

1 February 1966

A-1J 142038 VA-115, USN, USS *Kitty Hawk*
Lt(jg) B S Eakin (survived)

During an armed reconnaissance mission a flight of Skyraiders attacked an anti-aircraft gun site near Ban Senphan in southern Laos. On his second pass Lt Eakin's aircraft was hit in the fuselage and caught fire. He flew a short distance away before he abandoned the aircraft and was later rescued by a USAF helicopter.

A-1J 142031 VA-145, USN, USS *Ranger*
Lt(jg) Dieter Dengler (POW - escaped)

About an hour after Lt Eakin was shot down, another flight of four Skyraiders attacked a target deeper into Laos, near Ban Phathoung. Lt Dengler was the last to dive on the target when his aircraft was hit by ground fire. He crash-landed the aircraft a few miles from the target but both wings were ripped off when the aircraft struck some trees. Despite a SAR attempt in which a USAF helicopter crew spotted and photographed his wrecked aircraft, Dengler was nowhere to be seen. He had moved away from the wreck and evaded for several hours but was then captured by Pathet Lao troops. He escaped eight days after his capture but he was soon recaptured and tortured for his attempt. He was marched to a new camp at Houei Het and imprisoned with Eugene De Bruin and other members of an Air America C-46 crew who had been shot down on 5 September 1963. Also imprisoned with them was 1Lt Duane Martin who had been shot down in an H1J-43 during a SAR mission on 20 September 1965. Fearing that they were about to be killed, the prisoners decided to make an all-out escape attempt. On 29 June Dengler and the others escaped from their hut and broke into the camp's armoury and a firefight broke out during which several guards were killed. Most of the prisoners escaped and Dengler and Martin stayed together as they travelled through the jungle. Eighteen days after the escape Martin was killed by a Laotian villager leaving Dieter Dengler to travel on alone. After an epic struggle for survival Dieter Dengler was eventually spotted and rescued by an HH-3E on 20 July, one of the few Americans ever to escape from Laos. He was on the verge of death from starvation and exhaustion when he was found and weighed just 98lbs compared to the 157lbs he had weighed before he was shot down. Dieter Dengler, who was a German who had emigrated to the USA in his teens, was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions during captivity. In 1979 he wrote a classic book, *Escape from Laos*, about his experiences and he has also been the subject of a television documentary.

Pilot Tells of Prison Camp Ordeal

SAN DIEGO, Cal. (AP)

A German-born U.S. Navy flier who escaped a north Vietnamese prison camp said Tuesday prisoners were beaten, shot at and hung upside down from trees with ants put on their faces.

PACIFIC STAR STRIPES

AN AUTHORIZED PUBLICATION OF THE
U.S. ARMED FORCES IN THE FAR EAST

10¢ DAILY
15¢ WITH SUPPLEMENTS

Vol. 22, No. 257

★ ★ ★ EDITION

Thursday, Sept. 15, 1966

The apparent aim of the captors, said Lt. (jg) Dieter Dengler, was to persuade American war prisoners to sign statements condemning U.S. actions in Vietnam.

Dengler, 28, of Pacifica, Cal., described his ordeal at a news conference.

Dengler's remarks were censored at times when they touched on areas of security. A Navy spokesman said the value of Dengler's debriefing is "extremely helpful," in training pilots who will fly in Vietnam.

Dengler's first words at the conference were: "Man, it's great to be alive—alive and free."

Dengler was rescued July 20, six months after his plane crashed on his first flight over north Vietnam. He said it came down near the north-Vietnam-Laos border. He crawled from the wreckage and evaded the enemy for a day, then was captured.

He escaped after six days, was

(Continued on Back Page, Col. 1)

Successful rescue of Navy LtJG Dieter Dengler 20 July 1966

Low Bird

P.	Capt. William E. (Skip) Cowell
C.P.	1st Lt. Dean
H.M.	Gladish
R.S.	Leonard

High Bird

P.	Capt. David C. Henry
C.P.	2nd Lt Elmer C. Lavender
H.M.	Johnson
R.S.	Sutton

Returns To U.S.

Red Prison Escapee's Ordeal Is Kept Secret

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy pilot, who escaped from a Communist prison camp and reached safety last week after a 23-day trek through the Vietnamese jungles, was identified Wednesday as Lt. (j.g.) Dieter Dengler, 28, of Pacifica, Calif.

He was described as a native of Wildberg, Germany, who attended San Francisco City College and San Mateo (Calif.) Junior College.

But the terse Defense Department announcement giving his name said "security requirements" prevent any other details of Dengler's ordeal being made public at this time.

It was obvious that a tight lid is being kept on where Dengler was imprisoned and how he escaped to prevent the enemy from taking measures to block similar escapes by others of the 63 Americans held by the North Vietnamese.

Arthur Sylvester, assistant secretary of defense, who read the Pentagon announce-

ment to newsmen, refused to go beyond it. He promised, however, to make additional details public when security permits.

Dengler's brother, Martin, who works in a bakery shop in San Francisco, commented: "That's good." Asked about the escape, he said: "I can't talk about it."

A close friend who attended college with the two said the Navy had advised Martin before the Pentagon announcement but cautioned him about saying anything.

Dengler emigrated to the United States in 1957, joined the Air Force soon afterward and became an American citizen. His father was killed in World War II.

His mother, Marie Dengler, lives in a village on the edge of the Black Forest in southern Germany, where another son, Klaus, is a forestry official.

Dengler served in the U. S. Air Force from June 1957 to April 1963, the Pentagon said, and he was then appointed a naval



Dengler, Mother Reunited

Captured Pilot Escapes

(Continued From 1-A)
aviation cadet. He was commissioned in 1964 and promoted to lieutenant last September.

He reported to Viet Nam for duty in 1964. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal.

Although the Pentagon gave no details, dispatches from Saigon last week said the Navy pilot was spotted by an Air Force pilot in a "one-in-a-million" sighting. The pilot saw Dengler last Wednesday or Thursday in the rugged jungle near the 17th Parallel demilitar-

ized zone, which separates North and South Viet Nam, the Saigon dispatches said.

An Air Force "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter was sent from Da Nang airbase to lift him from the jungle and take him to the hospital at the base.

Dengler was reported suffering from severe malnutrition and shock when rescued after his long flight across some of the most difficult terrain in Asia. He apparently survived on a meager diet of roots or whatever edibles his survival training had taught him to look for.

Wednesday's announcement said Dengler "is receiving medical treatment and is being debriefed." But it did not say where or whether he is still in Viet Nam, has been taken elsewhere, or has returned to the United States.

But the San Mateo Times in California said it had learned from a reliable source that Dengler had been flown from Viet Nam to the air evacuation ward at Travis Air Force Base, 50 miles north of San Francisco.

The Times said Dengler now is under treatment in air evacuation ward at Travis and his brother, Martin, is billeted nearby and has visited him.

Martin, who works in a San Francisco bakery, told newsmen he had been told last Friday by the Pentagon that his brother had been rescued but was advised not to talk to any-

Dengler Must Wait To Wed

PACIFICA, Cal. (AP) — This was a day of disappointment for Navy Lt. (jg) Dieter Dengler.

The 28-year-old flier, who escaped from the tortures of a communist prison camp in Laos after his Skyraider was shot down in the Vietnam conflict, announced over the weekend he and Miss Marine Adamich, 24, would be married Oct. 16.

But when he returned Monday to a naval hospital in San Diego he was informed he couldn't keep the date.

"According to the blood tests and other examinations," he said in a telephone call, "the doctors think it is not possible. There are

(Continued on Back Page, Col. 2)

STARS & STRIPES

5 OCT 66

Dengler—

(Continued From Page 1)
a few other things wrong, things from my jungle experience that keep recurring.

"It is simply going to take more time to get rid of them. It is a medical condition, and right now we simply cannot say when our wedding date will be."

Both he and Marina, a petite, blue-eyed blonde, are wearing wide gold bands on their fingers to signify betrothal.

Wearing of the rings follows an old German custom for engaged couples. Dengler, a naturalized American, was born in Germany. His bride-to-be is the daughter of Royal Yugoslav Navy Cdr. and Mrs. Zanon V. Adamich.

Dengler returned to his home in Pacifica Sunday to make plans for the wedding. He lives with his brother, Martin, who staged a family reunion Sunday.

Dengler and his fiancée met while they were students at the College of San Mateo in San Mateo, Cal.

The pilot has a year and a half remaining of his five-year Navy duty term. He said Sunday he doesn't know whether he will continue on active duty or follow through with tentative plans to open a German restaurant at Squaw valley, a ski resort in California's Sierra Mountains.

Marina is a May graduate of the College of Notre Dame and is working as a chemistry research assistant at Stanford University. She will quit her job after the wedding.



U.S. Navy Lt. (jg) Dieter Dengler, who escaped from a north Vietnamese prison camp, has regained most of the weight lost during his imprisonment and escape to freedom. Dengler was down to 98 pounds (right photo) when rescued. He told newsmen Tuesday he now weighs about 157, (left photo). (UPI Radiophotos)

Prison Camp Ordeal

(Continued From Page 1)

captured again, then escaped anew with six other prisoners June 29 and spent 23 days creeping through jungles to safety.

In captivity, Dengler said, he was marched through villages to a prison camp, where, "It was terrible . . . we were locked up in crude wooden blocks and handcuffed."

He added, "We were taken out and beaten for no reason. They hang you upside down in a tree for five hours and put ants on your face."

In the mornings, he said, prisoners were shot at as they ran to a latrine. None were hit, he added, "but they came pretty close."

Dengler said that so far as he knows no prisoners yielded to pressure to condemn the United States. Instead they tried to escape.

"We'd rather die free in the bush than die in communist hands," he said.

Dengler, roaming in a remote valley, finally spotted a U.S. helicopter and flagged it down. It saved him.

Just four days earlier, his escape partner, Air Force Lt. Duane Whitney Martin, of Denver, was killed.

"We were crawling a jungle path when this villager jumped out and started hacking Martin with a machete. He chopped his leg and his shoulder."

When the villager came at him, Dengler said, he mustered his strength, ran up a gully and got away.

The escape was made possible by the theft of four guns from a guard while the guards were eating, Dengler said. As the men were escaping a guard spotted them and opened fire.

In the exchange of fire, six guards were killed, Dengler said. The others fled into the jungle. The prisoners then gathered up food and split into groups.

Dengler said his captors had no knowledge of Geneva Convention regulations regarding the treatment of prisoners and that he saw no representatives of the International Red Cross.

Dengler has been hospitalized at the naval hospital here since July 27, and appeared to have regained most of the 59 pounds he lost while in prison and during his escape. He normally weighs 157 pounds.

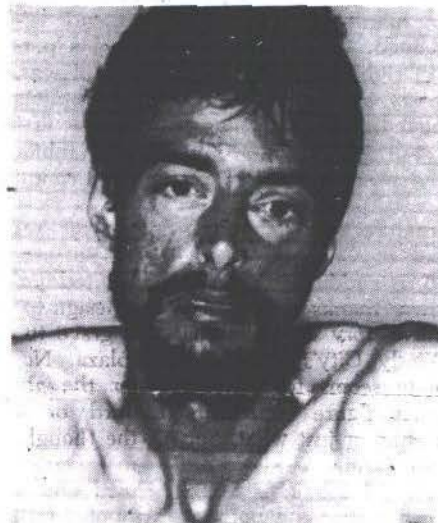
Dengler also announced that he planned to wed a research assistant at Stanford University Laboratory, Marina Adamich, of Belmont, Cal.

lage, Dengler was questioned in broken French by a Communist official, but the young lieutenant—following the U.S. military code—gave only his name, rank, serial number and date of birth. He was handed a prepared statement condemning the U.S. and told that he must sign it. When he refused, he was beaten with sticks. Still he refused to sign, and finally Dengler was beaten unconscious. When he awoke, he was tied behind a water buffalo, then dragged over stubble and sharp rocks until once again he fell unconscious.

Ants' Nest: Still, Dengler refused to talk; and on the eighth night, while his guards were asleep, he slipped his bonds and escaped. His freedom was short-lived, for next afternoon, while Dengler drank from a water hole, he was recaptured by the Pathet Lao. An-

and while his guards were eating, stole four guns. The other prisoners had freed themselves and after a brief exchange of fire with the guards, they fled into the jungle. Dengler in company with Air Force Lt. Duane Martin.

Burst of Energy: Martin soon was stricken with malaria, and Dengler himself developed a case of jaundice. But day after day, the two men stumbled through the jungle, sleeping in abandoned villages, eating snails they found along the way and bits of rice they had taken from prison. Martin grew steadily weaker, and on the seventeenth day of their escape, a Laotian villager suddenly leaped from a hut and struck him twice with a long, curved machete. One blow nearly severed Martin's neck, and the weakened Dengler, summoning up a burst of energy, dove into the bush and



U.S. Navy



UPI

Navy pilot Dengler: At the time of his rescue and as he looks today

'Great to Be Alive'

The saga of Dieter Dengler began on Feb. 1, when the German-born, U.S.-naturalized Navy pilot took off from the deck of the carrier *Ranger* and headed for his first mission over North Vietnam. It was a murky morning, and as the 28-year-old lieutenant rolled in against his targets, heavy ground fire tore into the crippled plane. Fighting to keep control of the crippled plane, Dengler headed across the border into nearby Laos and crash-landed in a small clearing. Dazed, and bleeding from a cut behind the ear, he heard shouting nearby, then headed into the jungle brush. Next morning, however, Dengler ran head-on into two armed men dressed in U.S.-style military clothing. They were, unfortunately, members of the Communist Pathet Lao. Dengler was their prisoner.

Over the next eight days, the Laotians led the U.S. officer from village to village, displaying him to peasants who came out of the surrounding woods to stare. At night, Dengler was spread-eagled and staked to the ground, an easy mark for the swarming leeches and mosquitoes. Once, he was tied to a tree while his Pathet Lao captors fired away, trying to see how close they could come with their bullets. In another, larger vil-

lage, Dengler was questioned in broken French by a Communist official, but the young lieutenant—following the U.S. military code—gave only his name, rank, serial number and date of birth. He was handed a prepared statement condemning the U.S. and told that he must sign it. When he refused, he was beaten with sticks. Still he refused to sign, and finally Dengler was beaten unconscious. When he awoke, he was tied behind a water buffalo, then dragged over stubble and sharp rocks until once again he fell unconscious.

Ants' Nest: Still, Dengler refused to talk; and on the eighth night, while his guards were asleep, he slipped his bonds and escaped. His freedom was short-lived, for next afternoon, while Dengler drank from a water hole, he was recaptured by the Pathet Lao. Angry at his escape and his refusal to sign a statement, they then hung the young officer upside down from a tree for five hours and began to beat him. They also, Dengler reported later in his rough English, took an ants' nest and "set it over your face and just want to make you sign the statement." He never did. For a time, North Vietnamese soldiers took over as Dengler's guards, but then they delivered him back to the Pathet Lao in a stockade deep in the jungle. Six other American prisoners were there, and Dengler immediately began to plot an escape. Some of the others advised waiting for the spring monsoon, but as April, May and June passed without the drenching rains, Dengler and some of the others became restive. Food became scarce, and the prisoners—racked with dysentery—devoured rats and snakes. Finally, fearful that the guards might be planning to kill them, the Americans decided to make the break. On the night of June 29, Dengler worked his way out of the wooden leg irons and handcuffs,

fled. Four more days he wandered, during which time Dengler lost consciousness twenty or thirty times. With what may have been his last strength, he fashioned a crude SOS with strips of parachute material he found. And then, miraculously, 22 days after his escape, he was spotted on the ground by a U.S. Skyraider pilot; within minutes, a U.S. helicopter was on its way to pluck the exhausted Dengler, down from his normal 157 pounds to a cadaverous 98, out of the Laotian jungle.

That was on July 20, and last week, after being flown back to the U.S. for seven weeks of recuperation, Lt. Dieter Dengler met the press in San Diego. "They wanted me—they wanted all of us—to die," the handsome flier related, "and as I indicated, we'd rather die free in a bush than those guys not feeding us, or shooting us, and I wanted to be free . . . I wanted to see my mother again . . . and I wanted to see my friends again. I wanted to fly again . . . Man, it is great to be alive."

①

The Snakes & the Angel

Of the 87 Americans taken prisoner since the Viet Nam war began, only three have managed to escape.* The problem is not so much one of harsh prison security, as it was for flyers downed by the Nazis during World War II. Rather, it is the harshness of the country itself. An escapee from a Southeast Asian prison camp must burrow through rotting rain forests, fight off swarms of bugs, swim mighty, mud-thick rivers that cut between the region's steep mountains, and find a way to signal the U.S. rescue planes that orbit high over the jungle. Last week the most recent escapee told a harrowing tale of his trudge back to freedom.

Ants & Water Buffalo. U.S. Navy Pilot Dieter Dengler, 28, was shot down over the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos last

UPI



DENGLER AFTER RESCUE



RECOVERED & WITH MOTHER

"I was tied to a tree and used for target practice."

Feb. 1. Stunned by a crash landing that sheared the wings and tail from his Skyraider, Dengler stepped bleary-eyed into a world of muck, vines and violence that stood in odd contrast to his tidy, air-conditioned stateroom on the carrier *Ranger*. Abandoning his radio, .38-cal. pistol and dehydrated rations, Dengler ducked into the bush—but was jumped by Communist Pathet Lao guerrillas.

Dengler was marched at the double along jungle trails and staked out among mosquitoes at night with arms and legs wide apart; when he refused to sign a statement condemning the U.S. in Viet Nam, his captors tied him upside down from a tree and let ants swarm over him. Then they dragged him into unconsciousness behind a water buffalo.

Laotian Roulette. When he came to, his guards amused themselves with Laotian roulette: "I was tied to a tree and

* Five have died in captivity, five others were released, and many of the 303 Americans listed as "missing in action" are probably in Communist hands.

②

used for target practice—the guards tried to see how close they could come to hitting me." Finally, three weeks after his crash, Dengler was led into a bamboo stockade somewhere near the trail and locked up in crude, wooden "footcuffs" with six other U.S. flyers. The prisoners were fed a handful of rice twice a week, supplemented their diet with snakes and anything else that crawled through their hut. "Once," Dengler recalled, "we caught a snake that had swallowed two rats. We cut it open and ate the rats. Then we ate the snake."

Escape was constantly on Dengler's mind, but the prisoners decided to wait until monsoons had swollen the streams and rivers down which they hoped to float. On June 29 they made their break. Dengler slipped his footcuffs, grabbed four rifles and a bag of rice while the guards were eating. The prisoners killed six of their captors in a flurried firefight, then split into pairs in hopes of making their escape route difficult to follow.

Loaded with Death. Dengler's teammate was Air Force Lieut. Duane Martin, 26, of Denver, whose rescue helicopter had been shot down in September 1965. Twice the pair slept in abandoned villages; then they built a raft and floated downstream until an unexpected waterfall smashed their craft. They came upon a third village that appeared abandoned: it was instead loaded with death. A man sprang from a hut and hit Martin on the leg with a machete; a second swipe hit the stumbling Air Force pilot between shoulders and neck, beheading him. Dengler fled back into the bush.

Starving and stupefied (he lost 59 lbs. during his imprisonment), he wandered on through the jungle. "I was hungry and nearly out of my mind," he said. "But I was angry. I wanted to come home, to fly again, but mostly to open my own restaurant." Finally, Dengler found an abandoned parachute, tore its panels into strips to form a crude SOS, and on July 20, a full 22 days after he had entered the jungle, he was picked up by a "Jolly Green" rescue helicopter. "That angel was a beautiful sight," said Dengler last week. "I was so far gone that I didn't believe it was real until I smelled the gasoline from the chopper."

Alive & Free. When the news of his escape broke in the world press, the Russians thought they smelled something else: a propaganda coup. Dengler was born in the West German town of Calw, the son of a Luftwaffe pilot who died in World War II. Although he emigrated to the U.S. in 1957 and became a citizen three years later, Dengler was carrying a West German passport when the Reds picked him up. The passport, he said, was meant to explain his slight German accent to his captors. Moscow quickly pounced on the fact to claim that West German "mercenaries" were fighting with the U.S. forces in Viet Nam.

③

Last week, as Dengler told his story to a jammed press conference in San Diego, West German Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder was explaining to a skeptical Bundestag that all U.S. immigrants are subject to the draft if they hope to achieve citizenship, and that the Russian claim was sheer claptrap. Dengler could not have cared less. Said he: "Man, it's great to be alive—alive and free."



Escaping Pilot Saved by '1-in-Million'

JUL 23 1966

SAIGON, South Viet Nam (AP) — A U.S. Navy pilot, shot down over Communist territory across some of the most difficult terrain in Asia, more than six months ago, escaped from a prison camp and was rescued from the jungle after a "one-in-a-million" sighting by another American flier, it was learned today.

The airman was reported suffering severe malnutrition and shock after his 23-day flight

The escape was disclosed by the U.S. military command, but spokesmen would give no details — in an effort, they said, to protect other prisoners who might be involved.

The rescued pilot was not identified for security reasons, but his next of kin have been notified, the U.S. command said.

An informed source said the escapee is a Navy lieutenant who had been held by the Communists for about five months.

He was spotted by an Air Force pilot last Wednesday or Thursday in the rugged jungle near the 17th Parallel demilitarized zone, which separates North and South Viet Nam.

Judging from the area of the rescue, the pilot may have been

shot down over Laos. U.S. planes make daily sorties on the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos to cut the flow of supplies to the Communists in South Viet Nam.

All the U.S. command would say was contained in this terse announcement:

"A U.S. Navy pilot who was held prisoner of war by the Communists has escaped and returned to our control in Viet Nam. His next of kin have been

notified. The identity of the pilot and all additional details must be withheld at this time for security reasons."

It was learned, however, that after the pilot was sighted, an Air Force "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter was sent from Da Nang to lift him from the jungle. The pilot was flown to the hospital at the Da Nang air base and placed in complete isolation. He will remain under in-

tensive care until enough to answer

His condition is satisfactory, apparently still very weak, but he is still surviving a grueling trek on a mountain trail with no roots and whatever survival training he has.

The announcement gives the location where the pilot was found. The Communist

How Escaping U.S. Pilot Was Rescued

SAIGON, South Viet Nam (AP)—A crude "SOS" of white parachute cloth on a rock led a U.S. pilot to Lt. (j.g.) Dieter Dengler in the jungle last week.

"Oh, God!" said Dengler, 28, of Pacifica, Calif., as he was pulled aboard a rescue helicopter. Then he lapsed into shock.

23 Days In Jungle

He was rescued July 20 after he escaped from the North Vietnamese and made his way for 23 days through heavy jungles.

Air Force Lt. Col. Eugene P. Deatrick of Morgantown, W. Va., commander of the 1st Air Commando Squadron, was the flier who spotted Dengler in the jungle. Deatrick and the other rescuers were interviewed in Da Nang, South Viet Nam, by the Air Force, which released their accounts.

Deatrick gave this report: "We were on a visual reconnaissance mission out of Pleiku. During one of our passes through mountainous terrain, I was coming up a very deep valley with a stream at the bottom of it. I passed over a bed of rocks across the



LT. DIETER DENGLER
Flees North Vietnamese

stream and saw someone waving a white flag at me.

"I went by so quickly I wasn't sure what it was. Perhaps a villager waving as we went by. But it was such dense jungle that I didn't make it out. I turned and came back and found the person waving again. I made a third pass over and noticed that on the rocks was written something in white cloth, a very scraggly SOS.

"So we immediately put in

a call to get the rescue on the way.

"We were fairly certain that it was one of the allied people that was down. We remained in the area as cover.

"There was always wariness, of course, of being trapped into something. However, I was firmly convinced that the man was friendly, even though I couldn't identify the person on the ground from what he was wearing. It was a dense area, so remote from everything and the possibility of ever seeing anything—this was one in a million.

"As far as I was concerned, this just couldn't be any sort of a trap."

Air Force Capt. William E. Cowell of Oahu, Hawaii, pilot of the "Jolly Green Giant" rescue helicopter, said the rescue was completed in 45 minutes.

"It was just inside the North Vietnamese border," Cowell said. "The A1s (Skyraiders) had him spotted. He was down in the bottom of a little stream bed standing on the rocks by the stream."

Bare Feet Blistered

"We went in and looked at him and made a pass by him. Then we went in to pick him up.

"He had been walking quite

a while. He didn't have any shoes. He had blisters on his feet when he came on board. They put him on a stretcher and the pararescue man (medical corpsman) gave him a quick physical and took care of him."

The story was continued by the pararescue man, Airman 1/c Mike Lenord of Fowler, Iowa:

"The hoist operator let the cable out. He must have used about 150 feet—maybe 175 feet—of cable.

"The survivor (Dengler) got in it. It took him a couple of seconds to figure out how it operated. He was a little excited and glad to be there, and he just had a little problem.

"But he made it on the hoist all right. We hoisted him up, and I reached out and pulled him in as he got up beside the aircraft. At that moment, he kind of went to pieces, as you'd expect. He just started—he grabbed for me around the leg and held me around the leg. He was just happy to be on board.

"It is kind of hard to say what he did or how he did it. Actually it's hard to say if he said anything, except 'Oh, God!' That's probably the first words he ever said."

Two U.S. planes downed in raids on N. Viet Nam, Page 8.

of Pacifica, Calif., a native of Wildberg, West Germany.

But official secrecy still shrouded the circumstances under which Dengler was shot down, imprisoned and escaped.

One reason for withholding details of Dengler's escape is that the locale of the incident reportedly was neither North nor South Viet Nam.

Reliable sources indicated that his plane was shot down in Laos where he also reportedly was held captive by the North Vietnamese.

It is U.S. policy not to admit that it has bombed North Vietnamese troops moving south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in neutralized Laos, just as Hanoi does not talk of operating in that country.

The major reason for the

secrecy was to prevent the enemy from taking steps to block similar escapes by American in the hands of the Communists.

The Pentagon lists 62 U.S. military men as captured by the Communists in North and South Viet Nam, and 212 as missing. Dengler's name does not appear on either list.

Dengler, 28, emigrated to the United States with a brother, Martin. His mother, Mrs. Maria Dengler, and another brother, Klaus, live in the Black Forest district. His father was killed in World War II.

The Navy pilot graduated from San Mateo (Calif.) Junior College and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1957. After six years of Air Force service, Dengler was appointed a naval aviation cadet.

He was commissioned in 1964 and reported for Viet Nam duty the same year. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal.

"I listened to him all the way. I talked to him a little bit but he went into shock on me three different times. "I was pretty busy there trying to keep him in the best shape I could, mentally as well as physically."

Pentagon Identifies Escaped Navy Flier

WASHINGTON—The Defense Department Wednesday identified the Navy pilot who escaped from a Communist prison camp and was rescued last week after a 23-day trek through the Southeast Asia jungle. He is Lt. (j.g.) Dieter Dengler.

Dense Jungle

Jolly Greens Pluck Pilot from

BY TSGT. JERRY N. ODOM

DA NANG — An Air Force pilot, serving with the 136th Fighter Squadron, Tuy Hoa AB, was recently plucked from dense jungle and undergrowth in the A Shau Valley by a crew from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang AB.

First Lt. Michael J. Laskowski, Buffalo, N.Y., was on his 32nd mission when his F-100 Supersabre was damaged by enemy ground fire, forcing him to eject from the stricken aircraft.

"I was on a close air support mission hitting supply-type enemy bunkers. We had dropped our ordnance and went in for a strafe, and on the last pass I evidently turned the wrong way because they must have known where I was going. I heard a loud thump and that was it," related Lieutenant Laskowski.

After the pilot bailed out, he was spotted by an Air Force forward air controller (FAC), and an Army Huey helicopter immediately located Lieutenant Laskowski's position on the ground. However, the Army chopper was not equipped to pull the pilot out because of the 100- to 150-foot trees in the area.

"We got the call after we'd taken off from Quang Tri," said Maj. Vernon A. Dander, Pacific Grove, Calif., rescue crew commander. "After we reached the area, we saw that the FAC had spotted the chute and located the pilot's approximate position. But we couldn't see him because there were too many trees."

"When we spotted the exact location, we realized we had too much weight, so we

dumped some fuel and went back after the downed pilot. The flight engineer spotted him and did a great job of guiding me right over the spot and holding me there. He's the guy who did all the work," said Major Dander.

The flight engineer, SSgt.

Jimmy L. Dodgen, Fairfield, Calif., on his last mission before returning to the United States, gave this account: "He (the downed pilot) was in a dense wooded area on a hillside. The jungle canopy must have been nearly 200 feet thick.

"As we came into the gener-

al area the FACs had already marked with smoke bombs. I looked for an opening in the canopy to drop the tree penetrator. The pilot never did fire a smoke bomb, but kept us constantly informed with his radio," he said.

An HC-130 Crown (command and control) aircraft, commanded by Capt. George E. Eldridge, Des Moines, Iowa, stayed over the rescue scene directing the efforts of the Jolly Green and the A-1 Skyraider aircraft flying cover during the pickup.

Sergeant Dodgen, on his fifth rescue, lowered 250 feet of cable into an opening in the jungle while the pilot was radioing his position. "I calculated that we placed the penetrator only 20 feet from him," he said. "A couple of seconds after he told us that he saw the penetrator fall into the forest, I could see him below putting it on. He put it on without any difficulty, and we hoisted him right on up."

"After I got hit and lost flight control," said Lieutenant Laskowski, "I headed the bird out toward the sea. Even though I lost control, I managed to get the thing in a fire light. I pulled the throttle back and finally jumped out. On the way down I had a good shot and steered toward what looked like a pretty dense area of woods and away from what looked like a path."

"Then when I went through the trees and got out of my chute, I got down on the ground and hid for a while. Finally, I got on the radio and found out that the Jolly Greens (HH-3 Huskie helicopters) were only 20 minutes away. But that seemed like an eternity."

"I wasn't worried too much about the Jolly Greens finding me, but about somebody else finding me. I was in the A Shau Valley at the time I got hit, about 46 miles from Da Nang. I managed to get about 15 miles away before I had to jump. This was the first time I ever had to bail out, and my first ride in a chopper—that is, one that really counted," concluded Lieutenant Laskowski.

Pilot Tells of Prison Camp Ordeal

SAN DIEGO, Cal. (AP) —A German-born U.S. Navy flier who escaped a north Vietnamese prison camp said Tuesday prisoners were beaten, shot at and hung upside down from trees with ants put on their faces.

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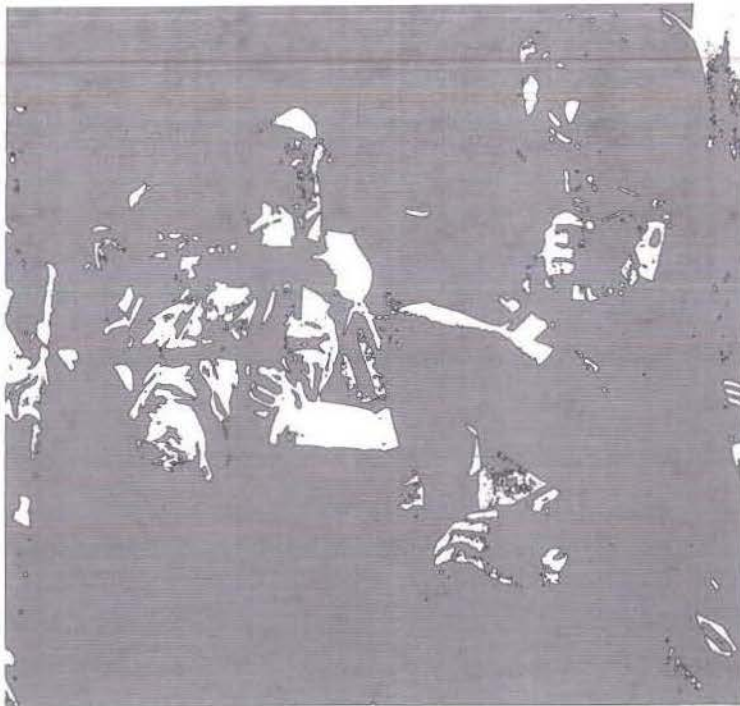
Vol. 22, No. 257

★ ★ ★ EDITION

Thursday, Sept. 15, 1966

FILE = D FENGLER NEWS, JPL





A pararescueman watches over a rescued pilot, who sprawls on the floor of an HH-3C rescue helicopter. The pararescueman descended into the jungle on a hoist cable to rescue the pilot and his aircraft commander who were shot down by North Vietnamese gunners. (U.S. Air Force)

jungle, thus providing a well-lighted target for VC gunners. Bullets whistled so close by the helo's open doors crewmen had to lean back. There were three men left on the ground, and although two is the normal limit for the Huskie, Cannon hoisted them all inside. One such hover and recovery at night was enough. Two would be tempting the Fates too much. Finally the last man—the eleventh to be airlifted to safety by Henning-

son and Kessler that evening—was brought aboard, and crew members and survivors heaved a collective sigh of relief when they broke out of the hover and lifted up and out of range of the whining bullets. "Thank goodness they were poor shots," Henningson said later.

The list of such heroic missions in Vietnam runs on and on.

Airman Second Class Michael P. Donegan, a PJ, once rode the hoist down to treat a hurt pilot. On the ground he found a Viet Cong patrol charging them from the brush, so he alertly strapped the flyer on the hoist and jumped on himself. As the helicopter took off, with both men dangling in midair, Donegan opened fire at the astounded VC, who had thought they had two Americans trapped, but underestimated the ingenuity and daring of a pararescueman.

A Skyraider pilot sighted a crude SOS drawn in the dirt below and radioed a nearby ARRS chopper to check it out. Airman First Class Mike Leonard watched from the helo's open door as a bearded, scraggly, bone-thin man climbed on the hoist. A minute later Leonard reached out and pulled him inside the craft, and then treated him for shock. It was Navy Lieutenant Dieter Dengler, who had escaped from a North Vietnamese prison camp—the first American to do so—and walked twenty-three days through the jungles, living on berries and roots, before he was spotted and picked up.

20 JUN 66

JULY 20

THURS JULY 21

19 NKP - LOW SAW F4C-104 TAKE OFF
FROM UDORN AT 0700. AT 0800 THE F4C
WAS HIT BY MISSILE ON RED RIVER.
BAD AREA. A105 IS DOWN NW OF

19 HANDI. 2 C-130 CHUTES ON F4C PILOTS
NO CONTACT WITH ANY OF THEM.

FAC PILOT SPOTTED MAN WAVING WHITE
FLAG SOUTH OF TCHERONE LAOS. LAUNCHER

19 J. C'S OUT OF QUANG TRI, PICKED KT. IN
NAVY UP THAT HAD GOTTEN SHOT DOWN
ON 27 JUNE - 23 DAYS OF E+E. HE
WAS OKAY EXCEPT MILITARY HUNGERY. FOUND

19 BUT LATER HE WAS SHOT DOWN IN
FEB AND CAPTURED AND PUT IN A PRISON.

HE ESCAPED ON JUNE 27 AND E+E'D
FOR 23 DAYS. DENGLEER WAS HIS

19 NAME. LT KERRY HAD PUT KRAFT
DOWN THE HOIST ON HIS WRECKED
PLANE ON FEB 2

19 OFF TODAY WENT DOWNTOWN
AT NKP TO LOOK FOR TINA AND ERIN
BIRTHDAY PRESENTS. COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING
TOOK PICTURES.

19 3 PLANES DOWN UP NORTH. NO BEEPERS
OR ANY SIGNS OF THEM SO THEY
COULDN'T SEND J & S IN. THEY (BAD GUYS)
ARE REALLY KNOCKING OUR BIRDS DOWN

19 SINCE WE'VE BEEN HITTING THE OIL
STORAGE PLACES. PILOTS PUNCH OUT
OVER TOO POPULATED AN AREA AND A
LOT OF THEM ARE CAPTURED AS SOON

19 AS THEY HIT THE GROUND. IT'S
REALLY HARD FOR EVERY BODY TO JUST
WRITE THEM OFF.

B-66 RADAR JAMMER GOT HIT WITH A

19 SAM WITH 6 PEOPLE ON BOARD. EVERYBODY
PRESUMED DEAD,

From: Williamson, Bob -
To:
Date: Tuesday, October 19, 1999 4:16 AM
Subject: 1966

Bob, RESCUED ON 20 JULY 66

Hackney picked up Dengler. I was on alert at site 36 and heard it all on the radio. A little bird (O-2?) saw a guy waiving in black pajamas. Transmissions suggested that he be hosed, but on closer look, the O-2 thought he had a beard. More transmission warned that it was a trap. (After all, Dennis Kraft had just been shot on just such a situation trying to get out 2 Marine F-4 pilots near the pass.) O2 saw a crude SOS made up of flare chutes, however, the S's were backwards causing further discussion of a trap. After several passes, the O2 was convinced he was too tall and with a beard it was worth sending in the Jollies from Danang. Duane Hackney was the PJ and he later told me that once the emaciated Dengler was pulled inside, he latched onto Duane's feet and wouldn't let go until they reached Danang. You know that one of Dengler's escapes was with Lilly; Art Black's pilot. (Kraft is a good mission if you can get info).

Also, George Hunt was lost overnight during 1966. Can't remember if it was on the Kraft mission, but it was an intense time at NKP during the subsequent all out search and recovery- finally sighted on last look late the next day. George's mission was responsible for the 3 ft square orange cloth later supplied in the new flight jackets. George had lost both radios and it was too dangerous for him to use flares. The Sandy finally saw him lying on the ground with the orange cloth spread over his chest. I think Aaron Farrior has the debrief/party tapes we made with George. George is a District Attorney in SC. gehpsh@netpath.net

Bruce Adams, 1078 Alta Vista Dr, Laramie WY 82070. Bruce is Steve's brother and is a dentist in Laramie. He was very active in the POW/MIA movement and believes he has credible info on Steve living through the incident.

Hope to get pictures to you this week if I can verify my scanner is up. RR-01 should be coming up email this week. Later.

Willy

DENGLER, DIETER

Name: Dieter Dengler
Rank/Branch: 02/US Navy
Unit: Attack Squadron 145, USS Ranger
Date of Birth: (born in Germany - US Citizen)
Home City of Record: Hillsborough CA
Date of Loss: 01 February 1966
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 174200N 1051500E (WE270590)
Status (in 1973): Released POW
Category:
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: A1H

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

Source: Compiled by Homecoming II Project 15 May 1990 from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK 1998.

REMARKS: 660720 ESCAPED

SYNOPSIS: The USS RANGER was a seasoned combat veteran, having been deployed to Vietnam for Flaming Dart I operations. The carrier played a steady role for the remainder of American involvement in the war. The first fighter jets to bomb Haiphong in Operation Rolling Thunder came from her decks.

LT Dieter Dengler was a German-born American citizen who advanced from VT30 to Attack Squadron 122 in late 1964 and then to Attack Squadron 145 onboard the RANGER. Dengler was known to his shipmates as something of a renegade; the ops officer was always after him to get a haircut and Dengler was forever in trouble over his uniform or lack of military manner. In his German accent, he would protest, "I don't understand." But Dengler was a good pilot, although his flying career was brief.

On February 1, 1966, U.S. Navy Lt. Dieter Dengler launched from the aircraft carrier USS RANGER in an A1H Skyraider as part of a four-aircraft interdiction mission near the border of Laos. Dieter was the last man to roll in on a target when he was observed by the pilot of one of the other aircraft to start a normal recover. Due to limited visibility, the flight lost sight of him.

The other aircraft in the flight could not determine what had happened. They only knew Dengler disappeared. Dengler later stated that ground fire had severely damaged his aircraft, and he was forced to crash land in Laos. Search continued all that day and part of the night without success.

The following morning, squadron members again went to search the area where Dengler disappeared and located the aircraft wreckage. Helicopters were called in. From the air, it appeared that no one was in the cockpit of the aircraft. The helicopter crew photographed the area and noted his donut (a round seat cushion) on the ground by the wing. They hoped he was still alive in the jungle somewhere.

Dengler had successfully evaded capture through that night, and later said that he even saw the rescue aircraft as they searched for him. He had tried without success to raise them on his emergency radio. Dengler was finally captured by Pathet Lao troops, who tortured him as they force-marched him through several villages. Eight days later, Dengler escaped, but was

recaptured within a short time.

Ultimately, Dengler found himself in a camp in Laos held with other American POWs. One of them, 1Lt. Duane W. Martin, had been aboard an HH43B "Huskie" helicopter operating about 10 miles from the border of Laos in Ha Tinh Province, North Vietnam, when the HH43B went down near the city of Tan An, and all four personnel aboard the aircraft were captured. It is not clear if the four were captured by North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao troops or a combination of the two. Duane W. Martin was taken to a camp controlled by Pathet Lao. Thomas J. Curtis, William A. Robinson and Arthur N. Black were released in 1973 by the North Vietnamese, and were in the Hanoi prison system as early as 1967.

When Duane Martin arrived at the camp, he found himself held with other Americans. Some of them had been held for more than two years. (Note: This would indicate that there were Americans in this camp who had been captured in 1964. The only American officially listed as captured in Laos in 1964 is Navy Lt. Charles F. Klusmann, who was captured in June 1964 and escaped in August 1964. Source for the "two years" information is Mersky & Polmer's "The Naval Air War in Vietnam", and this source does not identify any Americans by name who had been held "for more than two years." Civilian Eugene DeBruin, an acknowledged Laos POW who has never been returned, had been captured in the fall of 1963. Dengler has stated that a red-bearded DeBruin was held in one of the camps in which he was held. All previous Laos loss incidents occurred in 1961 and 1962.)

Throughout the fall of 1965 and into spring and summer of 1966, the group of Americans suffered regular beatings, torture, harassment, hunger and illness in the hands of their captors. According to an "American Opinion" special report entitled "The Code" (June 1973), Dengler witnessed his captors behead an American Navy pilot and execute six wounded Marines. (Note: no other source information available at time of writing reveals the names of these seven Americans.)

On June 29, 1965, after hearing the prisoners were to be killed, Martin and Dengler and unnamed others (Eugene DeBruin was apparently part of this group, but was recaptured, and according to information received by his family, was alive at least until January 1968, when he was taken away with other prisoners by North Vietnamese regular army troops) decided to make their escape in a hail of gunfire in which six communist guards were killed. Dengler was seriously ill with jaundice, and Martin was sick with malaria. Dengler and Martin and the others made their way through the dense jungle surviving on fruits, berries, and some rice they had managed to save during their captivity.

They floated down river on a raft they had constructed, eventually coming to an abandoned village where the men found some corn. After a night's rest, Dengler and Martin made their way downstream to another village. This settlement was occupied, however, and the two Americans were suddenly attacked by a villager with a machete. Dengler managed to escape back into the jungle, but Martin was beheaded by the assailant. It had been 18 days since their escape.

Dengler made his way alone, and on the 22nd day, with his strength almost gone, he was able to form an SOS with some rocks, and waited, exhausted to be rescued or die. Luck was with him, for by late morning, an Air Force A1E spotted the signal and directed a helicopter to pick up Dengler. He weighed 98 pounds. When he had launched from his aircraft carrier 5 months earlier, he had weighed 157 pounds.

Dengler returned to California, and has written a book, "Escape From Laos" on his experiences while a POW.

Curtis, Robinson and Black were released from Hanoi on February 12, 1973, over seven years from the time of their capture. Lt. Duane Martin's fate remains uncertain. If, as reported, he was killed during the escape attempt, no effort has been made by the Lao to return his body.

Martin is one of nearly 600 Americans who remain prisoner, missing or otherwise unaccounted for in Laos. Although the U.S. maintained only a handful of these men in POW status, over 100 were known to have survived their loss incident. The Pathet Lao stated during the war that they held "tens of tens" of American prisoners, but they would be released only from Laos (meaning that the U.S. must negotiate directly with the Pathet Lao).

The Pathet Lao were not part of the agreements that ended American involvement in Southeast Asia, and no negotiations have been conducted with them since for the prisoners they held.

Reports continue to come in related to missing Americans in Southeast Asia. It does not seem likely that Martin is among the hundreds thought by many authorities to be still alive, but what would he think of the abandonment of his fellow Americans. Are we doing enough to bring these men home?

Dieter Dengler resides in California.

Lt Dieter Dengler, USN

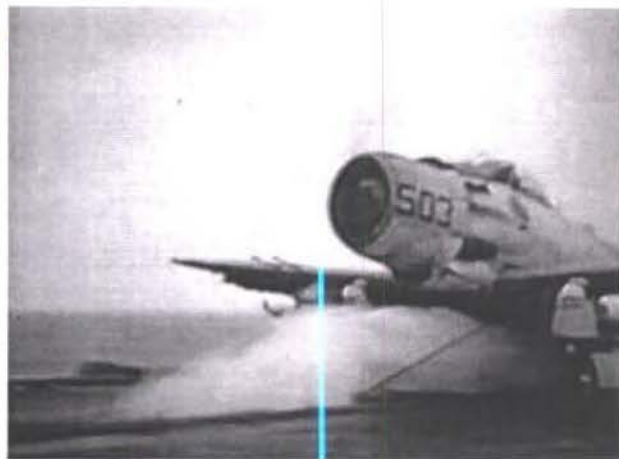
Escape from Laos

On February 2nd of 1966, US Navy Lieutenant Dieter Dengler was flying his first combat mission over North Vietnam from the carrier U.S.S. Ranger. The Ranger and its warplanes, including the Skyraiders of VA-145, had just repositioned from Dixie to Yankee Station following a short workup off the waters of South Vietnam in the South China Sea. Missions from Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf would be much more demanding and dangerous than those flown in the relatively benign South Vietnamese environment.

The book, "Escape from Laos," is Dengler's account of the events of that day, and of the seemingly endless days and nights following his shootdown, imprisonment, and ultimately, his rescue from the remote jungles of Laos. This excerpt tells of this first (and last) abbreviated mission in the A-1 Skyraider:

On February 1, 1966, our skipper took the first flight in and returned with several panels shot out of his wing, and other pilots, also stationed on the carrier, were shot down. I was glad that I was duty officer and did not have to fly a sortie that first day.

The next day I was scheduled for the 0900 launch. There were four of us-the flight leader and myself, the section leader named "Spook," and his wingman. We spent a nearly sleepless night, and about three hours before the flight we had a thorough briefing. I went up to the flight deck and checked my aircraft to make sure everything was in order. The fuel tanks were full and the safety wires on the bombs were properly installed.



We finally manned our Skyraiders-the Douglas single-engine, propeller-driven bomber usually called the "Spad," but also christened with nicknames such as "Dauntless II," "BT2D-I," "AD," "A-1," or "Able Dog."

I switched my radio to Gray Eagle Approach. "This is Skyraider 04," I said. "Up and ready." By this time the jets had been launched and the four of us taxied forward. I revved up my engine on number three catapult, checked the gauges, put on full power, and saluted. With a jolt the catapult slung me off the carrier toward North Vietnam.

Heavily loaded with bombs and fuel, we flew northwest. In twenty minutes the coast of Vietnam came into sight. The weather over the ocean was fine, but over the coast it was all black. Coastal monsoons, the fierce rains I came to know so well, were blanketing the coast. Since the weather was so bad, we automatically tightened our formation to about three to four feet, wing to wing, but even flying that close I could not see Spook flying lead. We climbed through 700 feet in the soup and I was barely able to see the number two man. We knew there were mountains around us, so the leader was forced to turn back and lead us out toward the ocean, starting his climb immediately. We finally broke out of the clouds but the heavy weather made our primary target, a road with a truck convoy on it, impossible, so we headed for our alternate.



We crossed Vietnam above the clouds and penetrated halfway across Laos, flying over the Mu Gia Pass. The weather soon got better and we could make out the ground as we neared the alternate target. I had never seen anything like that green jungle, with an occasional row of sharp, white-looking cliffs

rising up at least 2,000 feet. It looked exactly as I had read-impenetrable jungle. "If I ever get shot down over this, I will never make it out," I thought to myself.

I changed my altitude and heading every few seconds so that the radar-controlled guns on the ground would not be able to lock onto me. I was getting more and more separated from the rest of the flight as tail end Charlie, even though I had pushed the throttle all the way up. I glanced quickly at my map and at our location, trying to compare the ground to the map, but everything down there looked the same and I couldn't make out where I was. I stuffed the bulky, unfolded map down next to the seat, concentrating on staying with the others. We had flown nearly due west long enough to be over Laos, the flat ground that lay before me now. The air was dry and yellow, reminding me of the smog over Los Angeles. I found out later that it was due to the burning of the fields.

We were nearing our target. With the exception of the red master switch, all the arming switches for my bombs were set. Suddenly I heard Spook on my headset call out, "Zero seven, rolling in." I flicked on my master switch and tried to find the target myself, a road intersection with reported anti-aircraft emplacements next to it. Up and to my left I saw Spook's bombs explode, a one-run load. An enormous dust cloud marked where the intersection must have been located. I was at 9,000 feet, much too close to the target to make my run. I had to yaw and steeply bank the aircraft three or four times since the intersection disappeared below the nose of the Spad, when it should have disappeared below the left wing root.

When I thought I was in the right spot, I rolled in to the left to a nearly inverted position. Just then my AD lurched and began to shake violently. I let go of the throttle, knowing that I was hit, and grabbed the stick with both hands, yelling at the top of my lungs. I tried to radio to the rest of the flight but everything was dead--no side-tone, no click, nothing. The nose of my plane had fallen through, pointing nearly straight down. The anti-aircraft emplacement came directly into view below me since the dust clouds had drifted away. I took an erratic aim and let go of my load by pulling the emergency release handle. The plane jumped up with the weight of the bombs gone as I pulled hard on the stick to bring the nose up toward the horizon. Two more blinding explosions off my right wingtip threw the aircraft totally out of control. My hands darted all over the cockpit, not knowing where they were going, while I was trying to remember emergency procedures. My engine was dead and I decided to jump.

The AD was not designed with an ejection seat. The canopy had to be blown open with the emergency air bottle. As the aircraft gyrated through the sky, I unstrapped myself, threw the harness out into the wind stream, and lowered the seat. I started to climb onto the seat, staying crouched so the slipstream would not get hold of me. The unguided plane went through its own motions now, knocking me back and forth in the cockpit. Another nearby explosion made the plane shiver from nose to tail, and it was then that I decided to ride her in, no matter what. Haphazardly I strapped myself back in after I had unbuckled all the chute straps, so as not to get entangled or trapped after the crash.

There was a long green mountain ridge to my right. I thought that if I could get over it and into the next valley, as far away as possible from whoever was at the road junction, I would have a chance of escaping. It was risky since I was already low and did not know whether there would be an open clearing on the other side where I could ditch. I wobbled toward the ridge, losing too much altitude, and by now it looked as though I was going to crash into it.

Because of the windmilling propeller I could still drop the flaps, allowing the aircraft to balloon over the ridge with only a few feet to spare. I threw out my authenticator, notes, and all my maps over this jungle ridge, while my eyes searched frantically for a place to belly in. There were a few huts down to my left and a tiny clearing about half a mile in front of me. Except for the clearing, it was an unending jungle of trees and was not the valley I had expected. Jumping was out of the question because I was too low.

Amazingly, I could still control the plane. I swung right, then a little to the left, then right again, trying to lose altitude, skidding in a half circle, aiming for the small clearing. The stick had to be kept almost all the way to the right to keep my wings somewhat level. By now I was at about 500 feet and a quarter mile from the clearing-close enough to see that I had made the wrong decision. The clearing was nothing more than a section of cut forest, studded with five-foot-high tree stumps. Later I learned that the villagers built their huts on top of the tree stumps to avoid the floodwaters and also to provide shelter below for their animals.

My mind and hands went confusedly through the crash procedures. My airspeed indicator erratically showed 160 knots-at least 60 knots too fast-but there was no way of slowing the monster down. I had to get the plane into the clearing. The wall of jungle trees at the end of the clearing grew larger and larger as I approached it rapidly. With both hands, I pushed the stick into the right forward corner of the cockpit to lose altitude. A completely bare tree, 150 feet tall with only three or four limbs, loomed directly in my path. I could not fly over it without crashing into the dense jungle beyond, so I bore sighted the lower part of the dead tree. Just then I noticed the white tips of my external fuel tanks sticking out from under the wings. I yanked the emergency tank handle and dropped them off. It was a lucky thing that I had seen them because each carried 100 gallons of gas. The instant the weight was gone, the plane lifted upward, exactly the opposite of what I wanted. The stumps were just below the aircraft now and the tree was dead ahead. Hitting the tree straight on would snap it off and crush me inside the cockpit, so just before I hit I kicked the left rudder with all my strength, yawing the plane to take the full impact on my right wing root.

Tree and plane met with a violent shudder, tearing both apart. The left wing had swung forward and down, its tip snagging the ground, slamming the nose of the plane into the earth. The stick was torn out of my hands as all eight tons of Spad bounced back into the air, then tumbled over and over in a cart wheeling fashion. A stump ripped out the right side of the cockpit where the radios were, barely missing my leg. The force of deceleration pulled my helmet halfway across my face, then ripped it off. The inch-thick windscreen broke from its left corner in slow motion, like safety glass, and I ducked as the flying

glass narrowly missed my head. I began to scream when I smelled oil and gas. Then, in a blur, I saw the entire tail section tumble by. I kept on yelling with my eyes closed, pressing my arms in front of my face, through the endless grinding and tearing. Then everything was silent.

What remained of the plane was lying almost completely rolled over. I was wedged between the jammed bars of the canopy rail of the twisted cockpit. Confused and in a daze, I was hanging nearly upside down by my straps. The cockpit was filled with heavy green foliage and thick dust cut off most of the light. The dust filled my mouth and lungs and started me coughing- Seconds after the crash I still expected a fire and an explosion. Frantically, I tugged and pulled to get out, but I could barely move. After that, I don't know what happened.

As if reemerging into life I came to, lying on my back about a hundred feet from the crash. My Mae West was gone-I must have torn it off. Stumbling and falling like a drunkard, I crawled away as fast as I could, occasionally glancing back, expecting the fire that never came. When I reached the edge of the clearing and started into the bush, I stood up and took a quick look at what could still be seen of the fallen and broken bird. A thin veil of dust hung limply around her. There was not a sound.

Lt Dieter Dengler evaded capture for a short time. But soon, he was taken prisoner by the Pathet Lao and was marched for two weeks through the jungle enroute to what turned out to be a prisoner camp where he was interned along with five other prisoners. Their existence was bleak, and when the prisoners learned of a plan that would have them shot in order to make more food available to the guards, they decided to act on an escape plan they had devised. Dengler was the only one of the six escaped prisoners to survive. He managed to evade capture long enough to be rescued- but just barely.

In the morning of July 20th, 1966, Lt Col Gene Deatrick was preparing for a somewhat routine mission that would take him into Laos for an Armed Recce (reconnaissance) mission. Deatrick and his wingman, Major "Andy" Anderson were flying A-1 Skyraiders with the 1st Air Commando Squadron at Pleiku, Republic of South Vietnam. This sortie was intended to strike whatever enemy targets were found, as the area they were going into was without friendlies. When Deatrick and Anderson spotted Dengler on the ground, a Jolly Green rescue helicopter out of Danang was dispatched to the area escorted by Major Robert Blood and Captain Frank Urbanic.

As fate would have it, two Skyraider pilots from different branches of the service, would forever have their lives intertwined. A recent movie by noted film director Werner Herzog entitled "**Little Dieter Needs to Fly**" tells Dengler's entire story, from his upbringing in war torn Germany to the circumstances surrounding his rescue. The following sound clip from the movie, is of Dengler and Deatrick relating the details of the

rescue. (Used with permission)

Audio recording with Gene Deatrick and Dieter Dengler discussing Dengler's Rescue
(RealAudio 5:26)

Images from the collection of Dieter Dengler

Dengler's book, Escape from Laos is available directly from the author at a cost of \$10 (US funds) which includes shipping and handling. Mr. Dengler will also autograph copies of his book, so be sure to include a desired message.

Dengler's address is:

Dieter Dengler
790 Panoramic Hwy
Mill Valley, CA 94941

CONFIDENTIAL

3d ARRGp Hist, Jul-Sep 66

The A-1Es (call sign "Sandy") established voice contact with the survivor; he fired a pen gun flare and was spotted by the rescue force. A hoist recovery was accomplished with no difficulty and the helicopter returned to Udorn.

Det 1-3-45-14 July

(U) A Navy pilot of an F-8 with extensive battle damage ejected over the water about 90 miles north of Danang. An HH-43 helicopter scrambled from Danang made voice contact with the downed airman over his survival radio (RT-10) at approximately five miles. Communications during the rescue was excellent; the survivor was safely recovered in good condition.

Det 1-3-46-15 July

(U) Two Marine pilots of an F-4B ejected 15 miles west of Quang Tri. Two "Pedro" helicopters (HH-43) launched immediately from Quang Tri and proceeded to the bailout location. A forward air controller (FAC) in a light aircraft reported visual contact with both airmen. The survivors released a smoke grenade on the arrival of the helicopters and were hoisted aboard as the ground was completely obscured by elephant grass.

Det 1-3-47-17 July

(U) F-105 pilot ejected over water northeast of Dong Hoi. Crown Bravo (HU-16) on orbit in the area diverted toward the activated beeper signal. Radio contact (RT-10) was established with the airman as he was descending. The HU-16 landed, recovered the survivor and returned him to Danang.

Det 2-3-8-1 Feb (Reopened 20 Jul 66)

(C) An A-1E reported spotting a man on the ground waving a white flag with an SOS panel on the ground near the DMZ. HH-3Es at Quang Tri were sent to the area; the survivor (a Navy pilot) was recovered by hoist and flown to Danang. He was in poor condition, in a state of shock and incoherent. Subject had been in captivity for a prolonged period and had recently escaped.

Det 6-38-114-25 July

(U) An F-100 pilot with battle damage and low on fuel bailed out 12 miles SSE of Bien Hoa. A flight of F-100s were over the downed airman while a rescue HH-43 was enroute. When the rescue helicopter arrived, a parachute was spotted in an open field and the pilot was about 200 yards from it. Hostile forces were approximately 400 yards from the survivor and were firing at him. An approach and landing was made and the pilot jumped aboard with only minor scratches and bruises. Time from bailout to recovery was approximately ten minutes.

CONFIDENTIAL

Dieter Dengler shot down in Laos 1Feb66

A – 1J 142031 VA- 145, USN, USS *Ranger* Lt(jg) Dieter Dengler (POW - escaped)

About an hour after Lt Eakin was shot down, another flight of four Skyraiders attacked a target deeper into Laos, war Ban Phathoung. Lt Dengler was the last to dive on the target when his aircraft was hit by ground fire. He crash-landed a few miles from the target but both wings were ripped off when the aircraft struck some trees. Despite a SAR attempt in which a USAF helicopter crew spotted and photographed his wrecked aircraft, Dengler was nowhere to be seen.

Det 2-3-8-1 Feb (Reopened 20 Jul 66)

(C) An A-1E reported spotting a man on the ground waving a white flag with an SOS panel on the ground near the DMZ. HH-3Es at Quang Tri were sent to the area; the survivor (a Navy pilot) was recovered by hoist and flown to Danang. He was in poor condition, in a state of shock and incoherent. Subject had been in captivity for a prolonged period and had recently escaped.

Extracted from Det 2 38 ARS Unit History

The HH-3 crew that rescued Dengler was Captain William E Cowell (pilot); 1Lt William C Dean (copilot); SSgt William R Gladish (flight engineer) and A1C Michael D. Leonard

February 1966 found Air Rescue focusing on SARs in Laos, medevacs in SVN, plus a couple of feet wet missions in the Tonkin Gulf. Fourteen missions saved twenty-six men. The month started off badly. On the 2nd, Navy Lt Dieter Dengler was flying an A-1H on a strike mission in Laos. He was trail aircraft in a four-ship formation. Visibility enroute to the target area was poor. When his A-1 was hit by ground fire, battle damage immediately knocked out his radios. This rendered him incapable of notifying his wingmen that he was in trouble. His aircraft was not equipped with an ejection seat and he was too low to bail out. Out of options he crashed landed in Laos. He survived the crash and immediately began evading enemy capture.

Unfortunately for Lt Dengler, no one yet knew he had crashed. A few minutes later, the other members of his flight realized that he was missing. They began a route search, on the reverse course they had flown inbound, but could not find him. Crown was notified and the HU-16 began monitoring guard for a beeper. None was heard.

The next day, his carrier launched four A-1s to accomplish second route search. This time they located the wreckage. Jollys from Udorn RTAFB scrambled to the scene. Without radio contact, the rescue force was not supposed to attempt SAR. But the Jolly Green pilot disregarded this

guidance and went in to attempt a rescue. From a hover directly over the crash, the rescue crew could see that the cockpit was empty. With no SAR objective, they departed the area. Everyone flying overhead hoped he was still alive and evading somewhere in the jungle. In fact, Lt Dengler had successfully evaded capture. He saw the rescue aircraft as they searched for him. The Lt had tried without success to raise them on his radio. Unfortunately, it would not work. On February 3rd, Lt Dengler was captured by the Pathet Lao. He was forced marched through several villages. At each stop they tortured him. Ultimately, Dieter Dengler found himself in a Laotian POW camp.

Rescue had tried to locate him and failed footnote #187

Reference footnote #189

Det 6 38 ARRS Mission Report #6-25-12 February 1966. In USAF Collection, AFHRA.