

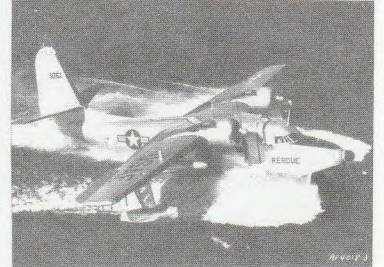
(From Bill Farnham comes some recollections of his "earlier years" in the Air Rescue Service--we include some of them here--Ed.)

48th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron

HC-54 on takeoff



Following a two-year tour with the 57th ARRS (1962-64) in the Azores, I was reassigned to the 48th ARRS, Eglin AFB, Florida. This too became another maturing period, personally and professionally. The fixed wing aircraft we flew were the Douglas HC 54, which I had flown in the Azores, and the Grumman HU 16 "Albatross", a twin-engine amphibian. The mission of the squadron was slightly different. There were some duckbutts, but not of the volume that we had in the Azores.



SPACE PROGRAM SUPPORT

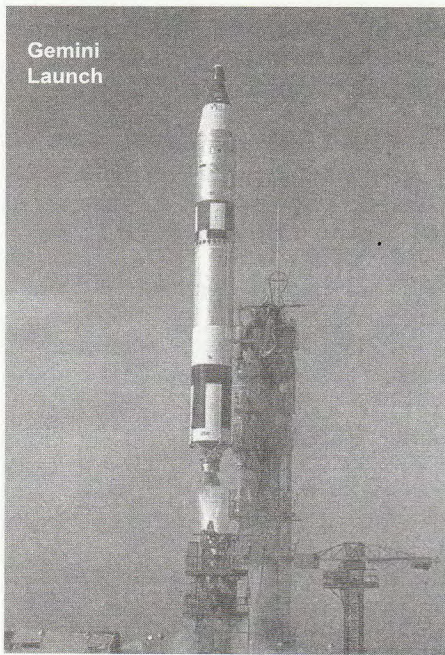
The U.S. space program was becoming more important and we had several hardware recovery missions. It was the importance of and the commitment to the program that resulted in ARRS receiving an up-to-date, state-of-the-art aircraft the Lockheed HC 130H. However, in the early days of the space program before the reentry accuracy was an expected and accomplished fact, we in Rescue, were tasked to locate and recover space hardware.

Shortly after I had signed in at Eglin, I was sent out on a crew to recover an experimental "lifting body" nose cone. Following our briefing at Patrick AFB, Florida, we went downrange and flew out of Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico for the mission. From our orbit some 300 miles from the islands, we picked up the radio signals and homed in on the data capsule upon entering the atmosphere. Everything worked as advertised and soon we were overhead preparing to deploy our pararescue-men; they were coming unglued! Three ecstatic PJ's jumped to an objective over 300 miles from the nearest land, leaving behind one disgusted jumpmaster in the aircraft; after landing in the water they put a flotation collar around the capsule and then climbed into a raft to await the arrival of the recovery vessel. Once in the raft, the PJ's discovered a rather large shark circling about. The story they relayed to us in the orbiting aircraft was that they first decided to light up some cigarettes with a day/night flare and then played with the shark by trying to burn him with the flare. After the recovery ship finally arrived on scene, we in the aircraft were released to proceed to Barbados where we were "forced" to wait for the ship to make port and retrieve our PJ's. There was absolutely nothing to do except eat, sleep, drink, barhop and chase women for three exhausting days.



One evening we arrived at a rather posh restaurant that catered to English tourists; two Englishmen had been vying for the attention of an extremely attractive Englishwoman. One gentleman announced to the other that he "was bloody well tired of having to put up with him" and ordered him to "bugger off"! The second gentleman didn't take the hint and continued to try to impress the lady, whereupon the first party struck the second party smartly in the nose, which caused in the second party to sit rather abruptly in the sand. Whilst trying to stem his bleeding nose he politely responded,

"I say, old chap, that was frightfully uncivil of you!" Blood lust then overcame the thin veneer of civilization. The first party, while bravely shielding the lady, descended to well-known American colonialist profanity and threatened to throw the second party over the (expletive deleted) glass-covered wall. I seem to recall the first party and his prize disappeared into the night as we uncouth, rowdy "colonials" were reduced to helpless laughter as we rolled in the sand.



Another space program support mission sent my crew down to Patrick AFB where we were briefed, and flew out of. Naturally being red-blooded Air Force flying types, we had to sample the delights of the "strip". After a few hours of bar hopping we were leaving the lounge at one of the hotels when we stopped to watch what became a street brawl. The police arrived and arrested one of the bystanders who happened to be one of the pilots on another rescue crew! My aircraft commander, "Frantic Frank" Catlin (who was also the squadron assistant ops officer), was the designated commander of our group of assorted rescue aircraft. The immediate problem was that we were supposed to fly in support of the space shot the next day. Catlin corralled the rest of our crew, loaded us into our rented car and sped off following the police car to the police station. While the rest of us stayed in the car, Catlin (who probably smelled like a brewery himself) argued with the police to get his man out of the jug. Just as dawn was breaking, a victorious Catlin emerged from the jail with our man. Once he got into our car, he stated he was lucky

he hadn't also been thrown in jail. We headed down the road singing happily to Roger Miller's newly released song,

"Dang Me, dang me, they ought to take a rope and hang me...."

The squadron also maintained the Air Force HU 16 crew training school, which was a haven for those squadron personnel who had become "homesteaders". Although officially part of the squadron, the "homesteaders" moved heaven and earth to keep from flying any missions and taking any TDY's. The rest of us looked down our noses at the school crews.

The 48th ARRS was heavily committed to rescue coverage of Air Force and Navy reconnaissance flights over and around Cuba the Cuban missile crisis having occurred the previous year (1963) while I was at Lajes. The squadron was permanently tasked to maintain two aircraft TDY at Homestead AFB, Florida (south of Miami) rotating one aircraft each week for a two-week period. Our missions were to pre selected orbit points surrounding Cuba in the vicinity of the reconnaissance aircraft's flight path. These missions were the first in which I realized that conflict was not just something to read about in a book. It could be serious business. One USAF U-2 had been shot down while flying a mission over Cuba. Our mission briefings included the rules of engagement (what we could or could not do and what support we could expect) briefed with a large map of Cuba and the Caribbean in the background. The normal flight profile was: take off from Homestead on a tactical VFR flight plan, climb to pattern altitude until departing the control area, then descend to 50 feet and remain at that altitude throughout the mission until re entering the Homestead traffic pattern.



I still remember my first mission. The night before, my crew and I went to the movies to see 633 SQUADRON, a war story about a RAF mosquito bomber squadron. The upshot of the story was that everyone was killed in action while bombing a dam in Norway. After seeing the movie, I couldn't sleep soundly and tossed and turned all night. Our mission was anti climactic we took off, dropped down to 50 feet, buzzed the Florida Keys and paralleled the Cuban coast to our orbit point in the Yucatan Straits. I kept the radar on standby but occasionally turned it on to get a radar fix off Yucatan peninsula. When released by our mission controllers, we returned without incident. Other than realizing that I was no longer involved in a "make believe read about it in a book in comfort" situation, the primary lesson I learned was that waiting was the worst part. **Activity certainly beats waiting!**