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10 AUGUST 1997

DEAR RON:

AFTER RECEIVING YOUR LETTER OF 28 APRIL 97, I WROTE A COUPLE OF MY FORMER SQUADRON MATES. ONE, HARV DAMSCHEN WAS IN GERMANY FLYING F-100 FOR THE GERMAN AIR FORCE. HARV WAS MY LEADER ON THE MAR 2 MISSION. I THOUGHT HE KEPT A FLIGHT LOG WITH COMMENTS IN IT. UNFORTUNATELY I WAS WRONG! HARVE SENT ME BACK A NICE LETTER, BUT LIKE THE OTHER LETTER NOT MUCH FACTUAL INFORMATION. IT HAS SIMPLY BEEN TOO LONG. HOWEVER, I HAVE PIECED TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING:

FACTS/ASSUMPTIONS

1. MY FLIGHT RECORDS SHOW FLIGHT TIME ON MAR 2 WAS :35
2. HARV BELIEVES THE TIME BETWEEN THE SHOOTDOWN & H-43 ARRIVAL WAS ABOUT :45
TO 1:00. HE SAYS THE FLIGHT SHORT-REFUELED, THEN FLEW HIGH COVER & ESCORTED H-43 FROM COAST INTO CHUTE AREA.
3. I ALWAYS THOUGHT I HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN AT 13:00 OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER.
4. I WAS SURE OUR TAKEOFF WAS IN THE AFTERNOON.
5. I REMEMBER OUR F-100S WERE :10 TO :15 LATE FOR TAKEOFF BECAUSE OF F-105 ARMING PROBLEMS.
6. YOU THOUGHT H-43 OVER MY CHUTE ABOUT 14:00 (28 APRIL LETTER)

OK - THERE IS WHAT I THINK

12:30	SCHEDULED TO
:10	DELAY FOR F-105 ARMING

12:40	ACTUAL TO
:35	FLIGHT TIME TO TGT. AND ORBIT

13:15	SHOOTDOWN//EJECTION
14:00	H-43 ARRIVES: 14:07 H-43 DEPARTS

OTHER MISSIONS WERE IN PROGRESS OVER THE NORTH BEFORE WE WERE AIRBORNE. WE THINK F-100 PILOT SHOOTDOWN (MAYDAY) BEFORE WE WERE EVEN AIRBORNE. IN YOUR LETTER YOU SAID YOU HEARD FIRST DOWNED AIRCRAFT ABOUT NOON. I DON'T THINK THAT WAS MY AIRCRAFT?

IN MY LETTER TO YOU ON 22 APRIL, I WAS NOT TRYING TO CONVEY A TIME SEQUENCE IN MY NARRATIVE NOTES, IN TRUE I HAD NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT HOW LONG I WAS IN THE JUNGLE EVADING THE GOOKS. BUT HAVING HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT I DON'T THINK I SPENT TWO HOURS; :45 MAKES MORE SENSE?

THIS IS THE BEST I CAN DO. I THINK IT'S CLOSE BUT 30+ YEARS IS A LONG

Summary Sheet

PARS Msn # 187, 2 March 65

HU-16 mission report from Detachment Provisional Fourth, Korat Thailand.
RCC Captain David P. Westenbarger

SAR area Laos. 20NM SE Tchepone.

Controlled two HH-43B's (Call signs Bandy 21 & Bandy 41) scrambled from NKP

Survivor: Major George W. Panas

Summary Sheet

PARC Mission Number 187, 2 March 65

Two HH-43B's based out of Korat

HH-43B # 1 configured for ACR. RCC Captain Joseph Kelly who wrote this report. His crew was co-pilot 1Lt Larry N Young, Firefighter A1C Harold L Morgan and Med Tech A1C John P Gibeau. At 0852Z an F-105 pilot bailed out over Thailand. At 0854Z HH-43 scrambled but due to insufficient fuel to reach survivor flew to Ubon to refuel. Arrived Ubon 1000Z. Refueled and ordered to remain on ground. Pilot had been located by Thai villagers and was being transported by truck to suitable helo landing area for recovery at 0200Z. At 0030Z, 3 March, HH-43B was again airborne and arrived at LZ at 0130Z, landed and picked up downed pilot. Crew flew to Ubon and transloaded survivor to HU-16, which transported him to Korat.

HH-43B #2 configured for LBR. RCC Captain Thomas C Seebo, Detachment Commander. Stayed in Korat area to cover LBR.

HU-16 RCC Captain Brown.

22 April 97

Dear Ron:

FROM MY NOTES:

I was in the parachute one or two seconds before my feet hit the ground. During ejection I had lost my sunglasses. As I reached down in my flightsuit pocket to get my other pair of glasses, I felt stings and pain on my face & arms. When I touched my face I was bleeding. Strange sounds were around my head; hell I was being shot at!!! Bark & branches were flying off the small tree next to me - gooks with AK-47s were running up the hill shooting on the run - BAD shots. I ran into the jungle - moments later my feet went out from under me - I slid down the side of a 100' ravine into a creek & started running down the creek to distance myself from the voice. Minutes later the voices were no longer on top of me, but behind me - at that point I saw a path to my left & headed up the hill out of the ravine - a short distance later a field opened up to the left - I hit the field on a dead run & motored back toward my landing site. After running some distance I saw the brush piles I remembered just North of the landing site. I ran up on the brush piles & landed rolling into a clear area - the tree - the chute - the chopper almost right over me. The chopper turned south & headed away - I ran further into the clearing, then remembered my beeper - I grabbed it from around my waist & turned it on - the chopper did not turn or acknowledge. Then I looked around - gooks standing not 50 yards from me shooting at the chopper - time to hit the brush piles!

Dawn next morning, beeper is on - waiting for the 10wonder - ach there he is right on time - no chopper for awhile ceiling to low - gooks stop searching & no one around thats good - 10 in the morning now, ceiling starting to lift 12 noon should be good time for pick-up - 1300 ceiling at least 3000' where is everyone? One dry cig left, might as well sit here on this brush pile & smoke it. 1630 OK guys this is not funny anymore where the hell are you?? Maybe this god damn beeper doesn't work - nah!

Dawn 2nd day, no 10wonder - bad sign! I guess it's time to head to the DGZ. Probably 4-5 day trip.

Late afternoon 7th day, need to get to the river bank before dark - cross after dark - where the hell did that gook come from - back into the creek - I in the morning, that old guy has a 10 gauge flintlock shotgun pointed at my head - OK, OK I'm coming out, yet, yet, I bet your going to get a lot of rice for me, huh?

Well as the guy says on the radio "Now you know the rest of the store".

Note 1. It might interest you to know that the survival pack I carried in our flight suit was the same one used in 1938-41 by the Flying Tigers - the silk map inside was of China!

Note 2. The marines called me shortly after I came home, they said they searched the northern boarder of the DMZ twice a day every day until the picture of me was released. That made me feel good because I had no idea how I was going to get thru the DMZ once I got there.

Note 3. I had no radio, only that damn beeper!

Note 4. If you want someone to return your call, leave a number.

Sincerely,

PHL