

C-7A Caribou Association

20th Caribou Reunion in Branson, MO from 2-6 Sept.

Place: The Lodge of the Ozarks, 3431 West Highway 76, Branson, MO 65616. The hotel has 190 guest rooms with the usual amenities. Our War Room is the Club Vegas on the main floor. Rafters restaurant, also on the main floor, will be available for meals that are not on the agenda. A wide variety of restaurants and fast food places are within walking distance.

Hotel Reservations: The room block is under “C-7A Caribou Group” (\$99.40/night inclusive of taxes). To reserve a room, call 877-327-9894. Identify yourself with the Association so that you get our special room rate and the Association gets credit for the reservation (our prices are contingent upon meeting certain minimum registration requirements). Please note that hotel reservations are the responsibility of the attendee and are not included in

any fees paid to the Association.

Hotel Check In: The check in time is 3:00 PM or later, but we are working to get that moved up. Unless the hotel is full the night before, some rooms may be available a little earlier.

Weather: The historical averages for September are highs of 82° F., lows of 55° F., and monthly rainfall of 4.2 inches.

Transportation:

By Car: Branson is on US 65 and the hotel is west of US 65.

By Commercial Air: Branson’s new airport opens in May, or you can fly into Springfield, MO which is 40 miles north of Branson. Rental cars, taxi service, and shuttle bus service are available.

Reunion Registration: Note that items on the registration form in **bold type** are **required** items to register. Register for the reunion with Pam Brown of **Gatherings Plus** (417-338-4048). A 50% deposit is **required** with the registration form, with final payment due **AUGUST 3**. There will be a 90% refund for individuals who cancel by **AUGUST 23**. No refunds can be made after that date. Cancellations must be made by phone and authorized by a representative of “Gatherings Plus.” Upon arrival you will pick up your name tag and registration package at the reunion table. If you do not pre-register, every effort will be made to accommodate last minute arrivals, but we cannot guarantee the availability of an event due to varying prior-notice requirements for transportation, tickets, and 72 hour advance meal counts. Registration will take place from noon to 4:00 PM

on 2 September in the hotel lobby. For those who will not be arriving in that time period, just seek out the War Room and someone will take care of you. If you arrive before noon, come on in and help set up the War Room!

The **War Room** is large and will accommodate 300 people. It will be outfitted with tables to sit around and catch up with old acquaintances. It will open at noon on 2 September, closing at 11:00 PM, and then be available from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM on 3-5 September and from 7:00 AM until noon on 6 September. Exception: During periods when reunion attendees are away at “off-campus” events, e.g., shows, tours, banquet, the War Room will be closed (locked up) unless an Association volunteer agrees to act as War Room monitor. The Caribou Association – not the Lodge of the Ozarks – will be responsible for War Room security throughout the reunion.

Breakfast: On 3 through 6 September, a free Continental Breakfast of cereal, pastries, coffee, and juice will be available.

Activities: The following (optional) shows and activities are planned: reception, Clay Cooper Country Music Express, #1 Hits of the 60’s (**added to their schedule in response to our request - y’all come**), Dixie Stampede dinner and show, Ride the Ducks, Legends in Concert, Showboat Branson Belle (cruise with dinner and show), Shopping (for the Ladies), 50’s At the Hop, Reunion Banquet.

Reunion Flyer (with registration form) will be mailed in May and will have details and schedule.

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

Elected Officers and Board Members....

President/Chairman of Board - Peter Bird [535, 71]
Vice President/Board Member - Pat Hanavan [535, 68]
Treasurer/Board Member - Mike Murphy [537, 68]
Secretary/Board Member - Al Cunliffe [458, 68]
Board Member at Large - Jerry York [537, 67]
Board Member at Large - Fred Dimon [535, 68]
Board Member at Large - Bob Neumayer [459, 69]

Appointed Positions

Bereavement Chairman - Jay Baker [535, 66]
Chaplains - Sonny Spurger [537, 68], Jon Drury [537, 68]
Historian - Robert Blaylock [457,70]
Newsletter Editor - Pat Hanavan [535, 68]
Reunion 2009 Planner - George Harmon [537, 69]
Reunion Advisor - Wayne DeLawter [458, 66]
Webmaster - Peter Bird [535, 71]
President Emeritus - Nick Evanish [457, 66]
Chaplain Emeritus - Bob Davis [457, 69]

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 457th Mike Thibodo [457, 70], phone 651-483-9799
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President's Corner

Coming out of a terrific reunion and into the new year, we encountered some setbacks. We were deeply saddened by the loss of Jim Collier, who put so much effort into making our Association such a successful one. Jim was the heart and soul of the C-7A Caribou Association for many years and his passing is a major milestone in our history. Just as another reminder of our inevitable mortality, we also lost Wilson Petefish. These men were the pioneers in building this organization and they have left it to us to continue their work. I hope we can make them proud.

The issue on the top of everyone's mind as far back as the last business meeting is the venue for the 2009 reunion. We had originally planned for the Macon, Georgia area, with a memorial bench dedication at the Robins AFB museum. Alas, the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry, and such was the case in Macon. We have officially moved the 2009 reunion, our 20th, to Branson, Missouri. It takes place from September 2-6. There are preliminary details in this issue. I apologize for the delay in



getting this information out, but we tried very hard to keep to the original plan and didn't abandon it until we had no choice. We will still try to put together a gathering at Robins AFB, as we have made arrangements for a memorial bench just like the one at NMUSAF to be delivered to the Robins museum. It will be safely cared

for by the museum until we can get there to dedicate it. For our 20th reunion, we are planning a purely entertainment-oriented social event. Sign up early — it should be fun!

I would like to know what happened to all those reunion survey forms! We have received exactly 26 of them. How can we plan when we don't know what you like and don't like? Dig out that last newsletter (or pick it up on the web site) and take a few minutes to send a completed survey to Al Cunliffe. This really helps our planning.

We need volunteers! Now that we have established the dates and location of Reunion 20, we are in dire need of volunteers to help staff memorabilia sales, the War Room, the registration desk, and other tasks. Reunions are a lot of work and are done on a volunteer basis. It's a great way to meet a lot of new people and make new friends. If you're willing to help out, just let me, George Harmon, or Pat Hanavan know.

For those of you who haven't noticed, Pat Hanavan is compiling a list of major awards and decorations (DFC and above) received by Association members in Caribou service. You will find a link to the data collected to date on the Latest News page of the web site. If you have a AFC, SS, or DFC, please send a copy of the citation to Pat so that we can add it to the growing list.

Finally, I hope to see all of you in Branson this coming September!

James L. Collier

Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)
[537, 67]



The C-7A Caribou Association lost one of its most influential members, Lt. Col. Jim Collier, on December 27, 2008. Beginning in 1998, Jim continuously served this association longer than anyone as a member of the board of directors. From 1998 through 2006, Jim was intensely involved in providing leadership and incorporating business practices to the office of the Treasurer. He also expanded the membership and maintained meticulous data during his years as Secretary. Jim was a proactive, hands-on worker who responded, usually via phone calls, to the many questions from both our members and potential members. His personal interaction with so many made him arguably one of the best known and respected members of the C-7A Caribou Association. This was evidenced by the fact that at reunions he was surrounded by those he befriended over the years.

One of the techniques Jim used effectively in recruiting a member to serve on the board was to first approach that member's wife. Only after he convinced the wife that her husband was essential to the organization did he talk the potential board member into serving. He was cunning and very effective – I know because he drew me back into

the fold a couple of times.

It was probably because of Jim's wife, Betty, and her support of him that he understood the importance of having the wife as a part of the team. We've heard about how Nancy Reagan may have been the one who made many of the executive decisions during President Reagan's years in office. Well, I know for a fact that while Jim was determined in the decisions that he made for the association, more often than not, if questioned why he believed so strongly about something, it came out that it was because Betty made or developed the decision – and Betty was always right.

While those of us who worked closely with Jim now mourn his loss, Jim would want us to reflect on all the good times we've had in working with him to make the C-7A Caribou Association the great organization that it is today.

Remembrance by Wayne DeLawter

Frankfurt Controller

The German air controllers at Frankfurt Airport are renowned as a short-tempered lot. They not only expect one to know one's gate parking location, but how to get there without any assistance from them. So it was with some amusement that we listened to the following exchange between Frankfurt ground control and a British Airways 747, call sign Speedbird 206.

Speedbird 206: "Frankfurt, Speedbird 206, clear of active runway."

Ground: "Speedbird 206. Taxi to gate Alpha One-Seven."

The BA 747 pulled onto the main taxiway and slowed to a stop.

Ground: "Speedbird, do you not know where you are going?"

Speedbird 206: "Stand by, Ground, I'm looking up our gate location!"

Ground (with quite arrogant impatience): "Speedbird 206, have you not been to Frankfurt before?"

Speedbird 206 (coolly): "Yes, twice in 1944, but it was dark, – and I didn't land."

Post Office Kudo

by Paul L. Peoples [459, 67]

During the siege of Khe Sanh in Jan–Feb 1968, the strip was largely destroyed, preventing the C-130's and C-123's from landing. Most of the resupply of the 26th Marines was made by paradrop and low-level extraction from C-130's. Only the C-7A could land. Crews of the 459th were shuttling from the Marine base at Hue Phu Bai to Khe Sanh taking troops and essential parts in and KIA and wounded out. Since the paradrops were consuming large numbers of parachutes, we also hauled back the chutes – usually wet and of unknown weight.

As a sideline, we often took in a case or two of beer, cooled enroute. These were traded for 50 lb. cases of steaks air dropped to the Marines. Their reefers had been destroyed early in the siege and they had no way of keeping the large quantities of prime beef raining down upon them. The trade was satisfactory to all concerned.

On one such mission, I was moving troops from Hue Phu Bai to Khe Sanh. A Gunnery Sergeant Mayo supervised the engines running on-load of the troops at Hue Phu Bai with a voice of command unlike anything I have ever heard!! On the second shuttle, he came up to the cockpit with a fiberboard box. It was about 20" square and 10" deep, covered with transparent plastic. Inside, visible from the top was a birthday cake addressed to a Lance Corporal and a few inscriptions such as "kill the Cong."

As Gunny Mayo explained to me, the cake made it all the way from the States to Phu Bai and he expected me to get it to Khe Sanh. After landing at Khe Sanh, I personally delivered the cake to the Aerial Port guys with a request to try to find the birthday boy. The C-7's were "mortar magnets" while on the ground at Khe Sanh, so we got off as the first ranging rounds were coming in. To this day I often wonder if that Lance Corporal got his birthday cake.

Prop For My Pop

by Jonathan Bird

It all began a few weeks after my dad returned from the 2008 Caribou Association reunion. He was showing me pictures from the event and was obviously excited to have been able to see all his friends in the Association again, as well as be a part of events at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. On the way home, with Christmas on the way, I was thinking about possible gift ideas for my dad, and I kept coming back to some kind of a gift having to do with the Caribou.

I remembered my dad mentioning that PenTurbo in NJ was retrofitting Caribou airframes with newer engines and avionics for modern use, and then I wondered if an original prop would be available. I knew the props were huge, so a full prop would be a difficult item to display in a house with 8 foot ceilings, however ... a single blade wouldn't be too large.

When I got home, I googled PenTurbo, found their number and gave them a call. Joe, the Vice President answered the phone. I introduced myself and explained my situation. I asked if they had any old props sitting around that they were willing to part with. Joe explained that the props are made of a valuable aluminum alloy, and they had been scrapping the props for the aluminum. He promised to scour the warehouse for one and call me back. I expected to have to chase him down for it, but to my surprise he called back an hour later and said he found one and asked me how much I wanted to pay. After a bit of old fashioned haggling, we agreed upon a price. Then there was the issue of getting it.

Joe wanted cash, and he didn't want to ship it. I figured I was going to have to drive down to get it. From Massachusetts to southern NJ is a good 8 hour drive each way for me, so this was looking to be quite an undertaking for a Christmas present. Then I had an idea!

As an active member of a Ferrari chat site (www.ferrarichat.com) for many years, I had become friends with dozens of Ferrari owners all over the country who shared my interest in the Ferrari 308 (which many of you will remember as the car Magnum P.I. drove in the 1980's). I posted a query in the 308 section of ferrarichat, asking if a "308 Brother" as we call ourselves, could help me out by picking the prop blade up in NJ and sending it to me via UPS, with me paying all the costs, of course.

After a few posts back and forth figuring out where the prop was and who was closest, I got several offers to go pick it up. Finally, a guy named Steve whom I have known through the site for 5 years, but have never met, mentioned that he was going to be driving from NJ up to MA for Thanksgiving to visit his sister, and would be happy to bring it to me. But he was 175 miles from the prop and was hoping someone else could bring it to him. Soon, another "brother" named Clyde, who I had actually met at the Formula One race in Montreal the year before, volunteered to drive down, pick up the prop blade, and deliver it to Steve. I called Joe at PenTurbo back, and asked how large it was.

"Oh, I don't know, about 5 feet tall and maybe 50 pounds," was the answer.

I relayed this information to Clyde, who decided that it was going to fit just fine in his Ferrari, and made for a perfect excuse for a nice fall drive. As it turned out, Clyde drove 350 miles round trip that day to pick up the prop. But, when he arrived at PenTurbo to pick it up, he found it a tad larger than 5 feet. It is in fact over 6 feet tall, and wouldn't fit in the car! He ended up wrapping his jacket around it, and rolled the window down to get it into the passenger seat of the little two-seater sports car. He drove to Steve's house in 30 degree weather, with the window down, and a Caribou prop sticking out the side of the car!

When he reached Steve's house in



northern NJ, they took pictures, had a couple laughs, and posted the pictures on ferrarichat.com. By now, hundreds of people were following this story as it unfolded on the internet, completely unknown to my dad. As it was approaching Christmas, there was a lot of goodwill in the air, and everyone agreed that the 308 brothers were truly at their best when helping each other out.

I was truly touched by this incredible assistance from these two guys that I barely knew and others were too, as well-wishes poured in to our ferrarichat thread from around the world.

Steve and I made plans to meet at my house the day after Thanksgiving. He drove up to his sister's house with the prop blade the day before Thanksgiving and of course posted his progress on ferrarichat — giving a better update on the status than you can even get with FedEx and a tracking number!



The day after Thanksgiving, only a week after the plan began, Steve arrived at my house with the prop blade. I had invited all the local 308 brothers to meet him, so we had an informal party at my house with some beer and

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Prop For My Pop (from Page 4)

munchies. More funny pictures were taken with everyone posing around the prop blade. The blade was in remarkable condition! My dad would love it! It weighed in at 73 pounds, by the way.

We stashed the blade in my garage to wait until Christmas.

The night before Christmas, I wrestled it into the family room and stood it up in the corner, wrapped loosely in paper to disguise its shape. On Christmas morning, with the whole family here, we held off until most of the gifts were opened before telling “Granfa” (what my kids call my dad) that the big present in the corner was his. He looked perplexed as he walked over. He grabbed the top and said “It feels like a prop or something.” Then he ripped the paper off and looked closely at the



Hamilton Standard sticker on the prop, still in excellent shape.

“Is this what I think it is?” He asked.

Quantity one, genuine Caribou prop blade! Who knows...it may have even come from a plane he flew.

Now my dad is undertaking a bit of a restoration of the blade and I hope that it will become a favorite part of his Air Force memorabilia collection. In a lot of ways, the story of how it came to be his is better than the gift itself. But I have to imagine that for someone so

deeply and passionately involved with the Caribou, this is a pretty cool piece of memorabilia — short of an entire plane, that is. I’m working on it for next year, but getting it here is going to take more than an a Ferrari ride!

The entire ferrarichat.com thread can be seen here at <http://www.ferrarichat.com/forum/showthread.php?t=222819>

You will need to create a free account and log in to see the pictures. It’s worth it! – Jonathan Bird

Aussie Bous

by Don Melvin [18, 70]

We still had one C-7 squadron (38 Sqn at Amberley AFB near Brisbane), albeit they were down to 14 aircraft. Very late last year one of their Bous was operating in Papua New Guinea assisting the PNG Govt. For the past 30 or 40 years every Caribou Conversion Course does a two-week ‘PNG Trainer’ to get them into the mysterious realm of short, jungle strips coupled with the very high density-altitude (some of the strips have elevations of 6000 ft. plus). That’s when they learn that landing distance is dictated by TAS and not IAS!

After what the grapevine tells me was a ‘firm’ landing at a short strip they stopped to have a look. There was no damage to the “crush indicator” on the struts, but one wing appeared to be “unusual.” Detailed inspection revealed that there was a large fatigue-corrosion failure in an area that would not be seen in anything less than a major inspection.

The Bou was scheduled to begin phasing out in 2010, with a new type introduced into service in 2012. We got our first Bous in 1964 and the last one in 1969/70 – a service life of 45 years!! Our first six never saw Australia until they came home from Vietnam late 1971/early 1972. They were on delivery flights from Canada, but, when they arrived at RAAF Butterworth (Penang,

Malaysia) the crews were told to get on a C-130, come home to kiss wife and kids, go back to pick up the birds, and fly them directly to Vietnam!!

The remaining Bous will now cease service by the end of this year. As an interim measure until a replacement is decided, the RAAF will take over three King Air B350s from the Army and an as yet unspecified number of additional B350s will be leased to form what could only be called a Communications Squadron.

This is designed purely to keep a number of pilots current (plus give them experience in turbo-prop and modern “glass cockpits”) and to get our “groundies” working on turbine engines and modern systems as a prelude to operating whatever we are going to buy.

We agree that the only thing that will replace a Bou would be a more modern Bou, but the choice really is between the EADS CASA C-295 and the C-27J Spartan. The C-295 is the cheaper, but it has been around for a number of years now.

The RAAF prefers the C-27J – it is a deal more expensive than the other, but it carries more over longer ranges and apparently is not too different to the C-295 so far as landing/take-off requirements are concerned. The biggest factor in its favour is its commonality with the C-130J-30s we’ve acquired in recent years – it has the same engines & props, a high degree of commonality in cockpit layout and equipment and I understand that even the systems are very similar ... the advantages of this from a logistic support viewpoint are obvious.

The ‘ground pounders’ are also adding new heavy-lift helos to their “wish list” to replace their aging CH-47C Chinooks (which were ‘inherited’ from the RAAF – rather like your Bous were inherited from the US Army), but we all know that the Army still looks upon aircraft as “winged tanks”! Besides, if God had meant the Army to fly, He’d have painted the sky brown!!!

What I Remember About the Crash at Tien Phuoc re: Shortest Tour

by John Mood [457, 69]

Christmas had been spent flying 9-10 sorties out of Bien Hoa, shuttling troops and supplies. The next day, I was goofing off doing nothing. Sometime that early morning a call to the hooch from the squadron told me to get my young Lt.'s a** down to the wing immediately. I could almost see the 483rd TAW HQ from our compound, so I was there ASAP. After all was said and done, within an hour a maintenance officer (maybe Lt. Rex Sides) and myself were on board a C-130 heading north to Chu Lai. After the short flight, we thought we'd be able to get some food and drink. Wrong! A Huey was awaiting our arrival with blades turning. Bag in hand, .38 revolver on the hip, and the 2nd Lt. in tow, we jumped on the chopper and we're off to Tien Phuoc. Where you say? We didn't know either, as us southern flyers didn't do much "I Core" work. On board, we were told our destination was 24 miles west of Chu Lai and an easy ride. Right! Before we could spit, the 50 cal. was offloading empty shell casings at my feet. They are noisy! The weather wasn't cooperating either. Soon we were ducking under the clouds and skimming across the trees. A beautiful sight if you don't mind the fact that at any moment, your blood could be splattered all over the place.

We arrived unscathed and landed in a light rain amidst what seemed like a lot of grunts. We found out later that Tien Phuoc was a combined artillery base and Special Forces camp. The maintenance officer and I were told to hop into the jeep and we'd be driven out to the crash site. Crash you say? Maybe I left out a few details at the onset.

As the Recorder on the 483rd TAW Accident Investigation Board, I was on

a short string for any accident or incident in the wing. This was my second investigation with only nine months in country, thus the summons to HQ, the quick plane trip, and a heart stopping "woop-woop" ride to the camp. Back at CRB we were told only that a Caribou from Phu Cat had crashed on landing — no other details. By the time we arrived, we had lots of questions.

Off we went to the crash site a mile or so from the aerodrome. It took about 10 minutes thru muddy streets of the local town and then a long stretch of road into another small village. We were told the plane crashed on final into a rice paddy. As we got close, we could see what looked to be the butt side of the fuselage and tail thru the trees, bamboo, and betel nut palms. Another few minutes of walking a muddy trail got us close to the site. Oh s***, what a mess! It eventually would take several days to figure out how the heck a Caribou could be so twisted out of shape and heading in all directions at the same time.



The long jeep ride shows you that we were not in friendly territory and a good distance from the post. Remember — one of ours just got shot down! Our friendly driver said he was not sticking around and he'd be back before dark. Remember his words, I sure did.

We were met by a guy from the camp who was in charge of the perimeter set up to keep the sheet metal from disappearing before we could get a good look and take pictures (my responsibility). One of the first soldiers at the scene of the crash explained the mess around us. I paraphrase his story.

"The aircraft was just turning on final approach to land. He never stopped his

turn, but continued to the right, making a descending spiral of almost 180 degrees when the aircraft crashed into the rice field. Fellows from the camp responded immediately and got to the crash site in a blink. As soon as the first troops arrived, they put out the fire that had started. It could have gotten out of control fast as there was lots of 115/145 avgas everywhere. While the fire was being extinguished, others arrived, securing the perimeter and searching for survivors. Two bodies, the pilot and engineer, were found without much problem, but the rescuers knew there should be at least one more individual. Luckily, the copilot was semi-conscious and making 'moaning' sounds. After a brief hunt, wreckage was pulled aside and the copilot was found still strapped in his seat, but in serious condition. A Huey was called in immediately and the survivor was flown to the Chu Lai hospital. The bodies were put in another Huey and sent along soon thereafter. We found out later, this chopper either got shot down or went down with mechanical problems, causing even more grief for the Army.

This brief verbiage was retold many times over the next days of the investigation, including lots of kudos for the guys at the camp for their rapid response. Now, our turn to study the scene to try to discern what actually happened. At that time, we didn't know that the pilot was hit by ground fire from an AK-47. There were hills on the pilot's side at nearly the same elevation as the Bou on its final turn. With the belly exposed in the right turn, it was a large target. But, we had to consider this an accident until we knew otherwise. This was different than a previous crash scene where a senior officer pulled out his .38, spent a few rounds and declared it a combat loss, saying "Let's go home." For this crash, we Lieutenants didn't have that option. One of our prime targets for inspection and salvage was the overhead throttle

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What I Remember (from Page 6)

quadrant which was mostly ripped off from the fuselage. After some chopping of cables, we freed it.

Throughout the day, we were constantly being watched by local spectators in black pajamas and cone hats. A few obviously had an unplanned holiday since a large, twisted wreckage was impairing their farm work. They didn't seem to mind, as aircraft skin brought a high price in the local market. I heard it made great woks. Later in the day, the "brass" showed up, including the board president, secretary, etc., but like all good desk jockeys, they spent a couple hours, gave us their all-mighty directions, and retired to some late afternoon refreshments at the camp. Don't know who those masked men were, but they were definitely "eco-friendly" and had low impact on our inquiry. As the hours wore on, the sun got hot and spicy. We slogged in the paddy, photographed, drew maps, took gauge readings, noted prop positions, and tried to figure what could have gone haywire. Of course, we were not well-trained accident investigators, just a prop jockey, and a wrench turner disguised as such.

As the sun was setting, our eyes were peeled for the arrival of our ride back to the camp. No one in sight, so we were getting antsy. The sun was almost set and the shadows were very long. The spectators disappeared and, to our surprise, so had the perimeter guards! Yikes, we were two ducks at the watering hole surrounded by hunters! It was time to consider the flight options.

Foremost on my mind was killing the jeep driver. With or without transport, it was time to get out of Dodge with much expediency. So, off we went, not exactly sure of our route, but adamant about getting to friendly territory. Picture this. Two yanks in tandem, one in a flight suit and the other in fatigues, both muddy, one side arm between them, and a weird contraption with cables dangling and handles askew being carried by two fools down a dark, country

road. By the way, the Vietcong owned the night in this local community. As we headed in the direction of the camp, the stares seemed hateful. We two abandoned troopers were wondering if we'd ever get to make our report. After what seemed like an eternity, but actually 30 minutes or so, by dumb luck only, we stumbled from the pitch black onto the camp gate. The guard couldn't believe two dumb-ass Air Force types would be beyond the barbed wire after dark. I had no comment.

Thoroughly teed off at the Army Lt., I barely held my rage once I found the ^#\$*!, but he casually passed off our little walk as a test of courage, saying he forgot we were out there!

Sleep that night was not on a par with the quiet of Cam Ranh. I swear the same Army Lt. that forgot us decided where I was going to bunk. To his chagrin, I ended up below ground in a bunker. Not so bad except for when the 155s and 105s started their triangulation firing early that evening and continuing until dawn. My bunk was at the fire control center about 200 ft. from the big guns. Talk about noise, no wonder the Army Lt.'s brain was scrambled. Prior to this try at sleep, I got a tour of the Special Forces area which was all underground. These guys seemed to appreciate that I transported beer, beef, and ammo, so they fed and boozed me well. Heading back to the artillery side of Tien Phouc, I ask about the gun fire down along the river which seemed out of place. "Dogs," my companion said. "They are shooting stray dogs." The next morning, on the way to the crash site, four-legged creatures were hanging in a market inside glass cases, upside down, and lacking fur. Yummy.

I don't remember much about the second day, except we continued our work. Sometime during day two or three, we were notified to wrap up our stuff. The pilot, Lt. Dave Bolling was killed by enemy ground fire. This crash was a combat loss. During the second day, one of the Army types gave me a roll of film he said he took as one of

the first men on-site after the crash. I took these back to Cam Rahn and developed them at the photo hobby shop. Our final instructions were to destroy all our documents, notes, and findings. No one said anything about the photos. I trashed the paperwork, but the photos stayed with me for some time thereafter and the negatives to this day.

My tour ended in March 1970 and the crash investigation was filed deep in the cranium. My next assignment was into KC-135s and to Castle AFB for training. Before we started class, my wife and I were at Mather AFB visiting old friends. We met a Major who was an instructor at the base and next door neighbor of our friends. He said that he heard that I flew C-7As and helped investigate a Caribou crash around Christmas 1969. He said that his son-in-law was in a crash and had survived, but the Air Force would only say he was shot down. They had no further details. That is understandable since I destroyed all the paperwork. In the conversation which followed, I tried to relate all the details about the crash. In addition, I mentioned the photos I took, plus those from the Army guy. I arranged to send the photos to him for his eventual release to his son-in-law, Rick Patterson. The Major said Rick was still a long way from full recovery and didn't remember anything from the crash. I cautioned him to be careful about giving Rick the pictures too soon, as there were a lot of explicit shots of him being pulled from the wreckage. When I talked with Rick several years ago, he still had not seen those photos. Luckily, I kept them and gave him what I had. The pic in Vol. 19, No. 2 is mine, taken with my trusty combat Pentax.

Those few days after Christmas 1969 are foggy at best. Although my words might seem a bit light-hearted, at the time this tragic accident struck me with considerable force. For the rest of my Vietnam tour, I was no longer the same immortal airman as I was the week before this experience.

Mail Call

by Dave Hutchens [459, 69]

There are a few things in life that I can point to and say that I am proud of being associated with, but the C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter is one of them. It is a couple of notches above Excellent and you should be proud of it also. I will try to make it to the 20th reunion where ever it is held. If it is at Warner Robbins it will be the second time it has been held there since it was the location of Reunion No 2.

Warmest Regards,
John Davis [457, 66]

+++++

I thoroughly enjoyed Jim Noones [536, 71] story, "A flight to remember" in the latest newsletter. It answered a lot of questions I had asked myself thirty-eight years ago while working in the 537th phase dock at Phu-Cat.

I remember attempting to patch de-icer boots that were so badly shredded that, in one case, we removed completely and painted the leading edge flat black. Afterwards, I wondered "What if this aircraft has to be ferried back?"

Looking at the fuel bladders stored in the hot sun, I wondered if they would ever be reliable to use again? How would the sheet metal hold up after all the bullet holes that we found during phase inspections were patched?

While reading how it took the strength of both pilots to move the control surfaces in icing conditions, I thought about the stress cracks that had been stop-drilled under the flight deck where the column mounts (an area where only a skinny kid could wiggle up to find).

I've heard the Navy refer to the old days as "When there were wooden ships and iron men." I guess the USAF has had their own "Iron men." Hats off to the brave aircrews who flew these amazing aircraft!

Best regards,
R.(Wayne) Tuck [535, 70]

+++++

Here's a recent email on uses for the newsletter:

The latest newsletter is one of the best. I will use some of the material in a somewhat scholarly presentation I am giving to my chapter of the American Aviation Historical Society here in Northern Virginia. The back issues contain a great deal of original source information too.

Keep up the good work. I think we have one of the best "old guys" newsletter out there.

Mike Loughran [457, 71]

+++++

8 Jan 2009

Happy New Year!

I was going to make the trip to Dayton this year, had reservations and all ready to go when I had to cancel. After reading what happened there I am sorry I missed it. The 19th reunion sounds like the best ever.

This aircraft and Vietnam is special to me for it was life changing. I am 100% disabled due to my tour. I get around fine and the prostate cancer from agent orange is something all in-country members should watch closely. I have no regrets.

Here are my dues for 4 years. Thank you for your service then and now with this great Association.

Gary A Miller [483rd CAMS, 68]

Recip Engine Mechanic

P.S. 40 years ago this week I was in Cambodia doing an engine change. Had to do two changes because the first engine from the depot was missing rings in the bottom jug. What a memory. I also experienced a B-52 "Rolling Thunder" strike one mile away. What Power!

+++++

Dave -

I had a really interesting email exchange with a Ukranian woman who was in the Russian Navy and based at Cam Ranh from '91-'93. Here are some excerpts:

"My name is Larisa. I was looking on internet the right spelling of Cam Ranh, and found the yours web page!!!!!!

Maybe some of my pictures what I did attach would be interesting for you

to look at.

I was in the Soviet/ Russian Navy Strategic and Reconnaissance Unit."

"Vietnam is a beautiful country, even I can judge by Kam Ranh bay area and places around Nha Trang. One of the pictures with my son - we stopped at the monastery on our way to Nha Trang. Time in Vietnam was most happiest years of my life. I was in the weather department, serving as junior sergeant, and my ex- husband was like you, a pilot - left wing commander of TU-95 in a Russian Navy Strategic and Reconnaissance unit .

Being in Kam Ranh was fascinating, because there were many things left after Americans - not only roads and runways, but buildings. It was like Little America. I have never thought that I will ending up five years later in real, big America and be an American citizen.

I have many the same pictures from



'officers beach', 'monastery', and others. If you are interesting, I can make scanning at work, and send to you sometime next time.

By the way, our unit was doing spy-work on Pacific Ocean American fleet (Is it #6 fleet, or #7?). I always mix the Mediterranean and Pacific, and bases of Subic Bay, and others on Philippines.

Vietnam was too hot for me also, but in fall or winter months it was very nice.

Continued on Page 9

Mail Call (from Page 8)

Originally I'm from Crimea, Ukraine. Sometimes there we would have lot of snow, but it will not stay long, but in Crimean mountains.

Here is St Louis metro, not that much snow at all.

Sincerely,
Larisa"

"Do you know that Russian even did not have light on runways, because Vietnamese would dig up the wire? Sometimes we would come to work, and there would be not communication between the control tower (by the way – the same control tower what you have had) and rest of points. We used to use tin cans with burning gasoline for the flights at night to indicate runways. Vietnamese, although, was not welcome on our territory.

Nevertheless, I loved Vietnam. For the first few years after leaving Vietnam (Russia was closing air and navy base) I would see it in my dreams, and would cry awaking, that I'm not there. It was like a paradise.

Life was very easy and delightful in Vietnam. Like we were separated of almost all turmoil what was going on in the time of the Soviet Union collapsing.

Living in post-Soviet Ukraine was not much fun."

Submitted by Peter Bird [535, 71] who writes: "BTW, she is now a U.S. citizen living in St. Louis!"

Dave Is Waiting...

Dave Hutchens, our *Mail Call* columnist, is anxiously awaiting your mail. Send your letters or email to him at

printhat@aol.com

or send your letter to

Dave Hutchens

17916 E 96th St N

Owasso, OK 74055-7705

The *Mail Call* column provides a way to communicate with the members, ask questions, or provide information.

You Might Be An Aircraft Maintainer, If ...

You've ever said, "Oh yes sir, it's supposed to look like that."

You've ever sucked LOX to cure a hangover.

You know what JP4/JP5/JP8 (jet fuel) tastes like.

You've ever used a piece of safety wire as a toothpick.

You've ever had to say, "My boots are still black!" (or ever spray-painted them black)

You have ever used soot from the tailpipe to blacken your boots.

You believe the aircraft has a soul.

You talk to the aircraft.

The only thing you know about any city is where the good bars are.

You know more about your coworkers than you do about your own family.

You can't figure out why maintenance officers exist.

Tigers Live Here

by Wolfgang Behr [459, 66]

Yogi worked in squadron headquarters. He would meet planes when they landed and bring the crew back to headquarters in his jeep. It was late in the day and the last plane was due in. He went to the runway to wait in his jeep. A plane started to land, then gunned the engine and took off again. When it returned and landed, Yogi asked the pilot why he didn't land. It was late and Yogi wanted to get the guys transported. The pilot asked, "Didn't you see that tiger sleeping in the middle of the runway? When we came over, it got up and went back into the jungle!" Yogi had not seen the tiger sleeping just yards away from him, with him in an open jeep, and only a pistol with him!

Note: Maps of Southeast Asia at the Jungle Survival School in 1968 had large areas with no map detail, just the words, *Tigers Live Here*.

And Then the Fight Started ...

When I got home last night, my wife demanded that I take her someplace expensive...So, I took her to a gas station..

And then the fight started...

My wife and I were sitting at a table at my high school reunion, and I kept staring at a drunken lady swigging her drink as she sat alone at a nearby table. My wife asked, "Do you know her?"

"Yes," I sighed, "She's my old girlfriend. I understand she took to drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear she hasn't been sober since." "My God!" says my wife, "Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?"

And then the fight started...

I rear-ended a car this morning. So, there we were alongside the road and slowly the other driver got out of his car. You know how sometimes you just get so stressed and little things just seem funny? Yeah, well I couldn't believe it... He was a DWARF!!! He stormed over to my car, looked up at me, and shouted, "I AM NOT HAPPY!!!" So, I looked down at him and said, "Well, then which one are you?" And then the fight started...

I took my wife to a restaurant. The server, for some reason, took my order first. "I'll have the strip steak, medium rare, please." He said, "Aren't you worried about the mad cow?" "Nah, she can order for herself."

And then the fight started...

A woman is standing nude, looking in the bedroom mirror. She is not happy with what she sees and says to her husband, "I feel horrible; I look old, fat and ugly. I really need you to pay me a compliment." The husband replied, "Your eyesight's darn near perfect." And then the fight started...



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY
THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO GEORGE C. FINCK

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Major George C. Finck for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as a C-7A Aircraft Commander near Duc Lap, Republic of Vietnam, on 24 August 1968. On that date, Major Finck flew the first night combat air drop ever flown in a C-7A through a hostile environment of heavy antiaircraft and automatic weapons fire in which five other aircraft had been shot down while attempting to re-supply the camp. Despite intense ground fire and battle damage to his aircraft, Major Finck made a second pass over the embattled camp to deliver sufficient ammunition, medical supplies, and water to the beleaguered defenders who would have been overrun without this vital re-supply. Through extraordinary

heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of an opposing armed force, Major Finck has reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Editor's note: George told me that his co-pilot was Captain Lewis Drew, and his Flight Engineer was Sgt. Joseph Szczepanek.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY
THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO HUNTER F. HACKNEY

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Hunter F. Hackney, Colonel [then Major], U.S. Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as a C-7A Aircraft Commander of the 458th Tactical Airlift Squadron, Cam Ranh Bay Air Base, Vietnam, Seventh Air Force, in action near Duc Lap Republic of Vietnam, on 25 August 1968. On that date, Major Hackney flew two drop passes delivering vitally needed ammunition through vicious concentrations of antiaircraft and automatic weapons fire in which his aircraft sustained severe battle damage, disabling it and causing him to recover at a forward base. Realizing that the defenders of Duc Lap could not survive through the night without resupply of small arms ammunition, Major Hackney obtained a new aircraft and volunteered to reenter this hostile environment in which five other aircraft had perished. With tenacious courage, he delivered his cargo, again sustaining heavy battle damage. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of an opposing armed force, Major Hackney has reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

**The "Stadium"
at Duc Lap**

By John L. Frisbee
Contributing Editor
in Air Force Magazine, Aug 1994

Outnumbered ARVN troops were surrounded by enemy regulars within 100 ft. of the inner defenses. Their salvation lay in precise resupply airdrops.

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

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

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

One of the C-7 pilots who came directly from an operational outfit was Maj. Hunter Hackney. He earned his wings in 1955 and accumulated several thousand hours as a T-33 instructor and as an aircraft commander and instructor in KC-97s and KC-135s. He had refueled fighters over the Gulf of Tonkin and Laos, but he wanted an assignment closer to the shooting. Maj. Hackney requested a Vietnam tour and ended up in January 1968 flying C-7s with the

Continued on Page 11

The Stadium (from Page 10)

458th Tactical Airlift Squadron based at Cam Ranh Bay. Flying four to six sorties a day, he soon logged several hundred hours in the Caribou.

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

At noon on Aug. 25, Duc Lap's survival was doubtful without prompt help. Maj. Hackney and his crew took off from Cam Ranh Bay, stopped to load cargo at Nha Trang, and were forced to land at Ban Me Thout until the fighting at Duc Lap subsided enough for the friendlies to retrieve dropped supplies. A few hours later, Maj. Hackney took off again and orbited east of the camp until air strikes lifted. He then took up a run-in heading and descended to 200 feet above ground. Heavy ground fire began two miles from his release point. The C-7 took several hundred hits but completed an accurate drop on the first pass. Maj. Hackney made another run from a different direction, again flying through a hail of ground fire to make another drop "on the money." Incredibly, none of the three-man crew had been hit, and the C-7 operated normally as they returned to Ban Me Thout. After landing, they discovered that all their "self-sealing" tanks were leaking. Maj. Hackney and his crew picked up an undamaged C-7, loaded four pallets of ammunition and water, and flew back to Duc Lap. Taking fire from all sides, they dropped the pallets in the center of the small drop zone.

Miraculously, crew emerged again uninjured and made it back to Cam Ranh Bay, their C-7 riddled with bullets. Duc Lap survived the siege, which was lifted several days later.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR TO ROBERT S. HOPKINS II

Major Robert S. Hopkins II distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as a C-7A Aircraft Commander near Loc Ninh, Republic of Vietnam on 2 November 1967. On that date, Major Hopkins was flying a Tactical Emergency Airlift mission carrying a Combat Control Team to Loc Ninh, scene of a fierce battle which had begun two days before. The airstrip was under hostile fire and Major Hopkins' aircraft came under automatic weapons fire throughout the approach. Less than five hundred feet of the dirt airstrip was useable due to craters from hostile artillery, and even this short stretch of dirt was covered with unexploded mortar shells. Major Hopkins made a successful landing, delivering the Combat Control Team, the first step in opening the field for the airlift vital to the forces at Loc Ninh. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Hopkins has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Hop's account:

We flew into Tan Son Nhut to pick up men and equipment to transport to Nha Trang when we were advised that we had a Tactical Emergency to fly a Combat Control Team to Loc Ninh where a battle had been on-going for two days. Enemy forces (North Vietnamese Army or Viet Cong) had laid siege to the camp and was deeply entrenched in the dense forest parallel to the runway. It was almost impossible to pinpoint their positions. The Army brought a jeep with all kinds of equipment for us to load. I told the person in charge that the C-7A had a limit of 5000 pounds of cargo. As always, he responded that the jeep and equipment was under that weight. We knew that wasn't true, but accepted the over-weight load.

Upon arrival at Loc Ninh, we established contact with the strike force

that was trying to retake Loc Ninh and were advised that undetonated mortar and artillery shells littered the runway and only about 600 feet was useable. There were craters in some parts of the runway. We relayed this to the senior Army guy on board and he told us it was critical to get the CCT on the ground to direct artillery fire and airstrike missions in support of the camp.

Of the nearly 1200 hours I logged in the Bou in Vietnam, this was the only true STOL landing I made in my entire tour. On final approach, I was more worried about the Army helicopters that were all over the place and the threat of a mid-air collision than I was about fire from the VC and friendly fire from the camp.

We landed successfully, zig-zagging to avoid holes in the runway and the duds on it. We made a quick off-load and a hasty departure to avoid further fire from the heavily wooded area next to the runway.

Editor's note:

I arrived in-country in mid-February 1968. The "heavily wooded area next to the Loc Ninh runway" was completely gone. The battle was so desperate that the defenders lowered the elevation of their artillery and fired point blank at the unseen enemy positions in the woods. It looked like someone took a giant scythe and mowed down everything out to 100 yards from the camp. It was truly a barren "killing field."

Chicken or Egg?

Hop received his Silver Star at SAC Headquarters. The general making the presentation had already attended the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Lt. Col. Joe Jackson (C-123 pilot) for his daring rescue at Kham Duc on 12 May 1968. The wording of Hop's citation seemed familiar to the general who joked, "You Caribou fliers must not have had very good Awards writers and didn't think you were worth anything higher than a Good Conduct Medal." Hop's Silver Star flight was earlier (2 Nov 1967), but was presented later.

Caribous Provide Duc Lap Victory Margin

by SSgt Wes Briden

Seventh Air Force News, Sept. 25, 1968, page 3

CAM RANH Bay – C-7A Caribou crews from the 457th and 458th Tactical Airlift Squadrons here and the members of Rigger Detachment, Headquarters Company, Fifth Special Forces Group, helped provide the margin of victory for the troops defending the Special Forces Camp at Duc Lap.

On Aug. 24, Capt. David M. Rogers, Bonifay, Fla., and his crew were flying a shuttle run out of the Ban Me Thuot airfield, when they learned that the CIDG camp at Duc Lap was under heavy attack and in desperate need of supplies.

Captain Rogers was informed that three helicopters had been shot down in attempts to resupply the camp and evacuate the wounded. Though none of the previous attempts had been successful, the captain and his crew volunteered to attempt a resupply of the camp by airdrop.

“As we approached the camp,” Captain Rogers said, “we were informed by the defenders that they were critically low on ammunition and they desperately needed the medical supplies which we were carrying. Because of the proximity of the enemy troop and the fact that the drop zone was only 75 meters square, I decided to make two passes to insure that none of the supplies landed outside the perimeter of the camp.

As he began his first pass, Captain Rogers could see the enemy troops firing at his aircraft. He began a series of turns and evasive maneuvers to confuse the gunners and at the last possible instant, he leveled off at 300 feet and prepared to the required 15 seconds of straight and level flight needed for the drop.

Sgt. Robert E. Glossen, Yakima, Wash., flight engineer, moved to his station in the unarmored cargo compartment. When he received the green light from Captain Rogers, he “kicked”

the first load out of the aircraft. As the Caribou pulled out, Sergeant Glossen could see a heavy concentration of tracers some 200 meters behind the aircraft.

Captain Rogers also spotted a heavy concentration of ground fire to the west of the camp, and recomputed a new north-to-south approach to the beleaguered camp.

“Sergeant Glossen re-rigged the second portion of the load for the drop in minimum time,” Captain Rogers continued, “and I began a second pass.”

Despite the fact that the aircraft received several hits from small arms fire as he approached the drop zone, it continued on course. Again the load was delivered inside the 75 meters square drop zone.

The ammunition was recovered by the defenders, but medical supplies were lost because the chute failed to open. The besieged Vietnamese CIDG soldiers and their Green Beret advisors requested another drop of medical supplies, ammunition and water.

“We returned to Bon [sic] Me Thuot where an inspection revealed that the Caribou was not seriously damaged. The crew volunteered to return to Duc Lap with another load of supplies,” Captain Rogers said.

The second load was also successfully delivered inside the small drop zone, despite increased enemy ground fire.

The airdrop sorties to Duc Lap by Captain Rogers and his crew were flown on the captain’s last scheduled mission before rotating.

Late the same day, Maj. James L. Montgomery, Murfreesboro, Tenn., aircraft commander; Maj. Austin B. Secrest, Novato, Calif., pilot; and Sgt. James A. Amidon, Lafayette, N.Y., flight engineer, made another successful drop to the camp.

That evening, the 458th TAS alert

crew was called out to make an emergency airdrop to the camp. Major George C. Finck, Tampa, Fla., aircraft commander; Capt. Louis D. Drew, K.I. Sawyer AFB, Mich., pilot; and Sgt. Joseph Szczepanek, Ware, Mass., flight engineer, flew what is believed to be the first night drop by a C-7A in Southeast Asia.

Major Finck picked up his load in Nha Trang, along with two Special Forces riggers who went along to assist Sgt. Szczepanek in “kicking” the load out of the aircraft.

“When the Caribou arrived over the camp,” Major Finck said, “we could see that the defenders were under heavy attack, and we decided to make two passes over the small drop zone to insure that all the supplies landed inside the perimeter.”

As the C-7A made the first pass, the aircraft received heavy ground fire. The first two pallets – one of ammunition and the other of medical supplies – landed well inside the drop zone. The difficult night drop was made with such precision that one of the pallets landed just two feet from the entrance to one of the bunkers.

Following the first pass, Sergeant Szczepanek in the blacked-out aircraft, rigged the three remaining pallets for the drop using only the light from a flashlight held by one of the riggers.

As soon as the load was rigged, Major Finck again descended and approached the camp through heavy ground fire. Again the load was successfully delivered to the ground troops, enabling them to hold off the enemy throughout the night.

On Aug. 25, two crews from the 457th TAS and two from the 458th TAS made successful airdrops to the besieged camp.

Maj. Charles J. Bishop, Lafayette, Ind., was the aircraft commander

Continued on Page 13

Victory Margin (from Page 12)

on the first flight. First Lt. Robert E. Fields, Sacramento, Calif., was his pilot and SSgt. Carroll D. Wood, flight engineer.

The second plane into the camp was commanded by Lt. Col. Elbert L. Mott, Alexandria, La., His pilot was 1st Lt. Lee A. Phillips, Des Moines, Iowa, and the flight engineers were MSgt. Richard M. Clark, Washington, D.C. and SSgt Ronald G. Sabay, Menominee, Mich. Both of these crews were from the 457th TAS.

Maj. Hunter F. Hackney, Pasadena, Calif, commanded the first 458th TAS Caribou to arrive at Duc Lap on the 25th. Capt. Karl T. Bame, Tiffin, Ohio, was his pilot and Sgt. Fred G. Carr, Hornick, Iowa, the flight engineer.

“When we returned to Ban Me Thuot,” Major Hackney remarked, “we discovered that the Caribou had been damaged by the enemy ground fire, and would need repairs before it could be flown again. We changed airplanes and made another trip to Duc Lap.”

Once again, the supplies were placed within the perimeter of the camp.

You Know You Are Living in 2009, If...

You accidentally enter your password on the microwave.

You pull up in your own driveway and use your cell phone to see if anyone is home to help you carry in the groceries.

You e-mail the person who works at the desk next to you.

You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of 3.

You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee.

Your reason for not staying in touch with friends and family is that you don't have their e-mail addresses.

Every commercial on television has a web site at the bottom of the screen.

Bon Mots

I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap.

- Bob Hope

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you.

- Winston Churchill
Maybe it's true that life begins at fifty, but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out.

- Phyllis Diller
By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.

- Billy Crystal
We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress.

- Will Rogers
Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and fat.

- Alex Levine
My luck is so bad that if I bought a cemetery, people would stop dying.

- Rodney Dangerfield

Time Is Running Out!!

Check the mailing label on this newsletter. If it does not show “2009” or later, then it is **TIME TO PAY** your Caribou Tax or this will be the **last** newsletter you will receive.

If you aren't up to date, you:

1. may have changed your address and the dues reminder in the last newsletter went to an old address
2. may have just sent in your check
3. may have forgotten to send your check
4. are one of the **262** roster names who should send 2009 dues **NOW**.

DO IT TODAY.

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

Mike Murphy
15892 Cedarmill Dr
Chesterfield, MO 63017-8716

Your \$10 helps the Association grow and put on other outstanding reunions like the one just held in Dayton.

Crash Landing of 62-4170

by Joe Kurtyka [459, 66] and Pat Howe [459, 66]

[Joe Kurtyka]: “In the February/March 1967 time frame, we were still operating from the 3000 foot dirt runway, the PSP parking ramp, and maintenance tents in Ellisville. One day this C-7A aircraft [62-4170] loaded with Army combat troops made a wheels-up landing. The left wing and the left landing gear were on fire. As the Army troops rushed out the rear, weapons looking ready to fire, they were met by tens of Air Force maintenance troops armed with cameras.”



[Howe]: “The aircraft was flown by Maj. Ron Dubberly and Lt. Phil Jach. They were enroute from Pleiku to Qui Nhon, if my memory is correct. The photo says that they were struck by ground fire, but I remember only that they were at cruise altitude (about 1500 feet above the ground) near the pass between An Khe and Phu Cat when the left engine caught fire and the prop would not feather. That is not a good situation for a Caribou on one engine. What is not shown is the hill at the end of the runway. They weren't able to maintain altitude on one engine with the windmilling prop, flew in ground effect at very low altitude over the hill, put the aircraft on the runway, but didn't have enough altitude to drop the gear.”

Courage

Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities...because it is the quality which guarantees all others.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
Prime Minister of the UK in WWII

Courage is doing what you are afraid to do...

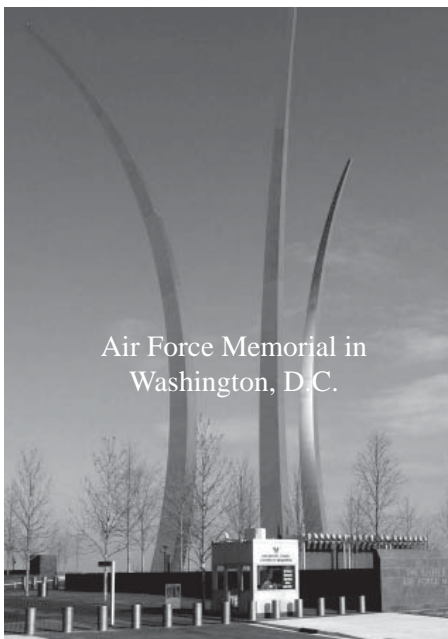
CAPT. EDDIE RICKENBACKER
Leading American Ace of WWI

It isn't my brother's country, or my husband's country, it's my country as well. And so the war isn't just their war, it was my war and I needed to serve in it.

BEATRICE HOOD STROUP
Maj., Woman's Army Corps, WWII

Our nation is blessed by the courageous families who give us our courageous Airmen.

GENERAL DAVID C. JONES
Ninth Chief of Staff, USAF
and Ninth Chairman,
Joint Chiefs of Staff



Air Force Memorial in
Washington, D.C.

Service before self is a virtue within us all which elevates the human spirit, compels us to reach beyond our meager selves to attach our spirit to something bigger than we are.

General John P. Jumper
Seventeenth CSAF

Sacrifice

They knew not the day or hour nor the manner of their passing when far from home they were called to join that great band of heroic airmen that went before.

INSCRIPTION FROM THE
AMERICAN CEMETERY
AND MEMORIAL
Cambridge, England

...am going on a raid this afternnon... there is a possibility I won't return...do not worry about me as everyone has to leave this earth one way or another, and this is the way I have selected. If after this terrible war is over, the world emerges a saner place...progroms and persecutions halted, then, I'm glad I gave my efforts with thousands of others for such a cause.

SERGEANT CARL GOLDMAN
U.S. Army Air Forces, B-17 Gunner,
Killed in Action over Western Europe
from a letter to his parents

Tell them that we gave our todays for their tomorrows.

INSCRIPTION FROM THE
ALLIED CEMETERY
North Assam, India

...Our military families serve right alongside those of us in uniform. A special thank you to all the spouses and children and moms and dads out there praying for your loved ones in harm's way – we add our prayers, too, for their safe return.

GENERAL RICHARD B. MYERS
Fifteenth Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Crew Humor

Q: What's the difference between a jet aircraft and its flight engineer?

A: The aircraft quits whinning when the engines are shut down!

Valor

Saving the lives of your fellow Airmen is the most extraordinary kind of heroism that I know.

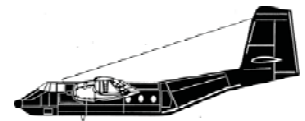
GENERAL CURTIS E. LEMAY
Fifth Chief of Staff
United States Air Force

When I think of the Enlisted Force I see Dedication, Determination, Loyalty and Valor.

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF AIR
FORCE PAUL W. AIREY
First Chief Master Sergeant of the
United States Air Force

As I prepare for this...mission, I am a bit homesick...Mother and dad, you are very close to me, and I long so to talk to you. America has asked much of our generation, but I'm glad to give her all I have because she has given me so much.

SERGEANT ARNOLD RAHE
U.S. Army Air Forces, WWII,
Killed in Action over France...
from a letter to his parents



Wisdom of Thomas Jefferson

The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world.

I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them.

My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government.

Buddha Mountain Laundry Trip

by Rich Coca [536, 67]

Most of my tour was spent TDY to Can Tho. I had a bunk in the barracks at Vung Tau, in the old French Warehouse. Sometime during the early summer of 1968, I was in the barracks at Vung Tau taking a break from Can Tho.

One of a young sergeant's jobs was to collect the sheets from the bunks each week and take them downtown to the hooch maid house to get them laundered. This was a lazy day for me and I was lying around doing nothing, so the barracks chief told me he was going to get a jeep and go downtown to drop off the laundry and he asked me if I would like to go along for the ride.

On the way, we picked up two of his buddies. We dropped off the sheets and picked up the clean ones with no problems. One guy suggested we take a sight seeing tour up Buddha Mountain to the radar site, so off we went up the small narrow road.

We made it to the top, looked around for a few minutes and then left. On the way down, we met a deuce and a half, full of Army troops, on a sharp curve. We saw the truck coming so we stopped, but he didn't see us and he hit us head on, almost pushing us off the side of the mountain. Shortly after the accident, an Aussie weapons carrier came along and stopped. He asked if he could take someone back to the base to get someone to tow the wreck.

I volunteered since I had to go back to Can Tho later in the day. The driver told me that the jeep belonged to the 536th commander. When I got back to the base, I went to the commander's office and explained what happened. He got up from his desk, looked out the window, and said his jeep was still outside. Then it dawned on him that the barracks chief took the wrong jeep. The jeep he took was the 535th commander's jeep. The 536th commander had to let the 535th commander use his jeep while his was being repaired.

GCA at Pleiku

by Steve Martin [537, 69]

The year was 1970 and I was on one of my final rides in the left seat, upgrading to aircraft commander. My IP in the right seat was a 1/Lt., like myself, and we were staging out of Pleiku for the Special Forces camps in II Corps. I remember my IP's name, but will withhold that information. I wish I could remember the flight engineer's name. He probably saved our butts that day.

Anyway, we were flying sorties all day long out of Pleiku and we didn't gas up on every leg. We thought we could make one more sortie to a Special Forces camp just north of Pleiku and make it back to Pleiku. On the way back, we discovered the airfield was no longer VFR. As we proceeded, the ceiling and visibility got lower and lower. We requested a GCA and were on the downwind leg when we were told that the field was now below limits and was "Indefinite Ceiling Zero, Visibility Zero Due to Fog." About that time, one of the fuel quantity low level lights came on (it illuminates below 110 lbs.) and the other fuel quantity reading wasn't much better. As other aircraft started heading for alternate destinations, we were committed to landing at Pleiku no matter what. We told approach control that we would continue. On base leg, the other fuel low level light came on. The situation has our full attention now.

We were inside the final approach fix when we were told that the weather was zero/zero – but we continued the GCA – making heading corrections of only a degree or two, but staying "on course, on glide slope." As we approached minimum altitude (100 ft.) the flight engineer (having a vested interest in this approach – especially since both fuel low level lights were taking up a lot of his attention) was standing behind my seat looking out for anything he could see. At 100 ft., both amber fuel low level lights on, and not able to see anything outside the cockpit, the controller now advised us

to take over visually and land (ha, ha) or make a missed approach.

Well, a missed approach would have us landing straight ahead a few miles west of the airfield, in the jungle. Sooo, we kept descending, hoping to get a glimpse of some concrete. The controller, in a rather loud and high pitch voice, kept repeating "if runway not in sight, go around." We just kept getting lower and lower.

If I remember correctly, final approach speed was 71 kts. for 30 degrees of flaps, so we weren't exactly coming in like a speeding bullet. At about 10 ft. off the ground, the engineer was no longer looking out the front windows, but instead looking straight down from my side window. He hollered we were right over the middle of the runway. I pulled the power off and touched down with, what truly was, zero visibility.

We were smack dab in the middle of the runway. What a terrific job that controller did and, thank God, our flight engineer was looking down instead of forward. We could only see a few feet in front of us, so we took our sweet time taxiing in to base ops.

As soon as we got inside, it was only seconds before the safety officer came charging in, wondering how we could have possibly landed in that weather. He said that we should have diverted as soon as the weather went below limits, and should have gone missed approach at the decision height.

My IP calmly replied that we had already started the approach and were thus able to continue. I'm not sure that was entirely legit, even then. That's why I'm not mentioning his name, but I'm sure he will remember this flight. It got us off the hook at the time. We told the safety officer that we definitely saw the runway at the 100 ft. decision height, but were just too busy to talk to the controller at that critical time. Other reasons come to my mind now, such as "speechless" or "breathless."

After that, I never ever came close to being low on fuel on any of my remaining flights in 'Nam. Lesson learned!

Boo Boo Magoo Memoirs – Part 3

by Bob Ross [535, 69]

First Performance Review

I was never very impressed with the Air Force performance review system after I received my first review in Vietnam. The review went well enough and I was very flattered when the reviewing officer ended the write up with the comment that “I had the potential to be a general some day.” Six weeks later I learned that the reviewing officer had been transferred stateside and committed to a mental institution.

First Female Caribou Pilot

I may be happily married to the first woman to fly a Caribou on a combat mission or anywhere else for that matter. I was fortunate enough to spend a month as second in command (there were only two of us) of the C-7A mission site in Bangkok, so I had my wife join me. Mostly, I did administrative stuff, but the boss and I flew once or twice a week so the crews rotating through could have a little R&R. My wife’s father had an airplane so she had some stick time growing up and a high level of interest in aviation. It seemed natural to take her along as a passenger and show her what I did for a living. Most of the other passengers were Special Forces guys and their dogs. In order to impress the “Round Eye” in the cabin, they spent the time acting tough by doing things like cleaning their fingernails with enormous knives. Since all was quiet, I had her sit in the copilot seat and take over the controls. Having the only woman on board climb into the right seat shut up the Special Forces guys for the rest of the trip and resulted in a deflation of my ego. After twenty minutes of complete control of the Caribou, my wife smiled at me, punched the mic button, and told the world, “This isn’t so hard.”

F-5 Short Field Performance

I never would have believed that a VNAF F-5 jet could land using less runway than a Caribou if I had not

seen it with my own eyes. Taxiing out for takeoff at Ben Hoa, I was holding for an inbound emergency. The F-5, apparently out of fuel, arrived over the runway and pitched out. Roll out downwind looked OK, gear and flaps down OK, but as he turned final, the pilot started screaming in Vietnamese. The jet dropped like a stone onto the overrun, ripping off the gear and slid about 2000 feet down the runway. The canopy opened, the pilot got out and took off his helmet, walked around the jet once, and sat on the nose apparently waiting for his ride to operations. Just goes to prove the old adage, “Any landing you walk away from is a good one.”

An Loc

On a pretty, routine afternoon, the Caribou saved my life at An Loc. The plan was to land on the short runway, towards the camp, turn around, offload the cargo with engines running, and get out of there. Everything went fine until we turned around and mortars started exploding around us. A voice on the FM radio said, “Get out!” Seemed like a good idea to me, but the cargo was still securely tied down and I had no idea if the Bou had enough performance to pick that load up on that short runway. The manual said that it was OK to occasionally over boost the engines so off we went at 100% power, plus a bit, with the cargo still on board. The race between enough airspeed and the end of the runway was won by the end of the runway, so I jerked the aircraft off the ground and immediately put the nose back down to stay in ground effect. After the gear was up and what seemed like hours, the bird was able to climb and we returned to Ben Hoa. Needless to say, the Army was somewhat disappointed that I brought the load back.

Instructor Pilot

Towards the end of my tour, I was very proud to be made an instructor pilot and several students remain stuck in my mind.

The first was a brand new copilot that, after climb out over the jungle, leaned both engines to idle cutoff. I slammed

the handles forward, both engines backfired, but kept on running and life was good again.

The second was a very gung ho pilot, who was disappointed to be assigned to Caribous. He would taxi quite aggressively, seldom waiting for the loadmaster to climb into the upper hatch to clear the wings. The problem was solved the day our wingtip caught the great big upper antenna on a parked O-1 and tipped the aircraft over on its nose. Neither the O-1 pilot nor the camp he was supporting were happy having to wait for a return-to-service inspection.

The third student had been flying for a great many years and certainly knew far more about propeller aircraft than I did. On one landing, he was way long so I told him to go around. His solution was to reverse both engines while we were still about fifty feet in the air and drop almost straight down to a perfect touchdown. He later told me that they used to do that all the time in the old days. I told him not to do it again, but I have no idea if he took my advice. I never had the guts to try it myself.

The final student was a Lt. Col. getting combat time after a long period of flying a desk stateside. On our first flight together, he was in the left seat. He was a pretty good pilot, but a bit hard of hearing. My habit as co-pilot while dealing with the deluge of information and instructions coming over multiple radios was to make notes on the windscreen with a marking pen. As soon as I noticed that he was not hearing what we were supposed to do next, I increased the size of my notes. His sly sidelong glances improved communication markedly.

Then, there was the nail trick I learned from a more experienced instructor pilot. Prior to the last leg of the final flight before a check ride, he would put the head of a large roofing nail in the tread of one of the tires. He would then tell the student pilot he had found a nail in one of the tires on walk around and asked him what they should do about

Continued on Page 17

Boo Boo Magoo (from Page 16)

it. There was no right answer, but if the student's idea did not make sense, he was not ready for his check ride.

The Santa Bou

Since holidays away from home and loved ones are a lonely time, I volunteered to fly the "Santa Bou" on Christmas day to keep my mind busy. Lifting off from Vung Tau, my two fellow crew members and I were filled with expectation of the joy we were going to bring to all the good little boys and girls. Mostly, Christmas cheer prevailed every place we went distributing trinkets from the cargo ramp. At one camp, however, we were greeted with a message over the FM radio that went something like, "Just push the crap off the back and get out of here, we are under attack." I suppose Santa has the same feeling in his stomach every time he goes down a chimney and finds the fire is still burning.

Going Home

After 364 days and 22 hours it was my turn to go home. As we waited in Saigon for the Trans America DC-8, it felt pretty good to be wearing 1505's again and I was looking forward to being a passenger with no aircrew responsibilities. Taxi and takeoff were marked by complete silence among the passengers. Who knew 200 plus GIs could be that quiet? I guess no one wanted to be on the first freedom bird to be brought down by ground fire. At about 1000 feet, unconstrained applause and shouting broke out. There it was – it was finally and really over.

Being Home

I never know for sure what will trigger a Caribou memory, with one major exception. Through the years, I have traveled fairly extensively, passing through many airports. Every once in a while I will see what appears to be an operable Caribou sitting on the ramp. Whenever I see one, I always kind of wonder, "If I scratched off all that civilian paint, would I find Boo Boo Magoo?"

What in the World Is This?



Several members sent in their guess – a cargo roller, but that is not what it is. It looks something like a roller, except for the nub sticking out from the back side. More of you would have recognized it if my picture were better.

Joe Hines [536, 66] said, "Looks like the business end of a cylinder valve, which has had the stem broken off and peened to death! Wonder what the piston looked like?"

Tom Smith [458, 71] wrote in, "My guess is a P&W R-2000 valve. Taking off from Tan Son Nhut, our #2 engine sucked a valve. When the cylinder hit it, it blew the top of the jug off, resulting in a fire that had three feet of flames coming out of the engine. Reasonably spectacular from my co-pilot's seat.

After returning to Tan Son Nhut, we found paint baked off the outside of the cowling and molten aluminum spattered around inside from the melted cylinder cooling fins. I ended up with the severely battered valve.

"Makes a nice paper weight. Now ... if I can just find the damn thing!"

Dave Kowalski [908, 75] had the earliest correct and perhaps most definitive response:

"It's a valve from an R-2000-7M2. I have changed many cylinders because they 'swallowed a valve.' It's an exhaust valve because the stem is larger

than an intake valve. On nine out of ten cylinders replaced for "swallowing a valve," it was an exhaust valve, which is sodium-filled for cooling, convex rather than concave like an intake valve.

This valve must have bounced around inside the cylinder for a while (the stem and valve mating surface are well peened). More than likely, it destroyed the piston and contaminated the engine and oil system, requiring an engine change and oil cooler replacement.

The valve stem failure was probably caused by the valve being out of adjustment for a long time (900-1100Hours). The valve timing being off caused the exhaust valve to overheat and the mis-adjustment caused the valve to slam shut and eventually stretch the valve stem, causing it to fail. The preferred valve timing method was the Air-Disk method, using a Time-Rite, compression tester, and Timing Disk. This method was often abused under time pressure to get the aircraft flying again. 'Close Enough' was often the 'Name of the Game.'

I've got part of a cylinder that swallowed a valve, I'll bring it to the next reunion."

DFC History Project Expanded to Include Air Force Cross and Silver Star

Contribute to our history records – If you received an Air Force Cross, Silver Star, or DFC during your Vietnam tour(s) with the Caribou, please send a copy of the citation and the pertinent order (if you have it) to the editor.

So far, we have 2 AFCs, 2 SSs, and 32 DFCs posted on our website. One of the challenges is trying to find the names of the other crew members and what awards each received, if any.

Keep those citations coming, they are interesting and important records of Caribou combat operations during the Vietnam War.

Be Careful What You Ask For

by Paul Peoples [459, 67]

In 1963, fresh out of an AFIT assignment to Michigan State University, I was assigned to the Hq PACAF Transportation Directorate. Among the duties were theater Project Officer for Project 463-L (part of the C-141/463-L SPO – the rail/roller/pallet system built into the C-141 and added to the C-130s). In that job, I worked with the 315th Air Division and their 7th Aerial Port Squadron. After much debate over configuration between PACAF, TAC, and MAC, the 315th C-130s went operational in October 1964.

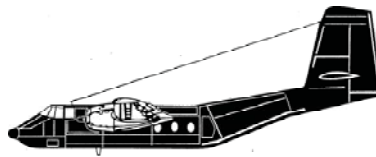
Concurrently, I was putting together equipment and personnel requirements for a massive buildup in SEA air terminal operations. Needless to say, the build up went faster than anyone expected. The manufacture and delivery of equipment and formation of the Aerial Port Squadrons fell far, far short of the need. The problem was further complicated by DOD insistence that all parts be purchased thru GSA or local parts dealers. Ok in the States, but no NAPA dealers in Saigon. Lots of 463-L forklifts and loaders in the junk yard!!

Meanwhile (1964-65) the Army was building up their capability, including the Caribou. The Air Force had theater responsibility for delivery of people and materiel to Army and Air Force units in country. In theory, the Army Caribous were also to take stuff from the air terminals to the Army units. However, they complained often and loudly that the Air Force was not doing the job. I made several trips to the Philippine Islands, Vietnam, and Thailand and was tasked to look into the problem. In short, there was no coordination between the Army Caribou units and the Air Force air terminals. The Army Caribou guys responded to their leadership and hauled what they wanted, when they wanted, and where they wanted. Often, the Caribous were

used for less than official business. I must confess that the Air Force Caribous were used at times for “redistribution of government assets to meet local contingencies.”

My report was scathing and supported by General Momeyer the 2nd Air Division commander at the time. I suggested that the Caribous be placed under operational control of the Air Force or at least ordered to check in with Air Terminals and provide and comply with a schedule and airframe commitments. The report disappeared into the bowels of Hq PACAF. I never heard anything more. In June 66, I went to the Air Ccommand and Staff College at Maxwell AFB. A year later, I received orders to report to Sewart AFB for Caribou upgrade and assignment to Vietnam. I GOT WHAT I ASKED FOR, THE AIR FORCE GOT THE BOU.

This was not necessarily a disappointment. My original orders had me going to the F-105 Wild Weasel program in its startup phase – and me with all of about 125 hours in T-33s and 3500 hrs in recips!!! At the same time, a section mate with 1500 hours in F-105's and an instructor at the Fighter Weapons School at Nellis was assigned to O-2s. We got the personnel weanies at Randolph to listen to reason. I got Caribous and he got Wild Weasels and got shot down – and rescued.



Christmas at Qui Nhon

by Bob Cummings [459, 66]

I remember Christmas of 1966. I was at Qui Nhon with the 92nd Aviation Company. Lunch was terrible. It tasted like iodine from all the water purification. That's all I remember. The Army was terrible. **Yea! Go Air Force!!**

New Club at Vung Tau

by Dana Kelly [536, 70]

Within two or three days of my arrival at the 536th at Vung Tau, the squadron commander asked me to be the “club officer” for our little bar in our off-base living quarters. Being a club officer was a job I never wanted and had purposely gone out of my way never to have. However, short of being insubordinate, I did not have any choice.

So, I accepted the task, but with three conditions or stipulations. First, every transaction with the lady Vietnamese bartender would be strictly with a “chit” system (thus no money would change hands and eliminated the possibility of some “disappearing”). The boss agreed with that. Second, the traditional “no hats on the head in the bar” rule was not applicable. Pilots coming in from a long and hard day “at the office” couldn't care less if they had a hat on and didn't need someone “ringing the bell” on him. He readily agreed to that one. Third, once within the confines of the “little club”, there was to be “no pulling of rank.” Again, tired, dirty and exhausted crewmembers needed a place to let their hair down without any recriminations coming from someone senior in rank.

The commander burped, gagged and convulsed over this but very reluctantly agreed when he heard my reasons. The results were just what I had hoped for. The club virtually ran itself, the Vietnamese bartender could not get her fingers in the till and the men had a place to unwind at the end of the day. It was very educational and enjoyable to watch a 2nd Lt. (fresh out of pilot training) express his frustration at a Major (fresh out of B-52's) for his “ten-mile turn to final” (a bit exaggerated, of course) and then see them leave the bar later still friends. This “club officer” job was only for six months as the squadron moved to Cam Ranh Bay, but it was enough to give me a greater appreciation for that duty, but didn't lessen my desire never to become one again.

Down Under Mate

by Don Melvin [18, 70]

I did not serve in Vietnam, but I was on warning for assignment there twice. In 1965, when I was instructing at one of our Flying Training Schools, the call went out for a volunteer to convert to C-7s (the CV-2B and using the US Army Flight Manual) and go to Vietnam as the IP/Instrument Rating Examiner/StanEval guy. I couldn't get there quick enough. A few months before I was due to ship out, it was cancelled.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) was being given a half-squadron of C-7s by the Canadians, but were not providing training for more than a few pilots. Our Government agreed to send an instructor to Kuala Lumpur to train enough of them for the squadron to proceed – including me - to Borneo.

At the time, Malaysia was fighting Indonesia in Borneo. The catch was that our government agreed that I would wear a RMAF uniform! I was the only white face in the squadron and quite larger than 90% of them. With quaint Asian logic, they probably figured that if I was in their uniform nobody would notice! Spent over two years in Borneo with them (they reached a peace agreement about halfway through my time there). Many times I was sure that I was at greater risk of their killing me checking them out into small jungle strips than I was from Indonesian action!

I came home to 38 Sqn as Training Flight Commander and was tabbed as CO-designate for 35 Sqn in Vietnam when, sure enough, the call came from the USAF – that was how I ended up at Norton. Nearing the end of my tour at Norton I requested a posting to something other than C-7s but, would you believe, I was posted home to 35 Sqn which had just returned from Vietnam. Shortly after, I was promoted to Wing Commander and given command of the Squadron until Christmas 1974. After that, Staff appointments (aka "Flying Mahogany Bombers") was my fate.

So there you are – current on the

Caribou continuously for just under 10 years. I think that I could probably lay claim to being the only pilot to fly the C-7 with three different Air Forces!!

I retired after just over 35 years with the RAAF – the first seven in the ranks in Maintenance (Instruments) and then lucky enough to get into pilot training. In case you think that the math doesn't add up, at the time I joined in 1951 you could join the Regular Air Force as young as age 15 (which I did). They put you through an Engineering Apprenticeship for a couple of years before you went out onto the flight line.

Aussie Bous

from Don Melvin [18, 70]

At a Primary School near a large RAAF base, 9-year olds were asked to come up in turn and speak to the class on the subject of "What my Daddy does" – a sort of "show and tell."

The first little guy stands up and says "My Dad is a pilot flying Huey helicopters in Vietnam. He does really dangerous stuff like Bushranger and Dustoff missions with the enemy firing at him. He is very brave, and I'm very proud of him" ... loud applause and cheering from the class.

The second little guy says "My Dad is attached to the USAF in Vietnam and is flying as a FAC. He flies little planes like the O-1 and O-2 really close to the enemy and fires smoke rockets to show the big, brave fighter pilots where the enemy is located. It is very dangerous, but he is very brave too and I am very proud of him also" ... more loud applause and cheering from the class.

A couple more offer similar tales until one little guy says "My Dad is in Vietnam and he plays honky tonk piano in a downtown Saigon bordello!" ... very loud boos and jeers from the class.

When they get outside his little mate draws him aside and says "Why did you tell them that? Doesn't your Dad fly Caribous in Vietnam?"

"Of course he does" was the reply, "but you didn't think that I was going to admit that in there did you?"

Cai Cai (VA4-191)

by Rich Coca [536, 68]]

It was a hot, dry afternoon at Can Tho and I just got back from the Special Forces dinning hall where I had a big lunch and was ready to take it easy. I was told that Lt Col McKnight wanted to see me – there was an airplane broken down at Cai Cai on the Cambodia border, with two flat or blown tires.

When I got to the office, he told me to round up a couple of tires and get ready to go to Cai Cai. I had changed several wheels on Caribous since I arrived in Vietnam and this one should be a piece of cake. He was trying to figure out how I could get to Cai Cai since the runway was only big enough for one Caribou at a time. The detachment called and made arrangements for an Army helicopter from Can Tho to give me a ride to Cai Cai.

I gathered up my tire tools, two wheels, and an axle jack from the storage shed and waited on the ramp for my first helicopter ride. To my surprise, three or four Hueys showed up, going on a mission, and they agreed to drop me at Cai Cai. Since this was my first time to ride in a Huey, I felt very strange when it took off with the nose pointed down and going up so quickly.

We were flying along a river on the way to Cai Cai, a little higher than the tree line, when, without any warning, one of the door gunners started firing his M60 at the tree line.

I leaned over and asked what was going on – did he see some VC – and he said he was just checking his gun and trying to draw some return fire, which really made me feel like I didn't belong on this helicopter.

We made it to Cai Cai without being fired upon, thank God. The helicopter sat down real close to the Caribou, so I grabbed my tools, kicked the wheels out the door, and got off as quickly as possible. The helicopter took off and joined up with his buddies flying around the compound, waiting on him. I

Continued on Page 20

Cai Cai (from Page 19)

made my mind up that I never wanted to fly in a helicopter again in Vietnam.

Before I left Can Tho, Col. McKnight told me that I needed to get that aircraft fixed and out of there before the sun went down. If I didn't, it wouldn't be there in the morning and the Army guys didn't want it there at all. Any aircraft on the ground was a "mortar magnet" So, I hurried to jack up the aircraft. That's when I ran into my first real problem. The jack wouldn't fit under the main gear axle, because both tires were flat and the aircraft was setting on its rims!

A couple of Army troops were trying to help me and one of them came up with an idea – we could use two duce and a half jacks, with a metal bar stuck through the axle, to jack the aircraft. We tried the bar, but it started bending like a horseshoe. I stopped them before it got stuck inside the axle. I was totally lost for an idea, so I went into the command bunker and called back to Can Tho to see if anyone had any ideas.

Someone back at Can Tho suggested that I dig a hole under a wheel and change that wheel, which I thought was a greatest idea I have ever heard. Back outside, I saw the aircraft had about twenty five ARVN on top of the opposite wing. An ARVN officer thought that the weight of the troops would cause the other wing to lift up and I could change the tires. It was really a site to behold. Twenty five ARVNs on the wing of the Caribou didn't move the shock strut a hair.

I dug a hole under the tire and changed the wheel, then cranked up an engine and taxied forward a couple of feet. Then I dug a second hole to change the other wheel. The pilots came out and we loaded the passengers, my tools, and the old wheels. We got out of there as fast as we could.

I would like to hear from any of the crew members that were there on this fun afternoon during the spring of 1968. Email: rich.coca@gulfstream.com

Career Ender?

30 Jan 2009



The photo above shows the gear handle of the C-17 which landed gear-up at Bagram, Afghanistan. The crew was making a combat approach into the airfield and there were 3 pilots on board the aircraft. They were taking ground fire at the time of the incident and became distracted with all the commotion of what was going on outside the airplane. They took many hits from small arms. The Aircraft Commander had a total A/C time of 200 hrs and the other two pilots were about the same.

Leaving Phu Cat

by Larry Schiff [459, 66]

I think the date was 28 Aug 67, I was to report to the Aerial Support "Terminal" at midnight for a flight to Saigon to get a flight to Clark AB, Philippines. No, I was not headed for the land of the big BX, not yet.

I got to the terminal (it was more like a shack), handed him a copy of my orders, and he told me to wait outside, the plane was due in about half an hour.

Keep in mind that as of that date there had been no snipers, no mortar attacks, etc., for the whole year I was there.

Half an hour grew to an hour – then 2 hours, and no plane. Finally I hear a C-130 land, but then it got quiet and no C-130 in sight!!! The Aerial Port guy came out and said the plane blew a tire and they had to fly one in from somewhere.

At that point my mind starts turning – a whole year and no danger – I should have been out of there hours ago – finally at around 5:30 am we boarded the plane and got off the ground around 6 am.

Two days later, I'm on a Braniff flight from Saigon to Clark. First chance I had I asked the flight attendant to let me know when we reached the "Point Of No Return" – it was about 600 miles to Clark, so it wasn't very long when she told me. Big sigh of relief.

Sappers Set Off Cam Ranh Inferno

from Frank Costanzo [483, 71]

Stars and Stripes Vietnam – Communist sappers touched off an explosion in the fuel storage area at the massive U.S. base at Cam Ranh Bay Sunday night, destroying 1.5 million gallons of aviation fuel. There were no casualties in the explosion or fire, and no contact was made with the Communist force. Early Monday morning, Communist gunners followed up the sapper attack with thirty 82 mm mortar rounds, but no casualties or damage resulted.

Caribou Sayings

The Caribou is the only aircraft that can take a bird strike in the ramp.

The Caribou is the only aircraft with strengthened trailing edges to protect against bird strikes.

The first engineering modification to the Caribou after being brought into service was the removal of the clocks and their replacement with digital calendars.

Born Again American

by Keith Carradine

Just a workin' man without a job
It got shipped off to China via Washington, D.C.
And I know I'm nothin' special, there are plenty more like me
Just the same
I thought I knew the rules of the game

I stood up for this country that I love
I came back from the desert to a wife and kids to feed
I'm not sayin' Uncle Sam should give me what I need
My offer stands
I'll pull my weight you give me half a chance

I went up to a congressman and said to him "You know
Our government is letting people down"
He said he'd need a lot of help to buck the status-quo
I said there was a bunch of us around

I'm a Born Again American, conceived in Liberty
My Bible and the Bill of Rights, my creed's equality
I'm a Born Again American, my country 'tis of me
And everyone who shares the dream from sea to shining sea

My brother's welding chassis at the plant
He's earning what our granddad did in 1948
While CEOs count bonuses behind the castle gates
How can they see
When all they care about's the do re mi

It's getting where there's nowhere left to turn
Not since the crash of twenty-nine have things been so unfair
So many of our citizens are living in despair
The time has come
To reaffirm that hope's not just for some

The promise of America's surrendering to greed
The rule is just look out for number one
But brace yourself 'cause some of us have sown a
different seed
A harvest of the spirit has begun

I'm a Born Again American, conceived in liberty
My Bible and The Bill Of Rights
My creed's equality
A Born Again American, my country 'tis of me
And everyone who shares the dream from sea to shining sea

It's clear my country's soul is on the line
She's hungering for something that she lost along the way
The principle the framers called upon us to obey
That in this land

The people's will must have the upper hand
I felt the calling once before and took a sacred vow
And faithful to that vow I have remained
I hear the calling once again, my country needs me
now
And to her cause I have been re-ordained

I'm a Born Again American conceived in liberty
My Bible and the Bill Of Rights, all people living free
A Born Again American, my country 'tis of me
And everyone who shares the dream
From sea to shining sea
And everyone who shares the dream
From sea to shining sea
A M E R I C A

Husband Down

A husband and wife are shopping in their local Wal-Mart.
The husband picks up a case of Budweiser and puts it in
their cart.

"What do you think you're doing?" asks the wife.

"They're on sale, only \$10 for 24 cans," he replies.

"Put them back, we can't afford them," demands the
wife, and so they carry on shopping.

A few aisles further on along the woman picks up a \$20
jar of face cream and puts it in the basket.

"What do you think you're doing?" asks the husband.

"It's my face cream. It makes me look beautiful," replies
the wife.

Her husband retorts: "So does 24 cans of Budweiser and
its half the price."

On the PA System: "Cleanup needed on aisle 25, we have
a husband down."

Composite Structures

USA Today reports that the new Advanced Composite
Cargo Aircraft (ACCA), being built by Lockheed Martin,
will be "the first military cargo jet in which the craft's
structure will be made of fibers, resins, and epoxy, replacing
metals such as aluminum and titanium that have been in use
in aircraft for decades." The program is working to get a
test aircraft just 18 months after the concept took shape, a
record time for the military. "While non-metal parts have
been used in commercial and military aircraft for more than
a decade," the ACCA "will be the first military transport
to incorporate the latest fiber technologies and production
methods in the airframe itself." That is expected to save 20-
30% in weight, with similar savings in fuel. The Air Force
spent \$4.2B on petroleum in 2005, up more than 25% over
2004 and more than all the other services combined."

Nose Gear Problem

by Edward Breslin [537, 67]

We needed to refuel, so I called for a fuel truck and the pilots headed off for a bite to eat. It was always nice when we had time to eat at base camp. They had a good field kitchen there and the food was good by Air Force combat standards. Otherwise, we ate C rations, usually cold. Those C's must have been left over from Korea, maybe earlier. On one occasion, I tried to feed what was euphemistically called "beef" to a Vietnamese dog and he buried it with his nose. This is no bull, excuse the pun.

Fuel was brought out by the Army in an olive drab truck and the fuel hose was passed up to the FE by the truck driver. The FE put the gas in much the same way as you gas up your car. Anyway, while we fueled up, we always put some oil aboard because one never knew when an oil tank might spring a leak or when oil consumption might be excessive.

The Army didn't have nice oil trucks like the Air Force. They delivered your oil in 5 gallon drums and you hoisted the drums up onto the wing using a tiedown strap. You poured the oil into the wing tanks using a funnel, all the time hoping the wind didn't blow the oil all over you or blow sand into the oil. As soon as I was fueled up, I hopped a ride in a jeep to the chow line and had a bite to eat.

When I got back, they had a cargo load waiting for us to take to Hue/Phu Bai. The load was two pallets of concertina wire. O.K. Reconfigure the plane, again. Put up the passenger seats, put down the rollers, secure the rollers to the floor and ramp door, and secure the stretchers. All the while, the sun is beating down on our airborne tin can and it's 125° in there. Another half an hour wasted. Oh, well. War is still hell.

Using a forklift, the Army guys loaded the two pallets onto the ramp and I pushed them into position and tied them down using straps and chains. The concertina wire was secured on the pal-

lets by metal banding. About the time I got the load ready, the pilots returned. We all checked that the tail stand was properly stowed. Lunch hour was over and now it was time for more fun!

We got her started up and taxied out with me in the roof hatch. As soon as we were clear of the parking area and rolling down the taxiway, I closed the roof hatch and strapped in for line up. Soon, we were on the takeoff roll. Gear up. We're in the air and I'm listening to the radios, as I usually did. I hear an Army guy say, "Hey, a Caribou just took off out of here and his nose gear is turned sideways and stuck in the doors!"

I leaned forward from my seat behind the pilot and look up at the gear handle. The red light is still on! So I call to the pilot, "Colonel, that Caribou with the gear problem is us."

After a bit of discussion between the three of us, it is decided to cycle the gear. Gear down. Three in the green. But, I think the gear is not centered. We had just had a procedure sent to us by DeHavilland. With this procedure, we could wire around the nosewheel weight switch in the air to enable the nosewheel steering and straighten out a nosewheel if the centering cam failed. Apparently, this had happened more than once! Our guys tried out the procedure on jacks in the hangar and it worked on the ground. Each FE was given a copy of the approved and tried procedure. I had mine with me.

We discussed the situation and all agreed that we should not try to land the aircraft, although we were pretty sure that if the nosewheel would respond to the steering control it would also center itself when we touched down. The colonel decided to go to Phu Cat so we could be with the Air Force when we declared an emergency.

As we got close to the Phu Cat pattern, Colonel McCullogh called the tower, advised that we had a gear problem, and that we wanted to do a "flyby" to have the tower look at the nose gear to see if it was cocked to the side. Asked if he wanted to declare an

emergency, he replied, "Yes."

It must have been an interesting scene on the ground, because it wasn't long before we were talking to every senior official in operations. They requested that we put the gear down and make a flyby close to the tower so they could see the gear. Even though it was confirmed that the gear was not straight on the first pass close to the tower, numerous passes were requested so that more and more officials and other late arrivals could personally witness our dilemma.

Soon, the discussion came around to the real question. Should we be the first ever crew to run the rewiring checklist in the air? You guessed it. There was no choice. So, we were instructed to execute the checklist. A senior NCO from Standardization/Evaluation who was present at the test in the hangar would talk the FE through the checklist, step by step. This seemed like a reasonable approach.

A suggestion was made that we should fly out over the South China Sea and jettison the cargo. I'm sure this was well intentioned, since FEs had been known to be crushed by the load when other C-7A's crash landed. The Colonel asked me what I thought of this idea and I told him I thought there was a pretty good chance that the concertina wire might hang up inside the plane as the load went out the door. If that happened, the wire would string out behind us like the tail on a kite and we would have air dropped a Caribou into the sea! He decided not to go for it. Good on him!

First step in the procedure, turn off the generators and disconnect the battery. Roger. No more radios. No more ground supervision. We had to do our jobs like we usually did. On our own.

Now, this procedure required disconnecting the leads from the 150 volt-amp inverter, leaving ½ inch thick wires hanging from the overhead as we tried to make the right connection using jumper wires. All the while, Colonel

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Nose Gear (from Page 22)

McCulloch must fly the plane without the benefit of instruments, except for basic airspeed and direction which come from the pitot static system and the standby compass. What a job he did! Steady as a rock.

The copilot got out of the right seat and came back to help me. I couldn't make the connections by myself, because the terminals are quite high up in the ceiling and we had nothing to climb up on. Fortunately, the young lieutenant was a tall, slender type and was easily able to reach the terminals. He made all the actual connections, with me reading him the directions and yelling to him over the engine noise (no intercom either). As soon as the jumpers were in place, we reconnected the 150 volt-amp inverter and buttoned up the ceiling.

Now, the colonel turned the nose-wheel steering wheel all the way to the left, then all the way to the right to get the feel of full travel. Then he turned it halfway back, theoretically centering the nosewheel. We called in that we were back on the air and ready for a flyby to check our work. On the first pass, it was confirmed that the procedure had indeed been successful. Our nose wheel was straight!

Now, the tower requested another pass to make sure. Colonel McCulloch told them to clear the runway because he was coming in, and no more passes! We touched down and rolled out uneventfully. As soon as we slowed I was out of my seat and in the roof hatch. We were being chased by what seemed like hundreds of blue cars and red fire trucks! To my amazement, the revetment walls were lined with hundreds and hundreds of Air Force personnel, all with cameras waiting to get a picture of us being killed! We shut the aircraft down on the taxiway and left it to the maintenance people to tow it into the hangar. It was the end of another glamorous day of Caribou flying and time for a beer.

Camp Evans Mortars

by Jerry Smith [537, 67]

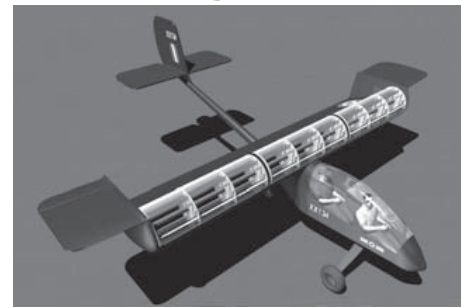
In about 1965, we lost the Ashau Valley to the VC. By 1968, we were ready to take back the Ashau, near the Cambodian border in I Corps. I was at Camp Evans, a new Army firebase. It was "Hot," so we were doing an engine running on-load of ammo pallets. Suddenly, we got incoming mortar fire! I raced back to the airplane and started our takeoff. Before liftoff speed, a mortar round hit under our left wing. Fortunately it was outboard of the engine and fuel cells and did only minor damage to the aileron. We discovered later that it left a lot of holes in the wing.

Thinking the worst was over, I realized that instead of easing back on the yoke for liftoff as normal, I was applying full forward pressure on the yoke to keep from lifting off below flying speed. A power-on stall at that critical moment would cause a lot of casualties.

I yelled at the copilot to help me keep the yoke forward. It was obvious we were outside the center of gravity limits, not a good thing. Our loadmaster didn't have time to secure our only pallet of ammo before the takeoff roll. He got the cargo door and ramp up, unfortunately, and acceleration slid the pallet on the rollers back to the retracted ramp where it lodged. Not good.

We were flying a few knots above stall speed, over heating the engines and barely clearing the foothills. I coaxed us up to about 5000 ft. above ground level, briefed the loadmaster, got him to tie down the pallet. We pushed over into a steep dive, then pulled back into a steep climb. With airspeed from the dive and major effort again, we pushed the nose over quickly so anything not tied down would float. The loadmaster pulled the pallet off the ramp, tied it down, and we were "good to go." Although we only had one pallet, we flew to the Ashau, off-loaded the cargo, heard the ground crew bitch "is that all you got," and returned to home base.

FanWing for STOL



The FanWing experimental aircraft opens up a new area of aerodynamics. Designs to establish a means of integral lift and thrust using a horizontal-axis wing rotor are recorded back as far as the late 19th century. Some of the experiments started to take off but did not sustain flight. The FanWing new blown-wing solution offers both basic proof of concept and improved and controlled flight performance.

The aircraft has a cross-flow fan along the span of each wing. The fan pulls the air in at the front and then expels it over the wing's trailing edge. In transferring the work of the engine to the rotor, which spans the whole wing, the FanWing accelerates a large volume of air and achieves unusually high lift-efficiency.

The FanWing showed proof of concept in the form of actual flights before theoretical validation, academic research, or explanation. The FanWing is an invention by trial and error and though certainly employing a methodology with good precedent in the history of innovation it is in no way within the normal paradigm of academic and conventional aircraft development.

First wind-tunnel tests were conducted in 1998 by Pat Peebles at the University of Rome. Other wind-tunnel tests were also carried out independently.

In 2007, a STOL UAV surveillance prototype showed unusually short take-off ability. A small surveillance aircraft could fly slowly and maneuver urban "canyons" with take-off independent of a catapult. The short-take-off capabilities make it useful for operations from a rooftop or short section of road.

Escape to U-Tapao

by Ralph Wetterhahn

in *Air & Space Magazine*, Jan 1, 1997

Henry Le remembers everything about his last morning in Vietnam. Then a 22 year old second lieutenant in the South Vietnamese Air Force, he landed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base outside Saigon the day before, too low on fuel to make it back to his home base at Can Tho. At 4 a.m. on April 29, he was awakened by the concussion of rocket explosions. "I was in a bunk on the second floor of the barracks," he recalls. "I sat up and for a few moments tried to understand where I was."

Today, Le is a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve, having flown S-3 Vikings on active duty patrolling for submarines in Subic Bay and A-6 Intruders in the Persian Gulf. On that morning 21 years ago, he was a newly trained A-37 pilot with only a handful of combat sorties behind him. The Cessna A-37 Dragonfly was a small, but capable, attack bomber equipped with a 7.62-mm gun and able to carry as many as six 500-pound bombs under its wings. Le and his fellow A-37 pilots had been supporting ground troops and trying, mostly unsuccessfully, to slow the Northern assault that had tanks and artillery moving in a solid column down Highway 1 toward the capital. But not until the rockets began raining down on the suburbs of Saigon that morning did he know the war was lost.

Most of the Americans involved in the conflict remember seeing the end coming long before Saigon fell. One of them, Air Force Brigadier General Harry "Heinie" Aderholt, commanded the U.S. military's assistance and advisory operations in Thailand (MACTHAI). Aderholt began his career in southeast Asia in 1960 – as the senior air officer in covert operations in Laos – and spent most of the next 15 years there. He trained Laotian Hmong guerrilla units for incursions into Tibet and is today a leader of a volunteer organization that helps settle Hmong refugees in the

United States. In war stories he tells, Aderholt is a rascal who made general, and he still has a rascal's glint in his eye. He does not suppress his distaste for past U.S. policy in southeast Asia, and recommends one history of that period with this endorsement: "It'll show you what bastards we are. How we always desert our allies."

Aderholt was chief advisor to the Royal Air Force in Thailand before going to the MACTHAI in 1973. By 1974 he had already begun to worry about Vietnam's neighbors – Thailand, Laos, Cambodia – small, poor countries vulnerable to what would soon be enormous air power. As the United States drew down its forces in South Vietnam, it pumped up that country's arsenal. By March 1973, in accordance with the agreement signed in Paris, only 50 U.S. military officers and 159 Marine guards remained in the country. But the Republic of Vietnam Air Force had grown to the fourth largest in the world, from 482 aircraft in 1969 to 2,276 in 1973. Aderholt saw that the ultimate benefactors of this military aid would be the North Vietnamese, and he wanted to reclaim as many airplanes as he could for the United States and its allies.

Aderholt was particularly concerned about 150 Northrop F-5 Freedom Fighters, 40 of which were E and F models, just off the production line, and 78 A-37's. The F-5's were Mach 1.6 fighter-interceptors that, with the capacity to carry 6,200 pounds of rockets, bombs, or missiles, doubled as attack aircraft. They would pose a significant threat to Thailand, a country with a far smaller, far less modern air force. In the beginning of 1975, Aderholt sought permission from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to begin bringing aircraft out of Vietnam. He had no authority himself to remove assets that had been loaned under the Military Assistance Program. After U.S. forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, military decisions there were made by the State Department.

"I presented a plan to Graham A. Martin, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam,

for the evacuation of all U.S. supplied aircraft" in the early months of 1975, Aderholt says. "But the plan was scrapped. Martin said he would entertain no defeatist attitude."

On March 10, 1975, General Van Tien Dung, North Vietnamese commander in the South, attacked Ban Me Thuot, a strategic city in the central highlands of South Vietnam, beginning the last offensive of the war. Seven weeks later, his victorious army marched through the gates of Saigon's presidential palace. In the interim, 933 VNAF aircraft fell undamaged into enemy hands. But not Henry Le's A-37.

When the second salvo of rockets lit up the night, Le leapt from his cot, jumped into his flight suit, and rode on his motorcycle to the main gate of the air base. "I grabbed a packet of documents including flight training certificates – all important for starting over in a new country," he says.

The base guards had orders to keep all personnel outside until the attack was over. Frustrated, Le listened to details of the ongoing battle via a tactical radio in the guard shack. He heard a pilot call the tower.

The pilot was orbiting in an AC-119 gunship over the base at 7,000 feet, desperately trying to locate the source of the rocket fire. He requested permission to drop to 4,000 feet to get a better fix on the enemy location. Le could hear the roar of the AC-119 but could not see the aircraft because the pilot was operating without lights. Le remembers that as dawn turned the sky gray, the AC-119, a bulky, black transport with guns mounted along the left side of the fuselage, swept into view and laid down a sheet of 7.62 mm fire on the enemy position. "It was the final act of bravery I saw in the battle to save my country," Le says.

As Le watched, an SA-7 shoulder-fired missile sailed wide of the attacking gunship. Then a second missile appeared, its exhaust tracing a crooked line as the SA-7 adjusted its course to

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Escape ... (from Page 24)

follow its target. It struck the airplane's right engine. As the airplane dove, the right wing caught fire. A crewman bailed out, but his chute got tangled in the tail as the aircraft started to break apart. Flames billowed behind as it rolled inverted and made 3/4 of a turn before slamming into the ground.

The guards, who had also witnessed the crash, now allowed Le onto the field. Inside the gate, pilots were searching for airplanes they could fly. There had been no briefings or plans for retreat. Just two weeks earlier in a radio address to the nation, General Nguyen Cao Ky, former South Vietnamese prime minister, had urged his forces to stay and fight, vowing to fight to the death himself. That morning on the base, Le watched Ky board a helicopter that flew east toward the U.S. fleet.

The pilots discussed their options. Conversation was tense and chaotic, but the choice was simple: Evacuate all flyable aircraft or blow them up.

Le and his friends had discussed the destinations available to them if the worst happened and Saigon fell. They could attempt to fly to U-Tapao Air Base in Thailand, some 350 miles to the northwest, or, if they had enough fuel, to Singapore, 580 miles southwest. Another option was to head for the U.S. Navy fleet off the coast to land aboard ship or ditch. Long-range airplanes, like C-130's or C-123's, could try to make it to the Philippines, 785 miles to the east. A final option was to simply take off and eject wherever fuel ran out.

At 9:45 a.m., the base intelligence unit broadcast a warning that a massive rocket attack was about to begin. Pilots and crew members ran for their aircraft as VIPs loaded staff cars in a mad dash to escape. At 10 a.m., rocket salvos began rolling across the base.

"All of us ran, checking aircraft to see if we could find one that was flyable." Le found an A-37 with fuel, and he, a pilot friend, and a maintenance crewman crammed themselves into the

two-seater. That eliminated the ejection option for Le's friend and the maintenance crewman. "I promised them I would ride the airplane into the ground with them if necessary," Le says.

Le started the engines and taxied. "It was a mess," he says. "No one was manning the tower. Aircraft jockeyed for position, trying to get to the runway and into the air before being damaged by rockets." An AIM-9 missile lay in the center of Le's path. Empty fuel tanks littered the area.

Inside the A-37, Le listened on the tower frequency, awash with confused and panicky calls as pilots asked for directions that would never come. As he waited for his chance to take off, Le watched the chaos around him.

"In the distance, a twin-engine C-7A rolled down the runway. The pilot had forgotten to remove the control locks," Le recalls. "The plane never got airborne. Instead, it plowed into the overrun and burst into flames. People came crawling from the wreckage. Some ran, others limped back to the ramp looking for other aircraft to board."

Finally, Le took his turn on the runway. To the north, raging fires and towering columns of smoke marked ammunition dumps being blown up before the arrival of the Communists. Le took off, and headed west.

Colonel Harold R. Austin, commander of the U.S. Air Force 635th Combat Support Group at U-Tapao, was in some ways prepared for the problems he faced on the morning of April 29, 1975. During the U.S. involvement in the war, Strategic Air Command B-52's were based at U-Tapao for strikes against North Vietnam. Some 20 of the big bombers were still standing by, protected in three-sided revetments. To support the B-52 operations, SAC installed a 12,000 foot runway and taxiways, a stroke of good fortune for the pilots who were now landing their airplanes on both ends of the runway, without clearance.

But by 9 a.m. things at the flight line were already out of control. Heli-

copters settled onto the grass between the runway and taxiway. One landed amid the revetments. Landing gear of a C-47 collapsed on touchdown. The airplane, built to accommodate 30 troops, had carried 100 passengers out of Vietnam. The accident blocked the runway, but pilots continued their attempts to land.

"We got all the SAC airplanes on the ground as soon as we realized what was going on," Austin says today. "I had the tower broadcast [to arriving aircraft] on all available channels to be on the lookout for airplanes without radios.

"We weren't fighting a big war," Austin says. "We were standing by to fight. So I had 6,000 people with not a whole lot to do. And everybody pitched in – SAC guys, MAC guys. I had excellent cooperation."

GIs in any vehicles available towed A-1's, C-47's, O-1 Bird Dogs, and all the smaller aircraft onto the grassy infield, making room for incoming jets and the larger transports. Others painted out VNAF markings. Under the extreme circumstances, aircraft were parked without chocks, their canopies left open. Maintenance crews de-armed the combat aircraft, stacking ammunition in piles along the parking ramp.

At the end of the day, 165 VNAF aircraft were at U-Tapao, including 31 F-5's, 27 A-37 Dragonflies, nine C-130A transports, 45 UH-1 Bell helicopters, 16 C-47's, 11 A-1 Skyraiders, six C-7A Caribous, three AC-119 gunships, 14 Cessna U-17 Skywagons, three O-1 Bird Dogs, and some civilian aircraft. The planes were crammed among 97 Cambodian aircraft that arrived since April 12, when Phnom Penh fell.

In addition to trying to keep the runway clear and securing aircraft and weapons, Austin had to manage the flood of refugees. "Most of them were very emotional, hungry, and dehydrated," Austin recalls. "They were scared to death." Many had suffered horrible losses in addition to losing their homeland. Austin remembers one

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Escape ... (from Page 25)

group in particular that had flown in on a C-130. Passengers had been boarding the aircraft at the Tan Son Nhut base when rockets started to fall. The engines were already running, and the pilot began to taxi. The copilot's wife had been leaning outside, helping load passengers at the front entryway. As the plane lurched forward, she fell. The left main gear rolled over her, crushing the woman. No one told the copilot until the aircraft landed in Thailand.

Austin had to get the refugees fed and made as comfortable as he could. He kept the families together and set up temporary living quarters for them in the hangar area and in the airmen's annex. He sent the single males to the U.S. Navy maintenance facilities, where tents were being set up for additional shelter.

Henry Le was one of the refugees who spent the night in a tent at U-Tapao. He had landed with his passengers at about midday, when the ramp was overflowing, and was shocked by the number of airplanes already on the ground. As he was taxiing in, several GIs stopped him, painted over the insignia on his A-37, then waved him on.

As Austin was organizing food and shelter for the refugees, he was also conferring with foreign service officers at the U.S. Embassy in Thailand. "The Thais had made it clear that they wanted the Vietnamese nationals out of the country in no uncertain terms," Austin says.

"The Thais were afraid that the Vietnamese would take vengeance on them," says Aderholt. "Besides, they had been there before. During the exodus in 1954, northeast Thailand had many Vietnamese infiltrate and become homesteaders. They were still there. So the Thais had no love for the Vietnamese."

Austin communicated the dilemma to his headquarters at the Pacific Air Force in Hawaii. Twenty C-141s were ordered to U-Tapao the next day to

airlift the Vietnamese, Henry Le among them, to Guam, where a tent city had been erected to receive them. But as the first transports arrived, Austin faced a new problem.

Sixty-five of the Vietnamese arrivals, all from one C-130, wanted to go back to Vietnam. Led by 27 year old Second Lieutenant Cao Van Li, these VNAF personnel had not realized they were leaving the country when the aircraft took off from Saigon. They had left their families in Vietnam, and now they threatened suicide if their request to return was denied. "They were all youngsters," says Austin. "We told them we were sending them to Guam. They'd never heard of Guam."

Austin enlisted the help of a VNAF colonel, who pointed out to the men that they would almost certainly be shot if they returned. An American chaplain also helped with the negotiations. "He worked his tail off," says Austin. And as the C-141s came and went, all but 13 Vietnamese agreed to leave for Guam. With 3,900 refugees already airlifted out, Austin continued trying to coax the last group aboard. "U.S. Embassy and Air Force interpreters informed the refugees that under Thai law they could be categorized as illegal immigrants and as such would be jailed and shot," Austin says, but the Vietnamese were adamant. Austin's medical personnel suggested sedating the remaining 13, a practice they had used before when dealing with medical evacuees who were apprehensive or whose condition required immobility during travel. With the lone C-141 holding on the ramp for departure and the Thais threatening to put the rebels on by force, Austin approved the sedation.

The first Vietnamese to be sedated was carried into the medical trailer. The remaining 12 hesitated but did not resist. Austin directed four Air Force security policemen and a male nurse to accompany the aircraft.

When the aircraft landed at Guam, Lieutenant Cao Van Li protested his

treatment to officials there. "I am not a Communist," he said, "but I want to go home. My family is there. They need me." The press picked up the story. Suddenly Austin found himself the focus of an international incident that eventually resulted in his removal as commander of the 635th. "I'd make the same decision today," Austin says.

A few days before the exodus from Saigon, Aderholt had sent Air Force Captain Roger L. Youngblood to Trat Field on the Thai border with Cambodia. Flying a Royal Thai Air Force AU-23 (a derivative of the Pilatus PC-6 Turbo-Porter that could handle the short runway at Trat), Youngblood orbited in the area with a Vietnamese co-pilot. The co-pilot stayed on the radio giving the tower frequency for U-Tapao and trying to direct pilots to land there. Not all of the pilots made it.

On the night of April 29, Aderholt, who had advisors all over Thailand, started receiving information about airplanes that had landed in fields, on roads, in any clearing the pilots could find. An A-37 that had landed on the highway near Korat Air Base, north of Bangkok, was sitting near a school. The pilot had taxied off the road and into a schoolyard before shutting down. The airplane still carried bombs under its wings. Aderholt dispatched an Air Force Captain from Udorn to fly the A-37 back to that base.

The reports continued to come in, and on May 1 Aderholt ordered U.S. Army helicopters detailed to MACTHAI to ferry pilots and 55 gallon drums of jet fuel to locations in Thailand and Cambodia where airplanes and helicopters had landed. Youngblood flew back to Trat with former forward air controller Briggs Dogood to make one of the trickier recoveries.

"We went by jeep to a nearby rice paddy where an O-1 was stranded on a cart path with barely a foot clearance on either side of the landing gear," Youngblood recalls. "Dogood paced off the length of the path, put some gas

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Escape ... (from Page 26)

from a tanker truck into the plane. Then he got in and in a cloud of dust flew the O-1 off the cart path.”

When it became clear to Aderholt that the North Vietnamese were going to claim the airplanes and helicopters that had escaped into Thailand, Youngblood also flew aircraft out of U-Tapao. Aderholt learned that the Hanoi government's first move would be to send a delegation to Thailand to inventory the VNAF aircraft. The Thai government, intimidated by Hanoi, ordered the aircraft impounded. “The aircraft were Military Assistance Program assets and as such still belonged to the U.S. government,” says Aderholt, but he wasn't sure that he could count on the Thais. He decided to get as many aircraft as he could to the United States – fast.

Aderholt first gave five F-5's to the air chief marshal of the Royal Thai Air Force to get the Thai military on his side. He had no authority to do so. The U.S. Embassy, in negotiation with the Thais and the North Vietnamese, was responsible for the final disposition of the aircraft. But, Aderholt knew it would be difficult for the State Department to take back the gift.

Aderholt learned from Pacific Command in Hawaii that the USS Midway was on its way to a Royal Thai Navy Base near U-Tapao, to off-load U.S. HH-53 helicopters that had taken part in the evacuation of Saigon. Says Aderholt, “The Midway was given a new mission – load the most valuable VNAF aircraft currently at U-Tapao.”

On May 5 the aircraft carrier pulled into port, and Austin hurriedly began the transport of jet aircraft by helicopter to its deck. Two F-5's fell from the helicopter slings: One dropped 25 feet onto the dock and the other into the water. The remaining aircraft were then moved overland by truck to the port at Sattahip, and no more were lost.

Loading only the most valuable aircraft aboard the Midway meant, of course, that older combat aircraft,

like the A-1 Skyraiders, would be left behind. These propeller-driven aircraft had proven effective in close-air-support and rescue operations, and Aderholt was not about to let them fall into Vietnamese hands. With the blessing of the Thai military, Aderholt ordered Youngblood and Major Jack W. Drummond, both pilots who had flown Skyraiders years earlier, to U-Tapao to fly the A-1's to a “less conspicuous location.”

“Start, taxi, and run up were accomplished and the thrill of sitting behind the P&W R-3350 came rushing back,” wrote Drummond of the incident in a recent A-1 Skyraider Association newsletter. “Takeoff was no sweat. Both of us felt that we had probably made the best landings of our A-1 careers!”

They delivered the airplanes to Takhli Air Base in central Thailand and parked them out of sight in a hangar. (Aderholt was familiar with the base because he had worked with the CIA there to send U-2's on missions over China.) The two pilots returned to U-Tapao and brought another pair of A-1's to Takhli. When the U.S. Embassy in Thailand found out about the F-5's that were given to the Thai Air Force and the movement of A-1's, Drummond and Youngblood were returned to their regular duties. The remaining A-1's stayed at U-Tapao.

While the U.S., Hanoi, and Thai governments arm wrestled, the Midway and several other Seventh Fleet ships slipped port, loaded with 142 VNAF aircraft bound for Guam. At least one C-123K also made it out of Thailand. Tail number 54-0592 is at Avra Valley Airport in Marana, Arizona. No one remembers how it came to be there.

Aderholt retired from the Air Force in 1976, but he stayed in Thailand for four more years – long enough to arrange transport home for the four A-1's he sent to Takhli. He says today that he knew those aircraft had become rare in the United States and he wanted to make sure a few were preserved.

Aderholt rented tractors to pull the airplanes from Takhli to the Chao

Prya River. He had them loaded on four barges brought up from Bangkok, which immediately got mired in shallow water. Aderholt bribed the keeper of the Chainat Dam with 20,000 baht (\$1,000 at the time) to open the flood gates. The barges floated down river to the port, and the aircraft were loaded on a ship. Later, war bird collector Dave Tallichet brought them to Los Angeles and stored them at Orange County Airport until 1986. Tallichet still flies one of the Skyraiders out of Chino Field in California. Another is on display at the Santa Monica Museum of Flight in California.

No aircraft were sent back to Vietnam by the Thais. The Midway delivered its load of 101 VNAF aircraft to Guam, making it possible for 21 F-5's to come back to the U.S. through McClellan AFB in California. Each had logged only 64 to 115 hours flying time. Most of them found their way to Williams AFB in Arizona, where they were used to train foreign pilots. Of those, five were moved from Williams to Nellis AFB in Nevada in 1977. For the next 12 years, the F-5Es were used in the 57th Wing Aggressor Squadrons to demonstrate Soviet Bloc tactics to U.S. pilots.

In 1988 and 1989, the F-5's were sold to Brazil and Honduras. Some spent a brief period with the U.S. Navy. The U.S. pilots they had helped train went on to establish a 41:0 kill ratio against Soviet-trained Iraqis in the skies over Baghdad in 1991. No small part of that triumph can be attributed to the efforts of the VNAF pilots. Many of the airplanes they flew out of Vietnam are still flying missions around the world. Their own air force ceased to exist on April 30, 1975. Its official history covered 20 years, during which its pilots knew not a single moment of peace.



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