what our problem was.

Army six-by trucks have two large 12 volt batteries. Connected together in series makes 24 volts, just the voltage you need to start a Caribou and use the HF radio.

Relying on my previous maintenance experience, I knew if I could find a few pieces of heavy copper wire, I could jump start the airplane. Lots of barbed steel wire everywhere but no copper. Maybe we could use the barbed wire? By doubling the strands of wire we started one of the engines. The generator cut in, and the rest was academic.

The night flight back to Cam Ranh was uneventful. It was an unusual sight to see a Caribou out after dark. Our faithful crew chief and his support troops were out in the moonlight, glad to have us home.

### **The. No Engine Take Off**

Rumors were going around Caribou Hqs that I had attempted a take off without either of the two engines running. The younger 2nd Lts enjoyed talking about us older pilots' experiences and this one was of keen interest. Here are the facts behind this rumor;

We were at Dong Ba Thin, an older US Army airstrip across the bay from our home at Cam Ranh. We had finished our missions for the day and the only thing left was a five minute hop back home.

We could not start the left engine. The starter was burned out. We called our command post across the bay, told them of our problem. They wanted to send a vehicle over to pick

us up. We could leave the airplane safely at Dong Ba Thin for the night. It was a beautiful cool evening with two hours of daylight left. I told the command post to hold up on the transportation as I wanted to try an emergency procedure to start the engine.

I had heard of this procedure when I was attending aircraft maintenance school and had always wanted to try it. You must have an aircraft with nose wheel steering. You taxi out to the runway with your good engine, get lined up as though you were going to take off. With the feathering button on the dead engine you set the propeller blades at about a 45 degree angle from the feathered position. This the engineer does with the feathering motor circuit breaker. Now get the dead engine ready to start, switch on, mixture rich, prime, etc. Start taxiing down the runway as fast as you can until the dead engine starts to windmill, then quickly start the dead engine, slam on the brakes and unfeather the propeller. With both engines now running, taxi back to take off position and take off as though nothing was wrong.

We called Dong Ba Thin tower, told them we were going to use the runway for a few minutes and not to get excited about the antics we might be doing with our injured Caribou.

Everything went fine until we got to the point where you unfeather the propeller on the (used to be) dead engine. My copilot, with practically no experience in propeller driven airplanes, got confused and feathered the good engine, leaving us with no engines.

We enjoyed our trip back to Cam Ranh in a jeep.

### **Bon Voyage**

No one that I can recall ever had a better send-off from Vietnam.

Saying goodbye to such a wonderful group of people was hard to do. We truly had a premier airlift squadron. I learned at my next assignment

the 458th Tactical Airlift Squadron continued to excel in all respects.

In looking back, I realize flying the Caribou in Vietnam was not a piece of cake. We were almost continually being shot at or being mortared. Thank God we were able to do our job well and so many of us came home safely to tell these stories.

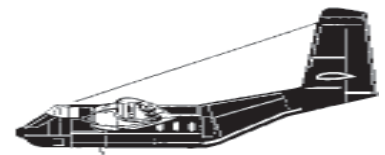
Good night kids,

Your Dad

*The foregoing are some highlights from a detailed diary I kept during the Vietnam conflict in 1967-1968.*

Bob Scudder, [458, 67]

*Due to space constraints Bob's article had to be edited. There are several more good stories that Bob might send to us later. Ed*



## **Low Flight**

Oh, I have slipped through swirling clouds of dust,

A few feet from the dirt,  
I've flown the Caribou low enough  
To make my bottom hurt,

I've flown in the desert, hills and valleys,  
Mountains too,  
Frolicked in the trees,  
Where only flying squirrels flew.

Chased the frightened cows along,  
Disturbed the ram and ewe,  
And done a hundred other things  
That you'd not care to do.

I've streaked through total darkness,  
Just the other guys and me,  
And spent the night in terror of  
Things I could not see.

I turned my eyes to heaven,  
As I sweated through the flight,  
Put out my hand and touched,  
The Fire Warning Light.

**Author unknown**

## Early Morning Excitement

The first mission of the day, Iris 456, is already airborne, on time at 0405 hrs. We've got two turning on the second 'Bou and walking him out to the taxiway that also serves as the active runway. It's a fraction away from 0430 hrs, making another on-timer at 0435 hrs almost in the books. As soon as he is out of sight we will police up the ramp and head for the chow hall. Just another routine morning.

We wait as the crew chief gives a thumbs up and a high ball to the pilot and moves toward the back of the aircraft to get his toolbox. That's when it hits! Just off to the left of the runway the rocket plows into the ground lighting up the morning sky. In all my years of sweating takeoffs I've never seen an aircraft get off the blocks this quick. But of course this "Bou had an added incentive!

From a standing start, the twin R-2000's didn't even cough once and the 'Bou was gone! The crew chief's toolbox came flying out the back, scattering his tools all over the PSP. We scattered too!! Funny thing though, Charlie only lobbed one rocket. Maybe that's all he had.

Quicker than you can say "One shot Charlie," an AC-47 gunship was right on top of him, raining tracers down. It was like watching Christmas tree lights. The tracers would come down from the gunship and the lights from the tracers appeared to be going back up again. I've never seen anything like it, and being right up close – a fantastic sight!

There never was another rocket strike before or after this one at "Vung Tau International" that I can recall. Fortunately no one was injured during this highly dangerous and unexpected attack. We were in the right place at the right time in witnessing an event that one generally only reads of or hears about happening some place else.

Ken Kimseu, 536, 67



## Discovering McDonalds

I'm hanging out by the expediter truck with Mac (SSGT McCormick) and the crew chiefs, waiting for their 'Bous to return. Its after 1630 hrs on a hot afternoon. Maintenance Control calls. Capt A (Donald Abbinanti) wants me in the office.

Soon as I get in Capt A says, "We have to turn in the names for Crew Chief of the Month, Airman of the Month, and NCO of the Quarter." Yes sir, we're gonna take care of the troops that take care of the 'Bous. Capt A has the fan going, pushing hot air around the room. Its plenty hot this time of day.

I kinda know who the "suspects" are, but for the record I thumb through the files and aircraft forms. Who's got

the most on-time-take-offs? OTTO is Our Motto...an old SAC terminology. What "Bou has accrued the most flying time, has the least number or repeat write-ups, and how much stuff is being carried forward in the Delayed Discrepancy Report, etc., etc., etc. Who got upgraded and/or promoted, assigned as Crew Chief – just the facts. It's a hot afternoon to be doing this.

Capt A is slouched down in his chair, feet up on the desk, cap pulled down to his eyes, rolling a pencil between the palms of his hands. The only sound is coming from the fan blades biting into the hot air.

I got all the info I need and look over at Capt A. After a while he senses me watching him, straightens up in his chair and says, "You wanna go get a beer?" Not one to let routine administration duties impede an important social invitation, I slam the file cabinet shut. On the way out I poke my head in Maintenance Control and tell them I'll be on the radio – Cobra One.

Capt A is waiting in his jeep. I follow him in mine, not having the slightest idea where we're going. About a quarter mile out the gate, he makes a left turn, like we're going towards the nurses quarters. Another quarter mile we turn off onto a little dirt road, hardly more than a foot-path wide, and drive into a clearing among a grove of trees. We back in about three or four yards. I could see the traffic going by but no one could see us in there. When we turned off, there were two yellow palm trees that droop towards each other. With a little imagination, a guy could swear he was at a MacDonalds! Who would've believed that? But hey! I'm here with a commissioned officer and that has to bear some truth, no doubt.

There;s a wood burning oven that cranks out roasted crabs, there's French bread wrapped in newsprint and of course the local favorite, Bon De Bon beer! I tell Capt A about the "Golden Arches" and he laughs, saying he and his buddies were here to ring in the '68 New Year along with some, ah, invited guests.

The beer was cooling in a metal tub with melting ice, not real chilled, but who's to complain? I'm thinking, someday, Lord willing, when I'm out of here I might remember enough to write about it. Another 'Bou tale to tell.

Kenn Kimseu, [536, 67]



## Four Caribous Move 1200 in One Day

**From the Caribou Country Clarion, Cam Ranh Bay , May 1969** By CAPT FRED A. MEURER

Back they came again and again, those four twin-engined Caribous, and when the sun set that first day, the job which was to have taken the better part of two days of continuous flying had been completed.

The mission was to move a tribe of Montagnard families - some 1,200 people - from an outlying Civilian Irregular Defense group (CIDG) camp to a location in the interior. The job fell to the 458th TAS based here at Cam Ranh Bay. But why Caribous—whose capacity is limited compared to larger transports - to move all those people and belongings?

A glance at the red clay landing strip at the Bu Krak site provides the answer. It is 1,840 feet long, 40 feet wide. Near one end the runway takes a gradual 35 foot dip. The strip is not level; it banks to the right for several hundred yards and then to the left - much like a “whip-the-whip” ramp on a carnival midway back home. The whole thing is perched on a hilltop with sheer drops on either end.

“The Caribou is the only aircraft that can land here,” marveled Army Capt. Lawrence M. Kerr, American commander of the hilltop camp. “Even light observation planes come in only in an emergency.”

Four C-7s left Cam Ranh before first light that Sunday morning. The plan was to fly into the camp, one after another, and with engines running, take on a load of passengers. Then a quick takeoff and flight to the inland base and off-loading there, engines still running. Take off again, return to the CIDG strip, more passengers, return, and so on through the day.

With each of the Caribou moving about 35 people at a time it looked as though the C-7s would have to fly for two days to move the 1,200,

But Lt. Col. Frederick R. Beal, movement coordinator for the 458th TAS, glanced at his watch at 1:40 p.m. He said they had moved 756 people already—and a few dogs,

“We didn’t expect to move over 800 all day.” he smiled. “Things couldn’t be going smoother.”

Beal, who has been flying for 30 years, said: “They sent me here to watch that we don’t over-load the aircraft. When a plane lands, we load from 32 to 36 people, depending on fuel, and also the equipment the people are carrying. I just count as they get on and cut them off when I have to.”

The ‘Bou, he said, can carry from 4,600 to 5,000 pounds, depending on fuel remaining. On this day, they were spending an average of seven minutes on the ground before taking off with a new load of passengers.

A typical turn-around was observed when C-7A No. 162, kicking up red dust, touched down at 12:57:30. Piloted by Col. Keith L. Christensen, Vice commander of the 483rd TAW, it taxied over to the waiting line of passengers. The ramp was lowered and 34 people trooped aboard. Col. Beal brought out soft drinks for the laboring crew who stayed on board, and a quick discussion between air and ground crews followed.

Meanwhile, the 34 passengers were being placed in the seats and strapped in. The walk-up ramp was removed. But then from the aircraft came the call for one more man, who came running, complete with an overloaded backpack. He was literally lifted into the ‘Bou’s back end by two captains, one Army and one Air Force.

The hatch closed, propellers, speeded up, and in a cloud of red dust and a hail of flying pebbles, the Caribou rolled back onto the runway. Dust swirling, it hurried down the strip, down the 35 foot dip, up the other side, and the wheels left the ground at 1:05 p.m. This one had been slow; it took seven and a half minutes.

Watching the Caribous operate, Army Capt. Howard M. MacDonald, ground liaison officer (GLO) for the 12th TFW who was coordinating Army - USAF efforts in the movement, remarked: “If anyone ever doubted the capability of that airplane, they’d be convinced if they saw this operation. The C-7 is a marvelous bird - and that’s an understatement.”

The entire operation took about 12 hours. Each of the four Caribous flew either seven or eight round - robins from the CIDG strip to the inland base - and back.

Through the day, they flew 65 total sorties and transported 1,207 Montagnards; flew a total of 42.6 hours (10.7 each) and carried a total of 16.8 tons. This included five tons of rice they returned to the CIDG camp after

unloading passengers on the circuits.

Flying with Col. Christensen were 1st Lt. Parker W. Rosenquist, co-pilot, and Sgt. George M. Pierce, flight mechanic.

Manning the other Caribous were: Capt. Thomas H. Mosiaman 1st Lt. Robert N. Herndon and SSgt. Donald V. Sutterfield; Lt. Col. Edward J. Thielen, 1st Lt. James A. Gray and SSgt. William T. Frye; and 1st Lt. John H. Sandrock, 1st Lt. James M. Smith and SSgt. Michael T. Murray.

Meanwhile, back at the inland base, an Air Force Major and an Army Captain, caked with dirt by day’s end, were speeding operations there. They were Maj. Robert E Baltzell of the 458th and Capt. James M. Brogdon, another GLO for the 12th TFW.

The involved operation came within two weeks of the day two years ago when the Army turned operational control of the C-7A over to the Air Force on Feb. 1, 1967.



## You Might Be a Crew Chief If:

If... you ever stuck a straight pin into an ignition harness in order to stay in Reno one more night.

If... you ever cleaned suspicious brown matter out of a pee tube. Or told a new mechanic that the pee tube was non electronic crew intercom.

If... you flew from Vung Tau to Saigon more than once for your bleary-eyed, hungover pilot who needed to “rest a few minutes.”

If... you’ve heard the phrase, “What you see here, stays here,” more than five thousand times.

If... you ever pulled the “three in the green” circuit breaker when a new pilot was attempting his first landing.

If... you ever smuggled San Miguel beer in the overhead.

If... you ever forgot to pull the gear lock pins and tried to blame it on the ground crew.

Allies from page 15

tars and 122mm rockets. There have been no reports as yet of NVA gunners using conventional artillery howitzers, the sources said.

The sources said that savage fighting broke out again five miles south of Dak Seang Tuesday morning and that another less heated battle took place in the afternoon, but that casualty figures are not yet available.

In Monday's action, two ARVN Ranger battalions clashed several times with NVA forces four miles south of the camp and killed 196 while ARVN officials estimate another 270 enemy were killed by artillery and air strikes. ARVN officials said the Rangers lost nine dead and 18 wounded.

Later Monday evening enemy gunners shelled a Ranger battalion position at Fire Suppor Base Tango four miles south of Dak Seang but caused no casualties, according to ARVN spokesmen.

Flying combat resupply for the embattled Special Forces and CIDG troops at Dak Seang were C-7 Caribou crews from the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing which has lost three of the twinpropeller cargo pplanes and nine crewmen since the fight-

ing began there on April 1, according to Air Force spokesmen.

As late as Sunday, the enemy controlled the Dak Seang runway and air drops were the only way to get ammunition, food and medical supplied to troops inside. "A large percentage of the supplies" landed inside the drop zone and were recovered, according to Air Force officials. They said that all equipment not recovered by the Allies was demolished by US. Fighters.

The Air Force termed the antiaircraft fire around Dak Seang : "some of the most vicious encountered by the Caribous in the entire Vietnam conflict" and said the barrage continued despite bombing runs and smoke screens laid down by A1

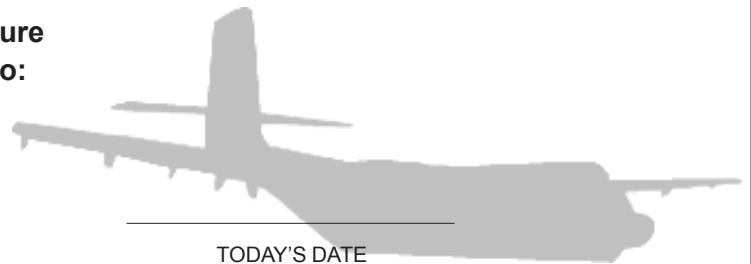
Skyraiders and F100 Super Sabres.

In I Corps – the five northern most provinces of South Vietnam – enemy troops once again attacked an element of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div. (Mech), in a single defensive position near the DMZ, according to U.S. officials. The American armor troops fought back with heavy machinine guns and tank main guns, killing 16 NVA troops while suffering one killed and 11 wounded during the early morning battle just four miles south of the DMZ, U.S. spokesmen reported.

**VITAL STATISTICS: June 2004**

**Check your vital statistics and mail label to insure that the information is correct. Send changes to:**

C-7A Caribou Association  
 Attn: Jim Collier  
 5607 Jolly Ct.  
 Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2707



TODAY'S DATE

TAX YEAR	SQUADRON ARRIVAL YR.	RANK	AREA CODE	TELEPHONE
LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE INITIAL		
STREET ADDRESS				
CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE PLUS 4	E-MAIL ADDRESS	



ASSOCIATION

VIETNAM

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