

Phan Rang AB Newsletter

The History of Phan Rang AB and the stories of those who served there.
"Keeping the memories alive" Newsletter 245

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AFTERMATH - A FAMILIES TRAGEDY



by Doug Britt and Doug Severt

The Accident

On October 25, 1967 a C-123 was getting ready to head back to Phan Rang Air Base and before they could even take off a giant tropical thunderstorm settled in over the field in Saigon. They were already on the runway when they decided that the storm was just too violent for them to take off so they requested and got permission to return to the parking ramp, but because there were aircraft behind them the only way to get back was to taxi down the active runway.

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Meanwhile, Olympia 01 was advised to divert to Tan Son Nhut AB (SGN) and he did so right after post-strike air-to-air refueling was accomplished. Maj. Aquilla Britt flying his F-105 proceeded alone to Saigon. Visibility was still poor and he would have flown the instrument approach until he was about a half mile out and then he would have been looking for what is called the landing environment or at the least the approach lights, or even maybe the physical end of the runway, since he did land, he picked up some part of it. As he transitions to landing he raises the nose as he flares and has little forward visibility. Touching down, he drops the nose and that would have most likely been when he first saw the C-123 - he's still at or above 100 knots and if he "yanked the stick to the left" he would have rolled the airplane and done little to change his direction. This is all pure speculation because visibility was low because of the storm and it's possible that he never even saw the C-123 before striking it and it's also unlikely that he ever had a chance to eject or let alone make a conscious decision to steer away, but the stark reality of the accident is it was just that, a terrible accident that like a LOT of accidents was not brought on by any one thing but rather a series of events which led to his death and life changing circumstances.

In the News

Panama City Herald

Telephone 763-7621

1962 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

The World's Most Beautiful Beaches

Circulation 763-7627

★
ONE KILLED, FOUR INJURED
★

*Transport Plane,
Jet Collide In Air*

The Tipton Daily Tribune

**Plane Crash in
Saigon Closes
Busy Airport**

THE *Columbian* DAILY TELEGRAM

**Fighter-bomber jet,
transport collide**

The Corpus Christi Times

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1967

**Fighter-Bomber,
Transport Collide
On Saigon Field**

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<p>Thunderchief And Transport Crash At Saigon (The Brazil Daily Times, Brazil, Indiana) 25 Oct. 1967</p>	<p>C123, Jet Crash At Saigon Field; One Flier Killed (Charleston Daily Mail, Charleston, WV.) 25 Oct. 1967</p>
<p>SAIGON (UPI) —An F105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber jet coming in for a landing in a heavy downpour at Saigon s Tan Son Nhut airport tonight crashed into a C123 transport plane taxiing along the runway. The planes exploded into an orange fireball that lit up the sky.</p> <p>A spokesman said the pilot of the Thunderchief was killed and the four crewmen aboard the C123 Provider were injured. They were removed from the wreckage by teams clad in asbestos suits and rushed to a hospital. One suffered a broken leg, the other three were burned.¹</p> <p>The rain was so heavy the airport—the world’s largest and busiest—was closed to all flights for a time after the crash. It is just outside Saigon and is used by both commercial and military planes.</p> <p>A spokesman said the left wing of the F105 collided with the right wing of the C123. There was a tremendous explosion and the</p>	<p>SAIGON (AP) — A twin-engine U. S. Air Force transport plane and a single-engine jet fighter bomber crashed at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport tonight and the jet pilot was killed.</p> <p>Four crewmen aboard the C123 transport received "varying degrees of injuries," an Air Force spokesman said. The transport plane normally carries a crew of five.</p> <p>The crash was at the end of the airport's main runway in a driving tropical rainstorm. Reports said the F105 was landing in the heavy weather and the transport plane was taxiing across the runway after completing a maintenance check on the other side of the field.</p> <p>The right wing of the F105 struck the left wing of the transport and "we had two big fires all of a sudden," a witness said.</p> <p>(The UPI story in the left pane is basically correct except the side of the aircraft that was struck is incorrect, because the right side</p>

¹ SSgt Curtis Edward Stieferman, the C-123 Provider loadmaster, died from his burns a few days later on 4 November 1967.

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two planes skidded about 500 feet where they burned. Wreckage still littered the runway an hour and a half after the crash. The C123 was taxiing from one side of the field to the other for a maintenance check when the crash occurred.

of the F105 struck the left side of the C123, but the AP dispatch had it correct. However the AP story states that the C123 was crossing the runway, but they were actually traveling down the runway and the crash did not occur at the end of the runway, but 2,000 feet down a runway that was 12,468 feet long. Dispatches from both news agencies were repeated hundreds of time.)

It's ironic that the very same newspapers that reported the crash of the F105 and the C123 also many carried the story “Jets Return For 2nd Run At MIG Base” which was the very same raid that Maj. Britt had been involved in.

Here's the story: *Panama City Herald*, October 25, 1967, Panama City, Florida

SAIGON (UPI) — U.S. planes bombed North Vietnam's Phuc Yen air base today for the second consecutive day then hit Hanoi's mile-long Paul Doumer Bridge, swooping in so low they could see the cottage residence of President Ho Chi Minh. Hanoi Radio reported air battles over the city.

Wave after wave of American fighter-bombers hit the key targets in the most intensive air attacks of the war in an effort to knock out the North Vietnamese air force and wreck the Communist nation's war potential.

Hanoi Radio said North Vietnamese ground forces and MIGs shot down 10 U.S. aircraft today, eight over Hanoi and two northwest of the capital. The Communist reports are invariably exaggerated but do indicate major air action.

Hanoi reported nine American planes shot down over the North Tuesday: an Air Force spokesman said four planes were shot down and their pilots lost. The American spokesman had no report of losses in today's deadly bombardment.

Hanoi said several American pilots were captured today when their planes were hit by anti-aircraft batteries, surface to air (SAM) missiles and interceptor aircraft. The broadcast

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said "heavily populated areas of the city and its suburbs" were hit.

The Doumer Bridge, last hit on Aug. 11, is a rail and road bridge leading from the heart of Hanoi across the Red River toward Red China. It is one of the most valuable means of transport of supplies from China.

A spokesman said U.S. fighter-bombers attacked in two waves and that the bombs were on target. He said the pilots flew low to escape radar detection and SAM attacks they could easily see the little cottage where Ho lives.

Pickup 4th: The Phuc

American jets hit the base Tuesday for the first time during raids against North Vietnam in which four U.S. planes were shot down, spokesmen said.

Pilots returning from today's raid against the base 18 miles northwest of Hanoi reported the North Vietnamese had worked all night frantically trying to fill with gravel and concrete the runway craters made by American bombs in Tuesday's attack.

They reported they not only pounded the heavily defended base once more but also struck 13 Surface to Air (SAM) Missile sites. 12 flak positions and three or four radar centers defending Phuc Yen. Air Force commanders listed the field as one of North Vietnam's five most heavily guarded targets and the nerve center of the nation's air defenses.

Despite Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's earlier concern that raiding Phue Yen might prove more costly than leaving it alone, Washington stripped it from the list of untouchable targets Tuesday.

The field was blamed for the fact that in the past two months, six U.S. planes were shot down in dogfights while only two North Vietnamese jets were destroyed in the aerial fighting.

The blows against Phu Yen left Gia Lam airfield across a river from Hanoi, the only remaining untouched MIG base in North Vietnam. Apparently its continued use by International Control Commission (ICC) and other non-combatant planes kept it on the American fliers list of banned

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targets.

The Aftermath

by Doug Britt

Strange noises woke me so I got up to see what was up. I was going to be 7 in December of 1967 and Dad had told me “*You’re the Man of the house while I’m gone, so help your Mom son.*” A duty I took seriously.

The day we were notified is probably somewhat of a blur and even possibility made up from pseudo memories that were repressed through the years. I don’t remember if it was the Chaplin and military escort or my Aunt and Uncle as both arrived at about the same time. I wasn’t really awake. As soon as I said something like, “What’s going on?” Mom picked me up and took me to the bathroom and shut the door. She sat on the stool setting me down in front of her. “*Douglas, your father is dead and he’s not coming home.*”

The whole family was still in shock; our world just ended...or at least that’s what it seemed at the time. Our family was now only my mom and my younger brother, Bryan, who is 5 years younger than me. When I calmed down she put me on the couch and I fell asleep under a blanket she put over me.

We moved from Fairfield, CA. (Travis AFB) to El Cajon, CA. to live with Mom’s Parents. This changed our entire extended family of Mom’s and Dad’s families. We were broken in many ways.

Losing a parent is so strange because you go through the rest of your life not being able to see or talk to them ever again, but you still feel like you will. Every once in a while, it all just hits you that they are literally never coming back and you feel the feeling of losing them all over again. It’s taken me years to come to terms with losing Dad.

I had to take summer school for 3rd grade and a couple sessions with a nice lady with some Ink Blots for me to look at. “Evaluations”, I wasn’t nuts but I didn’t play with others. For me, hmm, “I wouldn’t let anyone get close so I wouldn’t get hurt like that again.” But it was twofold, I

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kept everyone at a distance while wanting to be part of the herd and not knowing how. There’s a book I read in college, “*Painted Bird*”. It’s about a boy that survived the camps, forever wounded and how he struggled to get into the herd and totally failed.

Every pit-fall that you can think of when there is no father figure came into play for me but my brother Bryan, was only two when Dad died and he adjusted better than I did but we both wound up with holding people at a distance and not fitting in for various reasons, but we adjusted to that. I went into the National Guard while still in High School. I served with an Artillery unit. 8-inch 110 and I volunteered for Special Weapons which were classified. That was an eye opener. After graduation I went to a local College but I was totally not ready for it and a year later I went to work for my step father who had leased a gold and silver mine In Colorado.



Doug Britt (age 33) and his brother Bryan (age 28)

Mom had remarried a couple of times but it wasn’t her strong suit, She’s a City Mouse and in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado they had only paved the Main Highway and where we lived

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was it was very rural. Three party Phone lines, trailer homes and every animal in North America could and did walk across our yard like deer, elk, black bears, grizzlies and pine martens, wolverines.

I later went to work for the 3rd largest Gold mine in the US and that lasted until Gold dropped to \$400 oz. and we all lost our jobs, the mine closed and that and a lot of other mines were bought up by the Chinese Government after 2008. Anyway I wound up in the Regular Army for a tour with a couple of years in New Jersey and a couple of years in Mannheim, Germany. I had to change my MOS to Motorpool Supply because all the combat arms were full. There was a huge cash incentive at the time. SO I took what I could get.

I should have waited for one of the Combat Arms slots to open up, I was very disappointed with the Cold War in a Transportation Motor pool. So I got out when my enlistment was up and worked in San Diego for a Plumbing installation Company. That lasted for a Couple of years until California put a hold on new construction in the State. I moved back to Colorado and went to work where ever I found a Job. Nine years in the restaurant business in a tourist town. Then nine years In a VERY progressive Tourist town, Telluride, Colorado. I went to work in the Only Aerial Tramway operating as Commuter Service over the mountain between Telluride and Mountain Village “The Gondola”. I started as an operator then Trainer then Supervisor. Met and married my wife Linda there. Our wedding was high in the Mountains above Ouray, Colorado in '04.

I served in an M-60 Tank Company while I worked in Southern California prior to my RA enlistment. Went to Ft. Erwin for our summer deployment as an M-60 crewman, I was in heaven in the desert. I also managed to fall of the top of my tank. My boot caught on the hatch, I guess, and I did a 360, missed the deck and landed in the sand on my left leg. My left calve turned black, the whole muscle from the ankle to the back of the knee. I was sent to the medic, he looked at it, had me walk across the room and returned me to duty. I wound up taking pills to keep me in the work force for the next 25 years. The dose went up as the ankle, knee, hip, tore themselves slowly apart. You take codeine and Vicodin for 25 years and no matter how careful you are you get addicted. When that happened I quit on my own. That was 6 weeks of hell I don't want to repeat. I haven't had any since but I couldn't work anymore either.

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GOD covered us through it all. The timing of everything was so precise it couldn't be anyone else. That includes every tragedy in both our lives. Had anything been changed we would never have met. We are perfect for each other and we now live happily in our dream home with our 4 dogs.

Just an addendum, while I was in Germany I served as our Units NBC (Nuclear, Biological & Chemical) NCO. 20 days before I shipped out to the States, The Soviets had a problem with one of their reactors at Chernobyl. When the news broke I went to my Captain and asked what he wanted me to do as we were receiving fallout. He told me we were not going to monitor anything and I was not to talk to anyone about it. I asked for those orders in writing and he refused. So, I went to my office got my gear together and began monitoring the event. I set a personal dosimeter on my window ledge, in my basement office and carried another on my person until I signed it all back in as part of my out processing. I took 45+ rads plus 2 days I didn't wear a meter. I ate and drank only canned foods, did my PT indoors while the company PT was done outside. I took my iodine and the Germans did likewise. The German Government closed their school system. The weather patterns kept circling Germany and the Rhine Valley. The Germany I served in, their culture, is now gone. They are forever changed because of it. About 1996, I was working for my step fathers Lab and a Geiger counter came back from being recalibrated and I was testing it against a known source. While doing this we discovered that if you set the wand on by chest it would double the background reading. 2x what it read when we set it across the room from me. Cesium Isotopes in the lungs, we reached 'half-life' about 5 years ago. So far, so good.

It took longer to come to terms with everything after. BUT if any one tragedy in my life or of my Wife's had NOT happened we would have never met, and I wouldn't change that, ever. So, there IS a happy ending. Along the way I learned mining, had a run in with education, 8 inch artillery, small nukes, Germany and radioactive fallout from Chernobyl, I was our units NBC NCO. Fun times.

My Dad - My Hero

My dad was the son of an Alabama Share-cropper. His name is unusual and he never liked it

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and he always preferred to be just called “Britt”. In Greek Aquilla means ‘Eagle’.

His dream was always to be an astronaut, but his height prohibited that so he followed his dream to be just a pilot. His first flying assignment was at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Boise, Id with the Strategic Air Command flying B-47s but later saw his future to be a fighter pilot and to make a greater contribution to the Vietnam War effort.

Dad was on his last mission. He picked the target, the men and the attack plan. It was customary for the pilots to have the last 3-5 of their 100 sorties as milk runs to avoid what happened to us. But that wasn’t Dad’s style. He picked downtown Hanoi and the main railway bridge into the city. At the time it was the most heavily defend air target in history if I remember correctly. This would have them flying over Thud ridge of which there is a book “Thud Ridge” by Colonel Jack Broughton.

That which followed: Their approach was good AA was as bad as it gets, I hear that’s usually the case because they have to fly the length of country and they knew they were coming. Maj. Britt led his flight and put all of his bombs on target. The sortie of 19 F-105’s followed in close order and everyone hit their target leaving the rail, auto and foot bridge heavily damaged. Having made their run they left Hanoi airspace without losing or injuring any of the Sortie, minor hits but everyone was in good shape.



Upon hearing of their success the powers that be ordered the flight home to Korat and diverted Maj. Britt to Saigon to debrief them and to award Maj. Britt the AFC. In addition the award ceremony would be filmed and made public. The War effort needed good press. They didn’t know it at the time but the Tet offensive was brewing and Walter Cronkite’s broadcast Would kill the support of middle America even though Tet offensive was a disaster for the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong, Walter Cronkite turned it into a win for Ho Chi Minh.

We’ve always thought Dad’s story was worth getting out

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there but we could never see how. Dad was the first to attack a heavily defended target near the Northern Border of North Vietnam, that's the Chinese border. He did this Solo, at Night and an instrument only attack. He was awarded the Silver Star for that. He was awarded a second one for flying guard on a wounded F-105 and fought off Mig attacks for half the trip home. That would be 2 of those. Distinguished Flying Cross's with a copper and a silver oak leaf and I think that makes 6 of those. The air medal 4 silver and one copper oak leaf, which should be 21 of those. Dad was a hot stick. Even at the end, he yanked the stick left. It would have been the ONLY thing he could do as there's no way he could let go, and yank the ejection handle. Just simply no time. He has all the usual medals and awards you get in service but these stand out in anyone's book.

(An analysis of this accident is covered in great detail in Phan Rang Newsletter 189 in an article titled “Hell on Runway 25Left”.)

It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were all willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all. Every day.

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Lt. Col. Byron Taschioglou's Taped Letter Home on May 7, 1972

Five days after the shutdown and bailout of AC-119 Gunship, Call Sign 'Stinger41'.

(The following is a transcript of that tape.)

Good morning folks, I will try to explain the story behind the note that I sent you a few days ago about not worrying. Again, before I start, don't worry, I'm OK but I'll start right from the beginning and give you the whole bit.

First of all I kinda lied a long time ago when I told you all of our flying was done in Laos; normally it is but because of the offences going on a couple of weeks ago they started sending our airplanes and crews down to Bien Hoa, which is a very large base about 8 miles north of Saigon and we started flying missions out of there.

I finally went down there on the 29th of April and we flew our first mission out of there to An Loc, a night mission. An Loc is about 50 miles north. We worked in support of some ground troops that were surrounded by bad guys. I used the term bad buys and good guys and I don't use it facetiously, but that's exactly how they are referred to around here. They don't use the term 'Gooks' or anything like that.

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We flew one mission on the 30th of April, the day after we got there. Then the next day they scheduled us for a triple affair where we flew out of Bien Hoa over the Central Highlands where then to Pleiku and the city of Kontum which I'm sure you read about. We went up there, counted the trucks, and we did destroy a couple and then landed at Pleiku where we got some gas and flew another mission out of there and up to the Kontum area where we made contact on the radio with an American Advisor who was in some pretty bad shape. He explained what happened...he had four tanks in which the South Vietnamese had and as soon as the bad guys showed up the South Vietnamese pulled their usual trick and abandoned their tanks and they just gave them to the bad guys.

So he asked us to go up there and spray the area with our guns and try to get our tanks back. What happened is the first time one of our type aircraft ever destroyed a tank and it happened to be one of ours, but he said that after that tank blew all of the VC started running from the area and he said they are in the woods. Then he asked us to direct our fire into the woods and we did, just firing into the woods where we thought they were and when we left and finished all of our ammunition he called us back and said “Thank You” “Thank You”, you saved the day for us and you should know that you killed 75 of them. It may sound like I'm very gung ho on this, but believe me I wasn't very happy about it, but I was sure happy that there was an American and he needed the help and we gave it to him.

After that we went back to Pleiku, which was very close, and got some more gas and you probably, saw on TV newsreels with evacuating Vietnamese civilians out of there and we witnessed it and it was truly a tragic mess.

After we were gassed up we went back to Kontum and helped this guy more if he needed it and we were supposed to recover at Bien Hoa so we couldn't really stay there too long because he needed fuel to get back so we left. When we got back home we found out we were flying for 18 hours and that was a long day so we all went to bed and I slept for 16 hours after that mission. When I woke up, which was just in time, because I got a call to get down here because you're flying this afternoon. So I went down to the squadron and we had an easy mission flying up to An Loc and do whatever was required. It was a day mission. Normally they don't like us flying a day mission because of taking chances of being seen and shot down.

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At An Loc we made contact again with an American Advisor who was surrounded by a regiment of bad guys. We were orbiting his position trying to find out exactly where he was so we could shoot an offset 200m away from him. As we were searching for his marker a damn 37mm gun came up and he hit us. We weren't sure how many shells hit us, but it ranged from two to six. We got one direct hit on our right engine and the others were all in the wings. Fortunately nothing hit the fuselage.

As soon as it hit the right engine (Our airplane which has two large reciprocating engines and two little jets on the edge of the wing) it immediately quit and caught fire. Very quickly after that the right Jet, they must have hit a fuel line or something like that, because it stopped but it wasn't burning. So we had two engines out and a fire and I didn't see the flames in the beginning were going all the way back beyond the fuselage...beyond the tail of the airplane. I was sitting on the opposite side of the airplane, so while we tried to put the fire out it wouldn't work and we were losing airspeed and altitude. At the time we were hit we were at 4700 feet and the terrain there was about 1200 feet, so we were only about 3500 feet off the ground and the pilot just couldn't hold it because the wing was torn apart, so all we tried to do is fly west and get into a safe area and when the airplane became uncontrollable, we'd just bail out.

The things that were on my mind when I was going back to that door, you wouldn't believe. The first thing I thought of was I didn't want to be the first guy out because I had been in aircraft emergencies before and we always brought the airplane home. In this case I knew we were only about 40 miles from the base and we might be able to bring it back, but I don't want to be down there and have the rest of the crew in the airplane. When I got to the door I already saw three parachutes open out there in front of me, I said “OK, I'm going”. There was no hesitation, as scared as I was I just leaped out and the next thing I knew I was flat on my back, the desired position, because we have chest packs and I pulled the 'D' ring and felt a little bit of a shock and I looked up and there was this lovely orange and white thing above me protecting me. Then I looked around and the first thing I did was to try and look for other parachutes and I counted six others. I was the fourth guy out..or the fifth, I'm not really sure. After counting the parachutes I watched the plane crash about 35 to 40 seconds after I jumped it just went into a straight down nose attitude and crash and it just exploded immediately upon impact. There were 10 people on our crew and there were 7 parachutes. That's not really too bad, 7 out of 10, we were lucky, but then I started realizing I needed to start worrying about the

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problem at hand.

While I was floating down I actually had a sense of euphoria for a little while. I said “boy this is really fun”. I dig it..I shook my head and cleared the cob webs said “get with it”, you got some problems coming up and then I started looking down around for triple-A, anti-aircraft and enemy positions and all of that, because that’s the most important thing.

While you’re on the ground it your responsibility to know if there are any bad guys around here so that when the rescue people come you can help them. I couldn’t see a thing, it was just dense jungle and then I realized the ground was coming up pretty fast and I was wondering whether I was going to go into a bunch of trees or not. Trees to a parachutist in South East Asia were our worst enemy. Around here the trees are so thick and tall they have what is called a triple canopy...in other words they have tall, tall, tall trees and a middle layer of trees and a layer of trees under that. There have been many guys that landed in the top canopy and looked down and thought the ground was right below them and got out of their chute but then fell another couple of hundred feet to another layer of the canopy. So when I was searching for a place to land fortunately I was not near any large concentration of trees...it looked more like brush. I breathed a sigh of relief.

The fall itself wasn’t bad. There wasn’t any wind out that day and I landed in a grove of bamboo. The first thing I did, sitting there on my tail, I asked myself how I felt...any broken bones or what? I actually physically felt myself in places and I was alright! When I stood up I did discover a small scratch on the inside of my thigh. Boy I was lucky and looked up at my parachute and knew I needed to get rid of it, but it was tangled, so I just gave up on it.

I then started running. They taught us to go away about 15 minutes from your parachute, but I just ran and stopped when I was tired. I sat down and reevaluated my situation and tried to make contact over one of the radios that we carry. I found a good hiding place and just stopped because I was too tired to move any further. I pulled out my radio and transmitted “Mayday” “Mayday” “Stinger 41 Delta how do you read”. Stinger 41 was the call sign of our aircraft and Delta was the alphabetical suffix, which meant it was me because each crew member had their own letter so that when you are talking to someone, they knew exactly who they were talking to. I took my hand off the transmit button and it couldn’t have been more

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than one second later, he said “Roger 41 Delta, I read you loud and clear, how are you?” I said I’m Ok and he said “Roger...assume cover, help is coming and don’t worry buddy”. That was the greatest sound I ever heard because there was one of our guys flying around and he saw parachutes, so he was flying cover for us right away.

Once you’ve made radio contact with someone and they know the general area that you’re in, you’ve got the thing half beaten, so I just pushed the antenna down and put the radio back in my vest, sat there and took a drink of water. We carry two quarts of water in flasks. The next thing I heard was machine guns going off which seemed to me to be about only 20 meters away, so I just got up on my hands and knees and started crawling through the jungle in the opposite direction from the sound of the machine gun. I really don’t know how long I crawled, but it seemed like a day, but I got out of there. I wanted to find another good hiding place and I found a reasonably good one, but I didn’t like it. I crawled under a dead limb that had a lot of growth on it. While there I camouflaged myself by darkening my face and I then I just layed there and waited.

Under no circumstances were those bastards going to get me as a POW. I was ready to fight it out with a regiment if I had to and I knew I had the advantage because I was under cover. It was impossible for anyone to move through that jungle without being heard, so I would know if someone was coming and I also know I was a good shot, so if I saw three guys come, I could get at least two of them.

I just waited and that damn machine gun came up again and it sounded closer, so I got out of my little hiding place and this time I found a dead tree with a lot of growth around it and it was hollow and it gave me 270 degree coverage. The opening of it faced in the area that I came...also the direction the machine gun fire was coming from.

I got on my radio and talked to the guys above me and he was also on the radio talking to each of the downed crew members trying to get positions. We were taught this at Clark that when you are in the jungle, chances are you wouldn’t be able to see the aircraft above you. You’ll have to vector your position to him with sound only but being a navigator direction just come naturally to me. “54321...you’re right over me” and he said “OK, I’ve got your spot, you’re a dot on this map” and I said “Great” and he said “are you going to move from there” and I said

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“Not until that machine gun come up” and he said “What machine gun?” I said it sounded to be South west of me and the next thing I heard were two planes bombing the shit out of that location and I never heard it again.

When an American flyer is down the whole war ends for the Air Force and everything is diverted to rescuing those men. We couldn't have been on the ground for more than half-an-hour there must have been 50 planes circling.

Finally the Jolly Green Giants, the rescue helicopters, arrived on the scene and they held off for a bit to make sure there wasn't any ground fire because they are just a sitting target. The first people that they go for are the ones that are most injured or in the most precarious position. So they picked up another guy first and I could hear the sound and it was fairly close to me and then I heard the Jolly Green say “OK next man to the south, I'm coming to you..puff smoke”. That meant to pull one of my smoke flares and what happened is two of us pulled our flares at the same time because we were so close to each other and didn't even know it. He came to the general area where the smoke was and he dropped his rescue device, called a 'penetrator'. I saw it, as it was fairly close to me...maybe 20 yards or so and I ran to it like a Green Bay Tackle. When I got to the penetrator, I just about had my arms around it and then they lifted it right up and they left. I almost sat there and cried.

I found out later that they got a fire warning light, so they left the area, but they came right back and lowered the penetrator again. This time it was dropped some distance from me so I had to get to it and by the time I did, the penetrator was going up with another guy...that guy that was close to me beat me to it. After him they dropped the penetrator again, this time about three feet from me, and I got on it and got into the airplane and what a beautiful ride.

They picked up a third guy immediately after they picked up me, he was cut up pretty bad on the penetrator when it pulled him up through the trees. He was bleeding pretty bad and he was a mess. The helicopter then started to leave and I asked “why are you leaving” and they told me that the other Jolly Green picked up the rest of them and one guy was picked up by an Army helicopter after being on the ground for only 15 minutes.

Arrived at Tan Son Nhut...it was already dark. When I stepped out of the helicopter the first

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thing that I saw was a can of beer. This guy had a six-pack and was opening the cans and handing them to us as we got of the helicopter. I was so thirsty and I never chug-a-lugs a beer so fast in my whole life and then he gave me another one as I was walking towards the ambulance. They were taking pictures of us and I felt like one of those POWs, you know some of those horrible pictures you see of those guys.



2 May 72, Rescued Crew Members Heading to the Hospital. Left to right: Tasch Taschioglou, Larry Barbee and Yogi Bare. Strings were part of survival vest. Photo by Roy Davis

Made it to the hospital. I was asked how I was and what I wanted to drink and I said ‘Scotch’ and the guy hands me the biggest hooker of straight Scotch I’ve ever had in my life, but boy, I needed it.

While I was sitting outside the emergency room this doctor comes up and ask how I’m and I told him I was fine, but maybe a little scared. He said there must be something, so I told him about the scratch on my thigh, so he asked me to remove my flight suit, so I did and

then when I looked down at the scratch I almost fainted because it was very deep gash, out of which protruded some meat and fat. Then I just looked up at the Doc. and said “I hurt” and he said I know you do now, but it’s unbelievable with the adrenaline flowing I didn’t even know I had this thing. So he put me on the table and sewed me up and then spent the night in a hospital ward.

That night in the hospital nobody bothered us except all of the people that were in the recovery airplanes and talked to us and rehashed the whole situation because they were trying to figure out the three people that didn’t make it out, thinking maybe they did get out and they were injured and didn’t come up on their radios or something. The next morning intelligence came down and they debriefed us some and then we got on an airplane and went back to Bien Hoa.

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SURVIVORS OF THE STINGER 41 SHOOT DOWN ON 2 MAY 1972 Top Row: Larry Barbee, Craig Corbett, Ski Sledzinski, Tasch Taschioglou. Front Row: Yogi Bare, Dale Iman, Jimmy Barkalow. Aircraft is the A1-E flown by Sandy lead involved in Stinger 41 rescue Photo by Roy Davis

When we arrived at Bien Hoa we had to do the same damn thing, they had the doctor, who checked us all over and the same intelligence questions that they asked us in Saigon. Spent the night and then took a C-130 back to paradise at NKP. When we arrived here we taxied passed base operations I looked out the window and there must have been a thousand people there to welcome us. And when we got out of the airplane everyone was cheering...I felt like I was an astronaut and everyone ran to us, shook our hands and said how good it was to see us. They then quickly whisked us off and we went through intelligence debriefings again and then to the doctor where they checked us over again and gave us a tetanus shot.

I finally got back to my hooch, took a shower and got a phone call that there was a big party down here for you guys so I put on my Bermuda shorts and went down there. It truly was a fantastic party. They had steaks, nice salads and good ole corn-on-the-cob and 75 cases of beer. After everyone ate the commander got up from the crowd and official welcomed us back and he handed each of us a bottle of champagne. We popped the corks and started drinking and toasted the three guys that were still missing, then it happened to me and I just became uncontrollable crying. I was balling like a baby, I had my head down and I just couldn't stop

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crying. I knew I would have an emotional letdown, but just didn't know when. All of my good friends came to me and tried to console me, but I still couldn't stop and soon there wasn't a dry eye among them either. All in all it was a good party and everyone had a good time and got snookered.



2 May 72, Rescued Crew Members. Top Row: Yogi Bare, Tasch Taschioglou, Ski Sledzinski and Jimmy Barkalow. Front row: Craig Corbett, Dale Iman, Larry Barbee. Photo by Roy Davis.

Going back before I was rescued laying on the ground I thought to myself that I was never going to fly another combat mission in the gunship again. I made my mind up, but I haven't told my commander yet, but at the party he said I should go back to the cockpit immediately and I just humored him, but I'm going into his office tomorrow or whenever I have the guts to tell him that I'm hanging it up. Even if they ground me, I will refuse to fly in that airplane again,

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however it’s troubling me because I have that damn sense of honor, but I also have a great sense of survival too. **I just don’t want to be shot at anymore.**

Background	Crew
Date: 2 May 1972	Capt Terrance Francis Courtney (KIA)
Aircraft type: AC-119K Gunship III	1Lt Jim Barkalow (Survived)
Serial Number: 53-7826	Capt David Roddy Slagle (KIA)
Military Unit: 18 SOS, 56 SOW	Lt Col Tashioglou (Survived)
Service: USAF	1Lt Larry Barbee (Survived)
Home Base: Nakhon Phanom	SSgt Bare (Survived)
	SSgt Kenneth R Brown (KIA)
	SSgt Dale Iman (Survived)
	SSgt Ski Sledzinski (Survived)
	A1C Craig Corbett (Survived)

The first, and indeed only, AC-119 lost to enemy action by the USAF during the war was shot down during a daylight mission on 2 May. Six AC-119s were deployed to Bien Hoa on 15 April to assist in the defence of An Loc. It was rare for the slow and vulnerable AC-119s to fly during daylight hours but a C-130 had dropped ammunition to the defenders of An Loc and the load had fallen into enemy-held territory and had to be destroyed before the NVA found it. The AC-119, call sign Stinger 41, orbited over An Loc, which was still under intense siege, and waited to take its turn on the target. The AC-119 and an accompanying FAC were fired on by a 37mm anti-aircraft gun, which immediately became their new target. As the aircraft circled at 4,700 feet it was hit in the starboard wing by 37mm flak and limped away with the wing on fire. The piston engine on the starboard wing failed, the jet engine was blown off and the undercarriage leg swung down causing extra drag that the pilot was unable to counter. Seven of the crew bailed out as Capt Courtney fought to maintain control of the aircraft, but he and two other men were killed when the aircraft crashed about five miles from An Loc. The FAC was monitoring the bail out and the survivors were rescued over the next four hours by two HH-53s and a US Army UH-1 with the assistance of much suppressive fire from AC-130s, strike fighters and helicopter gunships. Stinger daylight missions were terminated following this incident.

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KIA's



Capt. Terrance Francis Courtney



Capt. David Roddy Slagle



SSgt Kenneth R. Brown

Click [here](#) to listen to Taschiglou tell his story and for a direct link to the AC-119 Gunship Associations web page, click [here](#).



Bomb Sights

The secret to 2SQN's bombing mission capability in Vietnam

George Hatchman, (right) ex WO Instruments, says: “Flight Sergeant Lionel Otto, RAAF WW2 Aircraft Instrument Fitter, was the RAAF's WW2 Norden Bombsight Specialist. I knew him well as I was the RAAF's 82WG T4 Bombsight Specialist in late 1960's.

The following is an extract from Lionel's biography plus info on my Bombsight background.

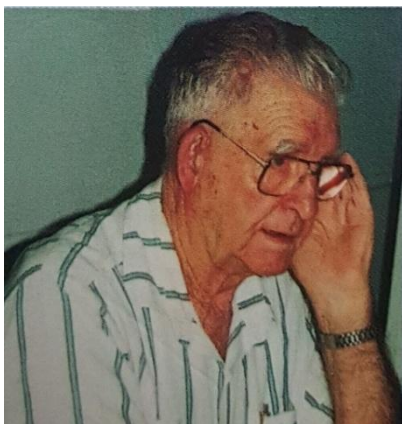


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I became very friendly with the famous Scotty Allen and we worked together to master what was known as ‘skip bombing’ by dropping torpedoes from 40 to 50 ft above the sea so they bounced and entered the enemy warships around the armour plate level. We were able to have a victory in the Coral Sea deploying this method. Later I was posted to a Liberator bomber wing in the Northern Territory which was equipped with the famous Norden Bombsight, but there was no equipment available to test and maintain it properly, so I made the first test equipment in the RAAF and dismantled the complete auto pilot and bombsight from a crashed bomber and set it up in an instrument section and showed the aircrew the correct method to using the bombsight.



George says: “As a young Corporal Instrument Fitter, I was appointed as the RAAF’s 82WG’s GAF Canberra Bomber T4 Bombsight Specialist leading up to the Vietnam War (circa 1965- 68) and on tasking by request of the Defence Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) SA, I conceived and carried out the initial prototype modifications to the design on the Bombsight Computer to enable the Canberra’s to have an accurate lower level bombing capability and subsequent use in that theatre (the T4 Bombsight were originally designed for hi-level ‘Dumb’ bombing with an effective bombing altitude ranging from 7,500ft up to 52,000ft’ - well before the concept of SAM’s).



I effectively modified the bombsight computer by incrementally profiling the altitude input servo ‘Pneumatic Height Interrupter Blade’ to proportionally input scale inclusion of 7,500ft down to 0ft calculations. My modified T4 Bombsight was sent for testing to WRE in SA and I was later informed that while my modified bombsight calibrations were accurate, the T4 (being an analogue computer) was found to be too slow in progressive update of release data to the Sight Head Reticule so at altitudes lower than 7,500ft this ‘lag’ time would make it impractical and unsuitable for low level bombing operations, however, the computed bombing ballistic data recorded from bench testing my modified bombsight was subsequently utilized by WRE to adapt a manual feed-in of the calculated ballistic data to the Bombsight Sight Head (by-passing the need for the computer to input incremental predictive reticule sighting release servo data)

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which proved very effective and accurate (not unlike the WW2 ‘Dam busters’ principle). I was tasked later to supervise the accuratisation of the T4 Bombsight Sight Heads at 3AD prior to their operational fitment and the Canberra Bomber’s deployment with 2SQN to Vietnam.

2SQN received a United States Presidential Unit Citation for their bombing mission capability in Vietnam and no doubt the T4 Bombsight’s accuracy contributed to this success. History does not formally record my contribution to the success of Canberra Bomber’s Vietnam War bombing accuracy with the only verification being entries documented on my RAAF Record of Employment but I am quietly proud of the legacy of my initial input.”

A little bit about the Norden Bomb Sights: The Norden M series is a bombsight that was used by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) and the United States Navy during World War II, and the United States Air Force in the Korean and the Vietnam Wars. It was an early tachometric design that directly measured the aircraft's ground speed and direction, which older bombsights could only estimate with lengthy manual procedures. The Norden improved on older designs by using an analog computer that continuously recalculated the bomb's impact point based on changing flight conditions, and an autopilot that reacted quickly and accurately to changes in the wind or other effects.

Together, these features promised unprecedented accuracy for daytime bombing from high altitudes. During pre-war testing the Norden demonstrated a circular error probable (CEP) of 75 feet (23 m), an astonishing performance for that period. This accuracy would enable direct attacks on ships, factories, and other point targets. Both the Navy and the USAAF saw it as a means to conduct successful high-altitude bombing. For example, an invasion fleet could be destroyed long before it could reach U.S. shores. To protect these advantages, the Norden was granted the utmost secrecy well into the war and was part of a production effort on a similar scale as the Manhattan Project. Carl L. Norden, Inc. ranked 46th among United States corporations in the value of World War II military production contracts.

Under combat conditions the Norden did not achieve its expected accuracy, yielding an average CEP in 1943 of 1,200 feet (370 m), similar to other Allied and German results. Both the Navy and Air Forces had to give up using pinpoint attacks. The Navy turned to dive bombing and skip bombing to attack ships, while the Air Forces developed the lead bomber procedure to improve accuracy and adopted area bombing techniques for ever larger groups of aircraft. Nevertheless, the Norden's reputation as a pin-point device endured, due in no small part to Norden's own

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advertising of the device after secrecy was reduced late in the war.

The Norden's secrecy had already been compromised by espionage before the United States entered the war. As early as January 1941, the Germans introduced a lightened derivative of the Norden called the Carl Zeiss Lotfernrohr 7 as the primary bombsight for most Luftwaffe level bombers and the first of its bombsights to have gyroscopic stabilization.

The Norden saw reduced use in the post-World War II period after radar-based targeting was introduced, but the need for accurate daytime attacks kept it in service, especially during the Korean War. The last combat use of the Norden was in the U.S. Navy's VO-67 squadron, which used them to drop sensors onto the Ho Chi Minh Trail as late as 1967.

The Norden remains one of the best-known and most overrated bombsights ever invented.

Doug's Comments:



I hope that you enjoyed this newsletter. If you have a story to tell, please write it down and send it to me so that your unique experiences can be saved for posterity. Remember if your stories are not written down and published, they will disappear over time. This newsletter was composed by Douglas Severt and all graphics by Douglas Severt. To see a list of all previous newsletters click [here](#). To unsubscribe to Phan Rang News, dougsevert@cox.net and put 'unsubscribe' in subject line.