

# C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 32, Issue 2

## Caribou Phase-out Accelerates in Late 1971

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The key words that describe Caribou organization and operations during the second half of 1971 are inactivation, reorganization, and consolidation. As other USAF wings in South Vietnam began inactivating, the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) gained new missions. On 1 September 1971, the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW added several Special Operations Squadrons and Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadrons.

The transition of Caribou operations also accelerated in the final months of 1971. On 1 August 1971, the Wing closed its mission site at Can Tho and flew the missions out of the Bien Hoa Operating Location. On 29 August, a mission site was opened at Phu Cat AB in advance of the inactivation of the 537<sup>th</sup> TAS on 31 August.

The C-7A Operating Location at Phu Cat AB closed on 15 October when the 536<sup>th</sup> TAS was inactivated and the personnel assigned were integrated into the three remaining squadrons.

The Operating Location at Bien Hoa closed on 4 November with the transfer of operations to a new Operating Location at Tan Son Nhut AB.

In October an Operating Location was opened at Phan Rang and the 483<sup>rd</sup> Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) was formed to train Vietnamese Air Force personnel to fly and maintain the Caribou.

Fifteen Caribous returned to the States in September 1971 and twelve more made the long journey in mid-December. The saga of the USAF C-7A Caribou at war in Vietnam was entering its final phase.

The effect of implementing the U.S. policy towards phase down of U.S. military activities in Vietnam was felt everywhere in the Republic of Vietnam. U.S. military forces "in-country" were preparing to leave. (from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. V*)



Photo by David Dean

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

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**Vice President/Board Member** - Doug Boston [458, 68]  
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**Chaplain** - Jon Drury [537, 68]  
**Historian** - Pat Hanavan [535,68]  
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 Doug and Ellen Boston [458, 68]  
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**Chaplains Emeritus** - Bob Davis [457, 69]  
 Sonny Spurger [537, 68]

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\$10.00 dues are payable each January.

Write your check to **C-7A Caribou Association**  
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Tom Snodgrass  
 2515 S. White Cliff Lane  
 Wichita, KS 67210-1924  
 magic0866@cox.net Phone: 316-684-1184

## Chairman of the Board's Corner



The autumnal equinox is behind us and the leaves on the trees are starting to change color. That can only mean that fall is upon us once again. Unfortunately, it is also the second consecutive fall with no reunion. The virus continues to flourish and we are now at a new high in the total number of active COVID cases in this

country. I remain in self-imposed isolation for the most part, because I am just too darn old to get in a tangle with that virus.

I did make my annual trip to Eastport, Maine for Independence Day, but even in a winter coat, I practically froze watching the evening fireworks. We could have used a little of that global warming!

With no reunion, Association business has been pretty quiet. I can report that the R-2000 engine we purchased, that has been sitting at Edwards AFB collecting dust, has finally been delivered to the Museum of Aviation in Warner Robins, Georgia. They are very pleased with their new acquisition and I expect they will get it cleaned up for display in due time. They are also preparing a display case filled with C-7A memorabilia, using items our members have donated.

With little Association news, I will just have to ramble. I still subscribe to Aviation Week to watch the changes in aviation.

Boeing has been in the news a lot. I think the whole 737 MAX fiasco was blown out of proportion. There was a design flaw, but one that the FAA certified (under questionable circumstances). The fundamental problem was basically a runaway pitch trim, regardless of the cause. In the two fatal accidents, not one of the four pilots involved followed the published procedure for that emergency. I would have to call that pilot error. Boeing is also behind schedule and over budget on the USAF's KC-46, the new 767-based aerial tanker. Of course, the Air Force did decide to get rid of the simple window the boom operator used to see the boom and the receiving aircraft and replace it with a camera system. They can't seem to get the camera system to work properly in certain lighting conditions. It's a good thing the KC-135 and the KC-10 continue to deliver the fuel! Then there is the conversion of two 747 aircraft to *Air Force One* configuration, which is also behind schedule. All things considered, the old saying, "If it ain't Boeing, then I ain't going," may need to be reconsidered.

I'd have to say that us old-timers got to see the very best of aviation. We could actually fly real aircraft without a computer, the pinnacle of that being the good old C-7A Caribou.

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## Reunion 2022 Planned for Atlanta

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## Reunion 2022 Is Coming!

The C-7A Caribou Association is planning to hold the 2022 Reunion in Atlanta, GA.

Currently, the reunion is planned to be held in the late September to early October 2022 time frame.

Specific dates have not yet been decided nor has a hotel been selected and finalized.

Activities and details of Reunion 2022 are still being discussed. One of the major activities will be a visit to the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins. Other possible activities being considered include a tour of the Lockheed assembly plant at Dobbins AFRB, a tour of the Atlanta History Museum, and a tour of the Mercedes Benz stadium where the NFL Atlanta Falcons play, which is also the site of college football bowl games and other sports and entertainment events

Details will be posted on the C-7A Caribou Association website when they are finalized and will be also included in the April 2022 edition of the *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter*.

## R-2000

### Progress Report

by Pat Hanavan [535, 68]

The R-2000 engine the C-7A Caribou Association purchased for the Museum of Aviation finally arrived at Robins AFB, GA, in July 2021. In the Age of COVID, it took two and a half years for the engine to be transported from Edwards AFB, CA, to the museum.

The engine was purchased in 2018 with Association funds, authorized at the 2018 Reunion, and with personal donations of \$500 each by Frank Godek and Paul Phillips.

Since July, in two separate requests, the personnel restoring the engine have



requested six missing parts. Pat Hanavan worked with the seller to provide the missing parts requested.

Restoration work of the engine continues, but we do not have a projected completion date.

The museum is also busy designing the entire Caribou display that will include their C-7A, the R-2000 engine, and C-7A Vietnam artifacts provided by Association members.

C-7A Caribou Association members have provided numerous artifacts for the museum, but there has been no determination by the museum on which artifacts will be displayed. For those of you who have submitted artifacts, please remember that it will not be possible for the museum to display all the artifacts they have – there simply will not be enough space.



The C-7A Caribou painting, engine, and display dedication is expected to take place in 2022.

Information on the dedication will be provided to members when it is finalized and available.

## Correction Newsletter 32-1

There was an error in the story *Last Landing, First Love* in *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter 32-1, April 2021*.

The last operational landing of a USAF C-7A in Vietnam occurred at Tan Son Nhut AB and not at Cam Ranh Bay.

The first sentence, fourth paragraph, first column, page 29 of *Newsletter 32-1*, should read:

“Out of habit, I checked the schedule and saw I was flying that same day on a mission running down to the Mekong Delta, then to Can Tho, and returning to Tan Son Nhut.”

The version of *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter 32-1* posted on the C-7A Caribou Association website has been corrected.

## Hostile Fire at Michelin Plantation

by Arthur Oxley [458, 67]

From January 1966 through the summer of 1967, the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, with its headquarters at Cu Chi, south of the Iron Triangle and northwest of Saigon, was the largest division in Vietnam. It had four brigades under its command, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division at Dau Tieng, approximately 72 kilometers northwest of Saigon. (On 1 August 1967, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division, was transferred to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.)

The Dau Tieng Base Camp was one kilometer northwest of the Michelin Plantation and had an east-west runway.

Established in 1925, the plantation encompassed 31,000 acres and was the largest rubber plantation in Vietnam. Located approximately halfway between Saigon and the Cambodian

Continued on Page 4

## Hostile Fire (from Page 3)

border, the plantation was an ideal base and staging area for the VC (Viet Cong).

In mid-June 1967, we departed Cam Ranh Bay in the morning. As ordered, we flew to Saigon and loaded 11 new troops for Dau Tieng, along with their baggage and some supplies. We departed Saigon and were flying visual in light rain at 1,800 feet AGL (Above Ground Level) to stay under the overcast. I would normally fly at 5,000 feet or above to avoid small arms fire.

We were flying a route toward the Dau Tieng airstrip using maps for navigation because the VOR and ADF at Saigon were unreliable at that distance and altitude. There were no navigation aids in the area of the plantation.

I had plotted a route to the Michelin Plantation, an easily recognizable facility. The plan was to drop to 1,500 feet over the north end of the plantation for a base leg and then turn west for final approach to the airfield. We were not aware that the VC had moved onto the plantation.

We never made the turn to the west because we started taking hostile fire that struck the aircraft along the length of the Caribou, ripping through the flooring. Flying wood fragments caused minor injuries to several of our passengers, but no one was wounded by the gunfire.

The yoke suddenly slammed into my chest. The nose went sharply up, the stall warning stick shaker activated, and it took both hands and all my strength to control the aircraft.

I later learned that a 12.7 mm round (equivalent to .50 caliber) severed the elevator trim cable, giving us full nose-up trim.

We were suddenly up into the overcast. Using the attitude indicator, I rolled left 90 degrees to let the plane fall enough to regain flying airspeed. It was "unusual attitude practice" on instruments.



By the time I had good control, we were in the clouds with light rain at about 4,000 feet. I was glad it was daylight. I had the Copilot set cruise power and I turned to an approximate heading to Saigon, on instruments in the clouds.

I discovered I had fairly good control with both hands, if I didn't go too fast. I had the Copilot control the power to maintain a speed of 70 knots, 10 knots above the stall speed, so I could maintain control with both hands. I turned southeast towards Saigon. Finally, we called Saigon Approach Control, declared an emergency, and used the VOR to head toward Tan Son Nhut.

We landed with a sigh of relief, pleased to see the fire truck and ambulance pull on the runway behind us and follow us to the ramp. We parked the Caribou and turned it over to ALCE (Airlift Control Element). We took some deep breaths to calm down and I called the 458<sup>th</sup> TAS and had them send a Bou to pick us up.

Our passengers were pissed that we didn't get them to Dau Tieng. I told them that they should be happy to be on the ground safely.

*Author's Note. I don't remember the names of my Copilot or Flight Mechanic on this flight. If either of them read this story or if anyone else remembers them or this story, please contact me by e-mail at: [artoxley@gmail.com](mailto:artoxley@gmail.com)*

## Barden Tidbits

by Barden Revelle [536, 67]

Most of the days in Nam were business as usual, sortie after sortie, humid heat, sweat, and odors. The only odor I liked was the smell of oil on engine start. To this day I love "round engines." I run out in the yard when I hear one, which is seldom. I just have to see it. That's one of the few sounds I still hear - gunshots and radials.

Now and then little tidbits of things that happened to me in Nam pop into my mind. Some are humorous; some create the pucker factor.

### The Hat

I remember a Lt. Col. who arrived at the 536<sup>th</sup> TAS, fresh from a desk in the States, or so I was told. A real likeable feller, but not yet acclimated to the roughshod ways of some of us troopers.

I was pulling a tour at Can Tho, dedicated to the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces mission. The new Lt. Col., who reminded me of Floyd the barber on the Andy Griffith Show, came to Can Tho to see what was going on there. I noticed that he stared at me a lot. I figured that he had heard vicious rumors about my off-duty antics.

One day, during a lull, he stopped staring long enough to ask me, "Do you have a regulation hat?" I wore a Vietnamese flop hat with my fatigues. We rarely ever wore flight suits - too hot. Fatigues were allowed for flying.

I replied that I no longer owned a fatigue cap. The new "Sweeney Beanies" were the ugliest hats ever invented. They were named after a general. I was ordered to go to the PX and buy a hat. I did. I bought the largest size they had. It covered my eyes. I looked like Beetle Bailey. As soon as he saw this hat on me it was another stare, followed by, "What the h.....?" I said, "The PX had only one size."

I was allowed to wear the flop hat.

**Continued on Page 5**

## Barden Tidbits (from Page 4)

### The Young Tree

On another occasion, after an air-drop at a Special Forces A-camp, we buzzed the DZ (drop zone), right over the troops head. The AC (aircraft commander) was my favorite pilot.

During the swoop we “bothered,” a sapling about 20 feet tall and one-and-a-quarter inches in diameter – like a long fishing pole. Jerked it right out of the ground, roots and all. It jammed between the right wing tip and the rest of the wing.

We couldn't shake it out. We tried everything except for flying backwards. You pilots store this in your memory. A 20-foot sapling stuck in your right wing tip requires very little rudder trim.

We landed at Can Tho with the tree intact, taxied up to Operations, and it fell out. I allowed no photos and removed the evidence.

### The Fuel

One day, while refueling at Tan Son Nhut, I noticed the two Vietnamese fuel guys looking behind the aircraft and laughing. After awhile I turned and looked behind me but saw nothing funny. I was on the right wing milking the fuel in.

We never filled the tanks to keep the fuel weight down in order to haul more cargo. On this day I was told to fill the tanks. We were going to Cam Rahn Bay, Qui Nhon, and then Vung Tau. I dropped the hose and moved to the left wing and began fueling. After a bit, I noticed the two Vietnamese fuel guys looking behind the aircraft and laughing again.

When I completed the fueling and got down on the ground I saw what the guys were laughing at. Avgas 115/145 was streaming out of both wings, from the engine nacelles to the wing tips.

The “bullet-proof” fuel bladders were dry-rotted above the normal fill level and had burst. I'm talking every bladder in both wings. Why those guys didn't tell me is beyond me. I had thoughts of using my M-16 right then.

I called the fire trucks from an aircraft next to us, as I didn't dare hit the battery switch on our bird. This could have been a tragedy.

### The Runaway Prop

I had a runaway prop one day. That was an interesting sensation. We shut the engine down, landed at the next available runway, and came home in an Army Otter. Another time, we came home in an Army Beaver.

### The Thunderstorm

One day, during the monsoon season, we were hauling a heavy load of ammo, and dodging thunderstorms (or trying to) when we flew into one. I was standing on the radio racks between the pilots, one hand operating the carburetor heat and air and hanging on with the other. Water was running in through several places and circuit breakers were popping. That cloud spit us out and we nearly rolled inverted. After we got out of the fix we were in, I went back and checked my load. All five pallets were secure, but butt cans, chains, straps, Tech Orders, and everything else was either on the cargo floor or on top of the load.

### Near Miss No. 1

One time, cruising along, something went by our bird that we never saw. It was a “whoosh” which rocked the plane. There was no trail visible behind whatever it was. We called about artillery fire, but there was supposed to be none in the area. I still wonder about that one.

### Near Miss No. 2

Once at Can Tho while I was on the left wing refueling, a Cobra chopper was wallowing around trying to land in front of me when it accidentally fired a rocket. The rocket went over my head, just missed the vertical stabilizer, just missed the airfield tower, and sailed off the base somewhere. It apparently broke the sound barrier somewhere close to me. Maybe not, but I flattened on top of the wing.

### The Puppy

I was hauling some Army troops one time, along with baggage and mail.

When I did the cruise check, I noticed a strange sound and motion coming from under a piece of cloth. I gingerly pulled the cloth back and discovered a puppy. Nobody claimed it. I guess they thought they would be in trouble.

I cuddled the pup and put it back. I got some thumbs-up from the Army.

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## Missing Antlers

from *Caribou Clarion*,

Vol. 1, No. 35

June 18, 1971

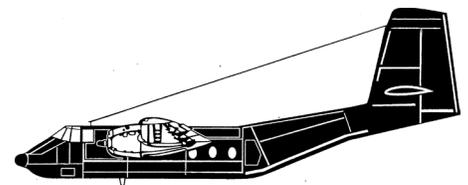
The fate of the Caribou antlers, which once adorned the entryway to the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) headquarters has been the subject of some conjecture.

Symbolic of the C-7A Caribou aircraft flown by the 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW, the antlers disappeared some time ago, and all effort of recovery have been without success.

Their Absent Without Official Leave (AWOL) status reached all the way to Alaska, and so it was just recently that Lt. Col. Paul E. Gardner, 608<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Support Squadron commander presented a new set of antlers.

Responsible for the antlers is Col. Arthur Harris, 602<sup>nd</sup> Military Airlift Support Squadron commander at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska and the Military Airlift Command's 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force. Receiving the mounted antlers was Col. Rodney H. Newbold, 483<sup>rd</sup> TAW commander.

The new antlers, however, will not hang outside. Instead, they are in the Wing conference room lest they too “disappear.”

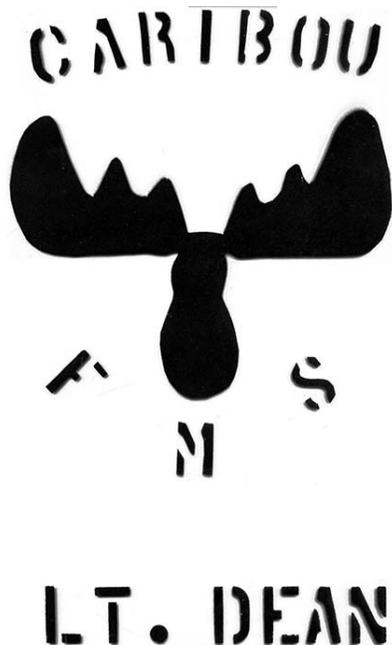


## Dean's Team

by David Dean [483 CAMS, 69]

From March 1969 to March 1970, I was a 22 to 23-year-old second lieutenant OIC (Officer in Charge) of Field Maintenance at Phu Cat AB, Republic of Vietnam. I had charge of a lot of people, many shops, and the field maintenance for two squadrons of C-7A aircraft, the 459<sup>th</sup> and 537<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadrons.

I had a sign on my door showing a caribou head that I designed as a logo for my troops. Phu Cat was a fighter base (Air National Guard F-100's followed by F-4's) and Caribou folks often felt like second-hand citizen "garbage haulers." I thought a logo would give them some pride, so I came up with this design. Since no one would recognize a caribou face, I thought we would use a likeness of Bullwinkle the Moose. Close enough for government work.



The drawing was done by 2/Lt. Donald M. Bishop, a USAF Public Information Officer at Phu Cat who had, and I assume still has, some artistic skill. Don went on to teach at the Air Force Academy and later became a very senior officer at the Department of State

serving as the Foreign Political Advisor (POLAD) to two military service chiefs. Don still lectures at Quantico.

I had a "Quick Engine Change Crew" that I took to remote fields to replace engines blown on a mission. That crew used whatever was available to get the prop and engine replaced, including forklifts, tank barrels – whatever was around. They could do a job in three hours that the book said should take eight.



The salvage operation of the C-7A *Baby Doll* that crashed at Tra Bong was unique. We knew that the Army method of salvage was to put a big net around the aircraft and lift it off. We also knew this method did not work – the net would twist and the helicopter would have to release the load.

A Staff Sergeant in my Sheet Metal shop came up with the idea of attaching steel plates to the wing roots of the aircraft, running cables overhead and attaching them to a helicopter. It worked great! I don't remember the name of the sergeant who invented this, but he is the kind of guy you need in a war.

We loaned the recovery kit to Air America for a pick up in Thailand or Laos and we used it again in Vietnam several months later.

I also had two outstanding Chief Master Sergeants (CMSgt.) – both were older than my father at the time. CMSgt. Donald M. Henry was my NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) and CMSgt. J.B. Freeman was in charge of the Propulsion Branch.

Both were in the first batch of USAF

Chief Master Sergeants when the rank was created. CMSgt. Freeman had been a belly gunner in B-17's in World War II. CMSgt. Henry worked on fighters for years. They were the kind of men who enabled the Air Force to function.



CMSgt. Freeman (left) and  
CMSgt. Henry (right).  
Photo by David Dean

*Editor's Note. Don Bishop taught history at the USAFA 1975–79 and was a member of the summer training cadre for the first Academy class that included women. He then served 31 years as a Foreign Service Officer in the Department of State (DOS). In 2006, he was assigned as the POLAD to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, and then to the Chief of Staff of the USAF, General Norton Schwartz. After retiring from DOS, Don joined Marine Corps University as the Bren Chair of Strategic Communications in 2016.*

## Help with the Changes!

Check your e-mail on the Association website by searching your name on the Roster.

If your Newsletter arrives with a **yellow postal address covering the printed address**, the Association does not have your correct address.

Please keep us updated.

Send any changes to: [athanavan@aol.com](mailto:athanavan@aol.com)

## One of the Last

by Brian Spitzer [535, 71]

I arrived in Vietnam in 1971 and during my tour I bounced around three different Caribou squadrons at Cam Ranh Bay AB and Tan Son Nhut AB.

After pilot training at Laredo AFB, TX, I was in the last full class of USAF pilots to graduate from the C-7A Caribou transition course at Dyess AFB, TX, in July 1971. After completing additional training, I went from Travis AFB, CA, to Clark AB, Philippines for the Jungle Survival course (a week or so long), and then a flight to Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Vietnam.

Upon landing, we had to turn in all U.S. currency in exchange for U.S. script bills, which we called “funny money.”

Initially, I was supposed to be in the 457<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS), but was almost immediately switched to the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS.

On arrival, I called my assigned squadron only to have them tell me, “Lieutenant what are you doing here? You were not supposed to come to Vietnam. There were orders to hold you at Travis AFB!” Some introduction to the war zone!

They sent a driver in a van to pick me up with my A-3 bag. We went to the squadron, and the Captain who picked me up told me to leave my bag. He then said, “Here are the keys to the squadron van. You are now the duty driver to take crews out to the planes.”

Eventually, I went to my “new” squadron, the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS, found a hootch with four to a room, and waited for an answer from AFMPC (Air Force Military Personnel Center) in San Antonio, TX.

Interestingly, the other pilots in my Caribou class that were held up (about half the class) went right to T-38 Instructor Pilot positions.

After two weeks of jumping on flights as an observer, AFMPC told me to stay. I then started a quick two week “in-country” checkout that included:



landing at some small strips; calling all the artillery locations as we flew through their areas to ensure that no live artillery fire might hit us (actually did happen); getting issued jungle boots that were not my size; getting a footprint of the bottom of my foot (in case fire destroyed the rest of my body); and learning where to buy stereo stuff at the BX.

About three months after my arrival, almost 75% of the C-7A crews returned to the States on shortened tours and some of the Caribou’s flew back to the U.S. (That’s a long haul!)

I helped close the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS (my additional duty was Administrative Officer) and I was then assigned to the 457<sup>th</sup> TAS when most of the Caribou aircraft either departed or went to the VNAF (South Vietnamese Air Force).

Those of us remaining moved to the 310<sup>th</sup> Composite TAS at Tan Son Nhut in 1972, about half-way through my one-year tour, as part of a squadron with two C-123’s. The C-123’s left almost immediately, leaving those of us in the Caribou there to PCS (Permanent Change of Station) on our scheduled DEROS (Date of Estimated Return from Overseas).

The last USAF Caribous in Vietnam were turned over to the VNAF in November 1972.

## Talk with Current Generation of 535<sup>th</sup> AS Tigers

A virtual meeting on Zoom took place between several members of the Vietnam era 535<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) and the current generation of 535<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron (AS) personnel on March 19, 2021. The 535<sup>th</sup> AS is stationed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, HI, and flies C-17 Globemasters.

The Zoom call was organized by the 535<sup>th</sup> AS commander, Lt. Col. Joshua “Doc” Holaday, who wanted his aircrews and other personnel to learn about the squadron’s history first-hand from those who served in Vietnam. Pilots, loadmasters, administrative, and support personnel of the 535<sup>th</sup> AS participated in the call.

The 535<sup>th</sup> TAS representatives on the Zoom call included: Arthur Candenquist [535,70], Pat Hanavan [535,68], John Schuepbach [535, 70], Brian Spitzer [535, 71], Bruce Toy [535,71], and Robert Waldron [535, 69].

There is no attendee list of who participated on the call, nor is there a record of who spoke on the call, or what was said. Following are summaries of their comments provided by a several of the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS participants.

### Arthur Candenquist’s summary:

I asked the 535<sup>th</sup> AS commander what their usual missions are, where they generally go, and what commodities they generally carry.

I briefly discussed what our 535<sup>th</sup> TAS missions were, what we carried - just about anything and everything to support the troops out in the boonies, and where we flew, which was in the IV Corps area of the Mekong Delta.

### Robert Waldron’s summary:

I mentioned that most of the pilots were lieutenants on their first assignment out of pilot training and I

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## Talk with Tigers (from Page 7)

discussed the benefits those of us who were “newly minted” pilots received from having our first operational assignment in Caribous.

We were able to hone our flying skills because with no autopilot we hand flew all the time. With our short duration flights, we had multiple take-offs and landings, sometimes 8 to 10 each day. While most first assignment pilots who went to other aircraft had to wait several years before upgrading to aircraft commander, we did so in about six months.

As young aircraft commanders flying in a combat zone, we had to make decisions everyday about route of flight, weather diversions, accepting a load, en route maintenance requirements, etc. It really was our airplane for the day. Command Post was not there to tell us what to do or how to do it – which in reality was a good thing.

I believe all of these things contributed to us becoming mature, skilled pilots early in our flying careers.

**Brian Spitzer's responses** to specific 535<sup>th</sup> AS questions:

*What training do you wish you had received prior to actual experience in Vietnam?*

After Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laredo AFB, TX, and having to get a copy of *Jane's All The World's Aircraft* to see what a de Havilland C-7A Caribou looked like, seven of us who were from U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) Class of 1970 went to Homestead AFB, FL, for water survival. It was fun until we saw barracudas cruise by our one-man life rafts. Since the USAFA had a semi-brutal survival and then POW (Prisoner of War) training, we did not have to do that again. We did go to a special class at Fairchild AFB, WA, for five days that taught us about SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape), if captured by the Viet Cong.

Later we went on to Travis AFB, CA, for the flight to the Philippines and a



week of Jungle Survival at Clark AB. The course was quite good, including how to hide from people looking for us if shot down. By the way, the Caribou did not carry any parachutes, so crash landing was the only option if staying airborne was not.

The question here should almost be “What did the Air Force learn?” from Vietnam. One of the big items was learning how to deploy folks to a combat zone. We went to our six weeks Caribou class (two weeks of academics and four weeks of flying) and were assigned to a Replacement Training Unit.

In other words, when pilots showed up at their assigned squadron, which could change at any time, they did not know the leadership nor any of the other pilots unless they had met them in the USAFA, or AFROTC, or in pilot training. Leadership and essentially all of the squadron personnel “in-country” were brand new to us on arrival. Now, at least for the most part, the USAF deploys as squadrons.

*What helped the squadron maintain morale?*

Actually FLYING!!

A typical mission would be normally 8-12 sorties per day, some to large run-

ways and some to very short runways. My shortest runway was 1,200 feet long and 50 feet wide.

Hauling “trash” could include anything from three-day-old *Stars and Stripes* newspapers (my first sortie after checking out), food, beer, mail, ammunition, passengers, more beer; steaks for the Army guys at the small locations; supporting the U.S. Coast Guard at an island off the coast; carrying Viet Cong prisoners; and unfortunately carrying “body bags” for the long trip back to the U.S.

Some referred to the Caribou mission as the “Pigs and Chickens Airlines,” since we did carry live animals at times. I NEVER carried pigs and chickens, but did carry pigs and ducks! That’s another story...

The missions slowed down a bit in late 1971 until the Spring Offensive of 1972 when we flew like crazy all over South Vietnam, mostly to small airfields. At times, we had to “stand down” as we were limited to 125 hours within a 30 day continuous period. Weird rule.

*How did people learn from their decisions (good or bad) and share with others?*

As mentioned earlier, I think organizational lessons learned included such things as: deploy as a unit, train together, know your people, and establish support for families back home. These principles are certainly much better established now.

In my personal case, I would say, “Don’t give up your dream of doing what you want in the Air Force. Do every job, even ‘snack officer,’ to the best of your ability and leadership will notice.”

My pilot training roomie in the Caribou class and I (we even flew together in Viet Nam) both ended up in fighters, our dream flying assignment. He went on to fly F-4’s and then F-15’s. I went to T-37’s (training Vietnamese strangely enough), then C-12A’s, and

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## Talk with Tigers (from Page 8)

finally F-15's.

*What are you most proud of during your time in the 535<sup>th</sup> TAS?*

Three things stand out for me:

1. Pulling out a single U.S. Army Special Forces soldier at an airfield called Djampap an hour before it was overrun in the Spring Offensive. Interestingly enough, he brought his small wooden desk with him.

2. Bringing back the last Australian Caribou (*Wallaby Airlines*) aircrew to Saigon when Australia closed operations in 1972 and they were going home. As the three of them came aboard, they offered me the first "oil can" Fosters Beer I had ever seen. When I told them I was the pilot, they pulled out another Fosters, popped the lid, and said, "in that case have another!" I had them later – after the flight.

3. Flying into Dak Pek and Dak Seang airstrips with fully equipped Montagnards and Meo tribesman, unloading them, and taking off again within two minutes, only to have the airfield mortared within a minute after lift off. Whew.

*What bit of life/military/career advice would you pass on to our generation?*

1. My Dad was a CMSgt., so trust your NCOs always. Don't forget that NCOs really run the Air Force. Not Colonels!

2. Treat every job/task given to you professionally. If you do a good job on a ##### task, you will be picked to handle better jobs.

3. If you are an officer, remember, "You are always on parade!" If you can't afford to read about something you might do in a newspaper, think again before proceeding.

4. Keep the family going. They are key to your post-Air Force life.

5. Treat anyone that works for you like your favorite brother or sister. Especially when doing OPRs/EPRs (Officer Performance Ratings/Enlisted Performance Ratings).

## Engine Maintenance Procedures

by George T. Malamatos  
[483 CAMS, 70]

During my year in Vietnam (January 1970 - January 1971), I was constantly rotated between the Engine Shop and periodic docks at Cam Ranh Bay and the various Operating Locations, usually the one at Bien Hoa AB.

This is my recollection of the engine maintenance procedures and what was expected of us when I worked in the Engine Shop and the docks.

We were told to give an intensive inspection of the engines and to make a list of which parts were bad, which were possibly bad, and the parts that may have had only a short period of time left. The required action for all parts on that list was simple, "change it," also referred to as "R&R" (remove and replace).

Normally, when we worked on our checklist, we were able to repair some parts, so we wouldn't have to replace them with new ones. This was especially true with parts for the exhaust system, which were difficult to find.

We did not use the repaired parts on the aircraft being prepared to fly back to the States because of the long-range distance of the flight and the possible danger of breakdowns of old parts. We all knew the Caribou wasn't built to fly halfway around the world.

Maintenance Checklist. When we wrote up the maintenance checklist for the repairs on each aircraft, the main things we looked for were cracks in the exhaust system, especially at the cylinder head and cylinder cooling fins.

We, also, checked for cracks on baffles, valve covers ears, and flange cracks. The hold-down cylinder nuts and studs were always checked. It was common to find a broken stud. If one was found, we would change that broken stud and the good ones on both sides of the bad one as a precaution. In order to do this job, we had to remove

the cylinder, exhaust, and hoses. Any cracks found were from engine vibration.

Next on our list of repair actions was to find any oil leaks. It was always difficult to find where the leaks started. Sometimes we had to use our best judgment or guess where the leak originated. There were always a few valve covers and cross-over tubes that leaked. They would swell, crack, or turn hard. This happened due to the heat and cold and the amount of hours on the engine.

On the lower half of the engine, it was always harder to detect the leaking area and to work on it, due to so much oil leaking and dripping on you – especially on a windy day. Try removing the lines and the cylinder in that situation. It wasn't fun!

I can't forget to mention that damn oil pump, the worst of them all. We had to remove the appropriate exhaust pipes and drop two cylinders down to get to the oil pump. Plus, several seals had to be changed before replacing the oil pump. It was a nightmare.

All the main connections from the rear of the engine to the firewall were checked. If they showed any bad signs, they were removed and replaced.

The last major items to be worked on were the two magnetos. One fired the front row cylinders and the other fired the back row cylinders.

The timing had to be checked to see if the back row was in sync with the front row. The cover plates on the mags were removed and the timer had to be hooked up to the mags. Then the prop was slowly rotated by hand until both lights came on. They needed to come on together at the same time to be timed correctly. If they didn't, one mag had to be removed to reset the timing gear underneath the bottom of the mag. Usually it was turned either one notch or two notches. The mag was then re-installed and the timing was checked again. Sometimes this had to be done two or three times until the lights came

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## Maintenance (from Page 9)

on together. We called it snake eyes. That meant the timing was good.

Once the timing was set, we removed the mags; cleaned all the cylinder contact points; weather sealed the mags for moisture; and re-installed them. We then checked the timing again to make sure it hadn't changed.

I really enjoyed working on this portion of the overhaul. It always made you feel good when the engines started up and they sounded great.

After the checklist was completed, we hosed the engine down with a cleaning solvent and waited for it to dry. We made a quick check of our work and, if everything looked good, we proceeded to call for a Quality Control (QC) inspector.

The QC inspector checked the whole engine over like we did and made his own list of items that he felt needed attention. We then took care of all the items on his list.

The QC inspector came back and checked on all the items he had listed to make sure we completed them. When everything was completed to his satisfaction, he gave us his okay. The job was then complete and that made all of us feel good. This was a special plane we worked on.

Before the plane was backed out and the engines tested, all areas and systems of the plane had to be completed by all the shops involved. It usually took the Engine Shop a week or two to finish, providing we had all the parts. When all maintenance had been completed by all of the shops, the plane was backed out to the flight line. We then fired up the engines for testing.

Once that was completed, we shut the engines down and removed the cowling around the engines for a final inspection on the flight line. We checked the engines mainly for oil leaks. Also, sometimes we had to make an adjustment to the carburetor if the engine was running too lean or too rich.

That would complete our portion of the maintenance and the Caribou was ready to return to operational flying.

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## My Time in Air Rescue Service

by Tom Hansen [535, 71]

When I found out I had been assigned to the Air Rescue Service, and in the HU-16 no less, I almost couldn't believe it. I felt very fortunate. Sure, I knew there was an element of danger inherent in doing search and rescue even in peacetime, and especially so when there was a war going on – but I had admired the Albatross ever since I was a kid. I used to collect pictures of them from advertisements and put them in a scrapbook. Never did I dream that some day I would be a Flight Mechanic on a HU-16 rescue crew.



The Grumman HU-16 Albatross was a twin engine, fixed wing amphibious search and rescue aircraft whose origins go back to just before the Korean War – during which the Air Rescue Service, its HU-16's (then called SA-16's) and their brave crews distinguished themselves. By 1966, the HU-16 was the only amphibious airplane in the entire U.S. Air Force.

When making an open-sea landing in a HU-16, just prior to touch down ("Slam down" would be more appropriate!), the aircraft was just barely above the crests of the swells. The power was just enough to keep the bird from stalling in. The flaps were full down and the nose was up. This wasn't just for proper landing attitude. It was also to keep from hitting a swell with the

nose and caving in the nose gear doors, which would almost certainly result in sinking.

Looking out the window from my seat in the back, the view was really cool. The HU-16 was probably doing about 80 knots and the wave tops were really flashing past, seemingly at eyeball level. When the pilot picked his spot, the intent was to set the plane down on a crest and not in a trough. The timing had to be exquisite. There was no gentle squishing down into the water. When you hit, you knew you had arrived! The pilot always used the prop reverse to shorten the landing run-out and lessen the pounding and banging.

From where I sat, when we were on the water and the props were in reverse, there was NO view out the window. Water was flying all over the place (hopefully only outside the window!). When the plane had decelerated enough that the props came out of reverse and all the water quit streaming past the window and off the fuselage, you could then see out. I never got sick from the bobbing and bouncing around on the water.

I thought water landings and takeoffs in the HU-16 were just the coolest ride ever. I felt like I was part of an elite group. Sure, we had old airplanes, but we had a first class mission, and there was no other aircraft in the entire inventory of the mighty U.S. Air Force that could do what we could do with our aircraft. There was an intense rivalry between the HU-16's and the helicopters to get the rescue pickups.

(The Sikorsky HH-3's were also amphibious, but their water landings and takeoffs were from a hover. Besides, I think actually going in the water was a last resort for them.)

From 17 August 1966 to 16 August 1967, I was assigned as a Flight Mechanic on the HU-16B with the 37<sup>th</sup> ARRS (Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron) stationed at Da

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## Air Rescue (from Page 10)

Nang AB, Republic of Vietnam. Our higher headquarters was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Rescue Group at Saigon. Even though I belonged to a flying unit in the combat zone, we were still a part of Military Airlift Command, and not Tactical Air Command, or 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force like all the other USAF squadrons in the combat zone.

*Crown* was the call sign for all the HU-16 missions. *Crown Alpha* was the first mission of the day. The *Alpha* mission was always scheduled for takeoff at 0500 hours, which would put it on station about 0630, or first light, as the carrier strikes were being launched. The afternoon *Crown Bravo* mission was scheduled for takeoff at 1200 hours and would be on station about 1330.

### **Robbie Rescue off Yankee Station**

The following is my account of the rescue mission, not only from memory, but also from notes I scribbled down the day the mission took place. However, there is a discrepancy in my notes because takeoff is listed as 0500 hours, the scheduled launch time for *Crown Alpha*, but the notes also show us arriving on station at 1315 hours with a total flight time of 4 hours 15 minutes.

It is possible there was a maintenance delay that morning. It also could have been that this was one of the times that our base came under a predawn rocket attack. If so, then all of the routine schedules would have been off kilter, possibly for several hours, due to base services being disrupted, runway clean-up, checking the aircraft for shrapnel damage, etc. These factors would have delayed takeoff considerably.

I will present the mission data as I have it recorded and as I remember it – after 55 years I don't have an answer for this discrepancy.

The date is 10 September 1966 and this is my twelfth mission since arriving "in-country." It is the morning mission, call sign *Crown Alpha*. In the course of a year of service, and flying 121 mis-

sions with the 37<sup>th</sup> ARRS, this will be the only actual rescue I participated in.

Our aircraft for the day is HU-16B S/N 51-7182. It is not one of "our own," which were camouflaged sea blue on the sides and on all upper surfaces, with white underneath. This aircraft belongs to the 33<sup>rd</sup> ARRS based at Naha AB, Okinawa – one of our sister squadrons with whom we exchanged crews and/or aircraft. The plane is painted dull aluminum overall, with standard and current USAF insignias and markings. Only the gloss chrome yellow wing tip and fuselage band markings are deleted. These were the standard Air Rescue markings worldwide, but in this case they were over-painted to tone down the conspicuous markings. There were bad guys out there who like to shoot at airplanes and they didn't care if they happen to be rescue birds.

The HU-16 crew is:

Pilot, Maj. Henry Erwin, a record-holder in the HU-16

Copilot, Maj. Don Purdy

Navigator, Name not recorded

Flight Mechanic, A1C Tom Hansen

Radio Operator, A1C James Rogan

Pararescue/Parajumper, SSgt. Dan Schmidt

The preflight, engine start, taxi, and takeoff are routine. Takeoff gross weight is the usual 36,000 pounds maximum. Fuel load is full main tanks, full drop tanks, and floats empty. Equipment load is standard: MA-1 kit (an air-droppable life raft, survival equipment package consisting of two rafts and three equipment bundles connected by a floating line), twenty SA-8 Mk.6 parachute flares, two smoke floats, and four 15KS-1000 JATO cylinders, and our personal survival gear, parachutes, and weapons.

We takeoff to the north from Da Nang's 10,000 foot runway (in between F-4's, A-1's, C-123's, Pan Am 707's, O-1's, A-6's, C-141's, and about anything else that flew in Vietnam). We head for our central orbit station, about 1.5 hours flight time as the lumbering HU-16 at max gross weight flies.

Our station lies approximately between Vinh and Than Hoa, North Vietnam on a north-south axis, and between Communist Chinese Hainan Island and North Vietnam, on the east-west axis, about 30 to 35 miles off the coast.

As we arrive on station about 1315 hours, we check in with our controlling agency – a Navy ship, a destroyer leader type, call sign *Royal Lancer*. *Lancer* tells us that our fighter escort (two A-1 Skyraiders from one of the carriers) is off somewhere doing an electronic and visual search for another carrier aircraft, call sign *Robbie*. The lost aircraft is also a Skyraider, but the multi-role version, an EA-1F electronic snooper and electronic countermeasures (ECM) aircraft.



*Robbie* had talked to *Lancer* earlier concerning in-flight electrical problems and has not been heard from since. *Royal Lancer* gives us the coordinates of *Robbie*'s last known position, along with information that *Robbie* had broken off their mission and was trying to get back to their carrier.

The two A-1's, call sign *Canasta*, assigned to us for RESCAP (Rescue Combat Air Patrol) are off somewhere looking for some sign of their comrade. They are from the *USS Coral Sea*, VA-25. We are in contact with them and heading for their area. They tell us they are picking up an occasional faint beeper signal, but they have not been able to home in on it. We tell *Canasta* lead that we too are starting to pick up a beeper signal, but can't get a steer on it.

We are in the area now and initiate an electronic search using our Sarah

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## Air Rescue (from Page 11)

receiver. This is a beacon homer type of gear that, we have been told, is on loan to ARRS from NASA. We have it on our plane, and we start picking up a stronger signal, as are the two *Canasta* birds. They are closer, so they get there first and the two A-1 drivers spot survivors in rubber rafts on the water.

*Canasta* lead holds down his transmit button for ten seconds so we can get a bearing on him, and shortly after we are over the guys too. As we approach in a shallow descent, our PJ (parajumper) suits up to go into the water.

*Canasta* lead calls *Royal Lancer*, informing him that we have located four survivors in rafts, apparently in good shape. He gives *Lancer* their position relative to the ship (as I recall, the ship had a TACAN). *Canasta* also tells *Lancer* that they better send out their helicopter (call sign *Lancers' Angel*, a Kaman UH-2 Seasprite helicopter – the older single engine model that was in use at the time).

*Canasta* lead doesn't think we can safely land in the swells to make the rescue. *Lancer* calls us back and asks our pilot what he thinks. Maj. Erwin is an old head in HU-16's and his reply is something to the effect of, "No sweat."

While the radio traffic is going back and forth, we overfly the survivors in a shallow, descending turn and see the soaked fliers bobbing in one-man rafts. They have a MK-13 handheld smoke flare deployed and sea dye marker in the water around them. This is a visual sighting aid that turns the water into a bright aqua blue-green patch near the rafts. As we are making our pass over them, I arm and toss a 45-minute smoke float out the open Dutch door in back. This gives the Pilot a read on the surface wind velocity and direction, and also gives him a reference point to aim for on final approach since once we are down low, just above the waves, we won't see the rafts.

The weather and sea state is rela-

tively sunny, a high haze layer, moderate wind, and about four or five foot swells. I don't recall if we had to get permission from 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Rescue Group in Saigon (our headquarters, call sign *King*) to make this pickup – on later pickups we did. The Radio Operator would call *King* on HF because of the range (almost 400 miles).

After passing over the guys in the water, we jettison our drop tanks. They depart with their characteristic audible "bang," as they are each held to the under wing bomb shackles by four explosive squibs. I make a quick eyeball check on both sides to make sure both tanks are gone, and call the Pilot on interphone to tell him so.

We swing around in a tight left turn, lining up into the wind for final approach, heading for the thin column of bluish-gray smoke that is our aiming point.

Our position is about nine miles offshore of Communist North Vietnam and well within SAM (surface-to-air-missile) range. The SA-2 Guideline missile has a slant range of 27 miles. But we are now down real low, so we are safe (I think).

We are all strapped in tight. This is going to be a rough ride. The power is on just enough to keep us a tad above stall speed; full flaps; the nose is up; the wave tops are flashing past. The Pilot picks his moment, left hand on the wheel, right hand on the throttles on the overhead – he yanks the throttles back. We stall into a wave crest with a mighty thump and a big splash. The props go into reverse. Engines bellowing, water flying all over the place, we rapidly decelerate.

From my vantage point in the back end, all I can see is water. We could be upside down for all I know. Now the engines are idling, props coming out of reverse, and I can see out the window again. We are bobbing and heaving on the swells. I spring out of my seat and make a fast bilge check of the six under floor watertight compartments and report to the Pilot, "Bilge check – Okay."

"The Master" has done it again.

The survivors are very close by, passing close abeam our left wing tip as we get into position to pull them aboard. The Pilot jockeys the throttles between idle and reverse as he maneuvers the HU-16 the last few yards to the rafts which, like us, are bobbing and heaving all over the place. I am now at the open back door on interphone calling out the raft position to the Pilot, who is backing us toward the rafts.

When we have the rafts at about our 7 o'clock position and about ten yards from our fully open Dutch door, the PJ jumps into the water and, in a few strokes, he reaches them.

We have a line on the PJ, so as soon as he grabs a raft line the Navigator and I pull them in. They are at the door and we start grabbing bodies and hauling them inside. Since these guys didn't have any injuries, nothing fancy was required – just grab 'em and haul 'em in, headfirst or whatever.

In short order, we have four soaked, unhurt, grateful Navy fliers and our fearless PJ onboard. Door closed and locked. I inform the Pilot we have everyone onboard and the door is closed. "Let's go!" – (or words to that effect).

Throttles to the firewall, now we find out what this old Grumman is made of! We slowly begin to accelerate, slamming and pounding into the waves. There is no time for finding seats and strapping in – this is a combat rescue.

We are a pile of wet bodies in the back end, trying to find something to hang onto as the aircraft is thumping and banging into the waves, trying to get up on the step. The Wright Cyclones are unbelievably noisy on every takeoff – not just engine and exhaust noise, but the prop tips are only inches from the fuselage.

We get up on the step as airspeed increases, but it is still a mighty rough ride. Finally we break free and are airborne. We were on the water about six

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## Air Rescue (from Page 12)

or eight minutes. The takeoff run was about 50 seconds.

There are no enemy boats, no bad guys, and no shooting. We climb and head back to Da Nang at METO (Maximum Except for Takeoff) power all the way!

The Pilot and the Radio Operator make all the appropriate calls, including *Royal Lancer* (who in turn calls *Robbie's* carrier, the *FDR*, to let them know their guys are safe), *King* (Rescue Control Center/Saigon), and 37<sup>th</sup> ARRS Ops at Da Nang. Everyone knows we have the four-man Navy crew on board.

Finally, everyone finds a seat, and the EA-1F crew tells us what happened.

The EA-1F crew members are:

Lt. (j.g.), L.G. Cox, Lexington, KY  
Navigator, Lt. (j.g.) J.R. Carleton, San Leandro, CA

ADR1, B. Anderson, Hometown not recorded, CA (ADR, Aviation Machinist Mate Reciprocating Engine Mechanic)

AT2, G.R. Johnson, Farmington, NM (AT, Aviation Electronic Technician)

The aircraft was Skyraider EA-1F S/N 132543 from VAW-13 detached aboard the *USS Franklin D. Roosevelt*, CVA-42.

The rescue location was 106 degrees 18 minutes east and 18 degrees 20 minutes north.

They launched from the *FDR* on an ECM mission. After a while, their communications and electronics started going down. A short while later, they had complete electrical failure and lost a generator. After losing the generator, they had an engine fire. Not only had they lost all navaids and radios, so they could not tell anyone where they were going down, now they had to make a quick choice – bail out or ride it down and ditch in the sea.

The Pilot made the call. They would stay together and ride her down. The Pilot must have done a good job, because they all escaped with no injuries. They

got into their rafts and tried to make distress calls. This is what the *Canasta* A-1's were picking up. When the guys in the rafts saw us coming, they popped a smoke flare and also started firing .38 caliber tracers up in the air that we never saw.

When we called our squadron operations at Da Nang and told them we made the pickup and were inbound, they scrambled the alert crew (*Crown Charlie*) to take over the rest of our mission. Our flight would be logged as a combat mission. Ordinarily our missions were combat support.

We arrive back at Da Nang, land, and taxi back to our very congested parking area. Everyone from our Operations is out to greet and congratulate us. This is what Rescue is all about – finding and bringing people back!

As soon as the bird is parked, I climb up on the wing to dip the fuel tanks as part of the post flight. At this point, the big maintenance item is an immediate and thorough fresh water wash-down for corrosion control after an open-sea landing.

The Navy fliers go to the hospital to get checked over and debriefed, along with some dry clothes and a shot of “cough medicine.” (The *FDR* would have sent a C-1A Cod transport to pick them up and take them back to the bird barge.)

At our squadron operations, everyone on our crew receives a handshake and a “Well Done” from our Commander, Lt. Col. Alan R. Vette, and the Squadron Operations Officer, Lt. Col. Harold Johnson.

The crew is off for the rest of the day and we enjoy the limelight. The PJ, of course, is the hero. That is how it should be. Each crew member received an Air Medal for this mission. If we had been under fire, we probably would have received Distinguished Flying Crosses and hopefully, no Purple Hearts! The Air Medal was fine with me!

My rank at the time was A1C (Airman First Class), the old A1C, with three stripes. On the date of the rescue

I was about ten days from having seven years of service. The rank and time in service was quite common at the time in the aircraft maintenance field. My AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) was A43151A.

Some time later, the Grumman civilian Tech Rep visited our squadron. He gave a real nice keychain medallion, with a figure of a HU-16 and the words “Open Sea Rescue” on it, to every crew member that had participated in an open-sea rescue.

I still have mine.



*Editor's Note. On 20 March 1963, then Capt. Henry E. Erwin, Jr. set two recognized class records: (1) for altitude (19,747 feet) with a 5,000 kilogram payload and (2) for greatest payload (12,162.9 pounds) carried to an altitude of 6,600 feet in a Grumman HU-16B Albatross at Eglin AFB, FL.*

## Time to Renew!

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

**Tom Snodgrass**  
2515 S. White Cliff Lane  
Wichita, KS 67210-1924

## We Will Never Forget

On August 3, 1967, 459<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron C-7A S/N 62-4161, flown by **Capt. Alan E. Hendrickson**, **Capt. John D. Wiley**, and **TSgt. Zane A. Carter**, was shot down while making a landing approach to the strip at Ha Thanh. They were shot down by a 155 mm U.S. Army artillery battery located just off the approach end of the runway. The 155 mm shell tore the tail section from the aircraft and the forward section crashed inverted into the Special Forces camp. No crew member survived this unfortunate friendly fire incident.

On November 30, 1967, 458<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron C-7A S/N 62-4175, flown by **Maj. Thomas D. Moore**, Instructor Pilot; **Maj. William J. Clark**, copilot; and **SSgt. Arturo Delgado-Marin**, flight engineer; hit a hill about six miles southeast of Qui Nhon during a heavy rainstorm. **SSgt. Stanley J. Yurewicz**, 483<sup>rd</sup> CAMS, was an additional crew member. The crew and all 22 passengers were killed.

### Take Me Home, Country Roads

by John Denver  
1971

Almost heaven, West Virginia  
Blue Ridge Mountains,  
Shenandoah River  
Life is old there, older than the trees  
Younger than the mountains,  
growin' like a breeze

Country roads, take me home  
To the place I belong  
West Virginia, mountain mama  
Take me home, country roads

All my memories gather 'round her  
Miner's lady, stranger to blue water  
Dark and dusty, painted on the sky  
Misty taste of moonshine,  
teardrop in my eye

Country roads, take me home  
To the place I belong  
West Virginia, mountain mama  
Take me home, country roads

I hear her voice in the mornin' hour,  
she calls me  
The radio reminds me of my home  
far away  
Drivin' down the road, I get a feelin'  
That I should've been home  
yesterday, yesterday

Country roads, take me home  
To the place I belong  
West Virginia, mountain mama  
Take me home, country roads

Country roads, take me home  
To the place I belong  
West Virginia, mountain mama  
Take me home, country roads

Take me home, (down) country roads  
Take me home, (down) country roads

Songwriters: Bill Danoff, John Denver, and Taffy Nivert Danoff.

*Take Me Home, Country Roads* lyrics  
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*While driving winding Maryland roads on their way to open for John Denver at a Washington, D.C. club, Bill Danoff and his girlfriend Taffy Nivert began writing a country song.*

*John Denver helped them finish the song and they first performed it together on December 30, 1970. Released as a single April 12, 1971, "Take Me Home, Country Roads" became John Denver's first Platinum hit song.*

*Danoff and Nivert had never been to West Virginia. Most servicemen in Vietnam hadn't either, but the song was not about West Virginia. It was about being far from home – and home was calling. I should have been home yesterday. Take me home, country roads, to the place where I belong.*



World War II Poster

### One More Roll

by Capt. Jerry Coffee, USN (Ret.)  
Hanoi, 1968

We toast our hearty comrades who have fallen from the sky, and were gently caught by God's own hands to be with him on high.

To dwell among the soaring clouds they have known so well before, from victory roll to tail chase at heaven's very door.

And as we fly among them there, we're sure to hear their plea: Take care, my friend, watch your six, and do one more roll for me.

## Rescue of Bat 21

by Darrel Whitcomb [537, 70]  
Review by Pat Hanavan [535, 68]

The thorough research behind Darrel Whitcomb's book, *The Rescue of Bat 21*, is incredible. Details are meticulously stitched together from documents and interviews and the manuscript is documented with copious footnotes.

The author was a Forward Air Controller in Southeast Asia who "hung it out" shepherding rescues. If you think this is an exaggeration, you would be wrong!

The day-by-day narration keeps you on the edge of your seat as you read about gallant aviators risking their lives over the jungles of South Vietnam to rescue one of their own.

A multitude of sorties were flown by OV-10's, F-4's, B-52's, O-2's, O-1's, A-1's, and HH-53's day and night into a maelstrom of enemy fire. North Vietnamese tanks, trucks, SA-2 missiles, AAA, infantry, RPGs, and AK-47's make it incredibly dangerous for the downed U.S. Air Force EB-66 navigator, Lt. Col. Iceal "Gene" Hambleton, and his valiant, would-be rescuers.

*Nail, Bilk, Covey, Sandy, and Jolly Green* call signs focus the action on the dangerous environment of Easter Sunday, April 2, 1972. In the middle of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) three-pronged invasion of South Vietnam, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces are put at serious risk for the sake of the rescue effort.

The excitement culminates in the rescue being pulled off twelve days later by Navy SEAL Lt. Tom Norris and a South Vietnamese sea commando, Petty Officer Nguyen Van Kiet. Norris received the Medal of Honor and Kiet the U.S. Navy Cross for their rescue of *Bat 21*.

The nearly 300 pages of this book will find you holding your breath, puckered up, and anxious to get on to the next page for more of the thrilling

action and down-to-earth sharing of heroic "tales that deserve to be told!"

This volume and others by the author are available on Amazon.

Read it now!

## Veteran of Three Wars

by Ron Devlin  
*Reading Eagle*  
May 31, 2021

*The following summarizes the flying career of James A. Zweizig [536,67].*

World War II in Europe was in its waning days when Lt. James A. Zweizig of the 404<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron broke formation in pursuit of a strange looking German fighter plane on April 17, 1945. It was strange because the German aircraft had no propellers, unlike Zweizig's propeller-driven P-47 Thunderbolt.

When the smoke cleared from two blasts of the P-47's eight .50 caliber machine guns, Zweizig had downed a Messerschmitt Me-262, the world's first operational jet-powered fighter aircraft.



Impressive as it was for a 23-year-old pilot, the incident was only one of many in Zweizig's 28-year career as a military pilot, which included missions in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, James Zweizig was a 19-year-old student at Bloomsburg State Teachers College. He joined the Civilian Pilot Training Program, a government effort that trained about 435,000 pilots for military ser-

vice from 1939 to 1944. In April 1943, Zweizig was ordered to active duty.

Flying out of an airfield near Cherbourg in France, a city still under German occupation, his unit flew missions in support of Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army in mid-1944. The incident with the Messerschmitt Me-262 is mentioned in *Battle for the Skies Over Europe: German Jets vs. the U.S. Army Air Force* by William N. Hess.

In a 2010 interview with the *Reading Eagle*, Zweizig said the encounter with the Messerschmitt was on the 97<sup>th</sup> of his 100 combat missions during World War II. Catching the German jet by surprise as it was landing at a camouflaged airfield near the Czechoslovakian border, Zweizig got so close he could see the "pipes" under both wings that were the aircraft's twin jet engine exhausts.

During the Korean War, he was activated with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. Zweizig flew 66 combat missions in F-94's, encountering Chinese pilots flying Russian MiGs over the Yalu River.

Again, in March 1967, the then 45-year-old pilot was called upon to serve his country. This time it was in Vietnam, where he spent a year flying the de Havilland C-7A Caribou into remote jungle airstrips.

"I did about 1,500 takeoffs and landings carrying every kind of cargo imaginable, from drums of gasoline to Vietnamese civilians with all their belongings and animals," Zweizig related in the 2010 interview.

"I'm lucky to be alive," he said. "I could have been dead so many times, but I really enjoyed flying."

*in April 1970, James A. Zweizig retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. During his flying career he was awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses, including one for a C-7A mission in Vietnam on 15 December 1967, and 20 Air Medals.*

*James Alfred Zweizig died at age 99 on January 14, 2021. He is buried in the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, PA.*

## Additional Firepower

by Tom Smith [458 & 310, 71]

Getting your own weapon in Vietnam was not difficult. Almost everyone accumulated weapons by trading, buying, or “inheriting” various firearms. As regulations tightened on what could and could not be taken home, many weapons were left under the bed when an individual rotated back to the States. Over the years, our hootches were virtually awash with AK-47’s, SKS carbines, and other assorted firearms.

Our standard “Combat Load” on the Caribou was an M-16 for the Flight Mechanic and each Pilot had a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson Combat Masterpiece 4-inch barreled, six-shot revolver with 18 rounds. The pistols were better than nothing, but not much. With a short barrel, hitting a target more than ten feet away took practice, and we didn’t practice. Not that anyone expected to get into a firefight, but most of us who were flying everyday wanted something more than 18 rounds of .38 Special, just in case.

So, I kept my eye out for suitable prospects. AK’s and SKS’s were pretty big and bulky for a cockpit. Most pilots would have loved to have either a Swedish K-9 mm submachine gun or a short barrel M-16 with a collapsible stock, but those were unattainable.

I had an Army Sergeant offer to trade his 1911 Colt pistol in .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) for my 5-inch survival knife. The pistol was a fine weapon, but I was looking for something more.

Then I was offered a Thompson submachine gun. Now we’re talking! That is, until I picked it up. It weighed almost 10 pounds unloaded! Plus, this one had its stock cut down for the typical Vietnamese frame. No, that wouldn’t do.

Next, some crew members came across a .45 ACP caliber M-3 “Grease Gun” submachine gun. While nice and compact, this particular specimen looked like it had spent the last ten

years in the bottom of a rice paddy – which it probably had. Because of its condition, the pilots were all afraid to fire it. We found some Army troops. “Wanna’ shoot this?” “No way,” was the response. Then a Marine was found. “Wanna’ shoot this?” “Sure!” (Gotta love the Marines!). It fired just fine, but everyone was still highly suspect of it. Plus, with a loaded magazine it also weighed over ten pounds.

I finally found “the one.” It was an M-2 carbine – the one with selective fire. The stock had been sawed off just past the pistol grip and a sling was attached. It weighed about five pounds and was very compact. The deal included a canvas carrying case, several magazines, and boxes of ammunition. The .30 caliber carbine round is hardly a powerhouse, but with the M-2 selective fire option of “Full Auto,” it beat our .38 pistols cold.

I faithfully carried the M-2 with me on every flight for the rest of my tour, until the day 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force made all of us turn-in our private weapons.

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## Christmas Encounter with MiG-21’s

by Theodore “Ted” Hanchett  
[537, 68]

Recently, I was going through old documents and came across a memory of 49 years ago. As I read the report that I had submitted the day after the event, there had been a couple items that I did not remember. It is amazing how the mind forgets some items, but remembers others.

As I transitioned from Bous (C-7A’s) to Buffs (B-52’s), and later to Ardvarks (FB-111’s), my life changed in a big way. The Bou was a fun chance to explore the Southeast Asia world. The Buff was a way to experience the reality of war. The Ardvark was an unrealized experience of playing a significant part of the Cold War. My part is likely still classified, but it had a potential resem-

blance to the Paul Tibbets experience.

Attached is a report that I filed the day following our MiG encounter in the B-52D about 15 miles south of the Chinese border and just north of Hanoi.

Many veterans usually don’t talk about their military experiences, but the one memory I will share is that in the moment of a threat, I felt that there was an Angel in our cockpit looking out for us.

The submitted report follows:



### Information Please

Information needed for the composition of “write-ups” for decorations necessitates asking you crew members for specifics. We are interested in knowing what aircraft/equipment/personnel obstacles you overcame to put the weapons on target. Please furnish us with a minimum of the following:

1. *Date of Flight:* 23 December 1972
2. *Cell Color and Position:* Copper 3
3. *Name of Wave Leader:* Col. Cody (Vice Division Commander)
4. *Name of Cell Leader:* Capt. Boniface
5. *Target Area:* Hanoi
6. *Hostile Defenses Encountered:* MiGs
7. *Aircraft/Equipment Problem:* Flare Drop System INOP
8. *Brief Narrative of actions taken in order to continue on over the target:*

Four minutes from the BRL (Bomb Release Line), two unidentified aircraft appeared on SSgt. Loy G. Newlan’s (Fire Control Officer, FCO, also referred to as the tail gunner) search radar, 6 o’clock position at 5,000-6,000 yards. *Copper 1 and 2* both called radar contact with the unidentified aircraft.

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## Song Be (from Page 17)

one of the terminating branches of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The airfield rests under the looming presence of Nui Ba Ra Mountain about 2.3 miles distant. At 2,346 feet tall, it is one of three extinct volcanoes in southwest South Vietnam and was a refuge for the Viet Cong (VC).

In 1972, the area between the mountain and the Cambodian border was “highly unstable.” For Song Be the Aerodrome Remarks section of the TAD included this interesting tidbit, “Opposite end of runway is not visible from touchdown.”

One day we were tasked to take a two-man Airfield Survey Team to Song Be to update the TAD data. The two airmen were equipped with a calibrated bicycle wheel, tape measures, clipboards, etc. Neither of the team had been to Song Be before.



*Filled in holes at Song Be.  
Photo by Tom Smith*

They looked over our shoulders during the approach and landing to get a bird’s eye view of their objective. Upon landing and turning into the parking ramp, we noticed numerous small mounds of dirt. Each was about 18 to 24 inches in diameter and about 6 to 8 inches high. “What are those?” the survey team asked. “I dunno’,” I said. They weren’t here last week, but they look like rocket or mortar impacts that have been repaired by filling them with dirt.”

I heard a little “Oh.” Turning around in my seat, I saw two very large pairs

of eyeballs. I think they were spooked a little. Avoiding the holes, we taxied in and parked. The team unloaded and proceeded to start warily working their way down the seemingly deserted 3,400 foot long runway, measuring and noting as they went.

Recently, 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force-level supervision had decided things needed to be “tightened up,” which resulted in a series of innocuous, but irritating policies. One of the worst ones, as far as we were concerned, was the new prohibition on private weapons. After many hours of riding with me in the cockpit, I was now required to turn in my beloved M-2 carbine.

While waiting for the Survey Team, and grouching about having to turn in our private weapons, we noticed a wrecked, abandoned, and stripped Cessna shoved to the side of the ramp next to a dirt berm. It was a Cessna 170, I think.

All of us got the same idea at the same time. I’d be damned if I was going to turn in my carbine with all of its ammo! I got my carbine, the Flight Mechanic unlimbered his M-16, and I gave all my .38 ammunition to the Copilot. The three of us then proceeded to thoroughly ventilate the Cessna.

It was all great fun, except we forgotten one thing. We hadn’t told the Survey Team. At the very moment we started firing, they were at the far end of the 3,400 foot (1,100 meter) runway and out of sight of us. It must have sounded like a major firefight going on at our end of the runway.

We had thoroughly shredded the Cessna and just about used up all the ammo when we heard heavy breathing and the pounding of feet. Yup, it was the Survey Team – out of breath and thoroughly P.O.’ed when they found out that we were “goofing around” instead of holding the fort against waves of charging VC.

We apologized for not telling them, or at least waiting until they got back, but they were still unhappy. I asked if they were going to finish measuring the ramp. “Hell no! Let’s just get the #####

outta this place!”

I don’t know if there is a record for the 1,100 meter dash with a bicycle wheel, but I think those guys must hold the unofficial best time.

*Editor’s Note. Until sometime in early 1971, the runway surface at Tra Bong was “Earth/Gravel.” In the third quarter of 1970, the 537<sup>th</sup> TAS submitted an OHR (Operational Hazard Report), OHR 537-70-10, concerning the poor runway surface at Tra Bong.*

*The Tra Bong information in the 1 Feb 73 TAD (the earliest TAD we have available after January 1971) states the Tra Bong runway surface is “M8A1.” The TAD describes M8A1 as “light steel matting, anti-skid treated unless otherwise noted in Aerodrome Remarks.”*

*The 1 Feb 73 TAD also indicates that the last Tra Bong airfield survey was conducted in April 1971. It appears that the runway surface at Tra Bong was upgraded sometime in early 1971 and an airfield survey was conducted in April 1971 after the matting was in place.*

## Aviation Accident Reports, 1917

*Daedalus Flyer, Fall 2016*

The following are excerpts from the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) monthly report of December 1917. The report was signed by Colonel C. St. John-Culbertson, Royal Flying Corps, and was dated 21 December 1917.

### Introduction

Another good month. In all, a total of 35 accidents were reported, only six of which were avoidable. These represented a marked improvement over the month of November during which 84 accidents occurred, of which 23 were avoidable. This improvement, no doubt, is the result of experienced

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## Accidents 1917 (from Page 18)

pilots with over 100 hours in the air forming the backbone of all the units.

### Resume of Accidents

#### *Avoidable Accidents:*

There were six avoidable accidents this last month.

a. The pilot of a [Farmer MF.11] Shorthorn, with over 7 hours of experience, seriously damaged the undercarriage on landing. He had failed to land at as fast a speed as possible as recommended in the Aviation Pocket Handbook.



*B.E.2*

b. A [Royal Aircraft Factory] B.E.2 stalled and crashed during an artillery exercise. The pilot had been struck on the head by the semaphore of his observer who was signaling to the gunners.

c. Another pilot in a B.E.2 failed to get airborne by an error of judgment. He was attempting to fly at mid-day instead of at the recommended best lift periods, which are just after dawn and just before sunset.

d. A [Farmer MF.7] Longhorn pilot lost control and crashed in a bog near Chipping-Sedbury. An error of skill on the part of the pilot in not being able to control a machine with a wide speed band of 10 MPH between top speed and stalling speed.

e. While low flying in a Shorthorn, the pilot crashed into the top deck of a horse drawn bus near Stonehenge.

f. A B.E.2 pilot was seen to be attempting a banked turn at a constant height before he crashed. A grave error

by an experienced pilot.

#### *Unavoidable Accidents:*

There were 29 unavoidable accidents from which the following are selected:

a. The top wing of a Camel fell off due to fatigue failure of the flying wires.

A successful emergency landing was carried out.

b. Sixteen B.E. 2's and 9 Shorthorns had complete engine failures. [This was] a marked improvement over November's failures.

c. Pigeons destroyed a [Sopwith] Camel and two Longhorns after mid-air strikes.

**Cost of Accidents:** Accidents during the last three months of 1917 cost 317 pounds, 10 shillings sixpence, money down the drain and sufficient to buy new gaiters and spurs for each and every pilot observer in the Service.

#### **Accident Briefs**

*No. 1 Brief:* No. 912 Squadron, 3 December 1917. Aircraft Type: B.E.2C, No. KY678, Pilot Lt. J. Smyth-Worthington, total solo 4.20 [hours], solo in type 1.10 [hours].

The pilot of this flying machine attempted to maintain his altitude in a turn at 2,500 feet. This resulted in the airplane entering an unprecedented maneuver, entailing a considerable loss of height. Even with full power applied and the control column fully back, the pilot was unable to regain control. However, upon climbing from the cockpit onto the lower main plane, the pilot managed to correct the machines altitude, and by skillful manipulation of the flying wires successfully side-slipped into a nearby meadow.

Remarks. Although, through inexperience, this pilot allowed his aeroplane to enter an unusual attitude, his resourcefulness in eventually landing without damage has earned him a unit citation.

RFC Lundsford-Magnus is investigating the strange behaviour of this aircraft.

*No. 2 Brief:* No. 847 Squadron, 19 December 1917. Aircraft Type: Spotter Balloon, No. J17983, Pilot Capt. \*\*\*,

total solo 107.00 [hours], solo in type 32.10 [hours].

Capt \*\*\* of the Hussars, a balloon observer, unfortunately allowed the spike of his full-dress helmet to impinge against the envelope of his balloon. There was a violent explosion and the balloon carried out a series of fantastic and uncontrollable maneuvers, while rapidly emptying itself of gas. The pilot was thrown clear and escaped injury, as he was lucky enough to land on his head.

Remarks. This pilot was flying in full-dress uniform because he was the Officer of the Day. In consequence it has been recommended that pilots will not fly during periods of duty as Officer of the Day.

Captain\*\*\* has requested an exchange posting to the Patroville Alps, a well-known mule unit of the Basques.

*No. 3 Brief:* Summary of No. 3 Brief, dated October 1917. Major W. de Kitkag-Watney's Neuport Scout was extensively damaged when it failed to become airborne.

The original Court of Inquiry found that the primary cause of the accident was carelessness and poor airmanship on the part of a very experienced pilot.

The Commandant General, however, not being wholly convinced that Major de Kitkag-Watney could be guilty of so culpable a mistake, ordered that the court should be re-convened. After extensive inquiries and lengthy discussions with the Meteorological Officer and Astronomer Royal, the Court came to the conclusion that the pilot unfortunately was authorized to fly his aircraft on a day when there was absolutely no lift in the air and could not be held responsible for the accident.

The Court wishes to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to Major de Kitkag-Watney on his reprieve and also on his engagement to the Commandant General's daughter, which was announced shortly before

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## Accidents 1917 (from Page 19)

the accident.

[*Ah yes, rank doth have its privileges!*]

### Flying Safety Tips

**Horizontal Turns.** To take a turn the pilot should always remember to sit upright, otherwise he will increase the banking of the aeroplane. He should never lean over.

**Crash Precautions.** Every pilot should understand the serious consequences of trying to turn with the engine off. It is much safer to crash into a house when going forward than to sideslip or stall a machine with engine trouble.

Passengers should always use safety belts, as the pilot may start stunting without warning. Never release the belt while in the air, or when nosed down to land.

**Engine Noises.** Upon the detection of a knock, grind, rattle or squeak, the engine should be at once stopped. Knocking or grinding accompanied by a squeak indicates binding and a lack of lubricant.

## Number One Crew Chief

from *Caribou Clarion*,  
Vol. 1, No. 29, April 2, 1971

For 16 of 17 days Sgt. Odell Hensley's C-7A Caribou took to the air. Nine of these flights, five of them in succession, were discrepancy-free, or "OK" flights.

This rare record of professional maintenance earned crew chief Hensley words of praise from Col. L. J. Wolfe 483<sup>rd</sup> Deputy Commander for Materiel, Lt. Col. Thomas P. Lang, Chief of Maintenance, and 483<sup>rd</sup> Organizational Maintenance Squadron Commander, Maj. Cordon D. Adame.

To use the local phrase, Sergeant Hensley is a "Number One" crew chief.



## Crash on Sunday

by Steve Croft [459, 66]

I was at Tinker AFB, OK, going through the C-124 Flight Examiner course when I received my orders for transition training in CV-2B's. My initial reaction was, "What the hell is a CV-2B?" In July 1966, I was at Fort Benning, GA, flying training missions from Lawson Army Airfield.

We flew with both Army and Air Force Instructor Pilots (IP). I had a 1/Lt. USAF instructor who was a "for real" hot-rodder who spent every minute he wasn't in a flight suit at the Phenix Drag Strip over in Alabama.

Because of an unusual number of "weather days," we were behind in the training schedule and had a Sunday morning training flight. We flew to a small airfield near Dothan, AL, to practice touch-and-go landings. I had completed my touch-and-go's and the other student was in the left seat. I was standing between the seats monitoring student progress.

On landing, the aircraft suddenly veered strongly to the right and I was thrown against the left bulkhead.

The right main brake had locked-up. The Caribou did a ground loop and departed the runway. There was a loud noise created by shearing metal and

the impact of a collision with another metallic beast.

Bumps and bruises were the extent of our injuries. We exited the aircraft and surveyed the damage. The Caribou had destroyed a tractor and hay bailer parked near the runway. The Bou's right engine, propeller, and wing had sustained major damage. We obviously were not flying anymore that day.

We tried to radio Fort Benning, but it was Sunday morning and Fort Benning was "off the air." We walked to the small building that housed the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) at the airfield.

The FBO had a pay phone and, after we fumbled around to find the right coins, the IP talked to a telephone operator and had them place a call to someone at Fort Benning.

I was standing next to him as he explained to whoever was on the other end that we had hit a tractor and hay bailer. The IP's next response was, "No, it was on the ground!" Someone was being a smart ass on a Sunday morning. We returned to the aircraft and waited.

Unknown to us, the standard procedure in this type of situation was for Fort Benning to contact local law enforcement. Sure enough, here comes a police car with lights flashing and siren blasting.

The car came screeching to a halt. The policeman jumped out of the car, immediately saw the damage to the tractor and hay bailer, and started cursing a streak of swear words that would have made any sailor proud. Not good manners on a Sunday morning.

The policeman continued yelling, waving his finger at us, and demanding to know what happened. He threatened to throw us in jail. He wasn't kidding.

Fortunately, three UH-1H Hueys, with maintenance and accident investigation personnel onboard, arrived to rescue us. One of the Hueys flew us home.

It turned-out that the policeman on duty that Sunday morning was upset

**Continued on Page 21**

## Sunday Crash (from Page 20)

because the wrecked tractor and hay bailer belonged to him. He had a contract to cut the grass alongside the runway. Whatever was growing there was of sufficient quality and quantity that, once it got tall enough, he cut it and bailed it.

Months later, I saw the IP, who was then a Captain, in Vietnam. I asked him about the aftermath of the crash with the tractor. He said the policeman had sued the U.S. government for damages, but lost the case because, per Federal Aviation Administration regulations, the tractor and hay bailer had been parked too close to the runway.

It helps to know the regulations, even if you are a policeman.

## There Was Only One

Judie A. Armington [483, 71]

*Only one member of the Women's Air Force (WAF) served with the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing in Vietnam, Judie A. Armington.*

"Capt. Judie A. Armington arrived in early November 1971 and assumed the position of Executive Officer. She also replaced TSgt. Kenneth M. Vaszary as Protocol Officer." *Caribou Clarion, Vol. I No. 58, November 26, 1971* and reprinted in *Caribou Airlines, Vol. V.*

*The following article is from the "Washington Post," July 19, 2015:*

The world lost a truly amazing person when Judie Ann Armington passed away on July 12, 2015 at the age of 71.

A native Californian, Judie obtained her BA [degree] from Cal State Long Beach, graduating in 1964 with degrees in Math and English; her MS [degree] in Systems Management from the University of Southern California in 1972; and a BS [degree] in Computer Sciences (*summa cum laude*) from Park University in 1988.



After teaching for several years in Salinas, CA, in 1968 Judie joined the U.S. Air Force.

She was thereafter stationed at various posts including a tour in Vietnam (1968-1971). She later served as a military White House Social Aide during the Carter Administration. Judie retired from the Air Force in 1989 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Judie returned to the U.S. Government and served as a Certified Defense Financial Manager-Acquisition (CDFM-A); as a Community Relations Field Specialist with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2004-2007, where she assisted in disaster relief; as a Budget Analyst with Defense Information Systems Agency, 2007-2010; and finally as a Program and Budget Analyst with the Environmental Protection Agency, 2010-2014.

A Board Trustee at the First Presbyterian Church of Arlington, Judie sang in both the church choir and in the Metropolitan Choir where she annually rejoiced in participating in the Messiah holiday concert at the Kennedy Center. She was also involved in the Community Emergency Response Team in Arlington, VA.

Judie had a love of flying and flew her Cessna across the U.S. She picked up and excelled in golf as a hobby and it became a favorite pastime.

She loved her country and was fascinated with the world around her, studying at least eight languages.

Judie was also the author of the chapter, "Changes in Constituencies with the Repeal of Defense of Marriage Act and Don't Ask Don't Tell" in *Glimpses of the New Veteran: Changed Constituencies, Different Disabilities, and Evolving Resolutions* (2015).

Judie A. Armington is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

## Women's Air Force History

by Martha Lockwood  
*Air Force New Service*  
September 18, 2014

By the end of World War II, women had been fully incorporated into the military, although they were still limited to clerical roles such as typists, clerks, and mail sorters. They represented only about two percent of the force.

When President Harry Truman signed The National Security Act of 1947 creating the Department of Defense, the U. S. Air Force (USAF) became a separate military service. At the time, a number of Women's Army Corps (WAC) members continued serving in the Army but performed USAF duties. The following year, 1948, some WACs chose to transfer to the Women's Air Force (WAF) when it became possible to do so.

Less than a year after the Air Force became its own service, President Harry Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, accepting women as a permanent part of the military. It was the beginning of the Women's Air Force, and for the next 30 years would represent a separate, but equal part of the military.

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## WAF History (from Page 21)

Originally, the WAF was limited to 4,000 enlisted women and 300 female officers, all of whom filled a variety of ground duty roles, mostly clerical and medical. They were not to be trained as pilots, even though the Army Air Force's Women's Flying Training Detachment had graduated its first class of female pilots in April 1943 during World War II.

When the WAF program ended in 1976, women were accepted into the USAF on an equal basis with men, but not before many milestones were achieved.

The first WAF recruit was Sgt. Esther Blake who enlisted on July 8, 1948 in the first minute of the first day that regular Air Force duty was authorized for women. She had been a WAC, and she transferred in from Fort McPherson, GA. The first recruits reported to Lackland AFB, TX, in 1948.

When basic training was desegregated in the USAF the following year, many African-American women recruits joined, even though the integration of quarters and mess had not yet been achieved.

During the Korean War (1950-53), the only Air Force women permitted to serve in the Korean battle zone were medical air evacuation nurses. The WAFs did perform in support roles at rear-echelon bases in Japan where they served as air traffic controllers, weather observers, radar operators, and photo interpreters.

By the end of the Korean War (1953), 12,800 WAF officers and enlisted women were serving worldwide. In 1955, Air Force nurses experienced a moment of turnabout when men were accepted into the Air Force Nurse Corps.

It would take two more decades and service in another war to achieve parity.

In the Vietnam War, American military women serving in Southeast Asia numbered 7,000, with 600 to 800 reported to be WAFs. No longer



*USAF Maj, Susan J. Helms,  
Astronaut*

thought of only as nurses or medical evacuation personnel, WAFs served in a variety of support staff assignments, in headquarters, intelligence, and in various personnel positions throughout Southeast Asia.

With the 1967 repeal of the two-percent cap on the number of women serving, and the lifting of the restriction on the highest grade women could achieve, the first of many glass ceilings was shattered.

In 1968 the passage of Public Law 90-130 allowed women to enlist in the Air National Guard, and in 1969 Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (AFROTC) opened to women.

One of the most notable women's accomplishments came in 1971 when Jeanne M. Holm was promoted to Brigadier General, becoming the first female airman to reach that rank. Two years later, in 1973, she was promoted to Major General.

It was also in 1973 that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of USAF Lt. Sharon Frontiero and changed military life forever. The Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the inequities in benefits for the dependents of military women. Until then, military women with dependents were not authorized housing, nor were their dependents eligible for the benefits and privileges afforded the dependents of male military members, such as medical, commissary, and exchange benefits.

By the end of the Vietnam War (1975) the Department of Defense had reversed policies and provided pregnant women with the option of electing discharge or remaining on active duty. Previous policies had required women to be discharged if they became pregnant or if they adopted a child.

By the conclusion of the WAF program in 1976, women had laid a solid groundwork for attaining leadership positions and equal opportunities. It was also in our country's bicentennial year that women were admitted to the service academies.

After that, the sky was the limit. In 1976, the Air Force selected the first women for undergraduate pilot training (UPT) and the first 10 women to earn their silver wings graduated in UPT class 77-08 on September 2, 1977.

In 1980, the first women graduated from the service academies, and just two years after that the Air Force selected the first woman aviator for Test Pilot School.

Six Air Force women served as pilots, copilots, and boom operators on the KC-135 and KC-10 tankers that refueled FB-111's during the raid on Libya in 1986.

The year 1986 was also a banner year academically for women as, for the first time in history, the Air Force Academy's top graduate was a woman.

The War in the Persian Gulf (1990-91) deployed 40,000 American military women during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. At the end of that war, the Air Force Reserve selected its first woman senior advisor, and Congress repealed laws banning women from flying in combat.

It wasn't until January 13, 1993 that an Air Force woman stood on the threshold of space. On that date, then Maj. Susan J. Helms, a member of the first class of the U. S. Air Force Academy (1980) to graduate women, became the first American military woman in space as a member of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* team. [Susan J. Helms retired in 2014 as a Lt. Gen.]

## Looking for Chang Mai

by Doug Clinton [458, 69]

Most of us were fortunate enough to get a week long rotation flying out of Don Muang Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB) in Bangkok. What a welcome relief it was from the small arms avoidance type of flying we did “in-country,” always looking over your shoulder and circumnavigating artillery fire. It was relaxing, the way flying should be without worrying about someone shooting at you.

Mostly, there were embassy passengers and supply runs to our bases of operations throughout Thailand. Typical stops were Korat, Takhli, U-Tapao, Nakhon Phanom, Ubon, and Udorn RTAFBs. Every now and then, the frag order would take our “Nid Noy Airlines” Caribou into Chang Mai.

Well, it was my lucky day. We were going to see the picturesque city of Chang Mai after a few stops at Korat, Udorn, and Nan.

Nan? Why Nan? It was a next to nothing airfield way the hell up and gone in the northeast corner of the country close to the Laotian border. It was probably a stepping off point to places more exciting to the east. We picked up one passenger at Nan and departed westerly for Chang Mai.

There were lots of mountains in the area and we certainly did not know the terrain like we did that of II Corps in Viet Nam. As foul luck would have it, towering cumulus had developed by the time we were halfway between Nan and Chang Mai. “Okay, no problem, we can pick our way through this stuff,” we thought.

We did for a while, but we eventually ran into a solid wall of weather.

Fuel was soon becoming a concern. We had no choice but to turn around and find fuel. I really did not want to chance making Udorn or Takhli, so we opted for a return to Nan – not knowing if they even had any Avgas.

As we came in radio range of Nan, I called to see if they had fuel. If not, I would cut the route short and head south to Takhli – but it would be close.

The radio conversation went something like this:

Us: Nan, This is *Nid Noy 02*.

Nan Tower: *Nid Noy* you rand south, crosswind reft.

Us: Nan, Do you have Avgas?

Nan Tower: Uh, you rand south, crosswind reft.

Us: Roger, I say again, do you have Avgas?

Nan Tower: Uh, you rand south, crosswind reft.

Okay, we are not getting anywhere with this.

We randed south with crosswind reft.

The language barrier did not disappear after landing, but we were able to communicate our need for fuel. With broad smiles, a couple of men began rolling out 55 gallon drums of, sure ‘nuff, 115/145 Avgas.

Another man brought out a manual barrel pump. I don’t remember how much we pumped on, but it was enough to get to Takhli without worrying. I don’t remember how we paid for the fuel, or if we did at all. I assume the U.S. government took care of it.

We missed our only opportunity to see Chang Mai, but at least we did not have to spend the night in the Caribou Hotel waiting for someone to bring us fuel.

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## **Apocalypse '45: Vivid Memories**

by John Anderson  
*Wall Street Journal*  
May 26, 2021

Given the innumerable histories, novels, dramas, memoirs, and endless hours of film and video devoted to World War II, there would seem little new to be done. But that’s precisely why *Apocalypse '45* feels so fresh.

It seems a near impossibility that

any of the footage in this documentary commissioned by the Discovery Channel could have gone previously unseen, but such is the case. *Apocalypse '45* director Erik Nelson was given access to more than 700 reels of unreleased film from the National Archives, thanks in part to the success of his previous archival feature, *The Cold Blue*, [a documentary on B-17’s in Europe].

All the film is in color, which gives an alarming immediacy to a war most of us are used to having seen re-created in dusty black and white. It is all the work of the combat photographers who documented the late stages of the Pacific war – including the battles of Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Manila; the fire bombing of Tokyo; and the August 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The material is often intimate, often heartbreaking.

It’s the naked honesty of the interviews that brings a viewer up short. The storytelling, provided strictly through voiceover, is from 24 servicemen who fought the battles – from the air, aboard ships, or storming the islands with machine guns and flame-throwers. No faces are shown on camera as they speak. Perhaps because of the partial anonymity they’re provided by director Nelson, or because they’re all in their 90’s or better, they speak with surprising frankness about their fear, their war and their enemy.

They were “vicious people,” one vet says of the Japanese. Someone else contends, “They were the bravest damn people around.” The idea that the men were all part of a “Greatest Generation” is dismissed by at least one as hype, but embraced by others. The point is that the recollections and sentiments are as diverse as the people who served, from the vet who declares he was happy to kill the enemy to the one who admits that Pearl Harbor “screwed my whole life up from that moment on.” One witness recalls a shipmate who lost a foot “and was the happiest guy in the world”

**Continued on Page 24**

## Apocalypse '45 (from Page 23)

[because it meant he would go home].

There is a general reluctance to glorify the war, or their service. "We just wanted to leave there alive," one says, and there is virtually no argument made that the decision to drop the A-bombs was anything but just and probably saved millions of lives, both American and Japanese.

World War II era photographers didn't have sound film, so everything heard in *Apocalypse '45* has been imposed by the filmmakers, principally David Hughes, whose sound design helps situate the visuals somewhere between memory and delirium, an altered state of consciousness that may not exactly replicate, but certainly strives to emulate, a 75-year-old fog of war.

What we see in *Apocalypse '45* has been transferred from the original film to 6.5K high-resolution digital video. "All of that footage was hiding in plain sight in the National Archives,"

*"Apocalypse '45" can be viewed on Discovery+.*

## 458<sup>th</sup> AS at Tuskegee

by 1/Lt. Sam Eckholm, 375<sup>th</sup> Air  
Mobility Wing Public Affairs  
*Montgomery Advertiser*  
October 9, 2021

On a warm fall afternoon on September 28, 2021, three Scott AFB pilots made history, becoming the first all-African American crew to land a C-21 at Alabama's historic Tuskegee airfield.

The group was joined by two other team members from the 458<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron (AS), who spent the day touring the airfield and visiting with students from the Red Tail Flight Academy, named after the legendary Tuskegee Airmen who trained at the very same airfield over 80 years ago.

"I've always known about the history of the Tuskegee Airmen. So, to be able to visit the site of their old training grounds really left a deep impact on me," said USAF Capt. Kyle Green.

In the early 1940's, the Tuskegee Airmen became the first African-American military pilots in the U.S. Armed Forces, when the U.S. military [was] racially segregated. During World War II, 992 Tuskegee trained pilots flew over 15,000 missions flown across Europe and North Africa.



*C-21 pilots Capt. Sidney Ganison, Capt. Kyle Green, and Capt. Johnny Frye at Tuskegee (left to right). Photo by 1/Lt. Sam Eckholm*

"It's no doubt that the history runs deep here, but being able to witness it first-hand left all of us inspired," said USAF Capt. Johnny Frye.

The 458<sup>th</sup> AS crew spent time visiting with dozens of students from the local Red Tail Flight Academy, a school for young pilots interested in building flight time and learning about aviation. "Having the chance to visit with students was inspiring, just knowing that the legacy of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen continues to be carried out to this day," said Frye. "Just seeing their dreams and aspirations and also helping them learn more about the opportunities the military offers for aviators, was something that will stick with me."

After giving personal tours of the C-21 to the students, the crew spent the rest of the afternoon walking around the town and visiting the historic Tuskegee University, before returning to the airfield to fly back to Scott AFB, IL.

"What struck me was how much pride the people of Tuskegee have for their town and their community," said Green. There is no doubt in my mind that the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen will continue to be carried long into the future, and I am so honored to have had the chance to spend time walking in the footsteps of giants."

## Santa Bou 1971

by Tom Smith [458 & 310, 71]

*"Christmas is not an external event at all, but a piece of one's home that one carries in one's heart." Freya Stark*

It was Vietnam in late December 1971 and Christmas was on the way. For me, and I am sure for many who served there, Christmas in Vietnam was not only their first Christmas in a foreign country, but also their first away from home and family. I had only been in country a few months, but I felt the Christmas homesick blues coming on.

Not that my situation was bad. Not by any means. Cam Rahn Bay was a pretty nice place, except for sand in your bed, socks, and underwear. Attacks on the base were seldom and random. The flying was great. I had one day off a week, which I generally spent scuba diving. We had hot food, warm showers, cold beer, air conditioning, and mail.

But still, I think for all of us, regardless of our religion or lack thereof, Christmas is a special time – a time of home and family.

Then I heard about a request for volunteers to fly the "Santa Bou." I am not sure when this tradition started, but at Cam Rahn Bay, some C-7A's were painted like Santa Claus. There was a bright red radome that looked like a nose, followed by a Santa face and beard with eyes where the cockpit windows were. On the entire length of the aircraft's flat bottom "MERRY CHRISTMAS" was spray-painted. The idea was to take a few days around

**Continued on Page 25**

### Santa Bou 1971 (from Page 24)

Christmas and fly to as many of the isolated camps and fire bases as possible and spread Christmas cheer to the troops. Each stop would be only 30 minutes or so.

One flight crew flew the mission and another handled duties in the back. Also onboard were several nurses and/or Red Cross “Donut Dolly” volunteers. The aircraft were loaded with liquor and beer. We also had Red Cross “Care Packages” and cards and packages from the U.S. addressed to “Any G.I.” For the local villagers and children, we had candy and ice cream.

The girls were there to cheer up the guys, hand out presents, and pose with them for pictures. The two non-flying Pilots would hand out treats to the locals and monitor the situation so the primary crew could concentrate on flying the mission. The extra Flight Mechanic was dressed up as Santa Claus and was in charge of serving drinks to the troops from a portable wood bar painted to look like a red brick chimney.

Every stop, while somewhat the same, was still unique. A radio call and a low pass over the camp announced our arrival. While taxiing in, “Santa” would scramble up the ladder to the top hatch behind the Aircraft Commander and wave from the top of the aircraft. After shutdown, we would deploy the chimney bar. Santa would start serving drinks, the two Pilots passed out candy and ice cream, while the ladies gave out the cards and presents and would just generally hang out with the guys.

On one stop at a camp in the Central Highlands, when we gave ice cream to the Montagnard children they made faces after a taste and would not eat it. The Special Forces team told us with the primitive conditions they all lived under, there was no refrigeration and the kids had simply never tasted anything that cold! Both the kids and adults loved the hard candy though.

Working our way around the Mekong Delta, after several stops we arrived



*Santa and his helpers, Christmas 1971. Photo by Tom Smith.*

at Chau Duc. We did not realize it at the time, but apparently our Santa for the day had been serving himself from behind the bar as well as the troops. Upon landing, he was sprawled out on the troop seats and semi-coherent. However, duty must be done! We opened the hatch and shoved him up the ladder. It must have been an interesting sight, since the troops on the ground said Santa was hanging over the side and flopping around as we taxied in! After that, we kept a closer eye on our bartender.

I always wondered what the mostly Buddhist Vietnamese thought of our strange Christmas rituals.

Next stop was Chi Lang, which was hard up against the Cambodian border where Special Forces and a New Zealand Army detachment were training Vietnamese troops. Santa had pretty much recovered by then and festivities were fully underway at the camp when we arrived.

Now, I have partied with troops from all over the world and I am here to tell you – it is tough to top the “Kiwis.” Somehow this huge New Zealand soldier had gotten onto the aircraft and was marching up and down the cargo

compartment, shirtless, and singing New Zealand songs. That would not have been so bad had he not also been carrying a nurse under each arm.

It appeared to me that the ladies, while in no immediate danger, would rather be somewhere else. How was I to extricate the nurses from this huge guy and not create an international incident?

Thinking quickly, I was a Lieutenant after all, I handed the soldier two bottles of Canadian Club – one in each hand. He released the nurses to reach for the bottles and the nurses quickly scrambled off the aircraft.

It was late Christmas Eve and after a long, long day we were finally on our way back to Cam Rahn Bay. Sweaty and tired, the entire crew was laughing and singing Christmas carols at the top of our lungs. The true Spirit of Christmas was there among us all.

Only those who have been stationed remotely can understand how it could be possible that my worst Christmas turned out to be one of my best.

*A final Santa Bou gift: “The main reason Santa is so jolly is because he knows where all the bad girls live.”*  
George Carlin

## Engine Maintenance Mentor

by Bob Cummings [459, 66]

I was a 19-year-old country boy when I went to Vietnam. I knew machinery and I knew engines before I signed-up, but I didn't know aircraft. The Air Force sent me to the "school house" to learn "round engines," but I was young, eager, and inexperienced when I arrived at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Army Aviation Company at Qui Nhon in December 1966.

We moved to Phu Cat in late December and I met USAF TSgt. Leonard M. Wildes, the head of engine maintenance, in January 1967. A tall, rough-looking, weathered Texan, he turned out to be the wisest person I knew during my time in Vietnam.

He was crazy about cars. Off duty, all he ever talked about was a sky blue Ford Bronco he was going to purchase when he got home. He brought the manufacturer's book with him to Vietnam and would sit and read that book and thumb through it until all the words were probably worn off.

TSgt. Wildes was the smartest man and best engine mechanic I have ever known. He knew things about the R-2000 engine that were not in the manuals. When we were working on the aircraft, he was all business.

He took me aside one day and said, "You are like a son to me. If you watch, listen, and learn everything I teach you, I will see you get your taxi and run up license for this old Caribou." He was true to his word and I earned my taxi and run-up license in May 67.

With patience and personal attention, he taught me well. After I got my taxi and run-up license, I was sent TDY from Phu Cat AB to Da Nang AB for the rest of my tour. Because of TSgt. Wildes' efforts to help me, I was able to go into the bush and repair aircraft that were broken down and return them to operational status. He taught me to be an excellent, confident aircraft engine mechanic.

## C-7A Airlift Accomplishments

### Airlift Accomplishments 1966

Sorties	129,324
Flight Hours	87,125
Cargo Tons	89,010
Passengers	822,432

*The 1966 data is for the Army Aviation Companies, including attached USAF personnel starting in July 1966.*

### Airlift Accomplishments 1967

Sorties	155,938
Flight Hours	100,230.8
Cargo Tons	95,320.1
Passengers	1,081,629

### Airlift Accomplishments 1968

Sorties	174,702
Flight Hours	119,184.1
Cargo Tons	104,225.8
Passengers	1,308,259

### Airlift Accomplishments 1969

Sorties	176,637
Flight Hours	120,508.5
Cargo Tons	96,410.3
Passengers	1,060,518

### Airlift Accomplishments 1970

Sorties	94,301
Flight Hours	106,910.0
Cargo Tons	86,316.0
Passengers	579,793

### Airlift Accomplishments 1971

Sorties	105,451
Flight Hours	86,233.0
Cargo Tons	43,706.0
Passengers	541,456

*Caribou Airlines, Vol. V, Appendix X*

There is no reliable data on C-7A airlift accomplishments in 1972.

Given the situation, the operational environment, and the day-to-day operational and maintenance challenges, the USAF C-7A airlift accomplishments are something that each and every Caribou aircrew, maintenance, support, and staff member should be proud.

## B-17 Navigator's Log



**This is the last in the long-running series of excerpts from:**

*B-17F Flight Log*

*(5 Sept. 1943 – 21 Feb. 1944)*

*8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing*

*Great Ashfield, England*

*by Joel Punches, Navigator*

**2-21-44. Mission No. 24.** We were bombing Hamburg, Germany, on my next to last mission, at 25,000 feet.

Over the target we were hit by flak from the ground, which knocked two engines out. Ten minutes later two German fighter planes spotted us and attacked us head on. They knocked one more engine out. We then were at 6,000 feet and going down 1,000 feet a minute with one engine on fire. The German fighter planes were circling and getting ready for "the kill."

So, we decided that if we kept flying we would never make it back to England and would have to ditch in the Channel, which in the winter was suicide. We all bailed out thru the bombay. I was fairly sure we were over Holland and not Germany.

I hit the ground and hid my parachute, opened my escape kit and got my compass and silk maps out, and started walking southwest. I walked to the nearest farmhouse and the lady there showed me where I was on the map. I then walked for four hours and met a Dutchman on a bicycle, who I stopped.

When he realized who I was, [he] put me in a ditch to hide and came back for me at 10 PM. He then took me to a house in a town where I stayed one week. While I was there they gave me civilian clothes and a false ID card. I was a druggist from Amsterdam. I was told to go to Spain where I would be free. I traveled by train, following a Dutchman. A stayed at nights with Safe

Dutch people. I had to walk across the Holland-Belgium border and stayed one week in a haystack. I got as far as Liege, Belgium when the Allied invasion started, so they told me to stay put and wait for the U.S. Army to arrive. I stayed in Liege for two months waiting for the U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Army to arrive. Then I was free.

I had many interesting experiences while I was traveling around. At one train station I ate dinner with two German soldiers and I never said a word.

Crossing river bridges was always an experience. They had German guardhouses on both ends and every 10 to 15 people [someone] was pulled in and interrogated. I finally figured it out, so I timed it so I was always the first or second to go by the guardhouse.

I stayed in many towns in Holland – Roermond, Venlo, Endhoven, Ermelo. In Roermond, I stayed one month in a house without looking out a window for the whole time.

From Liege, I rode an Army truck to Paris, where I was flown back to London. In London, I was promoted one rank, given \$1,500 in back pay, a new uniform, and put on a boat to New York.

*Joel Punches sent a printed copy of the "Flight Log" to Pilot, Robert "Tex" Taylor, with these handwritten notes: "Tex, Finally got around to sending the Log. It scares me to read it. I don't understand how we got out alive... The last three missions, I did not write for some reason. Lapinsky, our Copilot, was shot down February 22, 1944 over the North Sea. He is buried in Holland."*



## Ferry Preparation and Support

### The Fifteen, September 1971

Fifteen C-7A Caribous of the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing lifted off from the Cam Ranh Bay AB west runway Tuesday, [14 September 1971] on the first leg of their "Freedom Flight" to the World. Part of President Richard M. Nixon's phased troop withdrawal, the departure of the aircraft and their crews follows close behind the inactivation of the 537<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Squadron.

In order to prepare for the long flight to the United States, maintenance teams headed by Maj. Emmett E. Alan and MSgt. Eugene Murphy of the 483<sup>rd</sup> Organizational Maintenance Squadron installed [480 gallon] "ferry" fuel bladders [and an 18 gallon oil tank].

Fuel pumps and an auxiliary oil system were installed; armor plating [was] removed and the aircraft's heaters had to be put into operation after several years of non-use. In all, it was hectic work with much research and thought involved.

While the maintenance men prepared the aircraft, the flight crews prepared for what would be the longest trip many of them had ever taken in a Caribou. Emergency procedures and en route communications and navigation sessions were held in order to prepare for the long trip across the Pacific Ocean.

Finally, after two weeks of preparation, 15 aircrews plus two extra pilots under the command of Col. John I. Daniel, III made their final "walk arounds" and readied for the departure. Taking off 30 minutes apart in three groups of five aircraft, the aircraft took easterly headings and disappeared over the horizon. Well done to our first to leave. (from *Caribou Clarion*, Vol. I, No. 48, September 17, 1971, reprinted in *Caribou Airlines Vol. V*, page 19)

Fourteen [483<sup>rd</sup> Field Maintenance Squadron] FMS personnel, comprised of two seven-man teams, were assigned

to Project X16. The project involved ferrying C-7A Caribou aircraft from Vietnam to the United States.

Beginning in Vietnam on 15 September 1971, the aircraft and men "island hopped" from the Philippines to Guam, Wake, Midway, Hawaii, and terminated the project in the United States. Each FMS team included two engine personnel, one propeller technician, one hydraulic technician, one electrician, one aero repair technician, and one fuel system technician. (from *Caribou Airlines*, Vol. V, page 192)

### The Twelve, December 1971

Twelve C-7A's departed for the Continental United States (CONUS) on 10 December 1971, flown by crews from various squadrons. This ferry mission was Operation Lucky Dozen. The aircraft were being reassigned to the Air National Guard at Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Fuel Systems Shop installed fuel ferry systems on all aircraft. The Corrosion Control Section painted interior and exterior, refurbished radomes, and improved appearance of the aircraft in general. The Propulsion Branch did four engine changes and two propeller Internal Oil Control Unit time changes.

En route support teams were formed to provide support through Hickam AFB, HI. The organization furnished one Maintenance Officer, four Engine Specialists, two Electricians, two Pneumatic Specialists, two Fuel Systems Specialists, and two Propeller mechanics. En route support was provided at Clark AFB, Philippines; Andersen AFB, Guam; Wake Island; Midway Island; and Hickam AFB, HI.

At Hickam, all aircraft required the installation of an additional 480-gallon fuel ferry tank for the long flight from Hickam to California. One aircraft required a rudder change, rudder re-rigging, and a Functional Check Flight. Despite a heavy maintenance workload and unscheduled maintenance, all twelve aircraft departed Hickam on schedule. (from *Caribou Airlines Vol. V*, page 110)

## Longest Flight

TAC Attack, May 1972

Reprinted in

*Caribou Airlines, Vol. V,  
Appendix VII*

*The crew of C-7A Caribou S/N 62-4173 was Capt. Donald A. Henderson (Aircraft Commander), Capt. James L. Breitenstine (Copilot), and SMgt. Richard E. Jackson (Flight Mechanic). Jackson was a SSgt. in 1971.*

An hour before dusk, the Caribous lumbered into the air on the last leg of a ferry mission that began in SEA [Southeast Asia] and was to end in the land of the big BX. It was to be a seventeen and one-half hour flight that would drone away from a setting sun and would not see land again until the sun had completed its journey and was once again high on the horizon.

Each of the four aircraft in the section was crewed by a Pilot, Copilot, and Flight Mechanic. The aircraft had been equipped with special bladder fuel tanks [480-gallon] carried in the cargo compartment to increase the range of the normally short leg C-7A's. There was no autopilot to decrease the pilot workload; the beast had to be hand-flown the entire distance.

The flight climbed eastward and rendezvoused with a C-130 "duck butt" that was to provide the navigation expertise and lead the aircraft across the big waters.

The first 10 hours of the flight were uneventful except for numerous heading changes to avoid the cumulus build-ups, which littered the flight path. The ETP (Equal Time Point) had been left behind over an hour previously; now there could be no turning back.

At about ten hours and fifteen minutes into the flight, the low oil quantity light for the left engine illuminated in the number two airplane in the stream. There was nothing alarming or unusual about it; the engine had been steadily using about a gallon of oil per hour on the previous legs. The Pilot sent the

Flight Mechanic to the rear of the airplane to re-service the oil quantity from the onboard reservoir. He completed the servicing and then began to transfer fuel from the bladders. Moments later, he heard over the interphone, "something is wrong with number one engine." He scrambled back to the cockpit and couldn't believe what the engine instruments were telling him.

They had lost number one engine. The Pilot notified the mission commander who was in a trailing aircraft; then shut down the engine and feathered the prop. The Copilot advanced the power to METO (Maximum Except for Takeoff) on the remaining engine as the airspeed bled off and the aircraft began to descend from 10,000 feet. The Pilot had his hands full trying to control the airplane in night weather conditions. With METO power, the pilot was able to level the airplane at 3,700 feet. Then, as the airspeed slowly built back up, he was able to climb to 4,100 feet.

Some structural icing had been evident prior to the time the engine was shut down. As the aircraft descended to a lower altitude, the outside air temperature was warm enough to rid the airplane of ice. When the Pilot had the airplane under firm control, he told the Copilot and Flight Mechanic to put on anti-exposure suits, LPUs (Life Preserver Units), and parachute harnesses. After returning to the flight deck, the Copilot flew the airplane while the Pilot donned his survival gear. The airplane was equipped with parachutes (chest packs) and a seven-man life raft carried in the cargo compartment.

The Flight Mechanic then jettisoned everything possible to lighten the aircraft weight. The fuel bladders still contained some usable fuel, but they too would be jettisoned when their usefulness had expired.

For the next two hours, the Pilot was able to maintain airspeed by alternately selecting METO and climb power.

At the time of engine shutdown, the interphone went dead and the crew could not hear themselves transmitting

on any of the radios; however, they were able to hear incoming transmissions. They discussed the possibility of attempting a restart on the left engine and decided to wait until first light to give it a try.

The first couple of hours after engine shutdown, the crew concerned themselves with keeping the machine in the air. This was not the time to be overly concerned about the fuel ... that would come later. Initially, it looked as if the fuel remaining on board would be sufficient to get the airplane to the nearest airport. However, flight following agencies in the States had already begun to voice concern about the endurance.

At first light, the crew attempted a restart on the left engine. Any hopes they might had of once again having a two-engine airplane vanished as the pilot pressed the starter button. The engine was frozen. A windmill start was not attempted for fear of not being able to re-feather the prop.

The C-130 "duck butt" aircraft, which had been providing escort service was relieved by an Air Rescue C-130. Positions relayed by the rescue bird indicated that the fuel situation was going to be close. Then, the C-130 began having difficulty with its navigation equipment, making accurate positioning impossible. Meanwhile, the Caribou had squeezed all of the fuel out of the bladders and had jettisoned them. It looked at this time as if the crippled C-7A would arrive over the nearest field with about five to fifteen minutes of fuel remaining.

The crew had discussed the possibility of bailing out of the airplane versus ditching. They were well aware that bailout was the preferred method. The Pilot gave the crew members the option. The Copilot felt that he had but one choice; since he couldn't swim, he decided to stay with the airplane. The Flight Mechanic also decided to ride it

**Continued on Page 29**

## Longest Flight (from Page 28)

down if it became necessary.

Air Rescue had been alerted hours previously and they now had a Jolly Green Helicopter (HH-53C) en route. When the escort C-130 came within TACAN range of the coast [California], the DME locked on and indicated 197 miles. From this position, it became painfully obvious that the C-7A could not make landfall prior to fuel exhaustion.

The crew had been airborne for over seventeen and a half hours with seven of that time on a single engine.

A group of islands [the Farallon Islands] just off the coast appeared to offer the next best course of action. Although there was no landing field, the beach had already been cleared for the eventuality that the C-7A could make it that far. The Pilot had queried the Jolly, who by this time intercepted the aircraft, on the possibility of a carrier landing. However, none were within range.

The pilot decided to try for the islands, but if he couldn't make it, to begin the ditching run when the fuel on board was down to 50 pounds. It was imperative to ditch while engine power was still available.

As he turned the Caribou toward the islands, the Jolly began relaying ditching information. The water surface was glassy with swells of two to three feet. In turn, the Pilot of the Caribou relayed to the Jolly the ditching characteristics of the airplane, location of the emergency exits, and the position of each of the crew members. He had sent both the Flight Mechanic and the Copilot into the cargo compartment where they would remain until the airplane either ditched or landed. The Flight Mechanic opened the cargo door and jettisoned the right rear passenger door in preparation.

The pilot continued his slow descent, still heading for the group of islands. The first island was no more than a rock

jutting up through the surface of the water and offered no hope of a landing site. The larger island with the cleared beach was ahead . . . too far ahead. The fuel gauge read 50 pounds when the pilot turned the Caribou to the ditching heading. He lowered forty degrees of flaps, calling each ten-degree increment to the Jolly.

As the C-7A approached within 10 feet of the water, the Jolly pilot could see the prop wash making a trail on the water. The airplane touched down on the aft fuselage slightly nose high in what appeared to be a good touchdown, then suddenly the nose dug in and the airplane stopped abruptly. The flight that had lasted over nineteen and a half hours was over.

In the cargo compartment, the water began pouring in immediately. By the time the Copilot and the Flight Mechanic got unstrapped, the water was chest deep. They made their way to the rear of the airplane, which had ankle-deep water by the time they began unloading the raft. The Flight Mechanic put the raft into the water, inflated it, and the Copilot jumped into it. The Flight Mechanic then jumped into the water alongside of the raft and then boarded. Neither man was injured.

In the cockpit, the force of the impact had dislodged portions of the instrument panel and had pinned the Pilot in the cockpit. He briefly lost consciousness, then came to and could see the surface of the water over his head. He was able to move around slightly to get his head above water, but was not able to free himself of the debris. He managed to move enough to get his arm through the copilot's window. He began waving.

The Jolly had quickly lowered two pararescue men who swam to the airplane and began tugging at the debris to free the Pilot. The Pilot was struggling for air with each wave that passed over his head.

After the parajumpers were in the water, the Jolly maintained a hover position over the airplane. The pilot of

the helicopter was intentionally maintaining this position to force the tail of the airplane down so that the cockpit would stay as much above the water as possible. It was a superb decision. Both of the rescue men began frantically tugging at the Pilot and managed to free him of the debris. They laid him on top of the airplane and inflated his LPU. Moments after, the airplane sank beneath him. It had remained afloat for only 13 minutes, yet all the crew members survived. Only the Pilot had any injuries and those were very minor.

In retrospect, it is easy to glean from this accident why ditching is a last resort in an aircraft of this type. However, there can be no fault leveled at the Pilot. His primary concern was his crew and he brought them through in fine shape. Faced with the circumstances, the Pilot did an outstanding job.

Not enough credit can be given to the crew of the Jolly rescue helicopter.

Through their action, the Caribou crew is still around to tell one hell of a war story.

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## Share Your Story

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

The *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* is a forum to share your stories and enjoy the stories of others. Each of you has stories. I know you do. Please share your stories; others are interested and want to read them.

The stories do not have to be about Caribous or Vietnam. We want to hear stories about your career, the airplanes you flew or supported; the experiences you had that hold a place in your memory; the people you served with who made a lasting impression.

I am asking each of you to submit a story. If you need assistance or have questions, call me at 703-851-6892.

Please send your stories to:  
[ron.lester43@verizon.net](mailto:ron.lester43@verizon.net)

# Vietnam to Western Airlines



An Oral History of The Air War

Edited by  
Bruce Cowee

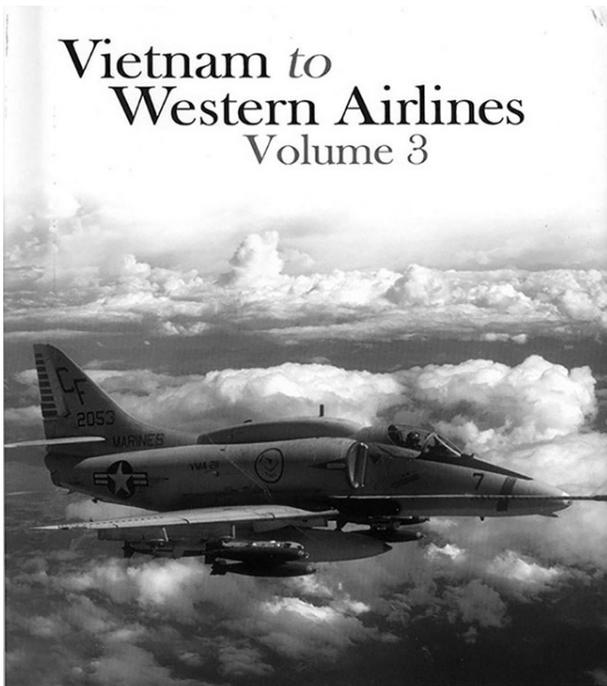
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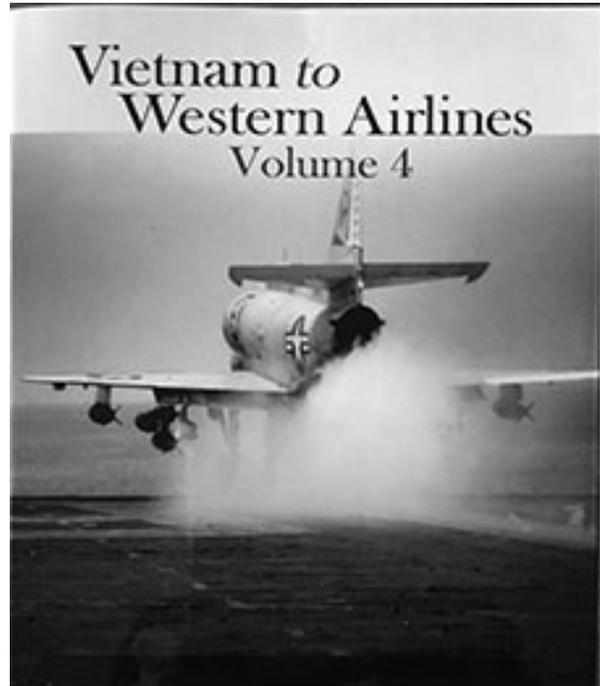
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