

# C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 29, Issue 1

## USAF Caribous Met the Challenge in 1968

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The year-old USAF Caribou organizations were heavily tasked and challenged throughout 1968. U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam started the year at 480,536 and peaked at 630,638 in June. Major hostilities and engagements with the enemy were fierce and constant: the siege at Khe Sanh from January through April; the Tet Offensive, beginning on January 30 which encompassed over 120 distinct attacks against cities, military facilities and outposts throughout South Vietnam; the battle to re-take the ancient city of Hue during February; the mini-Tet Offenses of May and August; and the 16 major attacks against Special Forces camps beginning with Cai Cai on January 18 and ending with assaults on Thoug Duc on September 28.

The year 1968 was also the year with the highest U.S. death toll, 16,592.

The strategic and combat demands for C-7A airlift services had never been greater, nor had the challenges. The operational pace was intense. The maintenance and operations personnel who arrived in the second half of 1966 to augment the Army Aviation Companies, and transition the Caribou to the Air Force, began rotating home. The training of new personnel to take the place of the hard-earned experience of departing personnel was a continuous effort – which was not made any easier by the daily operational demands.

In 1967, the fledgling USAF Caribou organizations had established a solid reputation as reliable airlift providers in all types of conditions with significant increases over the airlift accomplishments of the Army Aviation Companies in 1966. The challenges of 1968 were accepted and met.

Col. William H. Mason, 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Air Wing Commander, was proud of his people and what they could accomplish. In his Commander's Report for the third quarter of 1968, Col. Mason stated, "If they want us to put a Caribou on the Moon, the men of the 483<sup>rd</sup> will do it!"



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## The War 1968

*from Caribou Airlines, Vol. II*

In January there were 480,536 U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam. The 1968 campaign in Vietnam started with the battle for Khe Sanh, begun in late in 1967, when infantry of four North Vietnamese Army (NVA) divisions, along with two artillery regiments and armored units, began converging on Khe Sanh. General William C. Westmoreland moved 6,000 U.S. Marines into the area and planned to destroy the enemy with a massive bombing effort, Operation NIAGARA. The Marines reinforced Khe Sanh with two additional battalions and rebuilt the 3,897 foot by 60 foot AM-27 runway.

The move by the NVA, termed the Tet Offensive, was designed to take control of the northern provinces of South Vietnam to establish a strong position at the negotiating table, as they did in 1954, by attacking Dien Bien Phu.

The attacks on the cities in South Vietnam were designed to incite uprisings of the people against the government of Nguyen Van Thieu and bring the people over to the side of the North Vietnamese and their Viet Cong surrogates.

The expectation was that shelling the Marine outposts along the Demilitarized Zone would draw U.S. and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces away from the urban areas, making them vulnerable to attack. When the siege of Khe Sanh was ended, the NVA and Viet Cong lost almost 10,000 casualties, as much as 90 percent of their force, at the cost of less than 500 Marines killed in action. General Vo Nguyen Giap was almost killed by an "Arc Light" strike by 36 B-52's which dropped a thousand tons of bombs near his headquarters.

"On 30 January, the enemy violated his announced cease fire recognition of the Buddhist Lunar New Year holiday (Tet) and launched a country-wide at-

tack on the major cities of South Vietnam. He was well aware that, during the holiday period, the populace would be visiting with families and that the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces would be at a reduced status due to the granting of leave to its members. Also, a unilateral 36 hour stand down, from the evening of 29 January through the early morning of 31 January, had been declared by the Government of Vietnam and its allies, thus creating an ideal opportunity for the attack." *USAMACV Command History, 1968, Vol. II*

"The Vietnam Tet Offensive hit the American military like a thunderbolt. MACV had been expecting trouble, but not on a country-wide scale. On the eve of Tet-68, January 31, the United States had nine divisions, one armored cavalry regiment, and two separate brigades committed to Vietnam. This force totaled 331,098 Army soldiers and 78,013 Marines concentrated in a hundred infantry and mechanized battalions. MACV also had several strong formations from other countries, most notably the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force, a Royal Thai Army Regiment, two Korean divisions, and a Korean Marine Corps brigade." *Vietnam Combat Operations Vol. 7: Tet Counter-Offensive*

During 1968, 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces camps and supporting bases were under siege and attacked regularly by the NVA and Viet Cong: Cai Cai on 18 January, Khe Sanh on 21 January, Can Tho on 29 January, Kontum on 30 January, Ba To on 1 February, Moc Hoa on 2 February, Lang Vei on 7 February, Thuong Duc on 5 May, Kham Duc on 10 May, Katum on 1 August, Loc Nich on 9 August, Dak Seang and Duc Lap on 18 August, Ha Thanh on 23 August, Thien Ngon on 27 September, and Thuong Duc on 28 September. Caribous were called upon to supply these camps and bases on a regular basis, during the run-up to a siege and during a siege.

Following the "mini-Tet" Offensive in May, the pace of the war in 1968 intensified again when the long-anticipated communist Third Offensive

began on August 18 in Tay Ninh Province and then spread to other regions of the country

The number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam increased steadily to a high of 630,638 in June, then fluctuated up and down until the number was 537,584 in December.

In 1968, the 483 TAW set about the task at hand, namely, to provide better support than that demonstrated by the records set by the Wing in 1967. The Caribou guys had a real "can do" attitude, both on the ground and in the air.

## Mystic Yaw

Charles (Jerry) Engles {535, 67}

A new, young, and somewhat naïve, Copilot in our squadron was sticking his arm out the copilot side window gripping the cuff to force a draft into his flight suit to cool down. (It may have been jungle fatigues before the Wing decreed that pilots were only authorized to wear USAF flight suits, and not Army Jungle fatigues, when flying.)

Of course, that action made an audible noise which the Aircraft Commander (AC) noticed. The AC, without glancing over, fed in a little right rudder. The Copilot withdrew his arm and then repeated the action, noticing the slight "yaw" and the movement of the ball in the turn and slip indicator every time he stuck his arm out the window. After a few more "tests" (and unaware of the assistance from the AC), the Copilot announced to the AC that he knew the Caribou was not very stable and said, "Watch this," whereupon he demonstrated his new discovery.

Naturally, the story got around to every AC in the squadron. They knew they could count on this poor soul to demonstrate his discovery to every AC right after level off on the first leg of the day! Bets were placed on how many demos he would perform before he caught on. I don't know how many, because he was still at it when I rotated.

## Phan Thiet Medevac

by Guy Perham [535, 67]

from Newsletter 24-1, May 2013

Our missions in 1968 were 12 hours long. Mission time started at takeoff and ended when you landed at the end of the day. It made for long days. One of our missions racked up a record of 22 sorties, 22 loadings, 22 takeoffs, 22 landings on mostly improvised strips, 22 exposures to the enemy, and 22 off-loads. During the Tet Offensive of 1968, my crew was on the tail end of a mission supporting Special Forces camps in III Corps when we got a call from the ALCC (Airlift Control Center) asking if we would volunteer to fly a medevac mission out of Phan Thiet.

We agreed and diverted to our “home plate” in Vung Tau to pick up a medevac team. Since none of us had been to Phan Thiet, I wanted to get there while there was still daylight. We landed at Vung Tau, reconfigured for the new mission, and took on the medevac team of three. Unfortunately, the team forgot the keys to the medical equipment boxes, so we were further delayed until our Flight Mechanic solved the problem with the crash ax.

By the time we got to Phan Thiet, it was dark. We flew over where we assumed the field was – it was totally blacked out – and I thought I saw what looked like the end of the runway. I initiated a timed 90–270 degree turn that I thought would somewhat line me up for a landing. Still unable to see squat, an Army Huey pilot on the ground told me that he would orbit at the end of the runway and, when I thought I was lined up on final, he would turn on his landing light for a reference. Wish I knew who he was, because he saved the mission and possibly our sorry little rear ends.

We got on the ground, taxied to where three ambulances awaited us, and unloaded 18 civilians, mostly all burned in some degree. The first two were little boys on a litter. I’ll never forget that. The rest were walk-on patients.

Our medevac team went to work on them while we taxied down the runway with no lights and fearing the sound of mortars that we were sure would be incoming as soon as Charlie zeroed in on us. Back at Vung Tau, we off-loaded, shut down, and went to the bar.

Later that month, my Copilot had to have knee surgery. While he was in a wheelchair at the hospital, the two little boys recognized him as one of the crew that evacuated them from Phan Thiet. From that time on, they would push him in his wheelchair wherever he needed to go. A great reward for what he did for them and the other 16 victims.

Later, I flew in to Phan Thiet during daylight. The infield was packed with choppers and other Army aircraft. In the midst of all this was a 150 foot antenna. Had we had to make a go-around from a missed approach, we would have been toast.

That’s a story I am very proud of. I thought of that night many times after I returned home, commanding a tanker squadron and having to tell my squadron members not to wear their uniforms off base lest they be spit on by a completely uninformed public. I thought of all the real good we did in Vietnam, such as the orphanage we fed by “procuring” food from supply missions, and the medical assistance our flight surgeon volunteered to the orphans and the residents of an old folks’ home.



## Round Engines

Author Anonymous

We gotta get rid of those turbines, they’re ruining aviation and our hearing. A turbine is too simple minded, it has no mystery. The air travels through it in a straight line and doesn’t pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat.

Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from “OFF” to “START” and then remember to move it back to “ON” after a while. My PC is harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. It’s like waking up a horny mistress. On some planes, the pilots aren’t even allowed to do it.

Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a ladylike “poof”, and start whining a little louder.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho FART or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It’s a GUY thing.

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead. Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan. Useful, but hardly exciting.

When you have started his round engine successfully your Crew Chief looks up at you like he’d let you kiss his girl, too!

Turbines don’t break or catch fire often enough, which leads to aircrew boredom, complacency and inattention. A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it’s going to blow any minute. This helps concentrate the mind!

Turbines don’t have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot’s attention. There’s nothing to fiddle with during long flights.

Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps.

Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell

## Where Are They Now?

The **457<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron**, based at Joint Base Andrews, MD, is a geographically separated unit of the 375<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Wing at Scott AFB, IL. The squadron operates four C-21A Learjet aircraft and provides priority airlift for key federal officials, members of Congress, and senior-ranking military leaders, and maintains a global deployment capability.

The **458<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron** is part of the 375<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Wing at Scott AFB, IL. The squadron operates C-12J Huron aircraft providing executive airlift support and aeromedical evacuation.

The **459<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron** is part of the 374<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing at Yokota AB, Japan. The squadron operates UH-1 Iroquois helicopters and C-12J Huron aircraft, performing passenger and executive airlift support, aeromedical evacuation and search and rescue missions.

The **535<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron** is part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI. The squadron operates C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, providing airlift throughout the Pacific theater.

The **536<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron** is inactive and has not been active since it was deactivated at Cam Ranh Bay AB on 15 October 1971.

The **537<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron** is inactive. The unit was last active at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK where it was activated in 2011 and flew C-130's to augment the 144<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron of the Alaska Air National Guard. Its primary mission was to support Army airborne forces. The squadron was deactivated on 13 September 2013.



## Nose Gear Only

by Steve Haigler [537, 67]  
from Newsletter 18-1, Mar 2007

The Caribou, especially in the hands of a very good pilot, was capable of some amazing things. I know from personal experience. It was early September 1968, and I was the Flight Engineer on a routine mission to An Khe with Capt. George Kulik, 1/Lt. John Teske, and one small pallet.

After takeoff, a noise from the right side of the aircraft got my attention. Performing my scanning duties, I noticed the right main gear door clamshell was open about 3 to 4 inches. I reported this to the pilots and each took turns coming to the cargo compartment to look. We talked the situation over and Capt. Kulik elected to recycle the gear. The nose and left gears came down, but the right didn't even move. He then retracted the gear. The nose and left gear operated okay, but the right gear didn't move. The pilots then made radio calls about our situation.

It was recommended that we fly to Cam Ranh Bay where they had a long runway with the right crash equipment and trained crash crews. We were also reminded to burn off our fuel in anticipation of a gear-up landing. I tied everything down, even the paper cups! All suggestions were discussed, as our options were limited. At Cam Ranh Bay, we even tried a Bounce and Go, that Capt. Kulik performed flawlessly, but the gear never budged.

Since nothing was working, I suggested that we remove a window close to the right main gear; fashion a cargo strap on the end of a troop seat pole; and try to pull the gear door open. We all agreed it was risky, but, what the Hell, it was worth a try. When I had everything ready, Lt. Teske came back to the cargo compartment. Capt. Kulik slowed the aircraft to just above stall and Lt. Teske held my waist and legs while I leaned out into the slipstream to try to hook the cargo strap onto the

inner landing gear door. There was just enough clearance to hook the door. It took several attempts, but we finally hooked it. Then Lt. Teske and I tried to physically pull the door open – but to no avail.

We burned our fuel down while orbiting “feet wet” off Cam Ranh Bay. Our fuel was down to about 500 pounds, so the time had come to land. The pilots made a low pass to show the crash crews where the aircraft would touch down. The runway was foamed from 2,000 to 8,000 feet and we were told to land as close to the beginning of the foam because that was the thickest part.

The approach was perfect. We mechanically lowered the nose gear with the T-handle, figuring there might be enough clearance between the props and the ground. Just before touchdown, Capt. Kulik cut the engines and did a beautiful dead stick landing. I remember the grinding and skidding sound, with just the tips of the props hitting the ground, and the sharp smell of hot metal and foam. The plane came to rest right on center line after skidding about 2,500 feet. I waited for the pilots to exit the flight deck, then I jettisoned the two troop doors, and we all jumped to the ground with no injuries.

Damage to the aircraft was extremely light. Because the power was off, the engines were not damaged. Only about an inch was ground off the prop blades and Maintenance was able to dress the blades with minimum filing. The foam prevented a fire and very little sheet metal damage was done to the aft, left side fairing near where the steady strut was pinned. In all, only about \$100 worth of damage was done. I believe the plane was flying the next day.

I don't remember the tail number, but it was the smoothest Nose Gear Only landing I ever heard of and I am still proud I was part of it.

*Sgt. Steven H. Haigler was awarded the Air Medal for his actions that day.*

## ROKs Are Tough

by Mike Miller, Scripps-Howard  
March 15, 1968

South Korea's 50,000 troops in Vietnam apparently fared better than their U.S. and South Vietnamese allies during the Tet offensive.

During the lunar New Year attacks, the Viet Cong did not hit positions of the South Koreans, whose hard-nosed tactics reportedly have taught the Communists forces that tampering with the Koreans brings swift and harsh retaliation.

The Koreans did dispatch troops to clean out four cities attacked by the Viet Cong and secured all four in one day, according to a battle summary prepared by the Republic of Korea (ROK) Vietnam Command.

Since Tet, the Koreans have mounted at least three major offenses, killing more than 1,000 (of the enemy). Their casualties during these actions are described as "light" and "extremely light."

While the Koreans themselves were not attacked during Tet, the ROKs were ready for trouble. Lt. Gen. Chae Myung-Shin, the ROK Vietnam commander, tripled his alert forces at the beginning of Tet because of known enemy forces in the Korean areas and past truce violations by the Communists.

On January 30, the ROK 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine (Blue Dragon) Brigade sent five companies into Hoi An City, a province capital where about 200 North Vietnamese regulars had infiltrated. The ROK Marines cleared the city by 9 AM the next day, killing 52 and capturing one.

During the same period, the ROK Capital (Tiger) Division dispatched three companies to Qui Nhon City where a Viet Cong force had infiltrated and seized the radio station. This action resulted in 29 enemy killed, four prisoners, and the seizure of 27 weapons. Following the Korean victory at Qui Nhon, about 1000 Vietnamese staged



*ROK Tiger Division on patrol, 1967.*

an anti-Communist demonstration praising the Koreans.

Two companies of the ROK 9th (White Horse) Division killed eight and captured one in securing Ninh Hoa during Tet, while another company of the division with administrative personnel of the ROK field command headquarters killed 30 and captured eight in clearing Nha Trang, the headquarters site for U.S. forces in the Central Highlands. Since Tet, the Koreans have conducted these significant offensive actions:

1. Twenty-two companies of the Tiger Division tracked Communists forces in the general area of Phu Cat, which was hit hard during Tet. The ROKs made heavy contact with the 18<sup>th</sup> North Vietnamese Regiment and local guerrillas, killing 394, detaining 22 suspects and capturing 138 weapons during the two-week campaign. An enemy cache of rice was distributed to Vietnamese refugees.

2. The ROK Marines attacked two North Vietnamese regiments south of Da Nang and killed 612 soldiers, captured five, and took 94 weapons. Three battalions of the White Horse Division killed 27 enemy soldiers in a sweep northwest of Tuy Hoa.

The two Korean infantry divisions operate in the coastal areas of South

Vietnam's II Corps, while the Marine brigade is in northernmost I Corps.

U.S. officers who have observed the ROKs in action in Vietnam say their rough tactics discourage Viet Cong from attacking them. When the Koreans receive fire from a village, they are likely to level it and spread the word that the same thing will happen to the next village from which they receive harassment, sources said.

*Editor's Note. Today, few people know of South Korea's participation in the Vietnam War. From 1964 through 1973, the Republic of Korea (ROK) sent approximately 300,000 military personnel to Vietnam. In most years, the average number of ROK troops in South Vietnam was between forty and fifty thousand. During the war, ROK casualties were almost 5,100 killed in action and 11,000 wounded. The Koreans deserved their reputations as fearless and relentless fighters. However, their tactics, as described at the end of the newspaper article, resulted in several massacres of Vietnamese villagers being attributed to ROK units.*



## Dangers

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

In Vietnam, the hazards to flight safety and the dangers to C-7A aircraft and personnel were everywhere. They permeated the daily operational environment and living conditions.

**The Enemy.** The enemy was an obvious danger. They were everywhere and they were always present.

If the flight destination was not expecting an imminent attack, under siege, or being attacked, then the enemy probably wouldn't shoot at you. "Probably" was the operative word; there were no guarantees. "Probably" also required the pilots to follow established procedures (maintain at least 3,000 feet above ground level in route, descend from and climb to altitude over the camp or base, and don't fly over known enemy positions).

If the destination were immediate danger, then you would be shot at. If you landed in those conditions, then the enemy would drop mortars and rockets on the runway and the off-load areas. At times, the aircraft served as a magnet to attract mortars and rockets even when things were relatively quiet.

One of the unique aspects of the Vietnam War was that there were no front lines. Every "secure" base, airfield and camp could be and was attacked. There were long distance mortar and rocket attacks and up close sapper attacks. The primary targets in these attacks were fuel dumps, ammo dumps, and aircraft. One of the sappers' favorite tactics was to throw satchel charges into transport aircraft taxiing with their cargo doors open. Usually the enemy attacks on major aid bases /airfields occurred at night, but not always. The enemy attacks were often successful, sometimes in spectacular fashion.

**Other Aircraft.** Mid-air collisions or taxi accidents with other aircraft were a constant threat. The sky was filled with aircraft of all different types, sizes, speeds and missions: commercial jet

airliners, military transports, supersonic fighters, prop driven attack aircraft, observation and intelligence aircraft, fixed wing gunships, and, of course lots and lots of helicopters of every size and description.

Low ceilings pushed aircraft into more confined visual airspaces, whether flying "feet wet" on gray overcast rainy days, or in the valleys of the Central Highlands dodging low clouds and thunderstorms, sometimes within the valleys below the rugged peaks. Multiple uncontrolled aircraft flying visually in a confined space greatly increased the chances of a mid-air collision.

**Helicopters.** Helicopters were a hazard unto themselves. Army airfields and landing zones were beehives of helicopter activity. The helicopters seemed to operate by their own rules and often flew as if they were the only authorized aircraft in the available airspace. Being cocky and aggressive were assets for helicopter pilots in their combat missions, but it did not always make for safe flight conditions for other aircraft. Helicopters and helicopter rotor wash were factors in many C-7A incidents and accidents.

**Air Traffic and Taxi Operations.** Air traffic at major bases and airfields was extremely congested and hectic as traffic controllers worked to sequence the different types of landing and departing aircraft and handle aircraft with emergencies, some badly damaged from enemy action.

In 1970-72, once the process of "Vietnamization" began, the controllers in the tower and on the ground were often Vietnamese. Sometimes communicating with each other was difficult, and lack of understanding could make things more confused and dangerous.

Outside the major airport traffic areas, traffic was not controlled. Everyone was flying VFR (Visual Flight Rules), often in marginal weather that did not meet Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) requirements.

If you were a VFR pilot in a bind,

sometimes the tower controller would authorize a "special VFR approach," meaning you were authorized to fly a visual approach even though the weather conditions at the airport required Instrument Flight Rules. Dickey stuff. Great if it worked-out, but it was your fault if it didn't.

Taxiways and parking ramps were also crowded and congested as aircraft and helicopters vied for available space. Space in off-load areas at Special Forces camps and Army bases was limited. Forklift drivers were a common hazard. Some were trained and some were not, but every one thought they could do it.

**Airfields.** Most of the Special Forces (SF) airstrips were short, narrow laterite (combination of dirt and rock) runways. There were often little to no overruns and margins for error were often small. Many of the SF airstrips outside the Mekong Delta were in narrow river valleys surrounded by towering mountains that limited aircraft maneuverability.

Army and Marine airfields and landing zone airstrips were often made of pierced steel planking (PSP). Man-made hazards in the vicinity of the airstrips included antennas, concertina wire, land mines, and ditches.

At the SF airstrips, water buffalo and children on the runway could also be an issue.

**Mountains.** Once you left the delta and the coastal plains, the mountains were a threat to safe air operations. Mountains make up about 40% of South Vietnam. They were silent and unforgiving. Mountains and bad weather were a nasty combination for pilots flying VFR.

**Inclement Weather.** Thunderstorms and torrential monsoon rains during May to October made operations more difficult and dangerous. Caribou pilots struggled to maintain VFR, locate their destination, deliver their load, and return safely. The heavy rain turned the laterite strips to mud and made them

Continued on Page 8

## Dangers (from Page 7)

treacherous and, at times, unusable. The rains made the PSP runways “slicker than owl sh\*t.”

Heavy rain and thunderstorms over land also pushed more VFR aircraft over the water, sometimes flying at low altitudes of a few hundred feet. Some days, the many F-4’s, C-130’s, C-7A’s and other aircraft running “feet wet” made it feel like an expressway with no traffic rules. Some aircraft did not turn their lights on because it made them an easy target. Some turned them on so other aircraft could see them. Pick your poison.

**Friendly Fire and Bombardments.** Friendly artillery fire was a serious concern. There were artillery controllers. Maybe you could contact them, but it was rarely easy. Sometimes you didn’t know where the artillery fire was. Sometimes you didn’t know the proper frequency, because they frequently changed it. Sometimes they wouldn’t answer.

Fighter aircraft making bombing and strafing runs were not looking out for you. You better be looking out for them. B-52 Arc Light bombing missions were unseen, until they happened. Sometimes you knew about them in advance, sometimes you didn’t. It was the same with the occasional off shore naval bombardment.

**Aircraft Loading.** Dangerous cargo (ammunition, fuses, explosives, fuel, etc.) was often carried, but the primary safety concern was weight. Sometimes pilots knowingly took off with the aircraft overweight because the combat situation required it, but you never wanted to take off overweight unknowingly. A wise man once said, “Never trust an Army loadmaster.” Too many Army personnel thought a Caribou was a 5-ton truck with wings. They believed you could just keep loading until there was no space left. They also did not seem to understand that the weight stenciled on vehicles, and fuel

or water tanks, were their empty weight and did not include the weight of whatever was inside. Also, wet items (cargo parachutes for example) weighed more than dry ones. Caribou pilots and flight mechanics/engineers always had to be aware of the actual weight of what was being loaded.

**Passengers.** Passengers were dangerous too. When carrying U.S. or Vietnamese troops, one of the C-7A crew members stood in the doorway and made each soldier removed their rifle clips and “clear” their weapons before getting on the aircraft. After everyone had deplaned, you checked under the seats before stowing them to load cargo, just to make sure none of the U.S. troops left something by accident and that none of the Vietnamese (uniformed or civilian) had left something explosive on purpose.

**Airdrops.** Airdrops were used whenever the airfields were unusable because of rain or other factors, or when the location was under attack.

One of the primary dangers with any airdrop is that the load could hang-up for some reason and cause the aircraft center of gravity (cg) to be out of limits. Also, the deployed parachute on a hung load will create drag. Exceeding the “cg limits” and/or the drag of the deployed parachute could make it impossible for the pilots to maintain control of the aircraft unless the condition is corrected quickly.

Secondly, an accurate airdrop normally required flying at a low altitude and a low airspeed, in a straight line, for an extended period of time. If the location were under attack, then a standard airdrop became a dangerous flight maneuver.

**Mechanical Failure.** Mechanical failures were not always critical events, but they could be, depending on what failed, the nature of the failure, the aircraft location, weather, altitude of the aircraft, and the aircraft load when the failure occurred.

According to the Dash 1, a Caribou should be able to maintain altitude

on a single engine. The truth was that some would and some would not. The Caribous all looked the same, but they did not all fly the same. It was probably because they had been through a lot and each had their own individual history.

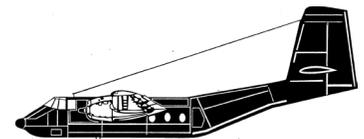
The aircraft took a pounding every day and endured considerable abuse. The excellent operational rates and reliable aircraft performance day in and day out were a tribute both to the aircraft itself and to the men who maintained them.

**Night Missions.** Night missions amplified the other dangers. “Normal” missions were not flown at night. If there were a night mission, then the situation was critical and someone’s survival depended upon successful airlift support. The dangers of mountains, weather, airfield limitations and hazards, obstacles, and the enemy were all heightened on night missions.

**Combinations.** Any one of these dangers could, by themselves, “ruin your day,” but the “norm” was that they came at you in combinations. The more danger factors in the combination, the more difficult it was to complete the mission and return safely.

**Safety Record.** The USAF Caribou history includes numerous aircraft accidents and incidents, some of them tragic. However, given the many operational and environmental dangers the C-7A crews encountered every day on every sortie, and the airlift accomplishments achieved under those conditions (measured in flight hours, sorties, passengers, and cargo tons), the USAF Caribou safety record was truly extraordinary. That safety record is a tribute to every C-7A aircrew member and maintainer, and is a record everyone should be proud of.

*Editor’s Note. For another perspective on dangers to safe flight in Vietnam, see Peter Bird’s (535, 71) article in the September 2003 Newsletter.*



## Life After The Bou

by Ted Hanchett [537, 68]

I give thanks to God for having one of the best experiences in SEA (Southeast Asia) because of the C-7A.

I followed that Caribou assignment with one in B-52's dropping bombs on 198 missions, totaling 987 days of my life in SEA. Four of those missions were in Linebacker II over North Vietnam. I experienced a rear attack by two Mig-21's and got to see SAA-2's a lot. Once I saw a SAM (surface-to-air missile) lift off at night near Hanoi. I punched my stop clock. It took 30 seconds to pass my wing at 37,000 feet.

My crew is probably the only crew that can claim victory in destroying an F-102 in air-to-air combat. I was stationed at Dyess AFB, TX. It was either in the spring of 1972 or 1973 and we were flying a night mission. The thing I always disliked about SAC (Strategic Air Command) was that the Wing did not always tell the crew what was going on.

We flew up to Canada and did a 180 at Flight Level 300. We had instructions to do no maneuvering and we had lights out. About the time we approached Detroit, my EWO (Electronic Warfare Officer) said that he had a real high frequency showing on his ECM (Electronic Counter Measures) scope. He asked for guidance. I replied, "Since we are supposed to be a Russian bomber, I suppose we should jam the signal." He did. We then heard a "MAYDAY- Stop BUZZZZ..." The next day at debrief, we were told that ADC (Air Defense Command) was controlling a F-102 using an uplink signal. The pilot was on autopilot. The ECM scrambled his signal and he went into a violent maneuver. He got on the ground safely, but the aircraft was overstressed and was destroyed. I recall that the Air Force put the F-102's in the bone yard about 3 to 4 months later. The F-102 was obsolete by that time. It had limited range and

no air refueling ability.

The FB-111A was my last active duty assignment.

In June 2017 I completed my 30th year as an Admissions Liaison Officer to the Air Force Academy. I have evaluated probably 65 to 70 candidates over the years, and at least 27 have entered the Academy. I think only four or five of those dropped out or quit. This job is performed by many reservists, active duty and retired officers. I covered most of the high schools in western Kansas.

The real benefit of performing this duty was that my own daughter was intrigued by a possible career in the Air Force. She failed to get an appointment to the Air Force Academy on her first try, but attended Kansas State on an AFROTC Scholarship majoring in Nuclear Engineering. She reapplied to the Academy and got an appointment, then majored in Space Operations Engineering. She graduated from the Academy in 1995 and is now an O-5 and a Space Squadron Commander.

## Claymore Danger

by John Maksymoncz, Jr. [459, 68]

We had finished moving supposed civilians out of a hamlet and landed back at Da Nang with them. Suddenly, one of the South Vietnamese soldiers kept telling me we had a VC (Viet Cong) on board. Next, M-16's were drawn on this guy and he really was a VC. I started to check my aircraft and found wires under a troop seat. I called for Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and cleared the area. We had F-100's next to us, fully loaded with bombs. EOD got there and towed the plane away. They found a Claymore mine wired to blow as soon as I lifted the seats. Luckily, I spotted the wires.

Three sorties later, the same thing happened. I found a package that shouldn't have been there under a troop seat. I called EOD again and got the same crew as the previous time. They asked if I had a death wish. We towed

the aircraft away again and this time they found it was a bag of mail someone failed to take to the mail room.

I will NEVER forget those two missions.

## Assistance Needed!

The Association has obtained copies of data cards with assignment information on USAF C-7A aircraft. We would like to digitize the information in a database and make it available to Association members.

The cards were microfilmed, but they were badly microfilmed. The copies we have, which were copied directly from the microfilm, are difficult to read. The only feasible way to create a database is to manually enter the data. It is fairly easy for a person to decipher most of the data and key it into an Excel or Word table.

There are approximately 150 pages of data. We estimate it will take about 30 minutes to enter data from the first page, and less time for subsequent pages. Templates will be provided to volunteers willing to help.

Your help is needed. **Please contact Peter Bird at: [peterb@petester.com](mailto:peterb@petester.com)**



## Marine in Cat's Mouth Saved

*Pacific Stars and Stripes*  
January 15, 1969

Quang Tri, Vietnam (Special). A tiger was killed by members of a small Marine patrol when the 400-pound cat attacked a 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion (Bn.) Marine in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam.

The Marine who was attacked is listed in satisfactory condition at a military hospital at Quang Tri.

The six-man recon team was on an observation mission near Fire Support Base Alpine, six miles east of the Laotian border in Quang Tri province, when the tiger attacked. The team had completed its mission and was waiting to be heli-lifted from the area. Bad weather conditions had prevented immediate pick up and the team had posted a two-man radio watch, while the others settled down to sleep.

The tiger struck silently and swiftly. "Suddenly, I heard somebody scream," said PFC Thomas E. Shainline of Gilbertsville, PA, "and then somebody else was yelling: 'It's a tiger! It's a tiger!'"

PFC Roy Regan of Nacogdoches, TX, who had been sleeping next to the attacked Marine recalled, "I jumped up and saw the tiger on my partner. All I could think about was to get the tiger away from him. I jumped at the tiger and the cat jerked his head and jumped into a bomb crater 10 yards away, still holding his prey."

The Marines quickly followed the tiger to the bomb crater and opened fire. They could not be sure which one of them actually killed the tiger, since they all fired at it.

Once hit, the tiger released his prey and the attacked Marine staggered out of the bomb crater. The injured Marine was given first aid treatment and a medical evacuation helicopter was called.

In minutes, a Marine CH-46 helicopter arrived to pick-up the injured



Marine, the rest of the team and the dead tiger. The injured Marine was rushed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Medical Bn. Hospital at Quang Tri, suffering from lacerations and bites on the neck.

The tiger, measuring nine feet from head to tail, was taken to the battalion headquarters.

The incident took place 10 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone, near the spot where a young Marine was slain by a tiger November 12, 1968.

*Editor's Note. This reference to the marine slain by a tiger probably refers to the marine killed November 14, 1968 as described in the following article.*

## Tiger Drags Off, Kills Marine

*Pacific Stars and Stripes*  
December 5, 1968

Quang Tri, Vietnam (Associated Press). A safari of U.S. Marines and a Vietnamese hunter left Tuesday (December 3) for a jungled mountain valley to kill a tiger that killed a young marine three weeks ago.

PFC Francis Baldino of Ashland, PA, was the tiger's victim while on ambush patrol November 14 in the northwest corner of South Vietnam.

The patrol leader told investigators he was only three paces in front of Baldino, a radio operator, when he heard a low growl and a scream. When he turned, Baldino had disappeared, he said.

Baldino's body was found the next morning under some bushes. Other patrols were sent in and saw two tigers but were unable to shoot at them.

*Editor's Note. Results of the December 1968 tiger hunt are not known.*

## Female WW II Pilot Flying at 100

by Sara Oliver, *The Mail*  
February 5, 2017



Mary Ellis, an Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) pilot in World War II, celebrated her 100th birthday on February 2, 2017 by flying a Spitfire over West Sussex.

Tearing through the skies above the south coast of Great Britain, two Spitfires evoke powerful memories of Britain's wartime resilience. But this stirring image holds a further poignancy, for in the cockpit of the lead aircraft sits Mary Ellis, celebrating her 100th birthday by recreating her time as one of the "ATA girls," the select group of female pilots who flew Britain's fighters during the war. Over her shoulder is one of the actual Spitfires she flew during her 1,000 flights as a First Officer with the ATA.



Continued on Page 11

## Flying at 100 (from Page 10)

“Wizard, this is wizard!” yelled the delighted centenarian through her intercom. Mary was handed the controls of the 275 mph twin-seater as it swooped over West Sussex. After about 15 minutes, she turned for home, and told her pilot Matt Jones, “Goodwood on the nose, you have control.” Then she settled back to enjoy the ride back to base.

Earlier, Mary watched in delight as Spitfire MV154 took its place beside her in an extraordinary airborne tribute. It was a plane she had delivered to Royal Air Force Base Brize Norton from Southampton on September 15, 1944, and it hides a sentimental secret. For at the end of the 25 minute wartime flight, she signed the cockpit, scrawling her maiden name Wilkins and the initials ATA.



Mary had her first flying lesson in 1938, and flew for pleasure until 1941 when she heard a BBC radio appeal for women pilots to join the auxiliary service and release male pilots for combat duty. For four years she ferried warplanes from factories to frontline squadrons equipped with only a compass, stopwatch and map to find the airfields. The 166 women of the ATA have been dubbed “The Female Few,” echoing Winston Churchill’s description of the Royal Air Force airmen who fought in the Battle of Britain.



*Mary Ellis (circle) flying in a Spitfire on her 100th birthday.*

Speaking at a surprise birthday party, Mary said, “I must have been four years-old when I began to wonder why the birds could reach the sky and I couldn’t. The war was a challenge and one had to do something about it. I went on and on until I flew everything. I love the Spitfire. The day I stepped into a Spitfire was a complete joy and the most natural thing in the world. It’s my favorite aircraft. It’s everyone’s favorite. It’s the symbol of freedom.”

Mary was usually found at the joystick of a Spitfire or a Hurricane, but ultimately flew more than 50 types of aircraft, logging 1,100 hours of flight, much to the astonishment of some colleagues.

As she sat on the airfield ready to deliver her first Spitfire, the mechanic standing on the wing asked how many of them she’d flown. When she said it was her first, he was so startled he fell right off the wing. The largest aircraft she flew solo was the Wellington bomber. After landing at an East Anglian airfield, Mary was greeted by the ground crew who asked where the pilot was. “I’m the pilot,” she said. They insisted on searching the aircraft before they believed her.

It was dangerous work. Mary was sometimes ordered to move combat-damaged planes that were not officially fit to fly, but had to be flown to another base for repairs. She crash-landed twice and was shot at once. Fourteen of the female ATA flyers lost their lives, including aviation pioneer Amy Johnson.

Mary, who to this day needs no spectacles, nor a walking stick, was one of the last six women serving in the ATA when it disbanded after the war. She remained a private pilot and then became managing director of Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight, which she managed for 20 years.

Matt Jones, managing director for Goodwood-based Boulton Flight Academy, first met Mary in 2015. He conspired with Spitfire MV154’s current owner, pilot Maxi Gainza, to bring the plane to the UK from its base in Bremgarten, Germany.

*Editor’s Note. On January 17, 2018, the Isle of Wight Council awarded Mary the Freedom of the Isle of Wight and she celebrated her 101st birthday on February 2, 2018.*

## Difficult Airfields

from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. 1*

The most demanding areas as far as crew ability were still Ha Tanh and Tra Bong Special Forces camps in the northern areas, and Plei Mei, Dak Pek, and Dak Seang to the west, southwest of Phu Cat.

Ha Tanh, although fairly long at 1,300 feet, had hills on one approach and a small hill very close to the southeast side of the runway. Wing tip clearance was small. Tra Bong was only 1,000 feet long. Plei Mei was about 1,200 feet long. Dak Pek was fairly long at 1,600 feet, but its location in a deep valley allowed no margin for the smallest error on approach or takeoff. It also had drastic wind currents causing up and down drafts near the approach ends of each runway. Dak Seang was narrow and hard to judge because of its dip (roller coaster) design. Crosswinds at Dak Seang made it even more demanding.

## Tra Bong Check

by Larry Pennington [459, 68]



I was getting my Tra Bong check out with 1/Lt. John Jumper as the Instructor Pilot. We had left Da Nang with a load to drop off at Tra Bong on our way to Phu Cat. We were also carrying an F-100 pilot who Jumper knew. The F-100 jock had bailed-out of his dam-

aged aircraft and was hitching a ride back to home base at Phu Cat.

The fighter pilot was standing between the pilot seats as we flew up the Tra Bong valley. We showed him the airstrip, but he didn't see it. "There's no airfield down there," he said.

By this time we were approaching the Special Forces camp and I started a descending left-hand turn to lose altitude and give him a better look at the short patch of dirt. "Sure there is," I said. "It's right there." The startled F-100 pilot exclaimed, "You're going to land on that! Major, I am sure glad you are making the landing and not that baby-faced Lt. in the right seat," jerking his thumb at Jumper.

I calmly replied, "This is my first trip in here. Lt. Jumper is my instructor and is checking me out." The F-100 pilot shook his head, went to the back, and strapped-in. He didn't say anything for the rest of the flight.

## Timing Can Be Everything

by David Enos [457, 69]

My assignment out of Cam Rahn Bay in 1970 was to none other than to B-52's at Minot AFB, ND. WHY ME!!! I had put in my DOS (Date of Separation) much earlier, since, at that time, a B-52 assignment was out of the question for anyone with a DOS, and I could get my desired assignment to C-141's. But, the Air Force Military Personnel Center did a 180 degree turn, and now I was heading to Minot, located in the middle of the beautiful North Dakota wind-swept plains, and cold as Hell in the wintertime.

It was a cold, sunny, late March day in 1971, with snow on the ground. I was on Bomber Nuclear Alert as a Copilot when the klaxon sounded. From the alert facility, which was built half above and half below ground, we ran for our alert vehicle (a six-passenger

pickup truck) and raced to our assigned aircraft. We opened and climbed up the steps on the entrance hatch, which is located under the belly of the aircraft beneath the cockpit and in front of the forward gear, climbed the interior ladder to the top level of the cabin, and crawled into our seats in the cockpit.

The Pilot hit the two cartridge switches for engines 2 and 8 (the Crew Chief would have already pulled the engine covers by that time). The cartridges on those two engines, which have an explosive charge (providing lots of smoke and excitement), enable the engines to start without an external air supply. Those two engines then provide air for the remaining six engines. Once we had the remaining engines running, the pilots completed all applicable checklist items required for takeoff while the

Radar Navigator and Navigator were copying the message from the Command Post.

Receipt of a klaxon by itself required getting the engines running, but we would then follow the instructions of the Command Post message that we received (Stay in place; Taxi to the end of the runway and hold; or Launch).

Pride as Airmen drove us to perform as quickly and flawlessly as we could. In all the many times I responded to these klaxons, only once did I think it was a real event. The one time it was for a real event is a story for another day.

On this particular day, we received an exercise launch message, so we taxied to the end of the runway and performed what was known as an "Elephant Walk," – accelerate to 70 knots on the runway, then throttle back, and slow to taxi speed by the end of the 13,000 plus foot runway. "Elephant Walk" refers to the sight of four lumbering 488,00 pound B-52's and four KC-135's accelerating, and then slowing on the runway, one after the other, at close interval (12 seconds between aircraft was the stated takeoff goal). The objective was to simulate liftoff

**Continued on Page 13**

## Timing (from Page 12)

within 15 minutes or less from time of notification, which was the assumed minimum time we had to get into the air and out of the immediate area before the impact of incoming ICBM's and SLBM's.

Everything went as planned, and we taxied back into the "Christmas tree" for recovery. It was called a "Christmas tree" because it resembled one, with the individual aircraft pads angling toward a central spine that pointed toward the end of the runway, thus providing as quick a route as possible for takeoff.

This is where it gets a little tricky. At this point in the aircraft recovery process, the aircraft is headed into the tree, but we have to reposition pointing out. The aircraft could be shut down, a yoke attached, and the aircraft backed into the pad, and then topped off with fuel. But, that was a slow process. At Minot, and, I assume at other B-52 bases, a procedure to speed up the process was used to regenerate the aircraft to full alert status. I honestly do not remember how wide the concrete pads were on the "Christmas tree," but they were much narrower than the aircraft itself.

It should be noted that the tandem gear are located well behind the cockpit. Sooo, following the instructions of the Crew Chief, who was on a headset well in front of the aircraft, the Pilot brought the aircraft onto the pad as far to the left as he could while remaining on the concrete. This was directed by the Crew Chief, who could see everything. Pilots had only a general feel for where the aircraft was in relation to the concrete pad. When the aircraft approached the end of the pad, the pilot was instructed to turn as sharply as possible to the right, using the foot pedals and the aircraft crosswind crab steering, to turn the aircraft around and pointing back toward the runway.

Since all the B-52's could do this procedure at the same time, it saved a tremendous amount of time, and the



four or more B-52's could be fully regenerated as quickly as possible.

Remember, this is taking place in Minot, ND, in late March. It is still damn cold in Minot and there is snow on the ground. When the pilot was instructed to start turning, we did everything we were supposed to do, but we suddenly had a sinking feeling, literally sinking. The Crew Chief started yelling "more power, more power," but that only helped to bury the front gear deeper into the ground. In March, the ground at Minot is usually as hard as concrete.

The Crew Chief had led us off the concrete pad, and probably had all winter long. Going over the end of the pad wouldn't gain anything for the procedure, but presumably going wide off of the concrete pad before straightening out would allow an easier maneuver for the Crew Chief, and he wouldn't have to be as precise.

So, there we were, a nuclear loaded bomber on alert with our two front landing gear buried up to the hubcaps (one way of describing it). I looked at the Pilot, he looked at me, and we both thought, "Well, there go our careers."

I then looked out my window to the next pad, and, unbelievably, the B-52 on that pad was also kneeling in the dirt just like we were! Whew!!! It was no longer crew error, or crew chief error (yes, if the two crew chiefs had not been so complacent, the procedure would have worked like it should have, and as it had worked many times before during any month of the year). Performing the maneuver at all had now become a management/leadership error. It was a procedure looking for an accident waiting to happen That day, conditions and complacency took over.

As I mentioned before, the only way into and out of the cockpit is through a hatch located in front of the forward landing gear. The nose of the aircraft was laying so low to the ground that we could barely get the hatch open enough to crawl down and out of the plane.

Two nuclear loaded B-52's were taken off alert for hours while several large snowplows were attached to each plane and pulled them back onto the concrete pads, where they were then checked for damage. I wouldn't have wanted to be the Wing Commander when he had to explain to CINCSAC why there were two fewer alert B-52's in his arsenal. I cannot remember if the Wing Commander was "canned," but I do not recall that he was. Which leads me to think that the procedure was being used SAC-wide, and was not a Minot-unique procedure. "We were just following SAC procedures, Sir."

I feel confident the procedure would have been canceled, whether one or two B-52's had been involved, but having two in the same predicament, side by side, definitely spared the careers of two, or four, young Air Force Captains.

**Timing Can Be Everything!**

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## Time To Renew!!

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

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San Antonio, TX 78232-2209

## We Will Never Forget

On 25 July 1968, Caribou S/N 63-9761, 457<sup>th</sup> TAS, was flying a resupply mission from Nha Trang to Polei Kleng. Flying in marginal weather in the vicinity of Dragon Mountain, near Pleiku, the left wing of the aircraft struck a tree and the C-7A crashed, killing **Capt. James Hoffman** and **A1C Raymond McKendrick**.

On 26 August 1968, Caribou S/N 62-4177, 457<sup>th</sup> TAS, was hit by ground fire in the right wing as it was flying an airlift flight about 10 miles southwest of An Loc, close to the Cambodian border. The aircraft crashed and exploded killing **Capt. Robert George Bull**, **1/Lt. Ralph William Manners**, and **A1C David Frederick Sleeper**.

### We Gotta Get Outta This Place

by *The Animals*, 1965

In this dirty old part of the city  
Where the sun refuse to shine  
People tell me there ain't no use in  
trying

Now my girl you're so young and  
pretty

And one thing I know is true  
You'll be dead before your time is  
due

I know

Watch my daddy in bed and tired  
Watch his hair been turning gray  
He's been working and slaving his  
life away

Oh yes, I know it

He's been working so hard  
I've been working too babe  
Every night and day  
Yeah yeah yeah yeah

**We gotta get out of this place  
If it's the last thing we ever do  
We gotta get out of this place  
Cause girl, there's a better life  
For me and you**

Now my girl you're so young and  
pretty

And one thing I know is true, yeah  
You'll be dead before your time is  
due

I know it

Watch my daddy in bed and tired

Watch his hair been turning gray  
He's been working and slaving his  
life away

I know, he's been working so hard

I've been working too, babe  
Every day baby  
Yeah yeah yeah yeah

**We gotta get out of this place  
If it's the last thing we ever do  
We gotta get out of this place  
Girl, there's a better life  
For me and you**

Somewhere baby  
Somehow I know it baby

**We gotta get out of this place  
If it's the last thing we ever do  
We gotta get out of this place  
Girl, there's a better life  
for me and you**

Believe me, baby  
I know it, baby  
You know it, too

*Editor's Note. The song was written by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil for the Righteous Brothers, but it was acquired by The Animals management. The lyrics were tweaked to fit the band's Manchester origins, and The Animal's version was released in 1965. It was probably the most requested song when bands played for U.S. troops in Vietnam. Everyone enthusiastically joined in on the chorus. We Gotta Get Out of This Place!*



### Words of Wisdom

President Theodore Roosevelt  
1910

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

## Nine Feet Tall

by John T. Correl

*Air Force Magazine*, February 2012

The picture on the *Time* magazine cover for April 23, 1965, was Air Force Lt. Col. Robinson “Robbie” Risner. The cover story, “The Fighting American,” featured 10 U.S. military members in Vietnam, with fighter pilot Risner, a rising star in the Air Force, foremost among them.

“At the time it was a great honor,” Risner said. “But later, in prison, I would have much cause to regret that *Time* had ever heard of me.”

On September 16, 1965, Risner was shot down over North Vietnam and captured. The additional bad news was that the North Vietnamese had seen *Time* magazine and knew who he was. “Some good soul from the United States had sent them the copy,” he said, “and they thought I was much more important than I ever was.”

The magazine article told them not only that Risner was an F-105 squadron commander who had led 18 missions against North Vietnam, but also that he was a Korean War ace, having shot down eight MiGs. It also disclosed details about his family. His captors knew they had an important officer and were determined to break him. “The Vietnamese regarded Robbie as their No. 1 one prized prisoner,” said Col. Gordon Larson, a fellow POW. “Robbie was by far the most abused POW there because of who they thought he was.” All of the POWs were tortured and ill treated, but Risner got an extra portion.

Risner was a leader among the airmen held by the North Vietnamese, first as senior-ranking officer and then as vice commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Allied POW Wing formed in Hoa Lo Prison, the infamous “Hanoi Hilton.” According to Larson, Risner was “the most influential and effective POW there.”

In 1971, after the POWs moved into large open-bay cells in Hanoi, Risner and several of his colleagues organized



a church service, a forbidden activity. The North Vietnamese, obsessed with maintaining control, interrupted the service and dragged Risner and the other leaders away for discipline. George E. “Bud” Day jumped on his bed and began to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” All 46 POWs present joined in to express their support.

“I felt like I was nine feet tall and could go bear hunting with a switch,” Risner said later.

The moment and his words are recalled by a statue of Risner unveiled at the Air Force Academy in 2001, the gift of Risner’s friend, H. Ross Perot, who had a history of honoring the POWs. The statue, atop a five-foot pedestal, is exactly nine feet high. Some 40 of Risner’s fellow POWs were on hand for the event. The principal speaker was Bud Day, who said, “We knew he was in fact nine feet tall. This is a life-size statue.” Few American airmen have ever stood taller in the estimation of their colleagues.

Risner is best known for his courage and leadership as a POW and for his book, “The Passing of the Night: My Seven Years as a Prisoner of the North Vietnamese”, but that is just part of his story.

He was born James Robinson Risner in Mammoth Spring, AR, on January 16, 1925. He grew up in Tulsa, OK, and joined the Air Corps as soon as he could, in 1943. After he earned his wings and a commission in the Aviation Cadets in May 1944, he applied for combat duty, but was sent instead to Panama, where he flew P-38 and

P-39 fighters. Risner left active duty in 1946, becoming a P-51 pilot with the Oklahoma Air National Guard (ANG).

His ANG unit was called up for the Korean War, but was not going to Korea, so Risner applied and was accepted for photo reconnaissance duty, in which he had some training. He shipped to Korea, where he flew 10 reconnaissance missions before talking his way into a transfer to the F-86, the Air Force’s best fighter at the time. He managed to work around the fact he had broken his arm in an off-duty accident before leaving the States by persuading a doctor to replace the cast with a leather cover, and he flew that way.

Flying with the 336<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Interceptor Squadron out of Kimpo, South Korea, he shot down five MiG’s and became an ace within a few months. “Korea was probably the high point of my whole career as far as real gratification is concerned,” he said later. In all, he flew 108 combat missions in Korea and was credited with destroying eight MiG-15’s.

He was also known for another feat of airmanship in Korea. On Sept. 15, 1952, Risner’s wingman, 2/Lt. Joe Logan, was hit by ground fire near the MiG airfield at Antung, China, on the Yalu River. It appeared he would have to bail out over enemy territory. “Joe’s aircraft got hit in the belly and began losing fuel,” Risner said. “When he was down to five minutes remaining, I told him to shut down and I would try to push him to Cho Do Island, where we had a rescue operation.” Risner carefully placed the upper lip of his air intake in the tailpipe of Logan’s F-86. “It stayed sort of locked there as long as we both maintained stable flight, but the turbulence created by Joe’s aircraft made stable flight for me very difficult,” Risner said.

Leaking fuel and hydraulic fluid made it even more difficult. “If either of us bobbed the least bit, I’d be tossed

**Continued on Page 16**

## Nine Feet Tall (from Page 15)

out of contact,” Risner said. The two aircraft lost contact eight times on the way to Cho Do, 60 miles to the south. They made it all the way, “but the nose of my plane was all boogered up,” Risner said. Near the base, Logan bailed out and landed in the water. Tragically, he became entangled in his parachute lines and drowned before the rescuers could reach him. Risner was awarded the Silver Star for the mission.

Risner was promoted to major before he left Korea and was augmented into the regular Air Force in 1953. He kept on flying F-86’s, first at Clovis AFB, NM, and then at Hahn Air Base (AB), West Germany, where he was the squadron commander. He returned to the States at George AFB, CA, and commanded the squadron evaluating the high-altitude air-to-air capabilities of the new F-100.

After a year at Air War College and a tour on the staff at U.S. Pacific Command, Risner went to Kadena AB, Okinawa, in 1964 as commander of the 67<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron. A new war was under way in Asia, and Risner was about to become part of it.

### Shot Down Twice

The war in Vietnam had not yet broken out in full fury. Although air commandos were flying clandestine combat missions in South Vietnam, U.S. fighters did not deploy to Southeast Asia in strength until after the Tonkin Gulf incidents in 1964. In January 1965, Risner led a contingent of seven F-105’s from Kadena on a temporary assignment to Da Nang AB in South Vietnam.

Risner promptly received a medal and a reprimand for the same mission. As directed, his flight knocked down a bridge at Ban Ken in Laos. Seeing another bridge downstream, Risner dropped it as well. The returning flight was met at Da Nang AB by Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, Air Force commander in South Vietnam. “We all lined up and he went down and gave us an Air Medal

because this was a successful strike,” Risner said. “He got to me and said, ‘By God, Robbie, what did you hit that other bridge for?’ ... He told me not to do that again.”

In February, the 67<sup>th</sup> TFS deployed on temporary duty to Korat AB, Thailand. From there, Risner led the first Rolling Thunder air strike against North Vietnam on March 2, 1965.



On March 16, he was shot down for the first time. Hit by ground fire while attacking a radar site in North Vietnam, he made it to the Tonkin Gulf, where he ejected and was picked up.

On April 3 and 4, Risner led two strikes against the 540 foot railroad bridge at Thanh Hoa, 70 miles south of Hanoi. Called the “Dragon’s Jaw,” it was rated the toughest target in North Vietnam. The strikes did not succeed, not because of lack of effort or courage by the aircrews, but because the weapons were not good enough. The bridge withstood 871 attacks before smart laser-guided bombs finally did the job in 1972.

The target was defended by lethal

ground fire and by the first MiG interceptors the Air Force encountered in Vietnam. Risner’s own aircraft was hit hard, but he pressed on despite smoke and fumes in the cockpit. For heroism in leading the mission, Risner was brought to Washington, D.C., and awarded the Air Force Cross, the first ever given to a living recipient. At the ceremony, Gen. J. P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, growled, “Now goddammit, Robbie, don’t go back out there and get your tail shot off.”

In August, the 67<sup>th</sup> again deployed from Kadena AB to Korat AB, Thailand, for temporary duty. Risner flew a mission a day over North Vietnam, often against tough defenses. “During one week, I was hit four missions out of five,” he said. He was awarded the Silver Star for several of these early September missions.

His luck ran out on September 16, 1965, when he was shot down a second time. That morning, he was leading a strike against a SAM site near Thanh Hoa. Flying low, he crossed a small hill and was suddenly hit hard by ground fire. He engaged his afterburner for a surge of power and raced toward the ocean, trailing smoke and fire. His engine quit before he got there, and he bailed out. He was captured by local militia, taken to Hanoi, and delivered to the Hanoi Hilton.

He didn’t expect to be there for long because, “I had been told that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had passed the word down: ‘Do not make any long-range plans and do not start any new buildings. The war will be over by June 1966.’”

Risner would remain a captive for seven years, four months, and 27 days.

After his capture, Risner was promoted to full colonel with a date of rank of November 8, 1965, but it would be some time before he knew that. Even in his previous grade, though, he was the senior-ranking officer among the POWs and, on their behalf, complained

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## Nine Feet Tall (from Page 16)

about the squalid conditions in which they were held. He also established committees and assigned tasks, such as keeping the POW list current.

The Vietnamese did not want any military organization among the prisoners, and they aggressively suppressed attempts to communicate. Risner's activity was one more reason for putting him in his place. When he refused to make the kind of incriminatory statements they demanded, he was kept on bread and water from October 1 through December 15. His legs were seldom out of shackles, and he was in solitary confinement except for periods of torture. In one such session, his shoulder was dislocated.

At last, Risner signed an apology for violating North Vietnamese airspace and bombing North Vietnam. His subsequent direction to other POWs recognized the limits of resistance. "Resist until you are tortured," he said, "but do not take torture to the point where you lose your capability to think and do not take torture to the point where you lose the permanent use of your limbs." Risner was eventually awarded his second Air Force Cross for courage under torture, and establishing an honorable standard that could be followed by others.

Later, others succeeded Risner as senior-ranking officer. The practice for establishing military command among the POWs was to use rank at the time of shoot-down because it was almost impossible to verify promotions and dates of rank after capture. This eventually became a problem. "New guys were coming in shot down as commanders who had been lieutenants in squadrons with old guys, who had been shot down as lieutenant commanders; thus the old guys were now working for their previous wingmen," said Cmdr. James B. Stockdale, the ranking Navy officer.

In 1971, the senior POW, Col. John P. Flynn, made an exception to the

shootdown rank policy. He recognized Risner's promotion to colonel and his 1965 date of rank, and named him vice commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Allied POW Wing, with Stockdale as his deputy for operations. The name of the wing referred to the fourth war of the century and recognized that Thai and Vietnamese were also held prisoner.

"Of all the indignities we were forced to undergo, I guess I resented meeting the foreign delegations more than any other," Risner said. "There was something so basically inhuman about appearing before the delegations and being asked how your food was and having to say it was excellent when it was not. Or to questions of your treatment, to lie in front of the cameras and say it was great, when they had literally tortured the stuffings out of you to make you appear."

There were command performances for reporters as well. In 1967, Risner was required to meet with Mary McCarthy, a liberal American writer openly sympathetic with the Viet Cong. "Do not say anything – regardless of what she asks you – do not say anything to disgrace or slander our country," the Vietnamese warned. "If you do, you will suffer for the rest of the time you are here," as if that was different from the regular routine.

McCarthy found Risner unlikable, "a gaunt, squirrel-faced older man" who "had not changed his cultural spots." She did not notice the scars or other evidence of torture. She spoke enthusiastically of Senator Eugene McCarthy's chances of winning the Democratic nomination and presidential election and expressed hope for an early end to the war. "We'd better knock on wood," she said, and knocked three times on the table. Afterward, Risner was in interrogation for hours as the Vietnamese tried to discover what secret signal had been passed with the knocking.

Treatment of POWs changed for the better in the fall of 1969. Part of the reason was public recognition at long last in the United States of the plight of the

POWs and the Vietnamese reaction to the unfavorable publicity. Another factor was the death of North Vietnamese strongman Ho Chi Minh.

In 1970, U.S. commandos raided the prison camp at Son Tay. No prisoners were there, having been moved recently, but the operation unnerved the North Vietnamese. They pulled all of the POWs back into the Hanoi Hilton and sent hundreds of civilian Vietnamese convicts elsewhere to make room for them.

The POWs were held in seven large open-bay areas in a section of the prison they called "Camp Unity." The fellowship was wonderful, especially for those like Risner, whose total time in solitary confinement during his captivity added up to more than three years. It was at Camp Unity where the church service and the "nine feet tall" episode occurred. "I never lost hope, and never did I despair of coming back alive," said Risner, who credits his religious faith with getting him through the ordeal.

In 1973, the POWs were released by order of shoot-down. Risner was No. 27 in the first group freed on February 12. En route from Hanoi to Clark AB, Philippines, on the first leg of the journey home, an Air Force doctor told the group they would be on a bland diet for a few days until their stomachs adjusted. Risner told the doctor they had been subsisting on "a lot of pig fat and grease." The doctor said, "If you can digest that, you can eat anything," and changed the menu. That evening at Clark AB, Risner had steak and three pieces of cake. He reported that he was ready for duty "after three good meals and a good night's rest."

The Air Force wanted him to rest and take a special assistant job, but Risner balked. He persuaded the Air Force to send him instead to qualify for operational flying in the F-4E. "Knowing that I had been in prison and been out of the cockpit for a long time, they didn't

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## Nine Feet Tall (from Page 17)

expect too much of me,” he said. “I didn’t have quite the finesse that I had some eight or nine years earlier” but “I had not lost my ability to take off, land, and fly an airplane in formation, and to position the airplane where I wanted it.”

He went to Cannon AFB, NM, as commander of the 832<sup>nd</sup> Air Division, and was promoted to brigadier general. He was then reassigned as vice commander of the Air Force Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis AFB, NV, in 1975, where he was also commander of the Red Flag combat training program. He retired in August 1976.

Risner was chosen six times as a participant in Air University’s “Gathering of Eagles” program, where noted airmen talk about their experiences. At a gathering in the 1990’s, he met a former Russian MiG-15 ace, who had been in Korea about the same time as Risner, and wondered if they had ever faced each other in combat.

**“No way,” Risner said. “You wouldn’t be here.”**

*Editor’s Notes. Brigadier General Robinson “Robbie” Risner died Oct. 22, 2013 at his home in Bridgewater, VA. He was 88.*

*James B. Stockdale, USN, was a POW from 1965-73. He was the highest-ranking naval officer to be held as a POW in Vietnam. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his resistance, courage, and leadership during captivity and retired as a Vice Admiral.*

*George E. “Bud” Day, USAF, was the only U.S. POW to escape from his North Vietnamese captors. He made it back to South Vietnam territory before being shot and recaptured. Col. Day was awarded the Medal of Honor for his escape and his valor while a POW, 1967-73.*

*John P. Flynn, USAF, was a POW from 1967-73. He was awarded the Air Force Cross for his leadership as the senior officer in captivity. He retired as a Lt. General.*

## Arc Light Surprise

by Doug Boston [458, 68]  
from Newsletter 17-2, August 2006

Arc Light missions (typically a cell of three to six B-52 bombers) were an awesome sight to behold and frightening to anyone close to the trail of bombs when they hit the ground. In 1965, the B-52D’s were given the “high density bombing” or “Big Belly” upgrade, which modified the aircraft to carry eighty-four 500 pound or forty-two 750 pound bombs in the bomb bay. The upgraded B-52D’s could also carry twenty-four 750 pound bombs on the pylons, for a maximum load of 60,000 pounds of conventional bombs, an astounding weight of ordinance. Arc Light missions from Kadena AB, Okinawa against targets in Vietnam began on 16 February 1968.

I was getting my line check for Aircraft Commander from Maj. Dick Brennan, who observed my performance while standing between the seats. The check ride was completed at Quan Loi. There had been an Arc Light mission about 15 minutes before we landed, but we had no information indicating that any other Arc Lights were imminent.

A normal takeoff was made on runway 05 and the gear was retracted. Just after liftoff, we saw out the left window that trees were being lifted into the air and clouds of dirt were rising. Everything was just “pushed up” into the sky. A shock wave hit the Bou, throwing it up and into a right turn. The angle of bank increased until it was about 135 degrees, putting the aircraft nearly inverted. Full left aileron and top rudder seemed to have no effect at first, but eventually began to right the aircraft.

When the Bou was right side up, I leveled out, began a turn back to the runway, rolled out on final, dropped the gear, and made a quick landing with a landing roll of about 500 feet. This horrifying sequence of events took only a couple of minutes, but it left a permanent impact on the entire crew. It was really “up close and personal!”

## C-7A Restoration at Museum of Aviation



In December 2017, Pat Hanavan and his son, Michael, visited the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins AFB, GA and scanned over 2,600 pages of C-7A tech orders. John Tawes drove down from Atlanta one day during the visit to make contact with the museum management and to check on progress in restoring Caribou S/N 63-9756.

**Mike Rowland is the curator of the Museum of Aviation and would appreciate any help you can render in the restoration, if you live nearby.**

In addition, the Association is in the process of acquiring four sets of roller conveyors for the Caribous on display at Warner Robins AFB, Dover AFB, Travis AFB, and Hill AFB.

## Morning Mortars

by Clyde Wilson [537, 69]  
from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. II*

Before we switched to air drop missions, the first flight of the day to arrive at Pleiku from Cam Ranh Bay was sent to Ben Het. When you landed at Ben Het and taxied to the ramp, the next step was the off load. Then the mortars would start to land around you. You would leave as fast as you could, call *Hilda* (Airlift Control Center in Saigon) to report the shelling, and the base would be closed for the rest of the day.

Each morning the first crew would land at Ben Het knowing they would receive in-coming and they always went.

## Supporting Khe Sanh

by Marty Hillman [459, 67]

from Newsletter 26-1, March 2015

The day started just as any other day at the office. This day's schedule was: flight to Khe Sanh out of Da Nang; recover to Phu Bai; back to Khe Sanh; do it one more time; and then home to Da Nang. The morning weather wasn't memorably bad or good. Winds normal.

The C-130 that "splashed" on the runway had been moved off to the side. Two-thirds of the runway was still unusable because of the accident. The method the Marines used to move the C-130 also tore things up a bit. It was a vivid demonstration of what tank and cat tracks do to an AM2 runway. With the existing winds, the result was landing down hill over a barrier, ending up on slimy, laterite covered AM2 matting.

The Bou would be loaded with a round blivet of fuel and some other "stuff". Sometimes the other stuff was beer. There was a shortage of cargo parachutes all over 'Nam because of Tet. Our primary load back was parachutes because of the shortage.

Previously, a Caribou flight into Khe Sanh took on two pallets of very wet parachutes. The full runway was still available for that flight and all of it was used. There was just barely enough to get airborne. Aborting the takeoff and taxing back was not a desirable option. Charlie usually wasn't a good shot, but you didn't want to give him additional practice time. At the end of the runway, the pilot dove over the cliff, got some more airspeed, and staggered away. Lesson learned, take only one pallet. No matter how hard the ramp officer yelled, cajoled or whined, take only one pallet of wet cargo parachutes.

The weather was good and our first flight in was uneventful, thankfully, since the GCA shack had been obliterated a week earlier. There was now a hole where the shack had been. Previously, the radar guys at Khe Sanh had been really helpful in giving us radar

"let downs" to VFR conditions. Luckily none of them got hurt when the shack was destroyed.

With the shack guys unavailable, getting in could be interesting. One way was to fly the coast to the sunken French fishing boat, turn inland on heading 274 degrees, give or take, drop down to the deck to stay under the overcast, hop over the ridge to the



A Shau valley, and turn right, down the river, until you got to the river that came from Khe Sanh. Then a left turn and keep on trucking until you got to Khe Sanh.

It was a good idea to fly at a maximum altitude of tree top level. That confused the bad guys until it was too late for them to react. At least that was the idea. Have you ever made rooster tails in the sand? The Bou could make some dandies. The Flight Engineer would open the tailgate and give us a heads up when it became advisable to pick it up a bit. On one memorable trip, while wafting our way over the sand dunes and rice paddies, we came across a farmer with a bullock hitched to a plow doing farmer things. The bullock took one look at the Bou, threw his head back, his tail went up, and off and away he went. The farmer never let go of the traces and, as a result, he was body surfing across the paddy when last seen.

If you were lucky enough to be able to arrive at altitude, the normal approach scene was to fly down the runway at altitude, make a 360 degree turn while losing *beau coup* altitude, skim over the telephone wires, and dive

down the cut bank to the runway and round out. Then, it was slowing enough to be able to make a right turn onto the ramp area and, even more importantly, not run off the existing AM2 into the mud. Plus, you didn't want to overshoot the turn and provide a stationary target for the occasional lucky mortar round.

Someone must have awakened Charlie because, as we committed to land that day, the mortars started impacting, and we could hear small arms fire.

We used what I called the Dennehey off load, which was to keep the Bou moving while the Flight Engineer got the blivet ready to go. The tail ramp would already be partially down and as we made the right turn up the parking ramp, the blivet would bounce out the back of the plane and end up in or near the hole where the GCA shack had been. A hole-in-one, sometimes. Next came the forklift with the pallet of wet parachutes to be loaded and quickly tied down. The Flight Engineer would then load as many guys as he could get on board. All this happened while we were still moving. As we turned to take the runway, the ramp came up, we all said a short prayer, and threw the whip to the R-2000's. As the sleek, subsonic STOL aerospace flying machine became airborne, the enemy mortar crews finally took a break. Adding to the excitement of the whole process was the option to dive over the drop off at the end of the runway to get a few more knots and then swoop off into the ozone.

We landed at Phu Bai, unloaded, reloaded with another blivet, and off we went to do the whole thing over again. Charlie always did his role at Khe Sanh by providing more mortars or, if you were really lucky, a few rockets. One more bouncing blivet, one more pallet of parachutes, some more Marines, and off we went to do it again. This day, the last trip to Khe Sanh was cancelled because of bad weather, so we went back to Da Nang to count fuselage holes. Got a few dents, but no holes. Just another day at the office.

## Flying in Leisure 1931-1939

by David Barth, 2013



Eighty years ago, flying British Imperial Airlines was a lot more fun than international flights today. The flights were leisurely and had more class. If people in Europe had serious money in the 1930's, and travelled internationally to South Africa or India, or within Europe, they probably flew on one of the large (130 foot wingspan) Handley Page HP 42 or HP 45 biplane aircraft, which were the mainstay of British Imperial Airways at the time.

The HP 42 and HP 45 were British four-engine biplane airliners designed to a 1928 Imperial Airways specification by Handley Page. Only four of each model was built. Two of the HP 45's were later converted to 42's.

A major difference between the two models was the engines. The HP 42 had four Bristol Jupiter XIF's with 490 horsepower each while the HP 45 used four Jupiter XFBM supercharged engines with 555 horsepower. Both had two engines on the upper wing and one on each side of the fuselage on the lower wing. The aircraft was a large unequal-span biplane, all-metal except for the fabric coverings of the wings, tail surfaces and rear fuselage. The tail was a biplane with three fins.

The HP 42 was designed for the long-range routes to South Africa and India and was the more luxurious of the two models. The similar HP 45 was built for the European routes and could carry more passengers.

The machines were extremely safe. No passenger in a HP 42/45 was ever

killed in its years of commercial airline operations, 1931 to 1939. A record thought to be unique for passenger aircraft.

The Imperial Airways flights were like holiday excursions. The HP 42 carried 24 passengers, all in First Class. The passenger area was divided into three different compartments: the First Class saloon, the bar and cocktail area, and the smoking section. The aircraft provided very comfortable seating, legroom and service. Hot meals were served on bone china with silver cutlery, free liquor flowed, and over night stops were spent in the very best hotels. No one was in a rush; there was no waiting in lines; and everyone was well dressed.

Flying along at a few thousand feet, one could see every interesting feature passing below – down to the quality of the washing on the backyard clotheslines. At a steady 95 to 100 mph, one also had time to look at the passing panorama.



It took four days to a week, depending on headwinds and weather, to fly from London to Cape Town, South Africa, flying only about four hours a day. Passengers and crew stayed at the best hotels in Europe, Cairo, Khartoum and the Victoria Falls. All the stops on the way to India also made for an interesting choice of destinations.

*Editor's Note. Six HP 42/45's were pressed into Royal Air Force service at the outbreak of World War II in late 1939. By the end of 1940, all of the planes had been destroyed or were unserviceable.*

## B-52's in 2050! Really?

by John A. Tirpak

*Air Force Magazine*

February 11, 2018

With the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY 19) budget request, the Air Force is beginning an overhaul of its bomber fleet. The USAF is planning to extend the B-52 beyond 90 years of service and will retire the younger B-1's and B-2's earlier than planned, as it brings on the stealthy new B-21 aircraft. The Air Force is eyeing a bomber fleet of roughly 175 aircraft overall, although service officials said that number could go up with more generous budgets.

The younger bombers would be retired early, in the 2030's, because the Air Force believes it must live with a bomber enterprise manpower footprint that is not much larger than it is now, meaning the new B-21 must replace, and not be additive to, much of the existing bomber fleet.

The Air Force had previously planned to operate the B-1 and B-52 until 2040, and the B-2 to 2058. In judging which older bombers to retain, USAF chose the B-52 over its younger stablemates because of the aircraft's versatile conventional payload, comparatively lower maintenance needs, and the ability to carry the new Long Range Standoff cruise missile. The B-1 is labor-intensive and treaty-prohibited from carrying cruise missiles, and the B-2 fleet, at only 20 aircraft, is considered too expensive per airplane to retain beyond the early 2030's.

The FY 19 budget request will include the first monies necessary to begin equipping the B-52 fleet with new engines that will reduce its maintenance needs, extend its range and loiter time, and allow the aircraft to climb faster to cruising altitude. The B-52 would be retained into the 2050's.

The Air Force envisions retaining all existing bomber bases, swapping out

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## B-52's in 2050 (from Page 20)

B-1 and B-2 aircraft as B-21's become available. Very substantial military construction funds will be needed to accommodate the new aircraft, however.

The revelations are contained in USAF's "Bomber Vector," (previously called the "Bomber Roadmap") which has been in development for several years. The plan includes the phase-in of the B-21, the phase-out of older aircraft, the timing and scope of upgrades, and the new munitions needed for the bomber enterprise.

## Bowling Memorial Service

by Gary Clark [459, 69]

I wanted everyone to know that David's (David Bowling, 459, 69) brother, Melvin Bowling, called me to express the Bowling family's "thanks and sincere appreciation" to the Caribou Association and all of us who were able to attend the rededication of David's memorial last November. Melvin said the Bowling family was thrilled to meet us and to learn more about David's mission and the events leading up to the day he was lost. Melvin said he was very grateful for the *Caribou Airlines, Vol. III* he received. The book, which covers the C-7A history in 1969, was a great help in providing a better understanding of David's mission in Vietnam. The book plus, our attendance at the rededication, was deeply appreciated by the Bowling family.

I also received a similar "thank you" phone call from David's sister, Janet Foster, just before Christmas. She too was very grateful for our attendance at the event. She indicated that she's been reading her *Vol. III* and had learned so much more about David's time in Vietnam. She has been sharing that information with the rest of the family.

Pat Hanavan has added Melvin, Ja-

net, and David's wife Judy as Honorary Associate Members, so they are all now receiving the Association newsletters. Melvin indicated the family was very pleased to have received their first newsletter.

When we were in La Plata, MD in November, Rick Boggs, who organized the rededication, told me that there were plans to fly a U.S. Flag on an Air National Guard flight on December 26, 2017 in honor of David, who was lost on 26 December 1969. Melvin recently confirmed that flight was flown. The flag will be placed in the new chapel, which will eventually be built at the La Plata United Methodist Church to replace the original chapel destroyed by a tornado some years ago. The new chapel will be rededicated to David.

My thanks again to Pat Hanavan for letting us know about the rededication and for all he does for the Association. I also want to thank him for his tremendous accomplishment in authoring *Caribou Airlines*. As a definitive account of the C-7A operational history in Vietnam, those volumes are a valued resource, not only for all of us who were a part of the C-7A mission during the war, but also as a way to share some of our legacy with our own families, just as *Caribou Airlines, Vol. III* has now done for the Bowling family.

## Hypersonics Effort Needed

by John A. Tirpak

*Air Force Magazine*, March 1, 2018

There's a 136 percent increase in funding for hypersonics (flight speeds of at least five times the speed of sound) research in the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's (DARPA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget request over FY 2018, but this is simply a "good first step" toward what is really needed—a national effort, said DARPA chief Steven Walker.

"Last spring, DARPA, in its role as 'truth-teller' to national leadership,



*The hypersonic X-51 Waverider vehicle has reached Mach 5.1 speed in a six-minute flight.*

went to Deputy [Defense] Secretary Bob Work, and laid out where we thought the U.S. was in hypersonics" in comparison to "peer competitors" and argued for a "very comprehensive initiative," Walker said. Both DARPA and the individual services all got a funding boost in the area, "I don't think we got everything we wanted, (but) it was a good first step."

Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, USAF Gen. Paul Selva, acknowledged in January that China is substantially ahead in the field, having made it a "national program" funded at up to hundreds of billions of dollars.

DARPA provided a breakout of hypersonics funding in the FY 2019 budget request and previous years. Funding went from \$85.5 million in Fiscal 2017 to \$108.6 million in the FY 2018 request, and to \$256.7 million in Fiscal 2019.

Two programs DARPA is pursuing in partnership with the Air Force are the Hypersonic Air-Breathing Weapon Concept (HAWC) at \$14.3 million and the Tactical Boost Glide (TBG) program, requested at \$139.4 million. Other projects include the Advanced Full Range Engine (AFRE), a combined-cycle powerplant, at \$53 million, and "Operational Fires" (OpFires), with the Army, to demonstrate a ground-launched hypersonic system "integrating tactical boost glide technologies."

Walker said HAWC and TBG will "start flying in 2019," and will have application as air-launched standoff

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## Hypersonics (from Page 21)

weapons. The TBG money requested “will actually look at developing some operational prototypes,” probably in the “2022-2023 time period, so it’s close,” Walker noted.

The AFRE will be ground-tested in 2019 or 2020, Walker said, and it’s been confirmed that it will fit in an existing hypersonic wind tunnel where those tests will be made. A flight demonstration is not yet part of that program, however.

Walker also said the US does not have sufficient hypersonic tunnel infrastructure to handle all the work that must be done.

“We need an infusion of dollars in our infrastructure to do hypersonics,” Walker asserted. China already has more hypersonic-capable tunnels than the U.S. and will soon have two or three times as many, he added.

“It is very clear that China has a focus on hypersonics and is making it one of their national priorities,” Walker said. “I think we need to do the same.”

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## Old Caribou Pilot Reflections

by Doug Clinton [458, 69]

I am 73. How did that happen? Guess I just screwed up and got old.

There is a hierarchy among pilots, and, by popular definition, fighter pilots are at the apogee. I never thought that way, and was always glad for them, because I never wanted to be one. Who wants to be immobile, strapped to a seat with a brain bucket on your head, a bear trap on your face and, in the case of some airplanes I flew, a rock-hard seat pack parachute under your butt?

I was fortunate enough to be high enough in my UPT (Undergraduate Pilot Training) class in 1968 to avoid the back seat in an F-4, and got my first choice, the C-141. I reported for duty at Charleston, SC in a military manner, “Sir, 2/Lt. Clinton reporting for

duty.” The response from the Squadron Commander was, “Who?” I repeated. He then said, “Oh yeah, you’re going to Viet Nam.” So much for dodging that bullet.

One year later, I was a 1/Lt. C-141 Aircraft Commander with 1,500 flying hours when I received new orders: EB-66 to Takhli AB, Thailand, with a short side trip to Myrtle Beach for an instant fighter pilot course in AT-33’s. But, as usual, my wife had the correct info before I did. Upon returning home to Charleston, she informed me that my orders were changed, and I was going to Caribous at Cam Ranh Bay. What!? I was a jet pilot! Caribous?

Although not totally thrilled about flying EB-66’s over the north with F-105’s on my wing, this news brought on glee-less emotions. Throughout the training phase, including Bou School at Dyess AFB, Combat Survival, Water Survival, and Jungle Survival, I was an attitude case.

Who was it that said the government had put out a contract for an airplane that was slow, ugly and easily shot down?

At Dyess AFB, TX, they put me in the “Old Heads” class because I had 1,500 hours of flying time, which shortened some of the academics. I remember the propeller class where the instructor said, “This is your Hamilton Standard prop, any questions?” I said “Yeah, what the hell is a prop?” Then there was the short field landing practice on 1,500 feet of runway. I was used to using more than that in the flare!

At Clark AB, Philippines, we were told there was a backup in the jungle survival training, but if we hurried to the front of the line, we might make the next class. I went to the back of the line and enjoyed an extra week in the BOQ and the Officers’ Club. Nevertheless, on New Year’s Eve 1969, I arrived at my new home.

It took a month or so, but I finally understood the Bou, and learned to love it. In all my years as a pilot, none were more rewarding, exciting, and

sometimes frightful, than that year. You really became one with the machine, and never since have I felt so proficient in an aircraft.

The years since have flown by a lot faster than a Caribou with a strong tailwind. More C-141’s, then T-33’s, C-130’s, C-26’s, KC-135’s, and finally retirement.

My career in aviation is steadily declining, but I am still doing it, albeit in a 1959 TriPacer! I think because of the Caribou experience, I still treat every landing as a short field.

Thinking back to 1970, some of the Caribou guys I flew with were in their 40’s then, and many of them are gone now. All the crews I flew with and the maintenance troops were fantastic. I miss that camaraderie.

What an experience!

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## Mail to Khe Sanh

by Serge Molohosky [459, 66]

I remember one of the flights to Khe Sanh very well. It was late September 1967. There was a low overcast with strong, gusty winds over the wire and I had difficulty getting the aircraft on the ground. Our load included almost 2,000 pounds of mail.

The Copilot and I were standing on the ramp next to the aircraft when the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Bruno Hochmuth and his aide walked up to us. The General made some small talk. He asked about the flying conditions and if there was any ground fire. As I remember, he then said, “Captain, I want to thank you for bringing the mail in. The mail is very important to my Marines and I appreciate it.” He was a true Marine’s General.

*Editor’s Note. Maj. Gen. Hochmuth was killed November 14, 1967 when the helicopter he was flying in exploded northwest of Hue. Maj. Gen. Hochmuth was the highest ranking Marine killed in Vietnam.*

## Six Seconds to Live

by Lt. Gen. John Kelly, USMC  
November 13, 2010

*From a speech by then-Lt. Gen. John Kelly to the Semper Fi Society of St Louis, describing a 2008 suicide bombing in Iraq that killed two Marines, Corporal Jonathon Hale, 22, and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, 20. General Kelly's son, Second Lieutenant Robert Kelly, 29, was killed in action in Afghanistan, November 9, 2010:*

What we didn't know at the time, and only learned a couple of days later after I wrote a summary and submitted both Yale and Haerter for posthumous Navy Crosses, was that one of our security cameras, damaged initially in the blast, recorded some of the suicide attack. It happened exactly as the Iraqis had described it. It took exactly six seconds from when the truck entered the alley until it detonated.

You can watch the last six seconds of their young lives. Putting myself in their heads I supposed it took about a second for the two Marines to separately come to the same conclusion about what was going on once the truck came into their view at the far end of the alley. Exactly no time to talk it over, or call the sergeant to ask what they should do. Only enough time to take half an instant and think about what the sergeant told them to do only a few minutes before: "let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass." The two Marines had about five seconds left to live.

It took about another two seconds for them to present their weapons, take aim, and open up. By this time the truck was halfway through the barriers and gaining speed the whole time. Here, the recording shows a number of Iraqi police, some of whom had fired their AK's, now scattering like the normal and rational men they were – some running right past the Marines. They had three seconds left to live. For about two seconds more, the recording shows the Marines' weapons firing nonstop,



the truck's windshield exploding into shards of glass as their rounds take it apart and tore in to the body of the son-of-a-bitch who is trying to get past them to kill their brothers – American and Iraqi – bedded down in the barracks totally unaware of the fact that their lives at the moment depended entirely on two Marines standing their ground. If they had been aware, they would have known they were safe, because two Marines stood between them and a crazed suicide bomber. The recording shows the truck careening to a stop immediately in front of the two Marines. In all of the instantaneous violence Yale and Haerter never hesitated. By all reports and by the recording, they never stepped back. They never even started to step aside. They never even shifted their weight. With their feet spread shoulder width apart, they leaned into the danger, firing as fast as they could work their weapons. They only had one second left to live.

The truck explodes. The camera goes blank. Two young men go to their God. Six seconds. Not enough time to think about their families, their country, their flag, or about their lives or their deaths, but more than enough time for

two very brave young men to do their duty – into eternity. That is the kind of people who are on watch all over the world tonight – for you.

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### Simple Solution

by Dick Lanoue [459, 69]

The northeast monsoon season in the northern part of South Vietnam was a strange phenomenon. You would wake up, do the four S's (sh\*t, shower, shampoo, and shave), and then get on the squadron 6-pac and head to the chow hall for breakfast. The sky would be virtually clear and lit up full of stars, and sometimes the moon. By the time you arrived at your aircraft, the sun would be just breaking the horizon with all shades of orange and red. Then, strangely enough, by the time you were ready to taxi, the sky was completely overcast and, shortly thereafter, the rain began and continued for most of the day, with a few breaks now and then.

When I arrived at Phu Cat in May 1969 and began my in-country check-out, I heard all about the "Do's and

**Continued on Page 24**

### Simple Solution (from Page 23)

Don't  GCI (Ground Control Intercept) procedures, talking to the Arty (artillery) sites, spiraling up and down at the various camps, and, oh yes, how to make the pattern entry at Da Nang and call "bridges with the numbers."

One of those bits of wisdom stayed in the back of my mind. It was actually a warning. When flying in moderate to heavy rain, the overhead hatch behind the pilot seat (in which the flight mechanic would stand while taxiing) would leak like a sieve. The warning part was to expect one or more of the radios to fail, since the radio rack was right below the hatch. Of course, such a failure would come at the worst possible time.

I had recently upgraded to Flight Examiner, and was due a check ride. The check ride had to be administered (not "given") by Dave Hutchens, Chief of Squadron Stan/Eval. I was assigned the daily mission that flew sorties out of Da Nang all day. We showed at the aircraft, did a ground briefing, and Q & A. Right on cue, the sky clouded over and it soon began to rain.

We made the usual departure to the northeast until we were "feet wet," contacted GCI since we were in the "soup," and leveled off for the flight to Da Nang. I was in the right seat with a "victim" in the left seat, and Dave standing in between. We began going through the normal check ride "give and take" when things began to go down hill. We first lost contact with GCI. I tried all the radios with no luck. We determined the navigation radios were out too. Only the radar seemed to be working. As Reilly, in the old TV show "The Life of Reilly" used to say, "What a revoltin' development this is." There we were, at four or five thousand feet, in the dark clouds, rain beating on the windscreen, and leaking badly through the overhead hatch.

During this time, Dave kept asking the normal check ride questions, including a few directed at what I was going

to do to get us safely on the ground. At one point, I remember saying to Dave something like, "Okay, Okay, enough with the questions. If you're going to bust me, let's get on the ground first. I need to deal with the situation." I felt really bad about what I said, and apologized when we got on the ground. I am still thankful for Dave's patience during that flight.

We kept trying the radios with no luck. However, the radar was a really good nav aid. It was painting the coastline quite well. So, I pretty much knew where we were, and where Da Nang was, but we had to get down to where it was VMC (Visual Meteorological Conditions). At that point, I was hoping for a break in the clouds, or even a "sucker hole," to  appear. I decided to start a slow descent  er the water and hoped we would break into the clear below the overcast.

As luck would have it, we suddenly found ourselves in a large sucker hole and were able to spiral down below the clouds. The base of the clouds were probably around 1,500 to 2,000 feet. From this point, the rest was relatively easy. We headed for Da Nang, found the "bridges," complied with Lost Communications procedures, and landed safely.

Some time later, we learned about a solution for the radio failure problem due to a leaky hatch. Some talented maintenance folks came up with a simple, yet extremely effective solution. They fabricated a canvass cover the length of the radio rack and secured it to the inside of the fuselage just above the top of the radio rack. It was wide enough that it completely covered the radios, yet could easily be rolled up for access to any of the radios. It was a simple, elegant solution to a very significant problem. From then on, I don't remember any incidents of radio failure due to the leaky overhead hatch.

I don't know the names of those involved with the fix, but we owe them a debt of gratitude. I, for one, having experienced the alternative, am thankful for their ingenuity.

## Checklist Discipline

by Fred Dimon [535, 68]

A very vivid memory of Lt. Col. Ed Stembridge stuck with me throughout my Air Force flying career, and remains with me today in whatever little flying I still do – a lesson about the use of a checklist.

We were on final into Song Be and there were mortar rounds being walked down the runway (as well as the Viet Cong could do it anyway). We landed and quickly dropped off our usual stuff, but we also had to pick-up some KIAs. I went back to help unload and load while the Aircraft Commander kept everything ready in the cockpit. When everything was ready in the back, I rushed to the cockpit and jumped into my seat.

I was ready to "get the hell out of Dodge" right then, but "Stem" called for the checklist. My surprise must have shown in my expression, because he promptly explained to me, "more pilots get killed not running the checklist than ever get killed by mortars."

I have never forgotten those words.

## Not My Troops

by R.C. Morris

Project Delta Recon vets (U.S. Army Special Forces) recall one operation in 1965, when a recon team had been out of radio contact with the Forward Operating Base for much too long.

The radio relay man had called repeatedly, yet failed to make contact. Finally, when the team leader answered, he spoke much too softly to be heard over the aircraft engine noise and it seemed his Vietnamese teammates were chattering loudly behind him. The irritated airborne radioman growled, "Speak up! I can't hear you through all your Vietnamese troops talking!"

Very slowly, a faint voice came back. "T-h-e-y-a-r-e-n-o-t-m-y-t-r-o-o-p-s.

## Vietnam Airlift Is a Human Thing

by Capt. Robert P. Everett  
*Airman Magazine*, October 1968

Who would want a cargo aircraft with only two engines (old-fashioned piston type at that); an aircraft that grosses out with a mere 5,000 pounds of cargo; and sporting a maximum speed comparable to the venerable C-47 *Gooney Bird*? Who would? The United States Air Force, that's who.

### Why?

STOL, that's why. STOL stands for short takeoff and landing, and you do a lot of that in Vietnam. STOL is one outstanding capability of the DeHavilland C-7 Caribou. So if there's such a thing as the right airplane for some very special airlift jobs in Vietnam, the Caribou has got to be it.

The C-7 is one of three primary types of aircraft flying the airlift mission in Vietnam. Together, these three aircraft, the C-7, the Fairchild Hiller C-123 Provider, and the Lockheed C-130 Hercules, have virtually wrought airlift miracles in South Vietnam:

More than two and three quarter of a billion pounds of cargo airlifted in a year.

An airlift takeoff or landing every 38 seconds, around the clock.

Nearly four million people transported in a 12 month period.

That's just a sampling of the imposing figures being tabulated by the people who do the airlift job in Vietnam. Dozens of other equally impressive statistics could be cited, but all the figures in the world could only tell part of the story. But more importantly, there's another story behind those figures, a story that deals with response, priorities, management and, mostly, with people.

### Response is the Key

The fact that you haul a thousand tons of cargo to a battle area doesn't really mean a thing if you get it there too late to do any good for the ground force

commander who needs it. Response is the key. When a ground force commander says he needs ammunition, weapons, supplies and troops, he also says when he needs them. Usually it's right now. And if you're the guy who pushes the airlift button, you've got to get the goods to him on time. That's where you succeed or fail.

The man who pushes the airlift button in Vietnam is Maj. Gen. Burl W. McLaughlin, commander of the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division at Tan Son Nhut AB. He bears responsibility for all in-country airlift. The 834<sup>th</sup>'s Airlift Control Center (ALCC) is the nerve center of all airlift operations in Vietnam. It's where the ground force commander's request is translated into cubage, weight and sortie. Specialists take the airlift requests, which have been approved by Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and program them against their available resources.

When you talk about available resources of the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division, you're talking about those three reliables, the C-130 Hercules, C-123 Provider and C-7 Caribou aircraft, all assigned to or under the operational control of the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division. ALCC's job is to match the right aircraft to the right requirement. This is to insure maximum, efficient use of the aircraft. You don't send a big C-130 with only a ton of rations to an outpost any more then you try to send 150 troops in a C-7.

Once the mission is scheduled the ALCC continues to monitor it until it is completed. Thus, the ALCC command post can tell you at any moment precisely where each of its aircraft is located, what it's carrying, where it will land, and when it will complete its mission. One a typical day the command post controls more than 1,250 sorties. It's a big job, and a necessary one that insures quick responses to vital demands.

Take an emergency medical evacuation request. The ALCC could quickly unload cargo from a lower priority mission and launch the aircraft to meet the

need, but a more likely response would be to divert airborne aircraft near the injured man. An emergency call for ammunition from a besieged outpost would be similarly handled.

### Airplanes and Men

"Big Daddy" of the Vietnam airlift is the C-130. It moves most of the tonnage, averaging more than 74,000 tons a month. The C-130 is a big airplane, nearly a hundred feet long. It can carry 16 tons of cargo. And even though its wingspan is 132 feet, it can still operate from about 81 airstrips and runways in South Vietnam. The C-130's and crews in Vietnam are under the operational control of the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division, but belong to the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division. They come to Vietnam from 315<sup>th</sup> units throughout the western Pacific. Each C-130 and crew normally flies missions in Vietnam for two weeks, then returns to its home base for four or five days for maintenance.

A middle-aged airlift bird that recently got a rejuvenation treatment is the C-123 Provider. Auxiliary jet engines were hung under its wings, giving it a short-field takeoff capability and increasing its cargo-carrying capability. The Provider can haul five tons. There are three C-123 squadrons at Phan Rang and one at Tan Son Nhut. All are assigned to the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Commando Wing.

Newcomer to the US Air Force airlift fleet in Vietnam is DeHavilland's C-7 Caribou, received from the Army on January 1, 1967, as the result of a fixed-wing/rotary-wing agreement. There are about 90 Caribous in Vietnam, assigned to the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing at Cam Ranh Bay AB. Six squadrons have the Caribous, two each at Cam Ranh Bay, Phu Cat and Vung Tau. Caribous' missions differ from those flown by the C-130's and C-123's because much of the work of the 483<sup>rd</sup> is under the category of dedicated aircraft. That means the aircraft is allocated to fill the airlift needs of a specified organization, such

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## Vietnam Airlift (from Page 25)

as the Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry or 101<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division. The Caribous also support Special Forces throughout the country. The C-130's and C-123's on the other hand, operate on a "common user" basis.

### Caribou a Busy Bird

Col William H. Mason is commander of the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing. He puts his mission in the simplest terms: "The continuing goal of this wing is to maintain customer satisfaction by providing safe, reliable and effective airlift." Performing the mission is a group of people the composition of which is, in itself, something of an oddity.

First off, it includes more than 50 lieutenant colonels ("granddaddies of the Caribou fleet"). Then there are a half dozen Ph.Ds in fields ranging from sociology to geophysics. There's an ex-Thunderbird pilot and a former NASA pilot. One of the lieutenant colonels was a double ace in World War II; another a single ace. Still another was pilot of an ultra speedy B-58 Hustler before "moving up" to the Caribou. Aircraft commanders run the grade ladder from first lieutenant to colonel.

During 1967, these people and their Caribous racked up more flying hours (100,159) and more sorties (157,576) than either of the other airlift aircraft in Vietnam. For the first half of 1968, both figures were up about 20 percent. As if to remind the Caribou pilots that their new records were being set under combat conditions, 23 Caribous took hits from enemy ground fire in the first 60 days of 1968 alone.

The Caribou can take off and land on an 800 foot strip. That means it can operate from about 160 runways or airstrips in Vietnam – far more than can either the C-130 or C-123. It is, therefore, the only fixed-wing aircraft that can fly troops and supplies to many of the allied outposts dotting the Vietnamese countryside. Like the forts of the early American West, these Special Forces

outposts are islands of relative safety in the heart of enemy territory. For airplanes to operate from their airstrips, pilots must make dangerous approaches and climb out over enemy territory. And every day's missions include stops at these Special Forces camps.

### A Caribou Day

Caribou crews go to work early. A 5 AM crew briefing is routine. Let's follow as the airplane moves down the runway at Cam Ranh Bay AB and lifts easily into the early morning sky. First stop will be Nha Trang, just a few miles up the Vietnam coast. By 6 o'clock, the Caribou is on the ground at Nha Trang. A sister ship is nearby, taking on cargo for the Special Forces camp at Ban Me Thuot, some 70 miles to the west. The cargo consists of a small amount of ammunition, a large amount of fresh vegetables and three live calves. That's a fairly typical load for a Caribou. The flight engineer/loadmaster is accustomed to handling live animals and quickly spreads heavy plastic sheets across the airplane floor. Calves, after all, are not house-broken. The odor inside the cargo compartment is well – pungent. The crew delays the closing of the rear cargo door to the last possible moment. Finally it is closed and the sister Caribou is off for Ban Me Thuot.

By now our Caribou has off loaded passengers and taken on others. This morning's mission will not involve hauling cargo. Instead, the plane will fly to Pleiku AB to pick up Vietnamese paratroopers for a practice jump. That's another feature of the Caribou. It can quickly be converted from cargo to passenger configuration. The large cargo door at the rear is an excellent jumping position for paratroopers. When opened in flight it adds not a whit of control problem for the pilot. Touchdown at Pleiku is under a hot mid-morning sun.

Within minutes the paratroopers are on board and the Caribou is headed for the drop zone. The jump is routine. The Caribou returns twice to Pleiku for additional loads. When the paradrops are

finished the Caribou returns to Pleiku. Crews change and the bird is made ready for its afternoon mission, a resupply of the Special Forces camp at Dak Seang, not far from the Laos border.

Caribou pilots land routinely on the several hundred feet of dust and gravel at Dak Seang. But putting a fully loaded airplane on that short, narrow airstrip is "hairy," any way you cut it. The plane barely touches ground before the props are reversed. A cloud of dust engulfs it. The rough, hilly airstrip at one point becomes so narrow that the wheels of the Caribou barely clear the ditch on the side of the runway. The pilots call it a routine landing. Nowhere in Vietnam can you see more vividly the effect of airlift on people than in the resupply of these isolated Special Forces camps.

Before the plane touches down, all the camp's vehicles, two trucks and a jeep, are moving to meet it. A U.S. Special Forces sergeant jumps from the back of a truck onto the platform of the Caribou. He spots a long-awaited package and shouts, "The hot water heater is here!" The heater and a pallet of rice are unloaded.

In unloading the remaining two pallets of fiber sand bags, the crew demonstrates one of the Caribou's special extraction techniques – Ground High Speed Off-load. The chains securing the two pallets are removed and the engines are revved up. Then the pilot releases the brakes and the Caribou lurches forward. The two pallets fly out the rear cargo door, remaining in an upright position, and slam down on the ground. It's a technique the Caribou pilots can use when they're under fire and have to get out of a place in a hurry, or to expedite off loading when a forklift is not available.

Taking the empty airplane off from the Dak Seang airstrip somehow lacks the drama of the landing. The Caribou heads for the next camp. The pilots refer to it as an international airport; it has a 2,000 foot paved runway.

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## Vietnam Airlift (from Page 26)

Compared to Dak Seang, the description is apt. Pleiku is again a pickup point for the last mission of the day – a supply paradrop at Dak Pek, scene of intense fighting between South Vietnamese forces and North Vietnamese regulars. No landing will be attempted at Dak Pek, but a couple of tons of supplies and equipment will be air dropped. The area around Dak Pek has been an enemy stronghold and contains several suspected 37 mm anti-aircraft gun emplacements. Flying around it is especially hazardous. But today the drop is made without encountering enemy fire. The slow moving Caribou comes in at about 300 feet over the drop zone and makes a gravity air drop.

It's an efficient, accurate means of putting supplies on target. By now the sun has set and it's time for the long flight back to Cam Ranh Bay. One day has seen the airplane carry paratroops on a practice drop, bring needed supplies to Special Forces camps, and drop ammunition and food to allied troops on an active battlefield.

Other days bring other challenges: moving an entire orphanage from war-torn Ban Me Thuot to a safe area, making the first landing at a new or recaptured airstrip in the A Shau Valley, picking up 13 hits on takeoff from Hue Phu Bai, or maybe setting a new record by hauling more than 50 tons of cargo in a single airplane in a single day.

It's all in a day's work for the C-7 Caribou. And in Vietnam, where the Caribou and its big brothers, the C-130 and C-123, are flying in history's greatest airlift, setting new records every day, it reminds you that airlift is, after all, a human thing.

## B-17 Navigator's Log



**12-15-43, Mission No. 14.** Bremen, Germany. Rail center and manufacturing center. Pathfinder mission with mixed load of incendiary and demolition bombs. Our Wing, 394<sup>th</sup>, leading. We were "Tail-end Charlie" in No. 6 position of the high squadron. Briefed at 0500. Took off at 0845 and climbed through 5,000 feet of fog and clouds. Assembled over Splasher #7 and left England at 1030. Had a 30 minute delay over North Sea and circled to kill time. Got back on schedule and left again. Hit a high layer of cirrus clouds near Germany and had to go around it. Came back and made landfall okay. Went over Bremen at 1310 and dropped bombs through clouds. Were in flak for eight minutes. Tracked us along complete undercast the whole trip. Saw few fighters. Had no attacks. German fighters couldn't get off the ground evidently. Hit flak at Freisian Islands in Holland on way out. Let down through fog and clouds over Splasher #7 individually and came home with none too much gas left. Landed at 1530.

**12-19-43 Mission No. 15.** Bremen, Germany. Carried 36 incendiary bombs. MPI (Main Point of Impact) was the business district. Bremen is second biggest inland port of Germany. Briefed at 0400. Couldn't get old "662" started so had to change to *Picadilly Queen* at the last minute. Took off at 0830. Left England at 1030 at 20,000 feet. 35 degrees below. Clouds cleared up over the continent. We had No. 6 position in lead squadron. The low squadron kept coming up under us so close that we had to leave the group on the Initial Point and go over the target behind our group. Bremen was clear except for a smoke screen they put up late. Every Division hit Bremen square in the city.

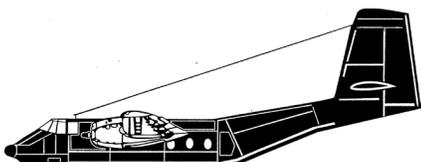
Our group bombardier synchronized on a large church. When we left, the city was burning amid a cloud of smoke. Two of our bombs failed to drop and were lying in the bombays with the pins out. Tubby went back and put the pins back in and we dropped them in the North Sea. GEE box and radio were out. Went in straight over Germany with ground speed of 300 mph and 80 mph wind. Came back over the North Sea against the wind with ground speed of 130 mph. Landed at 1530.

## Falcons and Drone Development

by Brian Everstine  
*Air Force Magazine*  
December 6, 2017

The tactics used by birds of prey to hunt can be used in the development of small, unmanned aerial systems to hunt other drones, Oxford University reported in a study originally funded by the Air Force Research Laboratory.

The study, released December 4, 2017, finds that peregrines' aerial hunting follows geometric rules, similar to visually guided missiles, to close in on prey. Using cameras mounted on falcons and miniature GPS receivers, researchers found that the terminal attack trajectories use proportional navigation, and the birds rely on information about the attacker's line of sight to target instead of needing any information on a target's speed or distance, according to an Oxford press release. "Our GPS tracks and on-board videos show how peregrine falcons intercept moving targets that don't want to be caught," said Graham Taylor, a professor in Oxford University's Department of Zoology. "Remarkably, it turns out they do this in a similar way to most guided missiles. Our next steps is to apply this research to designing a new kind of visually guided drone, which will be able to remove rogue drones safely from the vicinity of airports, prisons, and other no-fly zones."



## Kingman AAF Boneyard

from [AirplanesBoneyards.com](http://AirplanesBoneyards.com)  
submitted by Lew Shedd [459,66]

The Army Air Force Flexible Gunnery School, Kingman, AZ, was built at the start of World War II as an aerial gunnery training base. It was located on approximately 4,145 acres in Mohave County next to Route 66. The location was an ideal location due to its sparse population and miles of wide-open spaces.

The base offered its first classes in January of 1943, and was renamed Kingman Army Air Field later that year with the primary mission of training gunners for the B-17 Flying Fortress.

The airfield became one of the Army Air Corps' largest training bases, training 35,000 individuals. Its facilities included housing for 3,200 enlisted men, 3,070 cadets, and 430 officers. Bugs Bunny became the base's official mascot because of the large number of rabbits that inhabited in the area. The base newspaper was known as the "Cactus." With the end of the war, Kingman was ordered to close.

Within a year of the signing of peace treaties, about 34,000 airplanes had been moved to 30 locations within the U.S. The War Assets Administration (WAA) and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) handled the disposal of these aircraft.

The RFC established depots around the country to store and sell surplus aircraft. By the summer of 1945, at least 30 sales-storage depots and 23 sales centers were in operation. In November 1945, it was estimated a total of 117,210 aircraft would be transferred as surplus.

One of the locations chosen was Kingman, with its huge open spaces, good weather for aircraft storage, and three runways, one of which was 6,800 feet in length. The RFC quickly established Storage Depot No. 41 at Kingman, and by October of 1945, planes were being flown in, parked, and

processed. Planes were typically parked by type. As many as 150 airplanes a day were soon flying into Kingman, and the total aircraft inventory by the end of 1945 reached about 4,700. It is estimated that a total of about 5,500 airplanes were flown to Kingman in 1945 and 1946 for sale and disposal.

The contractor for aircraft scrapping at Kingman was the Wunderlich Contracting Company of Jefferson City, Missouri, who received an 18 month contract from the federal government for \$2.78 million to reduce 5,400 aircraft to aluminum ingots.

Active duty military personnel typi-



cally flew the aircraft into Kingman, and civilian employees would handle parking and classification. To accommodate the large numbers of employees, tent cities were erected on site.

In subsequent months, brand new aircraft directly from assembly lines were even disposed of at Kingman. Fuel was drained from the aircraft and sold. Aircraft engines were then removed and placed in rows on the desert floor. By the time the planes reached Kingman, most of the ordnance (predominantly .50 caliber machine guns and Norden bombsights) had already been removed at other temporary storage depots. However, a few planes did arrive with machine guns and a few with Norden bombsights, which were temporarily and securely stored. The machine guns were retrieved by the government, but the Nordens were "demilled" using a sledgehammer.

Interior items of the aircraft such as radios, oxygen equipment, handguns,

manuals, life rafts, fire extinguishers and instruments were removed. The main aircraft airframe was then sliced into major pieces using a guillotine. Some hand cutting of smaller parts was also done.

The final step was placing parts into the smelter, or furnace, for melting. Three furnaces were operated at Kingman for melting about 70% of an airplane's metal components into ingots. The furnaces were run 24 hours a day, and could consume up to 35 aircraft a day.

The Wunderlich contract at Kingman was successful and resulted in the recovery of significant resources including: 46 millions pounds of aluminum, 6 million pounds of aluminum from engines, 5 million pounds of aluminum propellers, 21 million pounds of steel, 1.6 million gallons of aviation fuel, and 256,000 gallons of oil

A total of 85 reconnaissance aircraft, 615 fighters, 54 light bombers, 266 medium bombers and 4,463 heavy bombers were disposed of. These 5,483 aircraft scrapped by Wunderlich at Kingman generated \$7.5 million in gross income.

By July of 1948, less than three years after the end of WW II hostilities, the job was done. A huge part of the American air power fleet had been reduced to ingots. Storage Depot 41 and Kingman were returned to the county as a municipal airport.

Today, the Kingman Airport and Industrial Park is a commercial facility hosting a number of businesses, including the temporary storage of airliners.

**Note:** The aircraft currently stored at Kingman are behind fences and are not accessible to the general public.



## Santa Bou 2017

by Doug Boston [458, 68]



On December 7, 2017, several C-7A Caribou Association members gathered at the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Addison, TX, north of Dallas, to visit and view the museum's Caribou. The museum had painted the Caribou as Santa Bou, just as the Caribou squadrons did in Vietnam. The museum also invited the Dallas Morning News newspaper, CBS Channel 11, and Fox Channel 4 to attend.

It was a good gathering and plenty of war stories were shared over refreshments and beverages. Several interviews were conducted, pictures taken. That evening, both CBS and Fox aired short film clips of the interviews.

*Editor's Note. The Cavanaugh Caribou, S/N 62-4149, is in flyable condition. Originally assigned to the 61<sup>st</sup> Army Aviation Company, the aircraft was later transferred to the USAF 457<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron.*

*The aircraft was completely restored to its original Army configuration and markings in 1999 by the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation. During the restoration, 21 patched bullet holes were found throughout the aircraft, testifying to the aircraft's Vietnam combat experience.*



Check your email address on our web site, <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/>. Send any change to:

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



*C-7A Caribou Association Members visit the Cavanaugh Santa Bou  
December 7, 2017.*

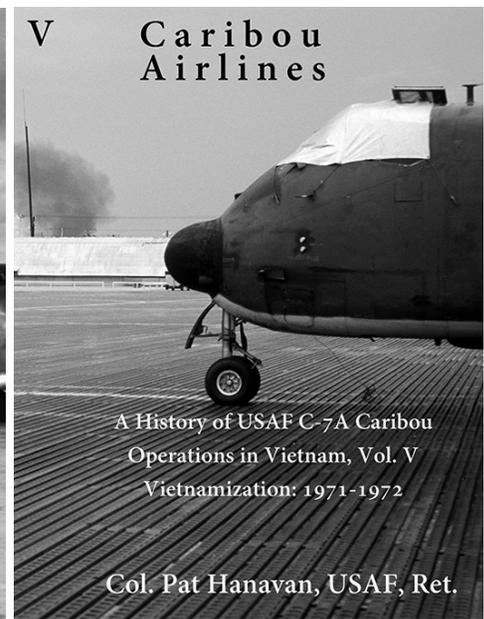
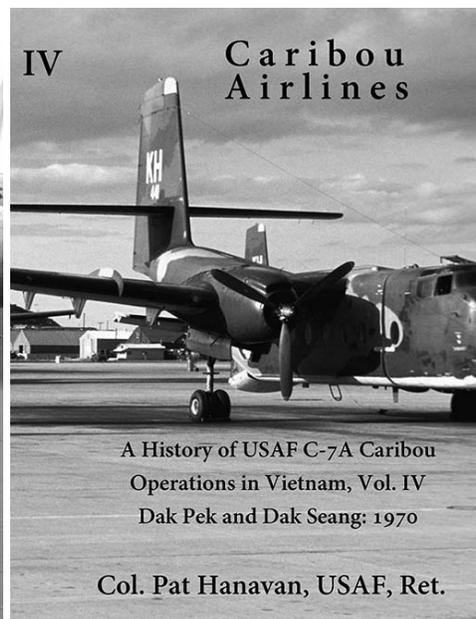
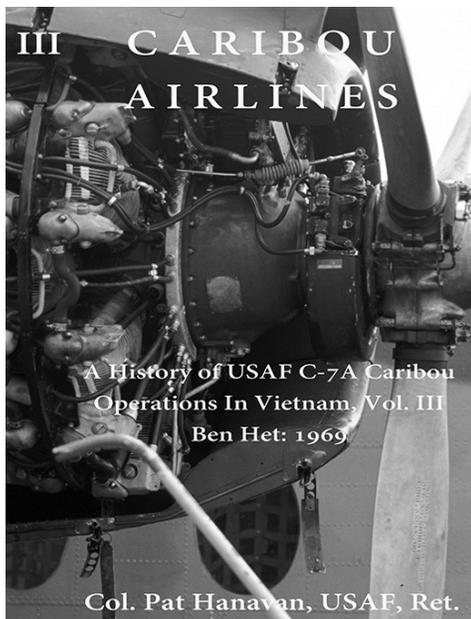
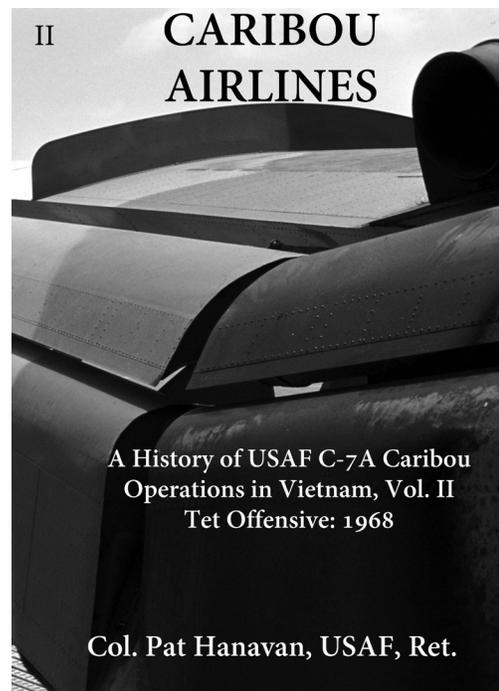
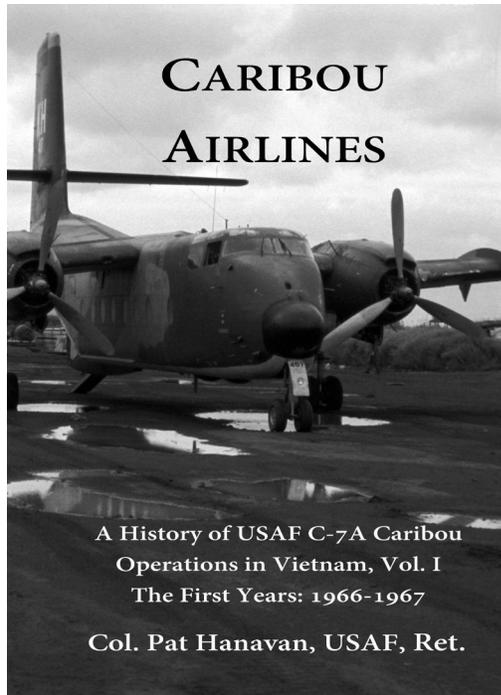
## Mini-Reunion



Hank Strauss (left), San Antonio, TX, and Joe Spooner, Portland, OR, both served in the 536<sup>th</sup> TAS, 1970-71. They recently met at Joe's home in Portland to share memories of flying the C-7A Caribou from Vung Tau, Cam Rahn Bay, Bien Hoa, and Can To. Hank is a retired Financial Consultant and Joe teaches Cartooning at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, OR.

## Dayton Reunion Highlights

To Be Completed with most recent reunion information from John Tawes, which is expected on Mar 28 or 29.

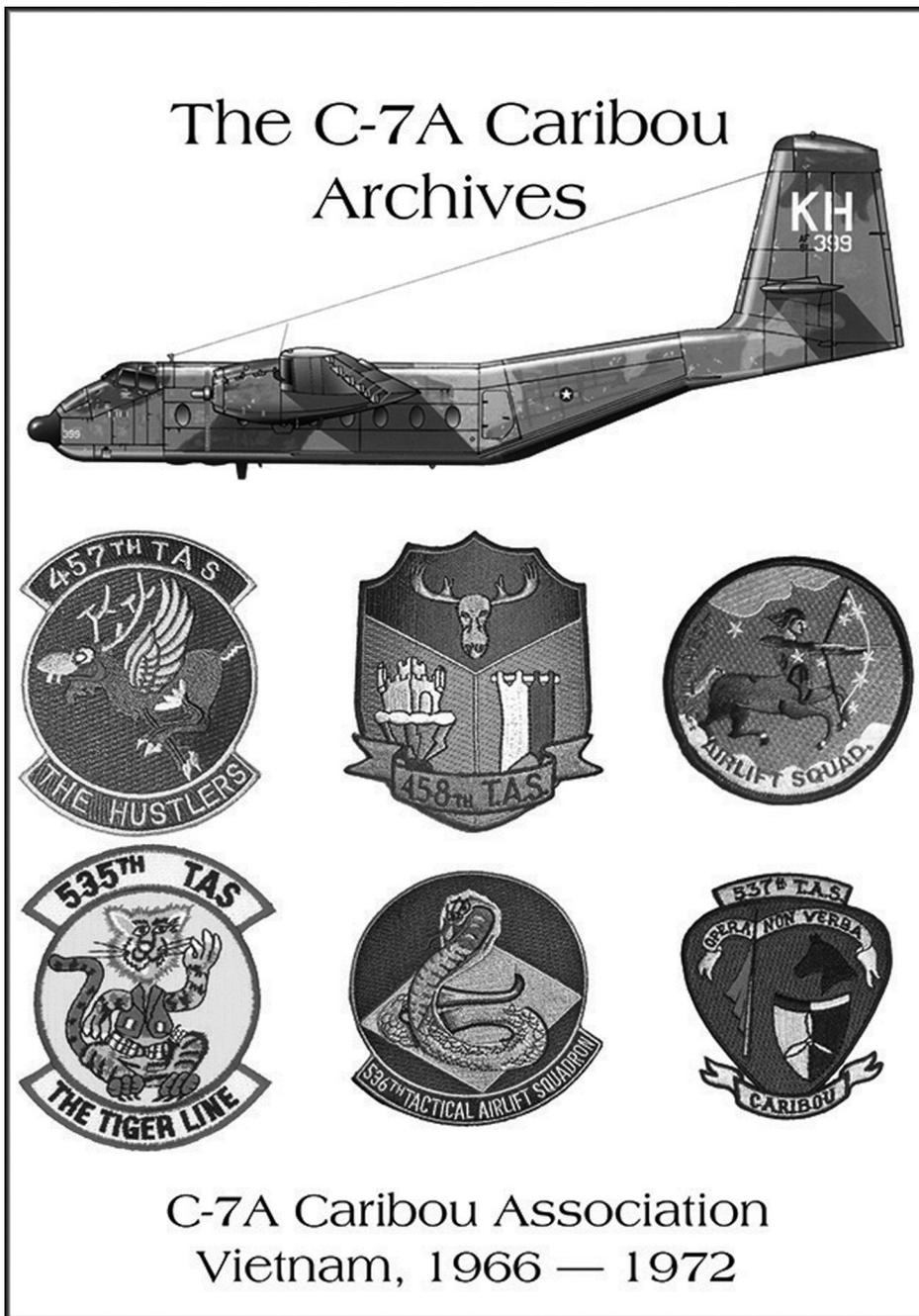


*Caribou Airlines* is a comprehensive history of USAF C-7A operations in Vietnam. It is about aircrews, crew chiefs, maintenance officers, line chiefs, maintainers, phase inspection personnel, specialty shop personnel, supply personnel, personal equipment specialists, administration and operations personnel, commanders, staff personnel, etc. They made it possible to deliver the troops, guns, ammunition, rations, beer, soda, equipment, animals, etc. to hundreds of bases on the battlefields of Vietnam. The 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing and its squadrons were not an airline, *per se*. They were tasked with supporting Army and Marine units and other customers with air landed and air dropped supplies using pre-defined, emergency, and opportune sorties to front line locations where the supplies were needed.

The history of the Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV); C-7A Caribou Association newsletters; and personal stories of those involved in C-7A operations provide the context for the books.

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

**C-7A DVD #2 – New!**



**C-7A Caribou Association  
Vietnam, 1966 — 1972**

**New C-7A DVD**

**DISK 1:**

- 7AF
- 834AD
- AFM 51-40
- AFR-64-4-Survival
- Air Base Defense
- Airman Magazine\Oct 1968
- Airman Magazine\Nov 1968
- Air\_War\_over\_South\_Vietnam\_1968-1975
- Army Air Facilities 1973

**Art**

- Art\Logo Images
- Art\Patches
- Art\Poster
- Art\R2000
- ATC Manuals
- Aviation Week
- C-7A-1
- Cam Ranh Ammo Dump
- Cam Ranh Ghost Town
- Caribou Agreement (USAF and USA)

- Caribou Sales Brochure
- Caribou SEA newsletters\Caribou Courier and Clarion
- Caribou SEA newsletters\Surfside Sentinel
- CRB\_Approach\_Plates
- DHC-4 Maintenance Manual
- DHC-4\_Type\_Certificate
- Indochina\_Atlas\_1970
- M16\_Comic\_Book
- Misc\_Manuals
- Squadron\_Signal\_C-7A
- Tactical\_Aerodrome\_Directory
- Tactical\_Airlift-Bowers
- TO\_1-1-4\_Aircraft\_Marking
- USAF Combat Wings
- Videos**
- Video\Aussie Bou
- Video\C-7A Training
- Video\Cam Ranh
- Video\Gimli Crash
- Video\Gunter News
- Video\Radial Engine Animation
- Video\UPT
- Vietnam Campaigns
- Vietnam Gazeteer

**DISK 2**

- City Maps
- Fire Bases
- Google Earth database (add-in)
- ONC\_K-10
- Series 1301 Charts
- Series\_1501\_Charts
- Series\_L509\_Charts
- Series\_L701\_L7014\_Maps
- Series\_L701\_L7014\_Maps\L7014\_Below\_17N
- Tactical\_VFR\_Chart
- Vietnam Country Maps

**Available on our web site:**

**<http://www.c-7acaribou.com/memorabilia/memorabilia.htm>  
for \$8, shipped.**

**White House VA Hotline**

A Veterans' Administration Hotline has been established at the White House. Call **855-948-2311** to communicate your problem.

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## Memorabilia (Previous Order Forms Are Obsolete)

### MEMORABILIA ORDER FORM

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

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

1. Polo Shirt*	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$20.00	Total: _____
2. Colored T-Shirt	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$16.00	Total: _____
3. R-2000 T-Shirt	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$13.00	Total: _____
4. Denim Shirt (short sleeve)	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$25.00	Total: _____
5. Denim Shirt (long sleeve)	Size - Please Mark: M L XL XXL	Qty. _____ @ \$30.00	Total: _____
6. Cap, Denim	One size fits all	Qty. _____ @ \$13.00	Total: _____
7. Cap, White	One size fits all	Qty. _____ @ \$13.00	Total: _____
8. 457 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
9. 458 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
10. 459 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
11. 535 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
12. 536 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
13. 537 <sup>th</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
14. 483 <sup>rd</sup> Patch		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
15. C-7A DVD (1:10 long movie)		Qty: _____ @ \$5.00	Total: _____
16. C-7A DVD Archives (documents, art, videos, charts, maps)		Qty: _____ @ \$8.00	Total: _____
17. C-7A Poster (12" x 18")		Qty. _____ @ \$7.00	Total: _____
18. C-7A Coin		Qty. _____ @ \$8.00	Total: _____
19. 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary C-7A Coin		Qty. _____ @ \$11.00	Total: _____
20. C-7A Pin		Qty. _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
21. C-7A Sticker (outside)		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
22. C-7A Magnet		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
23. C-7A Data Plate		Qty: _____ @ \$3.00	Total: _____
<b>Total:</b>			_____

\*Polo shirt colors: White, Gray, Yellow, Red, and Light Blue (please specify)

Note: Each amount above includes cost of purchasing item and domestic shipping. Any excess funds are a donation to the Association.

Photos of items can be seen on the web site: <http://www.c-7acaribou.com/memorabilia/memorabilia.htm>