

C-7A Caribou Association

Volume 33, Issue 2

New Caribou Display Dedicated

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The new C-7A Caribou display at the Museum of Aviation, Robins AFB, GA, was dedicated on September 23, 2022, with approximately fifty C-7A Caribou Association members and guests present. The display includes the Museum of Aviation's C-7A, the R-2000 engine purchased by the C-7A Caribou Association and restored by the museum, a Hamilton Standard propeller obtained by the museum, the C-7A Caribou painting donated by the C-7A Caribou Association, and C-7A Vietnam artifacts provided by Association members.

75. September 18, 2022 marked the 75th birthday of the U.S. Air Force as an independent military service. The first 75 years were characterized by exponential changes in technology: jets, supersonic aircraft, stealth technology, precision guided munitions, ICBMs, satellite communications, and much more. The first 75 also featured constant conflict and all types of war: Cold War, numerous hot – and often interminable wars, and the threat of wars deterred, but not fought. Additional war-fighting domains have emerged – space and cyberspace, and the concepts of war are changing as technology advances apace. Threats to U.S. security and interests abound. USAF's next 75 years will be as challenging as the first 75.

50. 2022 also marks 50 years since the end of USAF Caribou operations in Vietnam. The 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing was inactivated in May 1972; the 310th Composite Tactical Airlift Squadron in November. The aircraft still “in-country” were transferred to the South Vietnamese. The short, but exceptional, history of the USAF C-7A Caribou in Vietnam was over. *Fini*.

*C-7A Caribou display dedication at the Museum of Aviation.
At podium: (left to right) Marty Hillman, John Tawes, and Dave Kowalski.*



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

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 ron.lester43@verizon.net Phone: 703-851-6892
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Squadron Representatives

457th Royal Moulton [457, 66], phone 321-567-5734
457th Mike Thibodo [457, 70], phone 651-276-3177
458th Lee Corfield [458, 69], phone 724-775-3027
458th Al Cunliffe [458, 68], phone 334-324-2371
459th Bob Cummings [459, 66], phone 865-859-0888
535th Cliff Smith [535, 69], phone 703-864-1136
535th Mike Messner [535, 70], phone 865-317-1367
536th Dana Kelly [536, 70], phone 407-656-4536
536th Chuck Harris [536, 68], phone 325-465-8096
537th George Harmon [537, 69], phone 909-957-0720
483rd Gary Miller [483, 68], phone 262-634-4117
4449th BJ Spitzer [535, 71], phone 239-437-2423
18th AP BJ Spitzer [535, 71], phone 239-437-2423
 Send change of address, phone number, or e-mail address to:

Pat Hanavan
 12402 Winding Branch
 San Antonio, TX 78230-2770
 pathanavan@aol.com
 210-479-0226 (home), 210-861-9353 (cell)

\$10.00 dues are payable each January.

Write your check to **C-7A Caribou Association**
 (not Tom Snodgrass) and send it to:

Tom Snodgrass
 2515 S. White Cliff Lane
 Wichita, KS 67210-1924
 magic0866@cox.net Phone: 316-684-1184

Chairman of the Board's Corner

Once again, we are past the autumnal equinox. The days are getting shorter and cooler, the foliage is starting to transform into its pre-winter colors, and we have missed another reunion. This year, the lack of a reunion was not due to a lack of trying. Our team tried to find a suitable hotel in the Atlanta area, but was met with unacceptable terms. The team also looked in the Warner Robins area, closer to the Museum of Aviation, but was met with a similar problem. In the end, we simply had to give up the reunion due to the inflexibility of the hotels that were contacted. I know this is a huge disappointment to everyone, but over the years we have evolved a complete set of guidelines to assure a successful reunion and this year we couldn't come close. It's hard to know whether the problem was the locations or that things have just changed everywhere, but we will try again next year in a different location.



I have recently noticed that I am getting really old and that means you must be too. I can remember the Korean War, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and it has been more than fifty years since we served in Vietnam. We all lived through the Cold War only to find that history repeats itself. The new cold war is one in which we are pitted against Russia and China. After watching events in Ukraine, it seems like the remains of the Soviet Union have not aged well and that China is our biggest threat. Sometimes I wonder whether the almost endless wars have taught us anything as a civilization. All I know for sure is that I am happy to be an American.

My son bought a new Corvette C-8. Wow! This is a car that can give Ferrari and Lamborghini heartburn. I can no longer drive due to my failing eyesight, but I did get to ride with him all the way up to Eastport, Maine for Independence Day. We had a great private fireworks show (fireworks are legal in Maine), but nothing can top that car. Sadly, it will probably be the last pure internal combustion Corvette, but they did a fantastic job of it. The world is changing in ways that are not always good, in my aged opinion.

As we progress into the 2022 holiday season, I wish everyone the very best and hope that you all will enjoy the time with your families and some respite from the daily annoyances of life.

Reunion 2023 To Be Determined

C-7A Display Dedication at the Museum of Aviation

On September 23, 2022, the new C-7A display in the Scott Hangar at the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB, GA, was dedicated with approximately fifty C-7A Caribou Association members, family members, and friends in attendance.

The display is the result of a cooperative effort by the C-7A Caribou Association and the Museum of Aviation that has spanned several years.

The C-7A was previously outside on static display. Since it has been moved inside, the Museum repainted and refurbished the exterior and completely renovated the aircraft's interior. Caribou S/N 63-9756 is in excellent condition.

The Caribou display includes a R-2000 engine with a Hamilton Standard propeller attached. The Association obtained the engine and the Museum renovated the engine and obtained the propeller. Completing the exhibit is a display case containing Caribou artifacts donated by Association members. The Association also donated the painting "C-7A Caribou at Special Forces Camp" that is behind the display case. The painting was commissioned to honor Dick Scobee [535, 68].



A podium had been placed in front of the Caribou. The attendees were seated at round tables facing the C-7A and the podium with easy access to the speakers and the Caribou.

Museum Director Ken Emery (Colonel, USAF, Retired) opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone and explaining the efforts to restore the aircraft, with emphasis on the cooperation and support of the C-7A Caribou Association and the extensive work of Pat Hanavan [535, 68].

John Tawes [537,69], President of the C-7A Caribou Association, was the dedication Master of Ceremonies.



Al Cunliffe [458, 68] outlined a C-7A crew chief's responsibilities and then reviewed a "typical day" in the life of a crew chief along with a brief description of some of the common problems encountered while working on the airplane.

Nick Tcherniavsky [483, 69] then gave an engine specialist's perspective of Caribou maintenance.

John Tawes discussed the donated artifacts in the display case, including Marty Hillman's personal flight log and the bicycle pump provided by Dave Kowalski.

Dave Kowalski [908, 75] told about some of his many Caribou adventures. He explained the history of the bicycle pump that was used as a back-up pump for the ferry fuel system and how it was actually needed to save an aircraft from ditching.

Marty Hillman [459, 67] explained why the Caribou's unique capabilities and mission in Vietnam made flying it a valuable experience. One of the significant entries in his donated logbook chronicles the date he administered an



Aircraft Commander flight check to then First Lieutenant John "JJ" Jumper, future Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Marty closed with comments about Lt. Col. James Secrest, "the Bear," who had been the commander of the 459th Tactical Airlift Squadron.

John Tawes followed with an explanation of the meaning and significance of the scene depicted in the C-7A painting.

Alan Gravel [536, 70] briefly discussed his tours in Southeast Asia in the C-7A and the KC-135. He showed the aeronautical chart he maintained "in-country" on which he had marked in red every airfield he flew into in the Caribou and the routes flown to reach those airfields. The chart graphically shows how completely Caribou operations covered South Vietnamese territory.

Tom Combs [14th Aerial Port Squadron, 67] talked about his experiences flying on the Caribou and his appreciation of the aircraft and crew members. Tom then donated a U.S. Army CV-2 Operators Manual to the Museum of Aviation. (Tom recently became a member of the Association.)

Ken Emery encouraged everyone to tour the Museum and to take advantage of the flight line tour later in the afternoon. He closed the proceedings

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C-7A Dedication (from Page 3)

by inviting everyone to partake of the catered food that featured barbecued brisket, BBQ beans, macaroni and cheese, and green beans.

The day's activities concluded with a windshield tour of the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex Flight Line. The Air Logistics Complex provides depot maintenance and engineering support for F-15, C-5, C-130, C-17, and Special Operations Forces aircraft. The tour provided a quick look at the Complex's hangars and support facilities and the tour guides explained what was accomplished in each area.

After the dedication, a reporter from local NBC TV affiliate, Channel 41, conducted an interview with Nick Tcherniavsky that aired locally that evening.

The C-7A display dedication was a well attended, well done, and much appreciated.

Dedication display photos by Al Cunniffe. Front page photo by Ron Lester.

Commentary

by Ron Lester [459, 67]

I enjoyed the dedication of the new Caribou display at the Museum of Aviation very much. We had the museum hangar to ourselves – just us paying homage to the Bou. The proceedings were well planned and promptly executed. The Museum of Aviation hosts were gracious. The food, I thought, was excellent.

It was great to greet and embrace friends and comrades not seen since the last C-7A Caribou Reunion. I also welcomed the opportunity to meet several members who have contributed stories to the *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter* who I have communicated with, but had never met.

The care and effort the Museum of Aviation had devoted to the C-7A restoration was impressive. Caribou

S/N 63-9756 was spotless and pristine inside and out. It was as it should be. For all the Caribou endured in Vietnam, for the relentless pounding it took day in and day out, for the performance it gave in the most demanding operational environment, it deserves to look like a queen and be seen that way by future generations.

But, it felt strange. There were no mud splatters streaking the fuselage from reversing on wet, muddy runways. There was no oil on the engines – or anywhere else. There were no large chips in the propellers from the laterite runways that were often as much rock as clay. The cargo compartment was neat and clean with everything in its place. The pungent cocktail of smells was missing – the smells of sweaty, grimy U.S. Army infantrymen and Marine grunts; of Vietnamese and Montagnard soldiers and families; of rancid *nouc mam* and “fresh” vegetables; of cattle, pigs, chickens, and ducks; of... well, you know.

This is not a complaint. It is simply a commentary. The Caribou earned its place in history just as it earned its place in our memories and our hearts. It deserves to be seen and remembered at its best – as we all do.

However, no one should confuse this C-7A museum display – or the museum display of any aircraft flown in combat – with the way things were.

AFAT-2 Experiences

by Duane L. Brown [AFAT-2, 72]
from *Caribou Airlines, Vol. V*

When I got orders for Vietnam, I was a Reciprocating Engine Aircraft Maintenance Technician, AFSC 43151A, at Travis AFB, CA, working enroute maintenance. My orders were for O-2's at Phan Rang with school first at Hurlburt Field, FL. After training, I was on leave before a port call in January 1972, when my orders were cancelled. My commander at Travis called and told me to get ahead and take the holidays

off and report back after New Year's Day. While on leave, my orders were reinstated with the same port call date and still going to Phan Rang.

When I arrived at Phan Rang, they wanted to know what I was doing there since the airplanes were going away and my orders were supposed to have been cancelled. Of course, I volunteered to go back to the States, but they said since I was “in-country” they would find some place for me. This turned out to be Cam Ranh Bay on the C-7A, which I had never seen before.

The first night at work, my new supervisor dropped me off at one of the airplanes to refuel it. No problem! I knew it was over-the-wing refueling. After a half-hour with no fuel truck, the supervisor was near and I ask where the fuel truck was. He said it was down the flight line working its way through the planes. I then asked if it was refueling each airplane and going back to fill up the truck before going to the next airplane. He looked at me and said, “Have you never refueled a C-7 before?” I told him this was the first time I had seen one. I refueled many cargo planes before, but usually had more than one truck come to my airplane to fill it up. I had only worked on the C-121, C-124, C-133, C-141, and C-5 before, which could take as much as three to four trucks to fill one airplane.

So, after that night, I learned all I could about the C-7A. About two and a half months later, I went to Det. 3 of AFAT-2 (Air Force Advisory Team) at Phu Cat as one of the advisory team members for the Vietnamese maintainers.

When we got to Phu Cat at the end of March 1972, we had to refurbish our living quarters. At the end of 1971 we had turned the base over to the Vietnamese and they stripped the quarters of everything, including toilets. They took the toilets downtown to their homes even though many had no running water (just a status symbol).

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AFAT-2 (from Page 4)

One morning, a few weeks after we got to Phu Cat, no Vietnamese housekeepers showed up for work. That day there was a rocket attack near the quarters. We learned really fast to see who showed up for work.

Right after that, the base moved a detachment of Korean troops into quarters near us. That helped deter rocket attacks around our quarters. When the first Korean units came to Vietnam in 1965, they quickly made their presence known by their swift and brutal retaliation to any attack on their forces or installations. To attack a Korean unit was to invite an instant and deadly response.

Every morning, the U.S. maintenance personnel would gather at the last revetment on the flight line and wait for the truck to come by and take us back to our quarters where we would stay until just before the aircraft were due to return.

This morning, the truck came by about ten minutes early. One of the planes had not launched, so that crew chief and specialist had to wait until it departed. The rest of us got on the truck and headed back off the flight line to our quarters. We were not more than three minutes away when a 122 mm rocket hit the exact spot we had just left. Of the two people who stayed behind, one was killed and the other injured. That tells you how much intelligence they had on what we did on the base and where we were.

Another thing I remember is that everyone was issued a gun card that was tied to a weapon by number. If you ever needed it, the armory would issue that weapon when you turned in your gun card.

One mid-summer evening, we were all told to go to the armory and get our weapons because the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) was 500 yards off the end of the runway and coming onto the base. When we got to the armory there was a line starting at the front door and exiting out the back door. Inside the ar-

mory, one person handed you a weapon and a second handed you a bandoleer of ammo. After receiving weapons, we were taken up on the hill by the club and spaced out to defend a certain line of fire, if needed. Thank goodness we did not have to fire since an air strike was called in. Many explosions happened off the base near the end on the runway.

A few weeks after this happened, we were asked to go back to the armory and exchange our weapons for the one assigned on our card since they had no idea who had what weapon.

USAF 75th Birthday

by Joe Wallace
veteran.com

Joe Wallace is a 13-year USAF veteran and a former reporter for Air Force Television News.

The official Air Force Birthday is recognized as September 18, 1947, which is the date of the passage of the National Security Act of 1947. That legislation created what would later come to be known as the United States Department of Defense. It also established the United States Air Force as a separate branch of military service.

The history of this branch of service is an important part of the history of air power in the United States. Naturally, the Air Force birthday owes a great deal to Orville and Wilbur Wright who pioneered mechanized flight with their successful mission in 1903. But the Air Force also owes a great deal to Army pioneers who, roughly four years after the Wright Brothers' triumph at Kitty Hawk, began experimenting with using air superiority to gain tactical advantages in combat.

Humble Beginnings

Balloons had long been used for observation of various kinds. When the U.S. Civil War began, ballooning was adopted as a reconnaissance tool. One example took place in 1862 when the Union Balloon Corps kept watch over the Battle of Gaines' Mill and

telegraphed information to the ground as the battle unfolded.

The prospect of air power was so compelling even then that President Abraham Lincoln called a meeting with Thaddeus S.C. Lowe, an early pioneer of aeronautics, to discuss how the Union Army could further its cause from the air. When Lowe was named chief of the Union Army Balloon Corps, the long march to a separate Air Force began.

Wright Brothers and Kitty Hawk

In 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first mechanical, heavier-than-air flight using a gas-powered, propeller aircraft. Their first successful plane flight in history flew for 12 seconds and 120 feet before returning to land. Orville piloted the aircraft on its inaugural flight. The plane would fly 852 feet in 59 seconds later the same day. The Wright Brothers had discovered how to defy gravity. They had previously designed gliders, but this mechanized flight transformed aviation history.

Enter the U.S. Army Signal Corps

The Army had several units dedicated to military flying from 1907 to 1914. The timeline of Army aviation includes the following pre-Air Force organizations:

- Aeronautical Division, Signal Corps (August 1907 – July 1914)
- Aviation Section, Signal Corps (July 1914 – May 1918)
- Division of Military Aeronautics (May 1918 – May 1918)
- Air Service, U.S. Army (May 1918 – July 1926)
- U.S. Army Air Corps (July 1926 – June 1941)
- U.S. Army Air Forces (June 1941 – September 1947)

World War I and The Court-Martial of General Billy Mitchell

The World War I era saw the creation of the U.S. Army Air Service, which would prove to be a crucial turn for the future United States Air Force. The

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USAF at 75 (from Page 5)

Deputy Commander of the Air Service was Brigadier General Billy Mitchell who went on record as an extremely vocal supporter of military airpower. Mitchell became embroiled in a power struggle to assign coastal defense over to airpower rather than leave it to Navy protection.

In 1925, Mitchell went too far by publicly accusing Navy officials of criminal negligence and incompetent behavior. This resulted in the six-week court-martial proceedings against Billy Mitchell being used as a pulpit to extol the virtues of military airpower.

Mitchell argued that a separate and equal branch of military service responsible for air operations was a crucial for complete national defense.

Billy Mitchell was convicted as a result of his court-martial and resigned from military service. He remained a champion of air power until his death in 1936. Mitchell would never see the creation of a separate and equal Air Force, but his actions were quite important in the history of the American military.

Air Superiority in World War II

The U.S. Army Air Forces would prove Billy Mitchell was correct about a number of things. American air power was put to the test in World War II in the following ways: as a method of intelligence gathering, as a way to deliver troops to the battlefield, and ultimately as a way to deliver atomic weaponry that would bring the war to its final end with the surrender of Japan following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

By the conclusion of World War II the Army Air Forces were said to operate almost independently from the rest of the U.S. Army. This essentially created a separate branch of service that would be more than a symbolic move to more formally address the issue of American military air power. It recognized that combat in the air, from the air, and from surface to air required a whole separate



type of planning and organization.

From 1941 to 1947, the Army was setting the stage for the birthday of the Air Force. The Navy would object to the creation of an Air Force, but would not succeed in stopping it.

In 1945, General Dwight Eisenhower was promoted to Chief of Staff and General Carl Spaatz became the new commander of the Army Air Forces. Soon after, plans were made to reorganize the Army so that a separate Air Force might be created without the need for legislation.

In 1946, during internal discussions on the establishment of a separate Air Force, it was agreed that the Air Force could be made up of a variety of commands:

- Strategic Air Command
- Air Defense Command
- Tactical Air Command
- Air Transport Command
- Air Technical Service Command
- Air Training Command
- Air University
- Air Force Personnel Center

USAF Established

On September 18, 1947, Stuart Symington became the first Secretary of the Air Force. Army Air Bases were re-designated as Air Force Bases.

New uniforms and insignia were rolled out and a new command structure was put in place to recognize the specialized training and experience of Air Force pilots and commanders.

Air Force Commander Carl Spaatz created a new policy that kept tactical commanders from being interfered with by military leadership with no flight experience. The tactical commander would not be permitted to be subordinate to a station commander. Later, a “provisional wing plan” would place a wing commander above the base commander.

USAF Personnel Today

Today, the Air Force has approximately 330,000 active duty airmen with about 180,000 total personnel in the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve Command.

X-37B Record

by Amanda Miller
Air Force Magazine
July 10, 2022

A Space Force X-37B reusable space plane surpassed 780 days in space on July 7, 2022, eclipsing its prior endurance record.

The Space Force’s Space Delta 9 operates the uncrewed, Boeing-built X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle (OTV), which belongs to the 3rd Space Experimentation Squadron. The Space Force has never disclosed how many X-37B Orbital Test Vehicles it owns and does

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X-37B Record (from Page 6)

not publicize the classified program's mission itineraries. However, Boeing Space announced the new record on social media.

The Space Force says the uncrewed X-37B is a test bed for technologies associated with reusable space vehicles and largely classified space experiments. The spacecraft is 29 feet long, one quarter the length of the Space Shuttle. Taking off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, FL, the first three OTV missions landed at Vandenberg Space Force Base, CA. The past two returned at Kennedy Space Center, FL, close to the Cape Canaveral launch site.

X-37B missions have grown progressively longer over time. OTV-1 lasted 224 days in 2010. OTV-5 set the prior record of 780 days, remaining in space from September 2017 to October 2019.



OTV-6 launched from Cape Canaveral on May 17, 2020. Two publicly revealed payloads included the Air Force Academy's FalconSAT-8, which the X-37B deployed into orbit with five experiments and technology demonstrations aboard; and the Naval Research Laboratory's experimental Photovoltaic Radio-frequency Antenna Module, intended to convert solar energy into RF microwave energy.

The U.S. government will start missions on a new uncrewed space plane, Sierra Space's Dream Chaser, in 2023. NASA has contracted flights on Dream Chaser to resupply the International Space Station.

Vagabond Images Is a Must Visit Site

Wow! If you have an interest in historic, classic aircraft, ships, fighting vehicles, automobiles, or trains then Vagabond Images is a website you need to visit. It is probably a website you will return to again and again.

On the website you will find spectacular color photos of old "war birds" on display and in flight that were taken at different Air and Space museums and Air Shows. In the other galleries are amazing photos of ships, trains, automobiles, and armored fighting vehicles.

Vagabond Images' site is organized with separate photo galleries for:

Air & Space Museums

Air Shows

AFV (Armored Fighting Vehicles)

Naval Museums

Automobile Museums

Trains

The Vagabond Images site link is:

www.vgbimages.com

Thanks to James "Staton" Tompkins [535, 68] for sharing the Vagabond Images website information.

Instant Crew Chief

by Charles Davis [536, 69]

I arrived in Vietnam in early 1969, January 4th to be exact, and was assigned to the 536th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Vung Tau. I started working the day shift and did the post-flight inspections when the aircraft completed their daily missions.

Cracks in the exhaust stacks were a constant problem. One day in March I found five cracks in the stacks of a plane and I put it on a "Red X," meaning that the aircraft could not fly until the problem was corrected.

The Crew Chief confronted me. He was some kind of upset. He told me the aircraft was already scheduled to go to the docks the following week –

where the cracks would be fixed – and I should not have put the plane's status on a Red X.

The next day, the Maintenance Supervisor told me, "we can't have you grounding all of those aircraft on post-flight." I instantly became the Crew Chief on Caribou S/N 62-4169. It was the best thing that happened to me in Vietnam.

Caribou S/N 62-4169 had just come back from IRAN (Inspection and Repair as Necessary) and it was in pristine condition – new engines, new seats, new paint job, new everything! I was a Crew Chief for the rest of my tour and really loved my job. I was named Airman of the Month in either March or April 1969.

As an added benefit, we had several pilots who would reward the Crew Chief with a bottle of Chivas Regal for an "OK" flight, which were flights with no write-ups or maintenance discrepancies at the end of a mission. I had a lot of "OK" flights and was one happy Airman.

Flying Dangers and Challenges

by Peter Bird [535, 71]

from *Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 18*

Contrary to what I would have believed before arrival, the greatest danger presented to the military aviator in South Vietnam was not the enemy. He was always there and would not hesitate to shoot at you if you provided the opportunity, but he was not the biggest problem. The real issue was the tremendous amount of air traffic, the confused air traffic control and communications system, and artillery and naval gunfire. The situation changed minute by minute and it required a high degree of awareness to avoid disaster.

The Republic of Vietnam, claiming

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Dangers (from Page 7)

itself to be a sovereign state, chose to operate the civil air traffic control system. When we flew under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), we filed a flight plan with the Vietnamese air traffic controllers. Unfortunately, they were not yet well enough trained to do the job. At the larger airfields, like Tan Son Nhut in Saigon, there was rarely a problem, while at places like Nha Trang, just north of Cam Ranh, you were literally taking your life in your hands to depend fully on the controllers.

Consequently, whenever we flew IFR, we would use one radio to maintain contact with the air traffic controllers and a second to talk to the nearest Ground-Controlled Intercept (GCI) site. GCI was normally used to provide extremely accurate navigation for aerial strikes (the B-52's used it to put their bombs exactly where they were needed), but they had the best radars "in-country" and took pity on fellow Americans at the mercy of the civilian air traffic control system. They would follow our flights and advise us of any nearby traffic so we could take our own evasive action.

Most of the time we were VFR (Visual Flight Rules) or "Special VFR" (this tended to be a euphemism for IFR without a flight plan and clearance) and we did not interact at all with the Vietnamese air traffic controllers. We depended on our eyes to avoid other aircraft.

Remember that we had the civilian Vietnamese traffic (mostly Air Vietnam), civilian international air carriers (all operating IFR), the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marines, the U.S. Navy, the Australian Air Force, as well as the VNAF (Vietnamese Air Force) all operating more or less independently at the tactical level. Compartmentalization of information was routine and necessary in the military, so we had no idea what missions the Army or the Navy might be running

and, likewise, they had no idea what we were doing. It paid to be attentive.

Now add the grunts on the ground to the equation. They played with some really nasty toys like howitzers. A howitzer is nothing more than a large rifle, but it can chuck a high explosive projectile over 10,000 feet high. Since 10,000 feet was our maximum operational altitude, our only choice was to avoid the launch site and impact site of those projectiles and all points on the line between. To facilitate this, the Army set up a network of "Arty" (short for artillery) command posts and sectioned off all of South Vietnam into regions. Before entering a region we called up the Army Arty site and asked for current firing information. To add to the confusion, the Army used arcane FM radios, which operated in the 30 - 50 MHz range for these communications. That type of radio is unique to the Army, so our aircraft were retrofitted with them. They were among the least reliable communications devices we had. The Army would also change their frequencies often so as to keep the enemy guessing, but it also quite often kept us guessing.

One learned early in the game what a "marking round" looked like. A marking round was a projectile that produced a thick column of white smoke on impact. This was to allow the artillery spotters (sometimes in light aircraft) to determine the exact impact point and relay instructions to the gun crew if adjustments were necessary. More than once we saw marking round impacts in areas we thought were clear.

One of the most painful photographs I have ever seen was posted in all the Caribou operations areas – it was a picture of a C-7A Caribou immediately after it had been hit dead center by a 105 mm HE [High Explosive] round. The aircraft was still in the air – in two separate pieces. The picture was a reminder to check for artillery before entering a new sector. A further complication of the artillery problem was that the ARVN (Army of the Republic of

Vietnam) rarely participated in warning people of their intentions. They just rolled out the guns and started shooting.

The U.S. Navy also got into this game, but they had even nastier toys. The Navy often set up their ships off the coast and fired inland. A naval rifle, as it is properly called, can achieve a projectile altitude of over 20,000 feet and their projectiles could be as big as a small car. Fortunately, the Navy was very efficient at informing us of its intended firing areas in our pre-mission briefings every morning, so we could give these areas a wide berth.

I guess the postscript is that you also had to fly the airplane from time to time. Without a doubt, the best part of flying the Bou was the landing. The shorter the field and the rougher was all the better, for that was what this aircraft was designed for and thrived on. In a short field approach, the Caribou had a decidedly nose-low attitude. Those huge full-span flaps saw to that. Airspeed over the runway threshold could be as low as 42-43 knots and a huge pitch change was necessary to accomplish the flare preparatory to the touchdown.

When there is less than 1,000 feet of dirt in front of you, you don't play around trying to get a "grease job" landing. You plant the mains, reverse the props, lower the nose, and get the beast stopped with brakes, reverse thrust, and always a great cloud of red dust. Properly done, this could be accomplished in under 200 feet if you had the luck to have any decent headwind, and never more than 500 feet in the worst of conditions.

I think everyone took great pride in his ability to put 14 tons of aircraft exactly on the money and get it stopped in the shortest possible distance. I know I did!

The second best part of flying the Bou was cruise. Here, at 105 knots and with no pressurization or air conditioning, we flew with the cockpit side windows open and the rear cargo door open.

Continued on Page 9

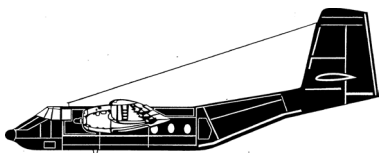
Flying Dangers (from Page 8)

That provided a great breeze and also allowed you to hang your elbow (or your whole arm) out the window. The view from the “greenhouse” cockpit was superb and we were low enough to do a lot of sightseeing in our scheduled rounds. From that vantage point, Vietnam was a very beautiful country.

On the ground, the inside of the aircraft was like a furnace, but as the aircraft climbed, the temperature dropped at 2 degrees Centigrade for every thousand feet. We welcomed the cool air at cruise and the opportunity to get some relief from the heat and humidity and often cruised at 9,000 or 10,000 feet (depending on our heading) just to get the maximum benefit from that standard atmospheric temperature lapse rate.

The takeoffs were always the time for extreme care. The Caribou, especially at high gross weights and the high density altitudes typical of a hot, humid climate, had very marginal single engine performance. In a full STOL takeoff configuration at max weight, in fact, the best single engine rate of climb we could expect was 50 feet per minute! In these situations, from the time you passed your refusal speed until you accelerated and got the flaps retracted, you were entirely at the mercy of Pratt & Whitney. The most likely time for an engine failure was at the initial power reduction from MAX Power to METO [Maximum Except for Takeoff] Power. Never has an engine been treated so gently as during those initial power reductions!

Fortunately, both of my Caribou engine failures occurred at cruise altitude and presented no great problem.



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JO's and the Bear

by Marty Hillman [459, 67] and
Ron Lester [459, 67]

Once upon a time in a place far, far away there were creatures called junior officers (Lieutenants and Captains), JO's for short. JO's were ruled by senior officers (Majors and above), called many things by JO's but rarely, if ever, referred to as SO's.

One sultry evening at Phu Cat AB, Republic of Vietnam, a bunch of JO's were re-capping the day's happenings and discussing better ways of fighting what had become “America's War.”

Beer was present.

Late into the evening the discussions continued long and loud. Suddenly, there was insistent, thunderous banging on the barrack's room door. Our first thought was that we were being too boisterous and a Senior Officer in a nearby room was concerned about our safety and wellbeing. There was also the possibility that another JO had arrived late for the debriefing. The Lieutenant closest to the door slowly opened it.

It was not a JO. What appeared in the door way had to be a Senior Officer – although not what you would typically expect to see. The figure was tall and wide with a weathered, unshaven face, and thin hair. He was half dressed and had a towel thrown across his shoulder. The room became suddenly quiet.



He announced himself. “My name is Colonel Secrest. I am new here. I want to inform you that there are two types of officers in this man's Air Force. There are JO's and there are A**holes. If you guys ever have another party without inviting me, then you will be known simply as A**holes!”

“Sir, would you like a beer?”

Almost immediately, Lt. Col. James K. Secrest became respectfully known as “the Bear” because he didn't walk – he lumbered along with a rolling gait. In addition, his general appearance and demeanor brought to mind a large carnivore rearing up on its hind legs and looking for a fight – or a good time.

In late 1967 and early 1968, Lt. Col. Secrest served as the Mission Site Commander at Da Nang. He became Commander of the 459th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) on 1 May 1968 and was promoted to Colonel while serving in Vietnam. The Bear was one of those leaders who wouldn't ask anyone to do what he wouldn't do himself. He did everything his pilots did, including running off the side of a paved runway – but that's another story.

Lt. Col. Secrest was liked and respected by the JO's. He trusted his junior officers and challenged us by giving us opportunities that other commanders might have considered too risky or unnecessary. Because of the Bear, many young Captains completed their tours as Instructor Pilots or Flight Examiners and many young Lieutenants completed theirs as Aircraft Commanders or Instructor Pilots.

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Jo's and the Bear (from Page 9)

One of those Lieutenant instructors was future Air Force Chief of Staff, General John P. Jumper, (then known to his fellow JO's as "JJ") who remembers the Bear as "the squadron commander we all wanted to be someday. He suffered no fools, took care of his lieutenants and enlisted, and allowed us to be as good as we could be. The Bear also had a great sense of mission, sparing no effort to make sure we all understood the importance of our support to 5th Special Forces and the U.S. Marines that made up the bulk of our responsibilities." (from the Forward of *Caribou Airlines, Vol. 1*)

Memories of those times are fading, as are many of the folks who served in the 459th TAS. Col. Secrest has passed, but his memory as a "good guy" will remain alive until the last of the 459th JO's from 1967 and 1968 are gone.

Epilogue. Beginning in the second half of 1967 the Caribou squadrons began receiving young Second Lieutenant pilots who had just graduated from pilot training and were reporting for their first operational assignments.

The distribution of the 459th TAS pilot manning in 1967-68 was shaped like a barbell. There was a large number of Lieutenants at one end, a very small number of Captains and relatively young Majors in the middle, and a large number of senior (old) Majors and Lt. Colonels at the other end. It made for an interesting organizational and operational mix, especially for the young guys.

All things considered, the JO's who arrived "in-country" as Second Lieutenants and served with the Bear turned out okay. Some of the notable 459th TAS JO's from that time include: General John P. Jumper, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff; Maj. Gen. Donald Loranger, Jr., 8th Air Force Vice-Commander, Air Combat Command; Link Spann, Director of Technology Security and Cooperative Programs, Navy Interna-

tional Program Office; Col. Lee Shelton II, SR-71 pilot; and Col. Ron Lester, Editor, *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter*.

Arrival of the Bear

A bunch of Junior Pilots were whoping it up in a Caribou room.

While the kid with the music box belted out a rock and roll tune.

When out of the silence of a dark humid night,

A banging on the door caused some young ones a fright.

The door was opened to a bear of a man in a woeful state of undress.

Who he was and from where he came, we could only guess.

"My name is Secrest, Colonel James K.," he growled.

He chomped his cigar and scanned us all with a scowl.

"I am just arrived and will be your commander soon."

The silence suddenly got louder in the room.

Startled looks crossed our faces, as he put us in our places

"There are two types of officers, JO's and A**O's," was his basis.

"If you have another gathering and I am not invited,

Consider yourselves warned. I will not be delighted."

Welcome, Sir! Would the Colonel like a beer?

Join with us to fly and fight and lead us far and near.

It is a time long gone in a place far away, but one thing I know is true

The Bear is still fondly remembered by JO's who flew the Bou

(Apologies to poet Robert W. Service and *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*)



Aussie Bush Pilot

Author anonymous

Submitted by Ron Ham [536, 67]

This flight may or may not have actually happened – it doesn't really matter. Buckle your seat belt and enjoy the ride.

I am writing to you because I need your help to get me bloody pilot's license back. You keep telling me you got all the right contacts. Well now's your chance to make something happen for me because, mate, I'm bloody desperate.

But first, I'd better tell you what happened during my last flight review with the CAA [Civil Aviation Authority] Examiner.

On the phone, Ron (that's the CAA idiot), seemed a reasonable sort of a bloke. He politely reminded me of the need to do a flight review every two years. He even offered to drive out, have a look over my property and let me operate from my own strip. Naturally, I agreed to that.

Anyway, Ron turned up last Wednesday. First up, he said he was a bit surprised to see the plane on a small strip outside my homestead, because the ALA (Authorized Landing Area) is about a mile away. I explained that because this strip was so close to the homestead, it was more convenient than the ALA and despite the power lines crossing about midway down the strip, it's really not a problem to land and takeoff, because at the halfway point down the strip you're usually still on the ground.

For some reason, Ron seemed nervous. So, although I had done the pre-flight inspection only four days earlier, I decided to do it all over again. Because the jerk was watching me carefully, I walked around the plane three times instead of my usual two. My effort was rewarded because the color finally returned to Ron's cheeks.

Continued on Page 11

Aussie Pilot (from Page 10)

In fact, they went a bright red. In view of Ron's obviously better mood, I told him I was going to combine the test flight with some farm work, as I had to deliver three poddy calves [newborn or unweaned calves] from the home pad-dock to the main herd.

After a bit of a chase I finally caught the calves and threw them into the back of the old Cessna 172. We climbed aboard, but Ron started getting onto me about weight and balance calculations and all that crap. Of course I knew that sort of thing was a waste of time because calves like to move around a bit, particularly when they see themselves 500 feet off the ground! So, it's bloody pointless trying to secure them, as you know.

However, I did tell Ron that he shouldn't worry as I always keep the trim wheel set on neutral to ensure we remain pretty stable at all stages throughout the flight. Anyway, I started the engine and cleverly minimized the warm-up time by tramping hard on the brakes and gunning her to 2,500 RPM. I then discovered that Ron has very acute hearing, even though he was wearing a bloody headset. Through all that noise he detected a metallic rattle and demanded I account for it. Actually it began about a month ago and was caused by a screwdriver that fell down a hole in the floor and lodged in the fuel selector mechanism. The selector can't be moved now, but it doesn't matter because it's jammed on "All tanks" so I suppose that's okay.

However, as Ron was obviously a nit-picker, I blamed the noise on vibration from a stainless steel thermos flask which I keep in a beaut little possie [position] between the windshield and the magnetic compass. My explanation seemed to relax Ron, because he slumped back in the seat and kept looking up at the cockpit roof. I released the brakes to taxi out, but unfortunately the plane gave a leap and spun to the right.

"Hell," I thought "not the starboard wheel chock again!" The bump jolted Ron back to full alertness. He looked around just in time to see a rock thrown by the prop-wash disappear completely through the windscreen of his brand new Commodore. "Now I'm really in trouble," I thought.

While Ron was busy ranting about his car, I ignored his requirement that we taxi to the ALA and instead took-off under the power lines. Ron didn't say a word, at least not until the engine started coughing right at the lift-off point and then he bloody screamed his head off. "Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!"

"Now take it easy Ron," I told him firmly. "That often happens on takeoff and there is a good reason for it." I explained patiently that I usually run the plane on standard MOGAS, but one day I accidentally put in a gallon or two of kerosene. To compensate for the low octane of the kerosene, I siphoned in a few gallons of super MOGAS and shook the wings up and down a few times to mix it up. Since then, the engine has been coughing a bit but in general it works just fine, if you know how to coax it properly.

At this stage Ron seemed to lose all interest in my test flight. He pulled out some rosary beads, closed his eyes and became lost in prayer. (I didn't think anyone was a Catholic these days.) I selected some nice music on the HF radio to help him relax. Meanwhile, I climbed to my normal cruising altitude of 10,500 feet. I don't normally put in a flight plan or get the weather because, as you know getting fax access out here is a friggin' joke and the weather is always "8/8 blue" anyway. But since I had that near miss with a Saab 340, I might have to change me thinking on that.

Anyhow, on leveling out, I noticed some wild camels heading into my improved pasture. I hate bloody camels and always carry a loaded 303 [WW II .303 Lee-Enfield rifle], clipped inside the door of the Cessna just in case I see any of the bastards. We were too high

to hit them, but as a matter of principle, I decided to have a go through the open window. Mate, when I pulled the bloody rifle out, the effect on Ron, was friggin' electric. As I fired the first shot his neck lengthened by about six inches and his eyes bulged like a rabbit with myxo [myxomatosis, a disease transmitted by mosquitos or fleas]. He really looked as if he had been jabbed with an electric cattle prod on full power. In fact, Ron's reaction was so distracting that I lost concentration for a second and the next shot went straight through the port tire. Ron was a bit upset about the shooting (probably one of those pinko animal lovers I guess) so I decided not to tell him about our little problem with the tire.

Shortly afterwards I located the main herd and decided to do my fighter pilot trick. Ron had gone back to praying when, in one smooth sequence, I pulled on full flaps, cut the power and started a sideslip from 10,500 feet down to 500 feet at 130 knots indicated (the last time I looked anyway) and the little needle rushed up to the red area on me ASI (airspeed indicator). What a buzz, mate!

About half way through the descent I looked back in the cabin to see the calves gracefully suspended in mid-air and mooing like crazy. I was going to comment to Ron on this unusual sight, but he looked a bit green and had rolled himself into the fetal position and was screaming his freakin' head off. Mate, talk about being in a bloody zoo. You should've been there. It was so bloody funny! At about 500 feet I leveled out, but for some reason we kept sinking.

When we reached 50 feet, I applied full power but nothing happened. No noise no nothing. Then, luckily, I heard me instructor's voice in me head saying "carb heat, carb heat." So I pulled carb heat on and that helped quite a lot, with the engine finally regaining full power. Whew, that was really close, let me tell you!

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Aussie Pilot (from Page 11)

Then mate, you'll never guess what happened next! As luck would have it, at that height we flew into a massive dust cloud caused by the cattle and suddenly went I.F. bloody R, mate. You would have been really proud of me as I didn't panic once, not once, but I did make a mental note to consider an instrument rating as soon as me gyro is repaired (something I've been meaning to do for a while now).

Suddenly Ron's elongated neck and bulging eyes reappeared. His mouth opened very wide, but no sound emerged. "Take it easy," I told him, "We'll be out of this in a minute." Sure enough, about a minute later we emerged, still straight and level and still at 50 feet. Admittedly I was surprised to notice that we were upside down, and I kept thinking to myself, "I hope Ron didn't notice that I had forgotten to set the QNH [altimeter setting that provides height above sea level] when we were taxiing." This minor tribulation forced me to fly to a nearby valley in which I had to do a half roll to get upright again.

By now the main herd had divided into two groups leaving a narrow strip between them. "Ah!" I thought, "There's an omen. We'll land right there." Knowing that the tire problem demanded a slow approach, I flew a couple of steep turns with full flap. Soon the stall warning horn was blaring so loud in me ear that I cut its circuit breaker to shut it up. But by then I knew we were slow enough anyway. I turned steeply onto a 75-foot final and put her down with a real thud. Strangely enough, I had always thought you could only ground loop in a tail dragger but, as usual, I was proved wrong!

Halfway through our third loop, Ron at last recovered his sense of humor. Talk about laugh. I've never seen the likes of it. He couldn't stop. We finally rolled to a halt and I released the calves. They bolted out of the aircraft like there

was no tomorrow. I then began picking clumps of dry grass. Between gut wrenching fits of laughter, Ron asked what I was doing. I explained that we had to stuff the port tire with grass so we could fly back to the homestead. It was then that Ron, really lost the plot and started running away from the aircraft. Can you believe it? I saw him running off into the distance, arms flailing in the air and still shrieking with laughter.

I later heard that he had been confined to a psychiatric institution – poor bugger!

Anyhow mate, that's enough about Ron. The problem is I got this letter from CASA [Civil Aviation Safety Authority] withdrawing, as they put it, my "privileges to fly" until I have undergone a complete pilot training course again and undertaken another flight proficiency test. Now I admit that I made a mistake in taxiing over the wheel chock and not setting the QNH using strip elevation, but I can't see what else I did that was a so bloody bad that they have to withdraw me flaming license. Can you?

Ralph H. Bell
Mud Creek Station

What Could Go Wrong?

by Dave Kowalski [908, 75]

After reading "Ferry Preparation and Support" in *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter, Vol. 32-2, November 2021*, I thought about the time in July 1975 right after Vietnam fell to the Communists. I was assigned to the 908th Tactical Airlift Group (TAG) at Maxwell AFB, AL at the time. I had just been promoted to Flight Chief after working on the flight line as a Crew Chief and as an Engine man before that.

Word came down that 22nd Air Force was looking for personnel for a special mission, but they couldn't say what it was. The volunteers would have to be ready to go in a couple of days and be

prepared to be gone at least 30 days. The next day the 908th TAG had committed three flight crews and two APG maintenance people for the mission. I was the Maintenance Chief. The 94th Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) out of Dobbins AFB, GA, also provided two aircrews for the mission.

After all the personnel were approved, the Commander called us into the Briefing Room and told us we would be going to Thailand to pick-up five C-7A's and bring them back to Hays International at Dothan, AL. These Caribous had been in Vietnam and flown by the South Vietnamese from 1972 until 1975. [In 1971 and 1972 the U.S. government transferred 60 Caribous to the South Vietnamese]. Keep in mind that these aircraft left Vietnam in a hail of gunfire while they were leaving Saigon as the Communists were attacking the airport.

The Colonel told us to get everything we needed for a 13,000 mile over water flight, including cold weather gear, Mae Wests, parachutes, tools, parts, and five bicycle pumps – which we bought from Sears. All this stuff was to be hand-carried and could not weigh over X number of pounds.

In a few days we left on Delta Airlines out of Montgomery, AL, to San Francisco, then Hickam AFB, HI, Clark AFB, Philippines, and then on to Thailand. Note that we had to hand-carry the parachutes on-board the civilian aircraft – that got us some strange looks. We were all wearing our military flight suits. Did we know something the rest of the passengers didn't?

After arriving at Utapao RTAFB, Thailand, we were lucky enough to have time to inspect the aircraft. We had a few days to conduct engine run-ups, mag checks, top-off the wing and ferry tanks, and, most important of all, figure out how the fuel transfer systems worked. There was not enough time for test flights. We also found that none of the ant-ice, de-ice systems were

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Wrong? (from Page 12)

operational. Who needs ice control in Vietnam? Don't know who was doing the "risk assessment" for the mission, but it must have been coming from far up the chain of command, because we continued on.

Someone had decided that we would be flying home using the Northern Route, up to Adak, Alaska instead of the route taken in 1971, which was through Hickam AFB, HI, and then to Travis, AFB, CA. Our crew was assigned to fly C-7A S/N 63-9755.

Some of the notable obstacles we faced on our trip were: There were three ferry tanks installed instead of the 2-tank configuration specified in the 1C-7A-1 that was used in the crossings back in 1971. The 3-bladder system had never been used before and had electric-driven air pumps instead using pressure from the engine-driven deice pumps. The bicycle pumps were used as the emergency back-up system in case of an electrical failure.

Only two of the five aircraft had all the radio and navigational equipment operational. The other aircraft only had FM radios and the whisky compass operational all the time. There was a lot of information being relayed between the C-7A aircraft and the C-130 Duck Butt airplane (an airborne escort to provide emergency assistance as needed).

There weren't any U.S. markings on the aircraft, since these had been given to the South Vietnamese in 1971. There were no AFTO 781 forms and no aircraft documentation. We didn't know how many hours were on the aircraft or the engines. They were probably over-boasted and over-spiced when they were getting out of Saigon. The bullet holes were scabbed, patched over and sprayed with zinc chromate primer.

The aircraft were 2,000 pounds over the maximum ferry weight of 34,000 pounds.

We didn't have any maintenance or enroute support. We also left on such

short notice that some of our stops did not know we were coming. Our maintenance support consisted of me, two Crew Chiefs, and the spare parts we brought with us.

In 1971, they made the crossing the way it should have been done. They had the time and the necessary manpower. We had neither with a very small window to get the aircraft out of Thailand. We were told the night before we left Thailand that we would be leaving at the crack of dawn the next day. Even off the coast of Cambodia the Communists had threatened to shoot us down.

It was a great adventure at the time, but I am not sure I would take the chances again. The entire trip is documented in *C-7A Caribou Association Newsletter July 2005, Vol 1, Issue 22*.

Last USAF Caribous

The last operational USAF C-7A flight in Vietnam was flown by the 310th Composite Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) in October 1972.

The C-7A's returned to the U.S. from Cam Rahn Bay AB in September 1971 and December 1971 were dispersed to Air Force Reserve and to Air National Guard and Army Guard units.

The twelve Caribous that departed Vietnam on 12 December 1971 were destined for the 908th Tactical Airlift Group (TAG), 357th TAS, Air Force Reserve at Maxwell AFB, AL.

The last Caribous of the 18th Tactical Airlift Training Squadron, Dyess AFB, TX, were transferred to the Reserves at Dobbins AFB, GA, on 29 March 1972.

Air Force Reserve Caribous

The 357th TAS, 908th TAG, began the transition to the Caribou in March 1972 and was declared combat ready in February 1973, the first C-7A unit in the Air Force Reserve to achieve that status. The 908th TAG converted to C-130's in October 1983, making it the last USAF organization to fly the C-7A.

The 700th TAS, 94th Tactical Airlift Wing, Dobbins AFB, GA, began the

transition to the Caribou in 1972 and converted to C-130's in 1982.

Air National Guard Caribous

Caribous were flown by several Air National Guard units including:

New Jersey Air Guard, 150th TAS, C-7A, 1973-1977

Maryland Air Guard, 135th TAS, C-7A, 1977-1980

No More Photos

Because of various constraints, the C-7A Caribou Association is no longer able to process new photos for posting on the Photo Gallery of the Association website.

Please do not submit any additional photos for processing.



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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

4 October 1966, 17th Army Aviation Company (AvCo) CV-2 S/N 63-9751, struck Hon Kong mountain west of An Khe, killing the crew and all but ten of the 28 passengers aboard. The aircraft was piloted by **Capt. David O. Webster**, USAF, and **1/Lt. Francis H. Bassaillon**, USAF, and flight mechanics **SSgt. Daniel P. Marlowe**, USAF, and SP4 John T. Bird, USA.

20 November 1966, a 135th AvCo CV-2 S/N 62-4167, crashed in the mountains southwest of Tuy Hoa, killing pilots Capt. John W. Clayton, USA and **Capt. Anthony F. Korpics**, USAF, and flight mechanics Specialist 5th Class Arnold Pearson, USA and **TSgt. Glendell E. Yates**, USAF.

28 October 1966, **A1C Willis A. Karickhoff**, USAF, was killed when 135th AvCo CV-2 S/N 61-2405, hit a mountain near An Khe in bad weather.

3 August 1967, 459th 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 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.

30 November 1967, 458th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) C-7A S/N 62-4175, flown by instructor pilot **Maj. Thomas D. Moore**; copilot **Maj. William J. Clark**, and flight engineer **SSgt. Arturo Delgado-Marin**, hit a hill southeast of Qui Nhon. **SSgt. Stanley J. Yurewicz**, 483rd CAMS, was an additional crew member. The crew and all 22 passengers were killed.

On 25 July 1968, 457th TAS C-7A S/N 63-9761, was flying a resupply mission from Nha Trang to Polei Kleng. Flying in marginal weather in the vicinity of Dragon Mountain near Pleiku, the left wing of the aircraft struck a tree and the C-7A crashed, killing the two airmen in the cargo compartment, **Capt. Kenneth J. Hoffman** and **A1C Raymond McKendrick**. The pilot and copilot survived the crash.

26 August 1968, 457th TAS C-7A S/N 62-4177, was hit by ground fire in the right wing as it was flying an airlift mission southwest of An Loc, close to the Cambodian border. The aircraft crashed killing **Capt. Robert George Bull**, **1/Lt. Ralph William Manners**, and **A1C David Frederick Sleeper**.

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

26 July, 1969, 537th TAS C-7A S/N 62-4186 crashed on final approach while attempting to make a single engine landing at Vung Tau as a result of loss of power on #2 engine after takeoff, resulting in the death of copilot **1/Lt. James. F. Wohre**. There were major injuries to three personnel and 10 passengers had varying degrees of less serious injuries.

17 August 1969, **SSgt. Donald James Jr.**, 457th TAS, suffered a cardiac arrest while loading a C-7A and died.

11 September 1969, 537th TAS C-7A S/N 62-4187 was shot down by small arms ground fire near the Special Forces Camp at Plei Djereng, killing **1/Lt. Robert P. Wiesneth**, **1/Lt. Neil N. Greinke**, **2/Lt. Charles B. Ross**, **SSgt. Frederick Wilhelm**, and a U.S. Army courier.

26 December 1969, 459th TAS C-7A 63-9723 was shot down by small arms ground fire as it approached Tien Phuoc, resulting in the loss of the aircraft and the deaths of **1/Lt. David B. Bowling** and **TSgt. E. J. Welch, Jr.** The other crew member on the mission, **1/Lt. Richard J. Patterson**, was seriously injured.

2 April 1970, 537th TAS C-7A S/N 61-2406 was shot down at Dak Seang during the resupply operation killing **1/Lt. Steve W. Train**, **1/Lt. Charles E. Suprenant, Jr.**, and **MSgt. Dale E. Christensen**.

4 April 1970, 537th TAS C-7A S/N 62-4180, flown by a 458th TAS crew, was shot down at Dak Seang during the resupply operation killing **Capt. James A. Gray**, **Maj. Frederick W. Dauten, Jr.**, and **MSgt. Russell L. Klein**.

6 April 1970, 459th TAS C-7A S/N 63-9746, flown by a 457th TAS crew, was shot down at Dak Seang during the resupply operation killing **Capt. Julius P. Jaeger**, **1/Lt. Theron C. Fehrenbach, II**, and **TSgt. Gordon M. Gaylord**.

29 November 1970, **A1C James B. Young**, 483rd TAW, was killed in a C-123K accident while escorting Spectrometric Oil Analysis Program (SOAP) samples and results.

31 March 1972, **SSgt. Dale Wayne Farris**, AFAT-2 (Air Force Advisory Team), was killed in a rocket attack on the flight line at Phu Cat AB.

Eddie Rickenbacker

by Annette Crawford, MSgt. USAF (Ret.)
Daedalian, May 2021

Born on October 8, 1890, in Columbus, OH, Edward Rickenbacker lived a challenging life. He had seven siblings, and his parents were Swiss immigrants who decided to settle in the United States. His childhood was tough, being a child of a day laborer who earned just enough to feed the entire family. Eddie was also involved in mischief as a young boy though he never forgot the values his father instilled in him.

At five years old, Eddie Rickenbacker started smoking and became the leader of the Horsehead Gang, a collection of mischievous youth from the town. His antics with the gang led to his first near-death experience at age eight. Rickenbacker, at the head of his gang, was riding a steel cart down into a gravel pit, when it flipped. After spilling him out, the cart landed on him, causing a serious cut on his leg that exposed the bone and resulted in severe bleeding.

Rickenbacker may have continued down the path to becoming a teenage ne'er-do-well if a tragedy hadn't altered his path. His father was killed in a serious construction accident and Eddie was forced to step up and start working.

Rickenbacker quit school and took on several jobs. He sold goat's milk, eggs, and newspapers, and the rest of the day he worked at a glass making factory until he was exhausted. Over the next few years he also found employment in a shoe factory, a foundry, and a brewery so he could earn more money for the family. In his transition from a naughty little boy to a responsible teenager, Eddie Rickenbacker became one of the major breadwinners for his family.

Love of Engines

"Long practice in driving a racing car at a hundred miles an hour or so gives first-class training in control and judging distances at high speed and helps tremendously in getting motor

sense, which is rather the feel of your engine than the sound of it, a thing you get through your bones and nerves rather than simply your ears." Eddie Rickenbacker

During these early years, Eddie Rickenbacker developed an interest in cars and engines. He had an intense desire to drive a powerful, fast car of his own, and he was determined to make this happen. At the age of 16, he took a job for a race car driver, Lee Frayer. Eddie served as his mechanic, further refining his passion for engines and automobiles.



Eventually, he began working at the Columbus Buggy Company as a salesman. When he wasn't busy with work, he participated in races, occasionally winning prizes. He charmed the crowd with his daring and death defying moves. He narrowly avoided serious injury in several accidents. As a dutiful son, he sent his mother a telegram after every car crash to tell her he was okay.

In 1914, Eddie joined a car-racing event in Daytona, during which he set a world speed record at an impressive 134 mph. He continued to test his limits, racing in a variety of events, though things were about to change.

Rickenbacker rode in an aircraft piloted by Glenn Martin, and suddenly, he had a new love. Battling a fear of heights, Rickenbacker was eventually able to start flying without problems in 1916.

Born to Fly

"When I look up and see the sun shining on the patch of white clouds up in the blue, I begin to think how it would feel to be up somewhere above

it winging swiftly through the clear air, watching the earth below, and the men on it, no bigger than ants." Eddie Rickenbacker

Eddie Rickenbacker wanted to expand his experience of flying, so he volunteered as an aircraft pilot for America during World War I. However, some challenges stood in his way. He didn't hold a college degree, and he was already 27, which meant he could not qualify for flight training because of age restrictions. [He enlisted in May 1917, arrived in France in late June with the rank of Sergeant First Class, and was assigned as a staff driver for Gen. John Pershing.] This did not stop Eddie from continuing to try to be a military pilot. With assistance from Col. William "Billy" Mitchell he became a student pilot at the 2nd Aviation Instruction Center in Toul, France.

Rickenbacker proved himself as a determined pilot. He graduated after training for 17 days in October 1917 and was commissioned a First Lieutenant.

He was then assigned as the chief Engineering Officer, 3rd Aviation Instruction Center at Issoudun, serving under Maj. Carl A. Spaatz. For many months Spaatz refused to allow him to become a combat pilot because he needed him on the staff. Rickenbacker was persistent and finally managed to be sent to the advanced flight training program at Villeneuve-les-Vertus, where one of his instructors was French flying ace, Maj. Raoul Lufbery.

In February 1918, Rickenbacker was assigned to the 94th Aero Squadron. Known as the "Hat in the Ring" squadron, it was the first all-American unit to see air combat. The squadron flew Nieuport 28 biplanes and, later, Spad XVIII's.

Rickenbacker's experience being a part of the squadron started off in a difficult manner. Most of the squadron members were graduates from Ivy League schools, and they looked down on him.

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Despite the lack of acceptance from the squadron members, Rickenbacker did not allow their treatment to deter him. He worked on aircraft engines and continued improving his flight skills while also working on ridding himself of his fear of heights.

He soon developed his own fighting techniques while piloting the aircraft. As he continually improved his aerial fighting skills, he also became more and more victorious during his missions. Slowly, his squadron mates began to accept him.

Rickenbacker perfected the technique of getting as close as possible to his target before he fired his guns. Rickenbacker shot down his first plane on April 29, 1918. A month later, on May 28th, he shot down his fifth, qualifying him for “ace” status and earning him the French *Croix de Guerre*.

On May 30th, he scored his sixth victory, but it would be his last for a number of weeks. He developed an intensely painful ear infection and traveled to Paris for treatment. After treatment and recovery, he returned to his squadron on July 31, 1918.

Greater Heights

During a flight on September 14, Rickenbacker shot down a Fokker D.VII, Germany’s imposing new fighter plane. The next day, he shot down another. On September 24th, he was made the Commander of the 94th Aero Squadron. The next day he shot down two additional German fighters. For these victories, Rickenbacker was later awarded the Medal of Honor in 1931 by President Herbert Hoover.

Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker continued to earn victories, all the while evading disaster. Rickenbacker survived numerous crash landings and near-death moments, including one time when his plane’s fuselage was riddled with bullet holes and half of his propeller was shot off. One bullet came close enough to scorch his helmet.



Capt. Rickenbacker ended the war with 26 victories, 13 against Fokker D.VII’s. He reportedly flew 300 combat hours during the war, more than any other American pilot. During his service, he was the most successful American fighter pilot and was declared the “Ace of Aces.” He was not happy about being given this title, since others that had been awarded this title before had since been killed.

In spite of his accomplishments, Rickenbacker remained a down-to-earth, simple man. He refused all offers by advertising companies to endorse products or to act in small roles on the silver screen.

Upon leaving active duty, Rickenbacker was a Major, yet he continued to call himself a Captain. He believed that his duty as a Captain was one of his finest, and he earned this title from his efforts and experiences.

“There is a peculiar gratification in receiving congratulations from one’s squadron for a victory in the air. It is worth more to a pilot than the applause of the whole outside world.” Eddie Rickenbacker

Post War Challenges

Rickenbacker decided to explore the field of automobile manufacturing. In 1920, he founded the Rickenbacker Motor Company and served as the director of sales and vice president. In 1922, the very first designs by the company were introduced in Detroit.

Their cars had four-wheel brake systems, a feature new to automobiles. In part due to bad publicity from other car manufacturers who were worried they wouldn’t be able to sell their two wheel breaking models, Rickenbacker had trouble making sales.

Eddie Rickenbacker married Adelaide Frost Durant in 1922, a marriage that lasted 51 years, until old age parted them. Adelaide, said to be as independent and strong-willed as Eddie, was a good match for him, and he credited her with saving his life at least twice.

By 1927, the company went bankrupt. Rickenbacker himself also went personally bankrupt, and although he was not legally required to do so, he vowed he would repay the \$250,000 he owed.

Eddie Rickenbacker, with financial aid from a friend, was soon back on his feet. To start, he bought most of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway’s common stock, becoming the Speedway’s president. Using revenue generated by the speedway, he planned to start making money to pay off his debts.

Another source of income was royalties from the book he published entitled *Fighting the Flying Circus*, which delved into his personal accounts as a fighter pilot during World War I. He also created *Ace Drummond* in 1935, a popular comic strip that ran in about 135 newspapers nationwide and was adapted into a movie serial.

Finally, he took a position as head of sales with General Motors (GM) for Cadillac and La Salle automobiles.

Eastern Air Lines

Through his position with GM, he convinced them to buy North American Aviation, a conglomerate whose assets included Eastern Air Transport. In 1935, GM asked Rickenbacker to step in and manage Eastern Air. With some help from friends, Rickenbacker then merged Eastern Air Transport and Florida Airways to form Eastern Air Lines. In 1938, after learning GM was

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Rickenbacker (from Page 16)

interested in selling Eastern Air Lines, Rickenbacker convinced GM to sell Eastern to him for 3.5 million dollars.

Eddie Rickenbacker then became heavily involved in commercial aviation, negotiating deals with the U.S. Government, supporting the design of new aircraft, and outfitting Eastern Air Lines with newer, larger, and faster aircraft.

Although Rickenbacker ran the airline effectively, his management style was not always appreciated. Many people were turned off by the cutting and acid manner in which he would criticize the failings of subordinates, both in public and private. He also was never able to reconcile himself to the idea of women working for the airlines and even hired male stewards when possible.

He worked tirelessly seven days a week, demanded that his employees work Saturdays, was fanatic about punctuality, and was accused of being a penny-pincher.

In spite of this, he was loyal to his employees, never overpaid himself (he apparently set his salary at \$50,000 a year in 1938, where it remained for the next 25 years), and was able to make on the spot, astute business decisions that built the airline into one of the nation's four largest carriers.

During this time, Rickenbacker traveled extensively to various countries to promote and support aviation. On February 26, 1941, he had what may have been his closest brush with Death.

Rickenbacker Almost Dies

On that February day, the Douglas DC-3 airliner Rickenbacker was on crashed outside of Atlanta, GA. Rickenbacker suffered extensive and serious injuries, was soaked in fuel, and trapped in the wreckage. Despite this, he encouraged other injured passengers around him, offering consolation to the injured and direction to those who were capable of helping.

The passengers spent a long, terrible night at the crash site before rescue arrived the next morning. When rescue did arrive, Rickenbacker was still conscious and in incredible pain, though he was unable to communicate with anyone. However, the rescuers didn't know he was still alive and carted away several dead passengers before getting to him.

Under the impression he had perished, the press reported his death to the public. When his body arrived at the hospital, his injuries were so terrible and grotesque, the surgeons and physicians that saw his body left him for dead, instructing their assistants to "take care of the live ones."

Rickenbacker injuries included serious head trauma, a fractured skull, a shattered left elbow and crushed nerve, a paralyzed left hand, several broken ribs, a crushed hip socket and severed nerve in his left hip, a pelvis that was broken in two places, a broken left knee, and a left eyeball that had been blown out of its socket.

In his autobiography, Eddie Rickenbacker stated that he spent ten days at Death's door, and during this time, he described, "having an overwhelming sensation of calm and pleasure." He further stated that it took a supreme act of will on his part to stave off death and return to the land of the living.

According to Rickenbacker, this was the first time Adelaide personally saved his life. One night, as she slept nearby, his oxygen tent malfunctioned. She awoke, with the sense he was in terrible danger, and ran up a flight of stairs and down the hall to his room.

There, she found he had torn apart his oxygen tent in his ferocious struggle to live and was beginning to suffocate. Adelaide discovered the attendant on duty had fallen asleep. After making sure Rickenbacker's tent was fixed, she exploded at the staff, yelling at them for their negligence.

Rickenbacker spent months in the hospital recovering, followed by more time recovering at home, but amazing-

ly, he eventually healed from his injuries, including regaining full eyesight.

Almost Dies – Again

In 1942, Rickenbacker supported the war effort as a civilian, touring training bases in the U.S. and England. He encouraged the American public to donate their time and money to the effort, and he made Eastern Air Lines equipment and personnel available to the military.

In October of 1942, after a successful trip to England, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson sent Eddie Rickenbacker to the Pacific. Part of his mission was to deliver a memorized, verbal message from President Roosevelt to Gen. MacArthur. En route from Honolulu to Canton Island in a B-17, the crew got lost, and the pilot was forced to ditch the plane after running out of fuel.

Of the eight onboard, only one was seriously injured while ditching the aircraft, although Rickenbacker was still recovering from the injuries suffered in the Atlanta crash. The men were able to recover three rafts, fishing kits, a few guns, and some survival rations from the rapidly sinking bomber. They lashed the rafts together with ropes to provide a larger target for search planes and then waited.

The next 22 days were a survival saga. Although they were overdue in Canton, no one knew where to look for them. Their rations went quickly. They only had a few oranges and occasional rainwater for liquid. They caught the rainwater in Rickenbacker's felt hat and a bucket they had salvaged. They supplemented the rain they caught by wringing out their clothes into the bucket as well. The guns they had become so corroded by the salt water that they wouldn't fire when birds appeared overhead.

They were able to catch a shark with one of the fishing lines, but the shark tasted so terrible that no one was able to keep it down. They caught an occasional fish, which would be divided

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Rickenbacker (from Page 17)

equally among all the men. As the days dragged on, they slowly began to starve. They were also worried about the sharks that were constantly slipping through the water underneath their rafts and occasionally bumping up against them. If that weren't enough, sunburn continued to intensify their misery.

At one point, one of the men attempted suicide by jumping out of the raft to drown, reasoning it would give the rest of them a better chance at survival. Rickenbacker, viewing this as cowardice, hauled the man back into the raft. He berated the men for giving up hope and continued to criticize them on a daily basis.

Finally, one day, as it appeared all was lost, a sea swallow landed on Rickenbacker's hat. He was able to catch the bird, and it was swiftly killed, de-feathered, and divided into equal portions. Its guts were used for fishing bait. Rickenbacker took this as a sign that they would survive, and they should not lose faith. Shortly after, one of the men died and the others buried him at sea.

The men continued to grow weaker. Rickenbacker's continued use of sarcasm and ridicule to keep the men in line and attempt to keep spirits up might not have won him any friends, but it may have saved lives. Rickenbacker later learned that several of the other survivors swore an oath that they would continue living, if only long enough to have the pleasure of burying him at sea.

After the second week stranded at sea, the survivors had several frustrating encounters during which search planes flew nearby, but failed to notice them. Eventually, it was decided the three rafts should split up, in an effort to make it more likely that a plane would spot one of them.

It is here that Rickenbacker credits Adelaide with saving his life a second time. Unbeknownst to the survivors, the newspapers had declared them dead, and the Army Air Corps was ready to

give up. But Adelaide, sure that her husband was still alive, personally approached Gen. "Hap" Arnold and convinced him to keep searching.

Planes soon spotted and promptly rescued the first of the three rafts. The second raft eventually drifted ashore on an island where the survivors were found by a missionary who had a radio. The last raft, with Rickenbacker aboard, was located by a Navy plane.

Rickenbacker had lost 60 pounds and suffered from severe sunburns and saltwater ulcers, but he was still alive. Barely. The *Boston Globe* dubbed him "The Great Indestructible."

Though he could have immediately returned home, Rickenbacker insisted on continuing to his destination to deliver the message to Gen. MacArthur. He then returned to the States and made extensive recommendations to Secretary Stimson about safety equipment that should be put into use. Among his recommendations were adding a rubber tarp to the rafts to both protect occupants from the sun and catch rain water, and the addition of small seawater distilling kits.

At the age of 73, Eddie Rickenbacker finally retired from aviation. He and his wife settled on a ranch in Texas, but after five years its remote location motivated them to move. Rickenbacker donated the small ranch to the Boy Scouts and temporarily moved to New York City. The couple then found a more suitable home in Coral Gables, FL and stayed there until Rickenbacker suffered, and survived, a stroke in 1972.

Rickenbacker recovered from the stroke and, after regaining enough strength to travel, he went to Switzerland, seeking medical help for his ailing wife. While there, he contracted pneumonia and died on July 23, 1973.

Rickenbacker's ashes were buried in the family plot in his hometown next to his mother's. Respected fellow aviator and colleague Gen. James "Jimmy" Doolittle gave the eulogy at the funeral, and four jet fighters flew overhead to pay tribute to this beloved fighter pilot.

Consider it luck, skill, or just plain determination: Captain Eddie Rickenbacker survived, by his own count, 135 brushes with death before finally succumbing at the respectable age of 82. Combat missions flown in World War I and survival of multiple serious airplane crashes after the war were only part of the many dangerous, exciting feats of this great aviator, who was regarded as the "Ace of Aces" in America.

Antonov An-225 A War Casualty



Russian Attack Begins

In the early hours on the first day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, Russian airborne forces captured the Antonov airfield in Hostomel on the outskirts of Kyiv. Ukrainian forces counterattacked and temporarily retook the airport later that day, but Russian forces gained complete control of the airport on 25 February.

The Russians had intended to use the airfield to land Ilyushin IL-76 transport aircraft loaded with fresh combat troops to attack Kyiv. However, the battle for the airport prevented the Russian landings that were planned for 24 February and the fighting left the runway in unusable condition. Russia forces maintained control of Hostomel and the airfield until they abandoned the area on 2 April 2022.

Destruction of the "Dream"

The An-225 Mriya ("dream" in Ukrainian) was undergoing maintenance and was stored in a hangar at Antonov airfield when the Russian

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An-225 (from Page 18)

attack began. On or about 27 February 2022, the Russians destroyed the one-of-a-kind An-225. The Mriya was the largest cargo aircraft in the world; had the largest wingspan of any operational aircraft; and was the heaviest airplane ever built.



Photo: Metin Aktus, Anadolu Agency

Initially, Ukrainian officials said it would cost \$3 billion U.S. dollars to build a new An-225 – that figure has since been adjusted to \$800 million.

Antonov An-225 Mriya

(from aircharterservice.com)

The An-225 was designed and developed by Antonov engineers in 1985 when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. While production began on several aircraft, only one An-225 was ever built. Its maiden flight was on 21 December 1988.

Originally tasked with transporting the space shuttle for the Soviet space program (the Buran space plane), the aircraft made its international debut in style by landing at the 1989 Paris Air Show with the shuttle on its back.

The An-225 Mriya, designed to carry twice as much as the original Boeing 747, was an engineering marvel. With an overall size that stretched as far as a football field from nose to tail and wingtip to wingtip, and a maximum takeoff weight of up to 1.41 million pounds, it dwarfed the Boeing 747 in size and lift capability.

An-225 Characteristics:

Max Takeoff Weight:

640,000 kg (1,410,958 lbs)

Max Payload:

250,000 kg (551,156 lbs)

Cargo Hold:

1,300 cubic meters (46,000 cubic ft)

Overall Length:

84 meters (275 ft 7 in)

Wingspan: 88.4 meters (290 ft)

Range:

15,400 km (8,315 nautical miles)

Cruise Speed: 800 km/h (480 mph)

By comparison, the 747-8F the largest Boeing 747 cargo variant, first flown in 2010, has the following features.

747-8F Characteristics:

Max Takeoff Weight

447,700 kg (987,000 lbs)

Max Payload:

132,600 kg (292,400 lbs)

Cargo Hold:

858 cubic meters (30,388 cubic ft)

Range: 4,120 nautical miles

The Mriya freighter was powered by six turbofan jet engines each capable of producing a staggering 51,590 pounds of thrust. The huge aircraft could reach a maximum speed of 528 mph at an altitude of 36,000 ft.

In order to support its tremendous weight, the An-225 had a 32-wheel landing gear. The nose gear housed four steerable wheels and the main gear consisted of 16 steerable wheels behind 18 wheels fixed in position.

The cargo hold was approximately 142 feet long and 21 feet wide with an interior height of about 14 feet. The cargo hold was spacious enough to carry 50 cars and featured a built-in crane capable of moving a 33-ton load.

Editor's Note. With the destruction of the Mriya, the Boeing 747-8F is now the largest operational cargo aircraft in the world.

The Lockheed C-5 Galaxy, that first flew in 1968, with a max takeoff weight of 417,305 kg (920,000 lbs), a max payload of 127,459 kg (281,000 lbs), a cargo hold of 880 cubic meters (31,000 cubic ft), and a range of 6,320 nautical miles, is number two.

(All aircraft data in this article is from Freight Course.)



Return of the Caribou

by Vernon Rich

Air & Space Smithsonian Magazine, Oct/Nov 2021

I'm part of the crew who in 1995 tried and failed to revive the B-29 bomber *Kee Bird* after it had languished for half a century on a frozen lake bed in Greenland, about 700 miles shy of the North Pole. This reclamation project was the dream of aviation superstar Darryl Greenamyer, who test flew the SR-71 Blackbirds, revolutionized pylon air racing, set absolute speed records, and built his own F-104 Starfighter, before his death in 2018. Back in '95, Darryl had gotten the B-29's engines started and was bounding over the snow when the auxiliary power unit started a fire that ended up destroying the airplane.

We were stunned. But we had to get home. We got everyone on our crew and all our gear to Thule Air Base and onto a C-141 Starlifter headed to McGuire AFB in New Jersey – everyone except Darryl, John Cater, and me. We were taking the slow road back in the 1962 de Havilland C-7A Caribou that had brought us to Thule three years before, when we'd begun our recovery attempt.

We had abused this Vietnam-era transport. In 1992, we had driven a bulldozer onboard that so overloaded the airplane that the flap actuators jammed and blew out all the seals. Tom Hauptmann and I repaired them using a pile of O-rings Tom had found at Thule that were god-knows-how-old and every color you can imagine. We also buried the nose gear in mushy tundra on more than one occasion while the aircraft was loaded to the brim and massively overweight.

Darryl, John, and I loaded everything we could carry into the Caribou, including eight 55-gallon drums of gasoline,

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two 55-gallon drums of 60-weight oil, a 55-gallon drum of hydraulic system oil, plus tools and camping gear. A battery-powered system one of our crew had built would pump oil or gas into the appropriate tanks while in flight.

Darryl told John and me that he was going to base ops to announce our departure. He said to be ready to go when he returned, because the airport closed at 3 PM, which sounded crazy for a place that had 24 hours of daylight.

I told Darryl I wanted to test the pump rig since we had no backup. The rig was failing my test just as Darryl returned. "Let's go anyway!" he barked. I declined, telling him I'd borrow a pump somewhere and be right back.

I raced to the maintenance barn, only to find all the guys had gone to lunch. Figuring I was a good tax-paying American, I borrowed a few of my tax dollars back in the form of a barrel pump, some pipefittings, and a few rags.

It was 3:05. We rolled onto the runway without so much as a nod to the tower. By the time we were climbing over Dundas Bay to the west, I was chasing fittings rolling all over the cabin and praying that I had collected everything I'd need to get fuel or oil into this little darling before we ran out.

Once we leveled off, I asked Darryl why we took off in such a wild-ass rush. He said there was a storm coming in from the west and we were going to have a 70-knot headwind very soon. He was right; anything over 1,500 AGL (above ground level) was puffing hard on the nose. We were getting the crap beat out of us.

I went to the back and tried to relax on the troop seats, but that was a joke, so I just sat wide-awake with my eyes closed, listening to every tick the engines made.

Eventually, I peeked out a window. We had covered 600 miles across Davis Strait to Baffin Island and were flying



C-7A Caribou airborne during B-29 recovery effort. Photo by Tim Wright

into a small fjord, not far off the waves. The mountains jugged straight up out of the water and we were headed through a narrow gash between them.

I went up to the cockpit thinking I might as well see it all coming, but all I could see was granite as Darryl wove us through the headwinds. Around the next bend, the fjord ended in a giant wall. There was nowhere to go but up.

Darryl eased us up over the top as though he'd planned this crazy route. He smiled like there wasn't anything to it, but all the blood had drained from my face and from John's.

With that crisis past, Darryl glanced at the panel and suggested I make our fuel-and-oil rig work, ASAP. I dug through boxes to find Teflon tape, wrenches, hose, heater hose clamps – all the components of my Frankenfuel contraption.

It was cold, bumpy, and dark in my workspace. To get to the spot in the cabin where the fuel and oil taps were, I had to reach over my head. Once I'd affixed the plumbing to the manual barrel pump, I let Darryl know I was ready. The Caribou was ready too – the needles on the gauges were bouncing off the bottom and the low-fuel warning

lights were starting to flicker.

With 150-mph wind leaking in and scouring my hands, I removed the plug in the fuel system tap. My insulated Carhart overalls were already saturated in 60-weight oil, but I was too motivated to feel cold or scared. For what seemed like forever, I hand-pumped through eight barrels of fuel. There was no way for me to know if I was keeping pace with the engines' demand. All I could do was pump, pump, pump. Just after midnight, we saw the Iqaluit Airport tower in the distance. We landed with less than 15 minutes of fuel left, nine hours and 886 miles from Thule.

A man emerged from the terminal. "You're the *Kee Bird* guys, aren't ya?"

We asked how he knew. He worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and had been told to ask how our project was going. Darryl showed a gift for diplomacy, politely dodging the question and asking the reporter if he could recommend food and lodgings nearby.

The Burger Shack made the best hamburger I ever ate.

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On our next leg to Churchill, Manitoba, 911 miles away, I glanced out a window and noticed the outboard right landing gear door was open, swinging freely. I went up front to tell John. "When that breaks off, it will hit the tail and we are done," he said calmly. John and I asked Darryl if we could ease over to the west shore and at least crash on land.

"Sure, why not?" he said, banking in that direction. He looked at the fuel gauges and told me I'd better get pumping again. Then he straightened up and pointed the nose of the Caribou directly toward Churchill. For the rest of the flight, I stared at the broken gear door and simply willed it to stay put.

After a pleasant night in Churchill, we took off for customs in Glasgow, MT, 888 miles away. The low-oil-level light for the right engine had come on, so I pumped oil the consistency of cold molasses the entire way to Glasgow, fearing I would snap the pump shaft off.

In Glasgow, we opened the cowl and patched the leak while waiting for the customs agent. When she finally arrived, she seemed excited to have an official task to perform. Not much goes on in Glasgow, evidently, even though it's an international port of entry.

We were happy to be back in the USA. Billings would be another 188 miles. There were other close calls before we all made it home, but if Darryl had asked, I would have flown the whole trip again.

Vernon Rich is a master fabricator from Shreveport, LA.

Waiter: "How do you like your steak, sir?"

Sir: "Like winning an argument with my wife."

Waiter: "Rare it is!"

Saga of the B-29 Kee Bird

by Richard Jensen
November 22, 2019
historynet.com

On a North Pole mission, the Kee Bird crew lost their bearings and had to set the plane down in Greenland before running out of fuel. "Kee Bird" would lie on the lake, in good condition, for nearly a half-century. It led to an ill-fated recovery effort 48 years later.



"Kee Bird" at Ladd Field, Alaska

"What are you guys doing in Greenland?" asked a radio operator at Ladd Field near Fairbanks, Alaska. "We came down to shoot a few polar bears," replied Radio Operator TSgt. Robert Leader, whose B-29 Superfortress had just belly-landed on a frozen lake about 700 miles from the North Pole.

It was shortly after midnight local time on Sunday, February 23, 1947, and TSgt. Leader and the rest of the crew were in the middle of a long weekend.

The Cold War had begun in earnest less than a year after the end of World War II. Operating from Ladd Field, the 46th Reconnaissance Squadron was tasked with investigating Soviet offensive and defensive capabilities in northern Siberia. The United States was also racing to map the Arctic and perfect methods of navigating in polar regions.

The 46th flew its first mission from Ladd Field in August 1946, and on October 16 a B-29 from Ladd flew over the North Pole for the first time. By the following year, polar over-flights had

become almost routine.

The 46th had its share of more exciting routes, such as those that ran along the Arctic coast of Siberia, where crews were instructed to keep their planes just within international airspace and monitor Soviet radar to see how well they could detect U.S. aircraft. On more than one occasion, the Soviets scrambled fighters in response.

On February 20, 1947, at 2:20 PM, a routine flight took off from Ladd Field. The B-29, an F-13 variant modified for photo reconnaissance, S/N 45-21768, was dubbed the *Kee Bird*. A kee bird is, according to soldiers stationed in Canada and Alaska, an ugly and unintelligent bird that spends its winters in the Arctic calling out "Kee-kee-keerist, it's cold!"

The crew of eleven was assigned to Project 8, the most highly classified section of the 46th. Their mission was to fly due north, circle the pole and return to Ladd Field. They were to maintain radio silence once they crossed Point Barrow, Alaska's northernmost point. *Kee Bird* was capable of carrying enough fuel for about 26 hours of flight, having been retrofitted with additional fuel tanks in its empty bomb bay.

1/Lt. Vernon Arnett was *Kee Bird's* Pilot. After ground crewmen had tightened one of the propeller blades, Navigator 1/Lt. Burl Cowan grabbed the standard-issue map kit and *Kee Bird* took off.

The flight out was relatively uneventful. The weather was clear when the B-29 flew over Point Barrow at 6 PM on a direct heading for the North Pole.

They crossed the pole at midnight and turned back toward Alaska. About 250 miles south of the pole, the weather closed in around them. Up to that point they had been able to take periodic observations to correct the gyroscopic compass, reportedly part of an experimental navigation system.

In theory, once set in motion, a gyro-

Continued on Page 22

B-29 Kee Bird (from Page 21)

scope in a gimbal assembly will always point in the same direction, regardless of either its position on the Earth or the motion of the Earth itself. This makes it an ideal navigational tool, especially in areas where magnetic compasses are ineffective. In practice, friction within the gyroscope and gimbals causes the axis of the gyroscope to precess, or move in a circle, over time. If the rate of precession of the gyroscope is known with some certainty, the navigator can correct the heading without taking visual bearings.

Cowan didn't trust the gyroscopic compass. After about 45 minutes in the cloud bank, he suggested they climb out of the overcast and take new bearings. Arnett agreed, and *Kee Bird* broke out of the clouds at about 24,000 feet.

***Kee Bird* Drifts of Course**

By the time the B-29 was in a position to take bearings, it had drifted far enough east and had been in the air long enough that darkness was giving way to twilight, and Cowan could not get a fix on any of the navigational stars on his charts. They remained above the cloud cover hoping to establish their location using the sun after it rose. However, the sun barely cleared the horizon before it began to set again, and at such a low angle that atmospheric distortion made reliable sighting impossible. With *Kee Bird* again in twilight, Cowan told Arnett and Copilot 1/Lt. Russell Jordan that he couldn't give them a fix on their location or recommend a heading.

The crew's best hope at this point was to make landfall and then identify their location based on the radar returns. If they were on course, or close to it, they'd reach land at about 6:30 AM.

Instead, at 5 AM, Radar Observer 1/Lt. Howard Adams told Leader that there was land about 100 miles distant, 165 degrees off the plane's current heading. Leader had to pass the message on to Navigator Cowan. According to the Radio Operator, "He was not

a happy camper."

Cowan and the Assistant Navigator, 1/Lt. John Lesman, went aft to the radar station and confirmed what Leader had reported. They saw returns indicating a rugged and mountainous coast. This convinced them that they were well and truly off course. The Alaskan coast in the vicinity of Point Barrow is fairly flat, with the Brooks Range some distance inland.

There was no point in referring to Cowan's map kit, which charted only the Alaskan coast. Furthermore, Radar Operators were kept within individual project assignments, so Adams was looking at terrain he had never seen before, since none of the Project 8 missions deviated from the course covered by their charts.

With neither charts nor experience to guide them, at a little before 8 AM Arnett authorized Leader to break radio silence and contact Ladd Field to request assistance.

At first, Leader couldn't reach Ladd directly, and had to interrupt the voice traffic of the civilian air controller in Barrow, who relayed the message to Ladd Field. When Leader got in touch with Ladd, he requested that they turn on their directional finder. They told him the directional finder was off-line for maintenance.

At that same time, Copilot Jordan was trying to use the radio compass. He'd picked up a strong, steady beam that did not broadcast any identifying information. Arnett suggested that they follow the beam and then bail out when they hit the "cone of silence" directly over the station broadcasting the beam. As they were currently flying above an undercast with no idea of the terrain below it, Jordan told Arnett he'd rather stay with the plane.

It was later discovered that the Soviets had been sending radio signals over the Arctic to lure U.S. planes into Russian airspace.

Hope from KFAR

Giving up on the unidentified station, Jordan started searching for

another station that they could use to set their course. Eventually, he picked up KFAR, a radio station in Fairbanks that many pilots used for navigational purposes. The KFAR signal would lead them right back to Ladd Field.

About half an hour after locking onto KFAR, the signal started to wander and then disappeared entirely. It turned out the crew had not been following the signal from the KFAR antenna. Instead, they had been locked onto a "skip wave" reflection of the signal off the ionosphere.

At this point, the crew had no better option than to look for a place to set *Kee Bird* down. They had been flying a variety of headings in response to the radio compass and were running out of fuel.

Jordan was still trying to pick up the KFAR signal at about 10 AM, Alaska time, when he spotted a saucer-shaped depression ahead, just off his side of the B-29. He pointed it out to Arnett, who decided to descend and have a closer look. They soon realized this was their only shot at a soft landing when Arnett banked the bomber about 100 feet above the ground and the engines started to cough from a lack of fuel.

Leader was on the radio with Ladd as they came in for their first pass at the landing site. He then locked down the radio's Morse code transmission key to transmit a steady signal that Ladd could hopefully get a directional fix on.

In what turned out to be the first positive development, Ladd Field was able to pinpoint the direction of the Morse signal at 46 degrees off true north.

With sufficient time to prepare for an emergency landing, the crewmen took several measures to raise their odds of survival. Emergency gear was moved to the exit hatches, so that in the event of a fire it could be grabbed on the way out. All of the hatches were opened to prevent a crash from deforming the doors and trapping the crew inside.

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B-29 *Kee Bird* (from Page 22)

Arnett decided on a wheels-up landing because they had no idea how deep the snow was or what exactly they were landing on.

As a final precaution, Flight Engineer 2/Lt. Luedke threw the master bar, cutting off the plane's electricity, a safeguard against a spark-induced fire, as soon as Arnett and Jordan no longer needed it to land the plane.

A little after 2 PM local time, not quite 21 hours after takeoff, *Kee Bird* touched down on an unnamed frozen lake, sliding a good distance on the ice before coming to a jarring halt. None of the crewmen were injured.

50 Below Zero on the Ground

It was at least 50 below zero on the ground in Greenland, and the crewmen quickly availed themselves of the mukluks and other cold weather gear stored on the aircraft. After landing, Luedke and Sgt. Lawrence Yarbrough immediately drained the oil from two of the B-29's engines before it froze inside them. The oil froze solid on the ground, and the crew cut it up into blocks to use to fuel fires. They assembled a makeshift stove to thaw out the bomber's auxiliary generator, without which they wouldn't have been able to use the radio.

The first plane to participate in the search and rescue effort took off at 1:40 PM Alaska time. When that B-29, piloted by Capt. Richmond McIntyre, reached its designated search area over MacKenzie Bay, Ladd radioed that *Kee Bird* was on Borden Island, 600 miles farther out on the same heading.

Back at the landing site, Cowan and Lesman were finally able to determine their approximate position based on the stars. They were in Greenland about 250 miles northeast of Thule, a Danish weather station. This information was radioed to Capt. McIntyre's B-29, which made three passes over northern Greenland but didn't sight *Kee Bird*.

While McIntyre's B-29 was over

Greenland, a second Superfortress piloted by Capt. Donald Allenby took off from Ladd just before midnight Alaska time on February 21. When Allenby's B-29 got to Greenland at about noon local time on the 22nd, *Kee Bird*'s crew reported that they were under a high thin overcast. Shortly afterward, Allenby sighted *Kee Bird* and made several passes to drop supplies and photograph the vicinity for rescue planning purposes.



"Kee Bird" in Greenland

Back at Ladd, a variety of rescue options were considered before they decided to send a Douglas C-54 to pick up the crew and fly to Thule, as the transport couldn't carry enough fuel to make a round trip. The rescue plane touched down on the lake next to *Kee Bird* at about 8 AM local time on the 24th.

Landing the C-54 on the frozen lake next to the B-29 wasn't a problem. Taking off was. To get airborne, they would have to use JATO (jet-assisted takeoff) and leave their own emergency equipment behind. While the C-54 was on the ground, a B-29 circled nearby, ready to assist if they encountered any difficulties during takeoff or on the flight to Thule.

After a short, uneventful flight to Thule, the *Kee Bird* and C-54 crews were treated to a steak dinner by the Danish staff at the station. The next day *Kee Bird*'s crew was put on a plane to Westover AFB, MA, for medical attention.

They were provided with sleeping pills and told not to talk to the press until they'd been given a cover story.

Arnett and his crew had spent three days on the ice in Greenland and never once saw the sun.

Efforts to Recover *Kee Bird*

Kee Bird would lie on that Greenland lake for 48 years.

In July 1994, a salvage operation led by famed racing pilot Darryl Greenamyer and funded by a group of California businessmen set up camp in Greenland seeking to repair *Kee Bird*, fit the B-29 with four new engines and props, and fly it off the lake.

In the spring of 1995, the salvage team reunited the surviving *Kee Bird* veterans, brought their documentary film crew back to Greenland, and attempted to fly *Kee Bird* off the lake.

However, someone left the auxiliary generator running. A can that reportedly had been left hanging over the generator to provide fuel came loose during their bumpy taxi across the lake's surface, spilling gas onto the hot generator. The resulting fire rapidly destroyed the airframe and the team was forced to watch their hard-fought dream go up in smoke.

Empty Cockpit

by Barden Revelle [536, 67]

Some of the missions were exciting, some were interesting, some became boring, and some were just plain hard work. The boredom in military operations is often overcome by practical jokes or horseplay, or booze, or any combination of these choices.

We all know about standing behind the aircraft commander's seat on the C-7A and tweaking the flight control cables, giving the pilot a second of terror. Or the one where the relief tube in the rear is reversed into the slipstream, causing the next guy who uses it to get a golden shower. These tricks were normally inspired by enlisted devils to raise the blood pressure of commissioned aviators. This story was an attempt by two Bou Pilots to pull a fast one on two unsuspecting Flight Engineers, me being one of the victims.

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Empty Cockpit (from Page 23)

It was a clear, calm day in the Delta region of South Vietnam. We had been making airdrops into 5th Special Forces "A" Camps. Everything had gone well – no hassles, malfunctions, enemy actions, or problems. We used two Flight Engineers on airdrops in the Delta, due to re-rigging in flight, while flying a 360 between drops. Three drop passes were executed between each re-rigging, flying at 105 knots for the drops.

We were dead-heading back to Can Tho after an afternoon drop. The Pilots had climbed to a higher altitude than normal and after completing the cruise checks we were in steady cruise flight.

Both of us Flight Engineers were semi-reclined, one on each side, with our backs propped against the bulkhead aft of the cockpit, facing the rear of the cargo compartment. We each had a "training manual" that we were seriously studying. Each "training manual" had a centerfold.

After a while, being lulled by the R-2000's, and contemplating the pages, I was vaguely aware of a crew member walking past me to the rear of the cargo compartment. Shortly thereafter I was aware of another crew member walking past me to the rear. I was also aware of the other Flight Engineer on my left still lost in his magazine.

Sooo, my mathematical brain started ciphernin.' Two guys back here, two had left the cockpit. Ain't nobody minding the kitchen. I understood immediately.

I shifted my eyes to the round window beside me. The ground was where it was supposed to be. I shifted my eyes over the top of my magazine. Two Pilots, grinning like possums, were in front of the cargo ramp watching for the reaction of two Flight Engineers figuring out that the cockpit was empty.

I motioned to the other Engineer to look back. He looked, grinned, went back to his centerfold. I did the same. The Pilots soon returned to the front. We never glanced up.

After the Pilots got back on interphone, one said, "Oh, well." It was a good trick, but didn't work on two "battle-hardened" Sarges.

I know they had trimmed the bird before they went aft. I wonder if we climbed any due to a 400 pound CG (center of gravity) shift.

Those two Pilots got me in the end though, on my last night "in-country." They were the infamous "Bar Monkeys." That's another story.

Drunk Pilot of Manhattan

sofrep.com, March 5, 2022

How many beers would it take before you accepted a bet that you could go get a plane and fly it back in 15 minutes? For pilot Tommy Fitzpatrick, it didn't take many. Pilots sometimes run into emergency situations that require them to come up with creative, risky, landing plans. Tommy's was definitely voluntary and he probably did so with a wide grin on his face. Not only that, he did it not once, but twice.

Meet Tommy Fitz

Born on April 24, 1930, in Washington Heights, Manhattan, NY, Thomas Edward Fitzpatrick braved two wars before he boldly pulled off his amazing stunt in September 1956.

Fitzpatrick enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps when he was 15 by lying about his age and he served in the Pacific theater during WW II. Discharged after the war, he enlisted in the Army in 1949 and served on the battlefields of Korea, where his buddies began calling him Tommy Fitz. In Korea he showed his boldness and bravery, receiving a Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

From Fitzpatrick's Silver Star citation [unconfirmed]:

"During a strategic withdrawal, Corporal Fitzpatrick noticed a wounded officer about 100 yards forward of his position. In attempting a rescue, he and a companion were seriously wounded.

Cpl. Fitzpatrick, despite severe pain and loss of blood, made it back to safety, directed a second successful rescue party, organized, and provided covering fire to support the rescue."

Tommy was honorably discharged in 1952 and returned home as a war hero at the age of 26. Back home, he worked at a construction firm as a licensed steamfitter and, at the same time, pursued his love for flying by taking flying lessons at the Teterboro School of Aeronautics. There were reports that he worked there as an aircraft mechanic while a pilot trainee.

Drunk Flying

There's drunk driving, and then there's drunk flying.

It was evening on September 29, 1956, when Tommy Fitz and his co-workers from the construction firm were drinking at a local hangout called "Joe's Bar" on 191st St. in Manhattan. They had just attended a friend's bachelor party, but they were not done celebrating. The drinks and the conversation were flowing, and they were having a great time. One of the patrons asked, is it possible to fly from New Jersey to Washington Heights in under fifteen minutes?

Tommy didn't hesitate and answered, "Yes." He was met with reactions of doubt. Challenge accepted. Tommy bet a drink that he could do it. The bet was accepted. Tommy left the bar in a somewhat inebriated state vowing to return.

The next thing the bar-goers knew, a red and white Cessna 140 descended from the skies, landed on St Nicholas Ave. and taxied to a stop outside the bar. The pilot? It was Tommy Fitz. How he managed to sneak into the Teterboro Airport and steal the plane was a mystery. However, he did so without establishing any radio communication or obtaining any type of flight clearance. He succeeded in traveling back and forth in fifteen minutes as he promised, weaving his way between

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Drunk Pilot (from Page 24)



New York skyscrapers.

Initially, he had planned to land on a school playground, but he couldn't see clearly, so he opted to touch down on St. Nicholas Ave. near 191st Street. It was 3 AM, September 30, and the bar was about to close. So, Tommy rushed in to get his final drink, hopefully paid by the patron he challenged earlier.



The police showed up and weren't really sure what to do. No one had ever thought to put a law on the books making it illegal to land a plane on a New York City street.

Stealing an airplane in New Jersey certainly broke the law in that state, but they had no jurisdiction to arrest him for it in New York. Probably fearing Tommy would try to take off in the plane and leave again, the police charged and arrested him for illegal parking.

As Judge Edward J. Chapman said, "A great many terrible things could have happened." The judge set his bail at \$5,000 "as a deterrent to other foolish young men who get drunk and fly a plane." Given Tommy's otherwise good reputation and status as a war hero, the judge decided to impose a fine of only \$100 and had Tommy's pilot's license suspended for six months.

Tommy could have been charged with grand larceny in New Jersey but the plane's owner refused to press charges against the now locally famous daredevil.

In court, Tommy Fitz was contrite and apologetic for his actions leaving the judge with the impression that he had learned his lesson and would return to a normal life. Tommy appeared to settle down, getting married in 1958 and sticking with his job as a steamfitter in the local union.

And then one night at another bar in New York City, he did it again.

Drunk Flying *Déjà Vu*

It was almost two years to the day since he pulled off his one in a million flying stunt. During a loud, boisterous bar conversation, one of Tommy's friends narrated the events of that night.

One of the bartenders serving them had the unmitigated gall to suggest that Tommy wasn't the guy who actually did the deed. No way he was the same guy. The bartender was sure of it.

Well, you can guess what happened next. Rather than just forget it, or pull an old newspaper clipping out his wallet as proof, Tommy left the bar and went to Teterboro airport again.

Once again, Tommy committed an act of air piracy and stole an airplane. Once again, he threaded his way through Manhattan skyscrapers while drunk as a Lord. Once again, he managed to land the plane [a Cessna 120] safely near the bar in the dead of night [about 1 AM on October 5, 1958 on Amsterdam Ave. near 187th St.].

Once again, he was arrested. Except this time, the judge threw the book at him and it wasn't a flight manual. Judge

John A. Mullen may have been surprised to see Tommy in front of him for the same offense, but this time the judge was not inclined to be charitable to him, "You're not going to make an airstrip out of a New York City street," he said. Tommy found himself "grounded" for six months. Not just from flying, but from anything.

He was going to jail.

After his release, Tommy was not only clean and sober, but also a reformed man. He returned to his wife and career as a steamfitter and lived to the ripe old age of 79, passing away in September 2009. He seemed a refutation of the saying that "There are bold pilots and there old pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots."

In a fitting tribute, bars in the Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan still offer a drink named for him. It is called the "Late Night Flight."

VA Aid and Attendance Benefit

VA Aid and Attendance Benefits and Housebound Allowance

The Veteran Affairs (VA) Aid and Attendance Pension Benefit is not well known. The following information from the VA website is presented to make members aware of the benefit. Additional information is available from the VA or on-line resources.

From the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs website:

VA Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits provide monthly payments added to the amount of a monthly VA pension for qualified Veterans and survivors. If you need help with daily activities, or you're housebound, find out if you qualify.

Veteran or Survivor Eligibility

You may be eligible for this benefit if you get a VA pension and you meet at

Continued on Page 26

VA Benefits (from Page 25)

least one of these requirements.

At least one of these must be true:

You need another person to help you perform daily activities, like bathing, feeding, and dressing, **or**

You have to stay in bed – or spend a large portion of the day in bed – because of illness, **or**

You are a patient in a nursing home due to the loss of mental or physical abilities related to a disability, **or**

Your eyesight is limited (even with glasses or contact lenses you have only 5/200 or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less)

Housebound Benefits Eligibility

You may be eligible for this benefit if you get a VA pension and you spend most of your time in your home because of a permanent disability (a disability that doesn't go away).

Note 1. You can't get Aid and Attendance benefits and Housebound benefits at the same time.

You can apply for VA Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits by either sending a completed VA Form 21-2680 to your pension management center (PMC) or by bringing your information to a VA regional office near you.

VA Form 21-2680

Fill out VA Form 21-2680 (Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance) and mail it to the PMC for your state. You can have your doctor fill out the examination information section.

You can also include with your VA form:

Other evidence, like a doctor's report, that shows you need Aid and Attendance or Housebound care

Details about what you normally do during the day and how you get to places

Details that help show what kind of illness, injury, or mental or physical disability affects your ability to do things, like take a bath, on your own

Note 2. The evidence needed to support your claim for benefits is extensive. See the VA website for specific requirements.

Note 3. If you're in a nursing home, you'll also need to fill out a Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance (VA Form 21-0779).

Editor's Note. This is provided as information only. Please contact the VA or other resources if you want more information or assistance with the application.

One Damned Island After Another

by Clive Howard and
Joe Whitley
1946



This is the first of a series of excerpts from "One Damned Island after Another; The Saga of the Seventh," that will be included in future "C-7A Caribou Association Newsletters." Clive Howard and Joe Whitley were both Sergeants who served as war correspondents for the Seventh Air Force during World War II.

7th Air Force's War in the Pacific

The air war and bombing campaign in the Pacific differed drastically from that in Europe.

Flyers in this theater needed all the innovations and ingenuity possible to overcome handicaps peculiar to the Pacific. In Europe our bombers flew comparatively short missions with strong fighter escort and hit targets that were often larger than several atolls combined. Men of the Seventh were flying missions at this time [1944] that averaged 2,431 miles, hitting pin-point

targets on infinitesimal islands. Usually they had to fight their way into and away from a target. They rarely had fighter escort. (*One Damned Island after Another*, page 184)

Born of Necessity

Operation Flintlock was the U.S. campaign plan for the Marshall Islands. The main phase was the capture of Kwajalein and Majuro atolls. D-Day for Kwajalein was set for 31 January 1944. Beginning in November 1943, Seventh Air Force aircraft began bombing strategic targets in preparation for the invasion. The primary targets were Mille and Maloelap, the most powerful Japanese bases that could be used to threaten Flintlock.

Some of the battered B-24 Liberators and their crews were saved by amazing mixtures of prayer and guts and Yankee resourcefulness. The *Texas Belle* was one of them.

The target had been Maloelap. For an hour-and-a-half after unloading its bombs, the *Belle* had fought a running battle with thirty Zekes.

Lt. Charles F. Pratte, the *Belle's* pilot, coaxed and prayed the shot-up airplane four hundred miles back to the Gilberts. His only hope was a landing on one of the Tarawa airstrips. The *Belle's* hydraulic system was shot out; therefore, no brakes.

Construction on the strip Pratte picked had gone just far enough to accommodate fighter aircraft, and a sizable crowd was collected to witness the first landing by a Navy fighter. At this point, the *Texas Belle* came along and stole the show.

With no brakes, and with a field too short even for a healthy bomber, Pratte faced the almost certain prospect of piling up the Liberator on a coral heap at the [approach] end of the runway. Or, avoiding that, he could boil down the short strip and into the sea.

To make matters just a little worse, one engine quit as Pratte came down for landing. He managed to pull up

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Saga of the 7th (from Page 26)

and circle again. Then he got an idea. It turned out to be one of the most original ideas of the whole war.

Going into the down-leg, Pratte called out a series of orders over the intercom. They sounded like crazy orders; but orders crazy or not, are orders. So the two waist gunners did as they were told. They rigged parachutes to their gun mounts and arranged the packs so that – if everything worked out as the pilot thought it might – the chutes would pop open in the slipstream. The tail-gunner, also following instructions, rigged a chute to his gun mount.

As the wheels of the *Texas Belle* touched the runway at a speed well over 100 miles an hour, Pratte called out one more order. The gunners yanked at their ripcords and three parachutes simultaneously blossomed open like a series of sea anchors. The *Belle* was eased to a stop four or five yards from the edge of the ocean.

The stunt drew a special commendation from General [Hap] Arnold, who, in a letter to Major General [Willis] Hale, described the parachute landing as, “unique, so far as I know, in operational history.” More important, it became an almost standard method for landing brakeless bombers, first, in the Pacific and, later, all over the world. (*One Damned Island after Another*, pages 161-162)



Supersonic Flight with No Sonic Boom

militaryaerospace.com

March 1, 2022



Washington, D.C. There was plenty to gape at as NASA Langley Research Center staff briefed members of Virginia’s Capitol Hill delegation, but it was the slender, streamlined X-59 with its promise of supersonic flight without sonic booms that may have best exemplified the work of the nation’s oldest aeronautics lab, Dave Ress reports for *The Daily Press*.

The Military & Aerospace Electronics take: The X-59 is shaped to reduce the loudness of a sonic boom reaching the ground to that of a gentle thump, if it is heard at all. Slated to start test flights next year, it will be flown above select U.S. communities to generate data from sensors and people on the ground in order to gauge public perception. That data will help regulators establish new rules to enable commercial supersonic air travel over land.

Usually, engines are placed on the bottom of an aircraft, but on the X-59 this section of the inlet and engine are mounted to the top of the plane. This way, supersonic shock waves from the inlet and engine are shielded by the wing – one of the many ways that NASA reduces the sonic boom to a sonic thump, similar to the slamming of a car door.

After proving the aircraft works as designed and can fly safely in the national airspace, NASA will fly the X-59 over participating communities to understand their response to the X-59’s sonic thump. NASA will provide this data to federal and international regulators for them to consider setting new guidelines for possible future supersonic commercial travel over land.

New National Suicide Hotline

by Kevin Lilley

July 18, 2022

MOAA

The new national three-digit suicide hotline – **988** – went live July 16, 2022, and veterans in crisis who dial the number can **press 1** for immediate access to the Veterans Crisis Line.

The 10-digit Lifeline number (800-273-8255) will remain in effect and will reroute calls to 988 indefinitely. Veterans also may obtain crisis resources at *VeteransCrisisLine.net* or by texting 838255.

Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care or receive VA benefits to access the Veterans Crisis Line. The line also is available to currently serving members.

Veterans are asked to continue texting 838255 to reach Veterans Crisis Line personnel. Those in crisis can text 988 to contact a counselor.

The Veterans Crisis Line has received more than 6.2 million calls since its 2007 launch.

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

Bou Surprise!

by Richard Patterson [459, 69]

I was visiting Costa Rica with friends. One of them saw a Caribou as we drove to the Parador Resort in Parrita near the beach known as Beauvoir.

The chauffeur stopped on the way back and I met a young woman as I looked at the Caribou and took pictures. She told me that it had been used to carry food and other equipment. I told her I had flown this type of plane in Vietnam, but she was too young to appreciate the significance. Looking through the window, I saw the seats were not like the ones we used in Vietnam. There was no tail number visible, so I have no idea how old it is.

The chauffeur told me that another Caribou painted blue was located up north. It was given to the National Police for use in drug enforcement, but the location was too far for us to visit on the trip. It was a big surprise to find Caribous in Costa Rica!



Editor's Note. In the early 1990's, two DHC-4 Caribous were acquired by the Costa Rica National Police for its air wing. DHC-4 MSP001 is on static display at Esterillos town center, Bejuco, Puntarenas, Costa Rica.

DHC-4 MSP002 painted dark blue and white with "Policia" markings is on static display at Daniel Oduber Quiros International Airport, Liberia, Costa Rica.

Training VNAF Pilots

by Gregory Custer [458, 71]
from *C-7A Caribou Association
Newsletter Vol. 26, No. 2*

My Bou experience began in 1971, with orders to Dyess AFB for C-7A training. I had been selected for upgrade to Aircraft Commander in the C-141, but that was delayed when I got my orders to Dyess.

After survival school at Fairchild AFB and jungle survival at Clark in the Philippines, we headed to Cam Ranh Bay. In our group were some young Captains, several from pilot training. At the time we had no idea what the future would hold for us. After an "in-country" check out and rapid up-grades to Instructor Pilot (IP), eventually Flight Examiner, we were told that we would be part of a school to train Vietnamese personnel for the transfer of Caribous to the VNAF.

We spent three months at Cam Ranh Bay flying missions and gaining "in-country" experience. Then the school began at Nha Trang. After a couple of months there, we were moved to Phu Cat. I think we were moved in order to keep an American presence at Phu Cat, as the base had been transferred to the Vietnamese.

We were tasked with missions over the entire country. We originally planned to train several hundred pilots, but that was someone's pipe dream. My first student was Capt. Dam, a wonderful man and an even better pilot. He had many thousands of hours in the C-47, had been educated at the Sorbonne in Paris, and was a joy to fly with. My next few student pilots were not quite as talented.

By the time we got to copilot training, we were often working with pilots that had little experience flying, or operating machines in general. We learned not to ask if they knew how to do something, as the answer was always "Yes." Instead, we learned to say, "Tell me how to fly that procedure turn." "Tell me your plan for this short field landing."

After training a few Copilots that were competent, we got to the point where we were checking out Copilots if they could handle the gear and the flaps.

I think there were twelve IPs and we had a wonderful cadre of NCOs. I can't give enough credit to the enlisted troops that I worked with during my entire Caribou experience.

Other than about six O-2 FACs (Forward Air Controllers) and their crews, we [were] the only Americans on base. If we got rocketed it wasn't reported to U.S. intelligence so intelligence briefings never included rocketing at Phu Cat.

On June 25, one of the O-2 FACs and one of my instructors from Laughlin AFB, Dave Yoakum, was shot down and killed by a SAM-7 very near the base. To lose a friend on that date knocked me down a little extra. I have always been aware that was the date Gen. G. A. Custer died at the Little Bighorn. That was the farthest south we had evidence of SAM-7's at that time.

Several times we took small arms fire on final, as base security wasn't great. A round lodged in the wing spar, behind my head, and it was dug out and given to me by my crew chief with a hole drilled in it. It was a lucky charm on my dog tags for the rest of my flying career.

When the weather was terrible or the missions risky, the Vietnamese pilots were less likely to show up. Then, missions ended up being flown by two American IPs. For a couple of weeks we had no student pilots, as they became ill after swimming in the Phu Cat swimming pool that hadn't been treated chemically since the Americans had transferred the base.

The flying was fantastic. Memories of short field landings in beautiful mountain valleys, using short runways with drop-offs at both ends, supporting troops in dire need, avoiding boats and islands by using radar "feet wet" up the coast during the monsoon, and turning off the active [runway] at the beginning

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Training VNAF (from Page 28)

of the runway when the winds were strong at Cam Ranh Bay were all part of a great flying experience.

The response we got from the troops on the ground was incredible, especially when their times were tough. Flying wounded or KIAs was always sobering.

It was a tough airplane, perfect for its task. It seemed no matter what you did to it, it went at 120 knots, and 66 or 68 knots on final.

After my year was up, I went back to C-141's for a short time, then separated to attend dental school.

For 17 years I did dentistry four days a week and flew two days a week in the Air National Guard, the last 10 years in the A-10. I got about a thousand hours in the A-10 in ten years. I think I got over a thousand hours in the Caribou in one.

Still No Hot Water

by John Record [457, 70]

Hot water for showering was elusive and hard to come by. I always seemed to miss it. No matter my strategy and timing, there was no hot water when I made it to the showers.

I was determined to have a hot shower. One morning I set my alarm really early. All the hootches were dark as I felt my way to the community showers at 5 AM.

I expected to be alone as I unwrapped my towel and turned on the hot water. Suddenly I heard a chorus of giggles. At the far end of the showers I saw six young Vietnamese women who had been working late. They were giggling and chatting as they towed themselves off after finishing their showers.

I stared. They giggled and waved. I went back to my shower. They dressed and left.

There I was, alone, at 5 in the morning, taking another cold shower. The six shower maidens had used all the hot water.

Xinh Loi, Vietnam

from Wallaby Airlines

by Jeff Pedrina [No. 35 Sq, 66]

Jeff Pedrina was a Caribou pilot with No. 35 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, at Vung Tau, August 1966 – August 1967. The following is excerpted from the Epilogue of his book "Wallaby Airlines, Twelve Months Flying in Vietnam" © Commonwealth of Australia 2006.

For a long time [after returning to Australia], I tried not to think about Vietnam. It was an experience shared with a group of colleagues – a few close friends, the rest merely working acquaintances – which bore absolutely no relationship to my real world.

The trouble with Vietnam was that only a handful of people wanted to talk about it. None of my Air Force colleagues who had not been there were particularly interested. To civilian friends and acquaintances, Vietnam was an aberration, which had no importance in their lives at all. They just did not want to know. Somehow we expected more from our neighbors.

After the indifference came outright opposition to any military involvement, especially the use of conscripts. There were street marches and anti-Vietnam rallies led by politicians. Even for permanent servicemen like me, expected to go anywhere at any time for any reason, the controversy was unsettling and demoralizing. It must have been even more so for the conscripts.

Vietnam would not go away. The daily news, at first a trickle of reports on the Tet Offensive and its aftermath, broadened to a stream of garbage about the peace accords and the phony politics of "Vietnamization." It finally became a flood of gut-wrenching accounts of the collapse of the South and the ignominious departure of the last guarantors of so-called anti-Communist freedom.

Then came the pitiful flight of the boat people, who braved cyclones, pi-

rates and disease to deliver themselves to the countries that had promised them such freedom....

What happened to you, Vietnam? Are your rice paddies and green hills peaceful now, or do men still ravage your timeless beauty and disturb your serenity? What happened to your cities and buildings – beautiful Dalat, fragile Hue, Nha Trang and its Buddha? And where are your people?

I left no loved ones in Vietnam, but I did care about the local people around us – Missy Lanh, Missy Kim and the other girls from the Villa, Xuan, our smiling self-conscious typist, Charlie from the hangar, the bargirls, coolies, and peasants.

Why did they not triumph? Was it our fault or theirs? Was our effort worth anything at all, or was the end inevitable as many people said?

What happened to me, Vietnam? In 12 months, I doubled my flying experience, and flew the most interesting and challenging flights of my career, past and future. My professional competence was enhanced in a way not possible under peacetime conditions. I learnt a little more of life, more of organizations, more about people, more about myself.

But I lost something too. I gave you a year of my life. You called and I responded, not because of any moral commitment to your cause, but because a professional military man would never do otherwise. Even knowing what I know now, I would have gone anyway. And like a jilted lover I still care and wonder what might have been had the end been different.

The Vietnamese expression *Xinh Loi* translated into English means something like "sorry about that" or "that's life." But the translation is inadequate. The sad but knowing eyes, the half-smile, the slight shrug of the shoulders, the way Missy Lanh would say it in her singsong voice; these are lost in the translation.

"Xinh Loi, Vietnam."

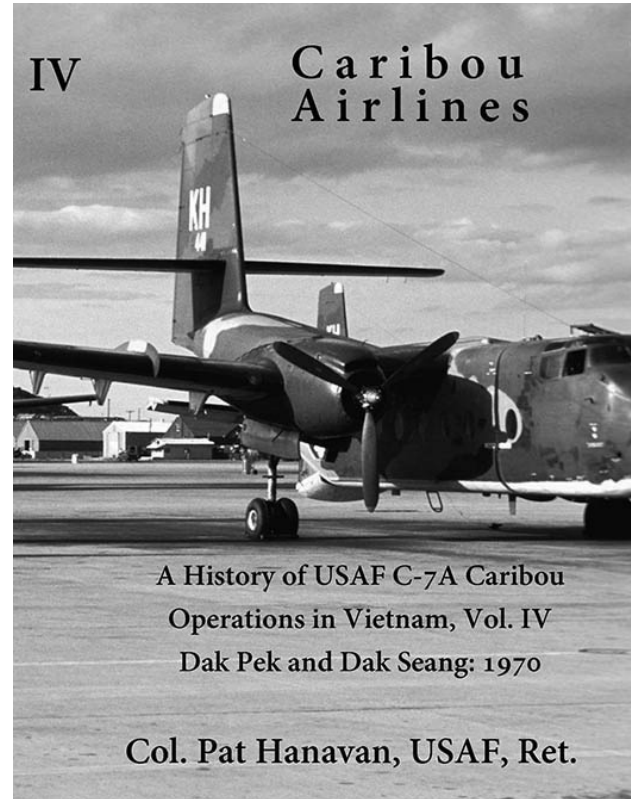
Caribou Airlines Volumes I - V

by Pat Hanavan [535, 68]

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

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

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



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Edited by Bruce Cowee [458, 68]

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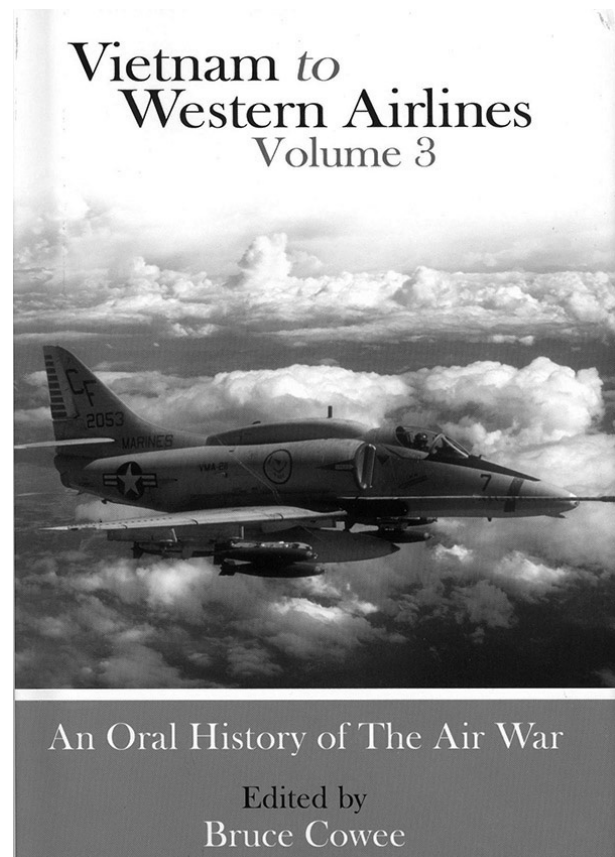
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