

FROM: Det 7, 38th ARRSq

28 July 1966

Subject: Mission Narrative 1-3-50/27 July 66

TO: 3d ARRGp

1. At 0245Z I was flying Jolly Green 15 and intercepted a distress call on guard from Moonglow 2 that his wingman was down. I was airborne returning to alert posture from a refueling station. We recieved permission from Queen thru Crown Alfa to scramble. Jolly Green 18 launched and joined us. I asked for an A-1 escort on guard and raised Locket flight. We rendezvoused with Locket flight at 0330Z. Queen had launched two Sandies out of Nakhon Phanon and there was a Dragon Fly over the pilot. The Dragon Fly took over the rescap when Moonglow 2 went bingo fuel. Dragon Fly was on scene Commander.
2. Difficulties encountered enroute were all weather. We had an average 45 knot headwind component all the way up there. Cloud cover forced us over 9,000 feet and turbulence kept our ground speed below 75 knots.
3. Arriving near the scene we got a UHF-DF steer from Sandy 31 and descended through a hole west of the pilot. After getting under the clouds, the Dragon-Fly gave me a low fly-by on the pilot's position. We positioned ourselves for an approach on that spot and asked the pilot for a beeper. We got a perfect UHF-DF cut on him, came in a second time, asked for his smoke and hovered in over the smoke. The smoke had already drifted 150' before it penetrated the jungle canopy. The survivor directed me over him with his emergency radio. The hoist operator got him in sight, took over directing the hover and pick the man up. The wind caused much turbulence in the area of pick-up. While in the hover, airspeed fluctuations were 0 to 35 kts and torque was 65% to 105%. Pick up time was 0358Z.
4. The coordination between all parties participating in this SAR effort was good. There was a great deal of unnecessary radio chatter concerning revised coordinates in that we had a cap on the survivor that could electronically direct anyone to the scene. Other than that radio dicipline was good.
5. The survivor was extremely effective in supporting his own pick-up. He briefed me that he had stayed in his burning aircraft to make it to rough terrain before ejection. Once he got on the ground he cooly directed SAR aircraft over his position. He knew how to use the forrest penetrator. The survivor was uninjured. The return trip to Quang-Tri was uneventful.
6. From notification to pick-up time 1+13. Crew coordination was outstanding. This was my copilot's and helicopter mechanic's first pick-up and the first time I had ever worked with my pararescueman. This was a very difficult pick-up due to the high gusty winds and high, dense jungle canopy. Each crewmember's action was indispensable in the success of this mission.

David C. Henry
DAVID C. HENRY, Capt., USAF
RCC

CREW MEMBERS:

RCC: Captain David C. Henry

CP: 2/Lt Elmer C. Lavender

H1: A1C Jerry W. Johnson

RS: A1C Dennis C. Hughs

HUGHES

Rescues Owed to 'Green Giants'

HH-3 RESCUE CREWS, many of their pilots trained at Sheppard AFB, Tex., under Air Training Command, are flying the "Jolly Green Giants" to supplement air rescue operations in the northern part of South Vietnam. The crews of the Jolly Green Giants are assigned to Det. 7 of the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Sq., a sub-unit of the 3d Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Gp.

Other air rescue aircraft include the HU-16 amphibian and

the HH-43 helicopter.

The Jolly Green Giant choppers can fly farther than the HH-43s, and have a hoist line that can be used for recovering downed airmen while the helicopter is still airborne over ground or water.

Many of the Jolly Green Giant pilots received their early heli-

copter pilot training at Sheppard AFB, Tex. Advanced training as chopper pilots came through Stead AFB, Nev.

One Jolly Green Giant pilot with plenty of know-how in rescue operations in Southeast Asia is 1st Lt. Richard J. Sans, a graduate of the advanced helicopter training program at Stead.

Jackson Daily News

State Flyer Lifts Captain To Safety

DA NANG, Viet Nam (AP)—Air Force Capt. James R. Mitchell, 37, of Ogden, Utah, nearly ran out of luck today on his last scheduled combat flights over North Viet Nam.

Communist ground fire knocked down his F105 Thunderchief near the coastal city of Dong Hoi, in North Viet Nam's southern panhandle, but one of the Air Force's "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter hauled him out of enemy territory and brought him to the Da Dang Airbase.

Mitchell's flight of Thunderchiefs had been assigned to knock out a ferry. He was making a strafing run on the target, about 100 miles north of Da Nang, when enemy automatic weapons fire ripped into the belly of his plane.

His plane carried him about four miles off and he bailed out.

While Mitchell was falling in his parachute, his "beeper"—a miniature emergency radio which sends out spaced sound signals—was fixing his location for other nearby American planes.

When the swift rescue helicopters whirled in, the fighters stifled enemy anti-aircraft guns with their 20mm cannon and .50 caliber machine guns.

The HHE helicopters, commanded by Lt.-Col. Allan Vette, of Gulfport, Miss., dropped down. One of them lowered "a penetrator"—a device that cuts through jungle canopy and Mitchell was lifted to the rescue through jungle canopy — and Mitchell was lifted to the rescue craft.

"They are the greatest," Mitchell said of the helicopter rescue teams.



SEP . 66

Successful rescue of Air Force Capt. James R. Mitchell, F-105 pilot near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam 27 JUL 66

Jolly Green 15 Low Bird

RCC	Capt. David Henry
CP	Lt. Elmer C. Lavender
HM	Johnson
RS	Hughes

Jolly Green 18 High Bird

RCC	Capt. Rice
CP	Lt. William C. Dean
HM	A1C Nick Beaumonte
RS	A1C William Flower

61-0045 F-105D

During an attack on a river ferry Captain James R. Mitchell's aircraft was hit by 37mm AA over Route Pack 1. He managed to keep his plane airborne long enough to reach the mountains where, Captain Mitchell ejected from his aircraft and was rescued in 1 hour and 45 minutes by a USAF helo. He had minor injuries from the ejection. This was 100th and last mission. 27/7/66. Call sign-Moonglow. He was rescued by a helicopter call sign Jolly Green 15. It's crew was Captain David C. Henry, pilot; 2nd Lt. Elmer Lavander, copilot; A1C Dennis C. Hughs, pararescue; and A1C Jerry W. Johnson, medic.

AIR WAR COLLEGE JOURNAL FOR PUBLICATION
No. 5142

TITLE: Down On The 99th

AUTHOR: James R. Mitchell, Lt. Colonel, USAF

A personal narrative of a flying incident experienced by the author while over North Vietnam in 1966. The incident recounts the shootdown on his 99th (and next to last) F-105 sortie, and subsequent rescue by helicopter. The author's feelings and thoughts during the entire experience are reflected.

JAMES R. MITCHELL

CALL SIGN MOONGLOW LEAD

F-105

JULY 15

CAPT DAVID C. HENRY	A/C
2LT ELMER LAVENDER	C/P
A/C DENNIS C. HUGHES	PJ
A/C JERRY W. JOHNSON	FE

You were set up last night to fly your 99th combat mission over North Vietnam. Hopefully, it will be just like the previous 98: you will be reasonably successful in getting to the target, inflict some damage, and then make it back to home plate. This has been the name of the game for you these past six months.

The F-105 Thunderchiefs you have been flying have been good birds. They're not what every fighter pilot dreams about, but they do carry a heavy load a long way and at a pretty decent speed, and they are single seaters with a forward firing cannon. But if you want to pull a few g's, forget it. The old "Thud" just wasn't made for that. It has been rather pitiful these past six months to watch guys (including yourself) try to bend it around over a target and still keep the objective in sight inside that enormous turning radius. This has gotten particularly ludicrous a number of times when the visibility was bad.

But for just cut and out lugging the mail to a fixed point on the ground, whether at medium or low altitude, there hasn't been a fighter plane in SAM that has been able to go as far or as fast with as much. This particular capability of the old "Thud" has been quite desirable at times, particularly when you've tried to cut into tough targets around Hanoi and then cut again.

But for this mission today (your 99th), you're Boonglow Lead, flight lead of a two-shipper set up to recce in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. It's a pre-dawn takeoff, which hopefully gives you enough time to get into the designated area in time to spot some of the night-time stragglers along the jungle supply routes, hopefully some of them out in the open where you can get in a few good shots.

Not really too much sweat with this mission, you think, because you've been over there plenty of times before. In fact, so many times that you recognize all the landmarks and geographical features as though they were in your own local training area. Sort of like hopping off to the gunnery range for a little air-to-ground practice. No cumbersome maps required in the cockpit for this one.

But you must be careful this time. You've had it drilled into you from the day you arrived that overconfidence in any combat situation can be your undoing. There were plenty of other missions way up north that got your pucker count up, but somehow things have always seemed much more tranquil down in the panhandle. We have been calling these missions the "easy counters." In fact, you have felt all along that if you could fly all your missions down there in Route Package One, things would be just peachy-keen.

You finish your briefing before daylight, having rather perfunctorily gone through the whole ordeal in the usual and "standard" fashion: short discussion about the target area, the

route of flight, call-signs, radio frequencies, emergency procedures, and so forth. Not really much different from the previous ninety-eight. You give your personal equipment a quick once-over, checking to make sure the batteries in your four emergency radios check out. Some guys have been taking with them extra food, water, bolo knives, large hand guns, and so forth. You've always put the emphasis on emergency radios; as a result you have taken a little kidding about it in the past. "Nobody," they've said "needs that many radios." It's too late to change your habits now, so you just give them all one last check and then head for the airplanes.

No problem on takeoff. You both get airborne; about forty minutes later you are crossing the border into the southern panhandle and are beginning to strain the old eyeballs for targets of opportunity. You swing up the river from the Quang Khe ferry crossing, watching for either water or road traffic as you go. There are plenty of water and road arteries to scan, and at 400 knots at low level, you have to be quick to catch something before it jells off into the trees and virtually disappears.

It's getting light now. You've timed it just right so shooting should be good. You're now down below a 4000 foot deck of broken clouds and looking in earnest for something to zap. You hope you find something soon because fuel will be a problem on this mission. This was one day you didn't get a drink from the tanker.

Major Don McIntosh is with you today in the other F-105. It's one

of his first missions in S.A. and he hangs out there in fighting formation as though he'd been doing it forever.

As you both swing up a navigable waterway, something catches your eye. It looks as though a rectangular shaped part of the river bank has become unhooked and is floating just outside a perfectly symmetrical rectangular shaped niche in the bank itself. Since this is just about half a mile from one of the major river crossings, you know from experience that this is no barge shaped island. It's a good sized ferry boat being put into its moorings after the night's work.

You call it out to Dan, he spots it, and you both climb up for a little five bomb work. It's going to be touch and go with those clouds in your way, but you've just got to give this one a go.

Once you climb on top the cloud deck you lose sight of the target, so you're going to just about have to use the Brille fitted in your five bomb case. They only gave you two bombs each today. No bomb short age; they just have too many airplanes!

You spot a hole in the cloud deck on a heading and angle you think will get you in for a good pass, but it's going to be hard to get a good hit. So you roll the wing up, pull the nose down, and aim yourself right for the hole in the clouds. Dan is just a few seconds behind. When you break out underneath it's going to be right at release altitude so there won't be much time for a last minute tracking correction.

Sure enough, there's the ferry, but it's off to the left slightly. You jam the stick left, roll the wings level, let the fighter come quickly up to the target, and then pickle off both 750 pound bombs. The whole operation takes about two or three seconds. You come on with about five g's and start a hard left turn around the target, your neck muscles straining against the g-forces. The bomb impact point is about 50 feet from the ferry and in the water. As you continue your turn under the cloud deck you see Dan sliding down through the hole. His bombs are off slightly too, but the impact of the bombs has broken the mooring lines they were using to put it to bed.

As Dan pulls off you see muzzle flashes and smoke from automatic weapons about 300 yards from the target and on the opposite bank. They were firing at you too when you finished your pass, but you didn't see them.

You feel badly about missing the ferry. Just then Haystone Flight checks in on the same radio frequency, and you remember from the general briefing this morning that they are flagged to the same general area. You give them a quick call and directions to the ferry. They get a visual on it and climb up through the cloud deck to repeat your tactics. Dan calls bingo fuel, so you tell him to head on out for home base, you'll catch him enroute. You tell Haystone Flight about the automatic weapons, and since you have a little more fuel, you tell him also that you'll pop

up from over a nearby hill and zap the automatic weapons with 20mm just as Keystone Lead rolls in. You figure the hostile gunners will be watching you through the hole for Keystone Lead just as you sneak up on them.

You get off behind the hill about three miles while Keystone Flight is in its climb, all the time keeping yourself masked from the gunners' view. When Keystone rolls in, you get up a big bag-full of airspeed, nip sharply up over the top of the hill, roll inverted, pull the nose down, and then line up on the gun position just as Keystone breaks beneath the clouds. The only trouble is that Keystone Lead aborts his pass and pulls off above the clouds. This leaves you with your zipper on the automatic weapons site and with nothing to do but squeeze the trigger and hope awfully hard.

Since you have a thousand rounds of 20mm, and a rate of fire of 100 rounds per minute, this gives you about 15 seconds of steady fire. No one being conservative now. Aim a little high to start with, and then bring your zipper down as the range decreases. Just as you squeeze you see their muzzle flashes. You stay on that trigger and the rounds spray out at a rate of a hundred rounds per second. You begin to see your own high explosive and armor piercing incendiaries impact right on the guns. You work the rudder a little as if you are painting a picture on them with a lot of grey smoke and sparkles. Your range is decreasing fast now, but you

stay mashed down on the trigger. You've covered the area of the gun site wall, and as you pull off you know you must have gotten them all.

But at that instant something happens. You feel a couple of healthy thumps in your belly and immediately you get smoke in the cockpit. The caution and warning light panel is now decorated with bright red and amber lights, but because of the smoke you can hardly see which ones are on. You know now you've been hit and are going to have to pay a price.

Instinctively you plug in the afterburner and hope it will light and at least carry you a few miles away from here. You know without thinking about it that this trusty old bird has been mortally wounded.

Luckily the burner lights, and as it does you simultaneously push down the Mike button and call out that you've been hit and are on a heading of 135 degrees from the target. You repeat this a couple of times with your call sign, hoping to be heard before the engine goes dead. Altfueyway 100, already headed home, acknowledges your call and heads back. Part of your briefing had been for any surviving single-seater in this situation to jettison off his empty fuel tanks, return to the scene of the bailout, try to get radio contact with the downed pilot, and to recover at Da Nang Air Base in South Vietnam, which is not too far away even when the lower bingo fuel level was reached.

You try to get some altitude and distance between you and that automatic weapons site, which is over relatively open and flat terrain. Remarkably the afterburner is still cooking, but it's getting hotter than blazes in the cockpit and the smoke is now so thick you can't see out. You're on 100 percent oxygen, but you jettison the canopy to clear away the smoke. You come out of afterburner, and then check to see if anything improves. More warning lights are on now, including both fire lights, and the engine is vibrating and making a screeching noise. It won't be long now.

You check the terrain below and are happy to see the lush green of the jungle. You have at least side it to what you hope will be a safe area. Some maneuver and evasion when you are forced to eject.

Your flight controls are beginning to jerk and act up now. You're never hospitalized, but you try to check your hydraulic gauges. Still to wish a little thing blown around that it's hard to see them. When the controls finally begin to freeze up, which is the signal that they're just about ready to crap out for good, you make the decision to stop, slowly over the side. You don't debate much with yourself. The decision comes easily and automatically.

Head back against the headrest, back straight, up with the air-locks, reach down for those triggers and squeeze them both. You're surprised when a rather comfortable but positive jolt rushes you up and out. The first thought you remember is looking down at

the top of an airplane flying along without its canopy--sort of convertible style. Then there's some tumbling, the sound of the parachute shroud lines paying out of your back pack, and then kabump! You've reached the end of those lines and are delighted to look up and see that rather handsome looking tri-colored parachute all filled with air above you. You look straight ahead just in time to see your stricken F-105 pitch up violently about half a mile away, and then plunge straight down into that green morass below you. You expect a giant explosion when it hits, but oddly enough, there is only a minor whiff of smoke to mark the spot. After that dissipates, there is nothing.

Better get back to the ride down now. You look down past your feet and see that you're oscillating pretty seriously. You remember what they told you in training; grab your elbows and stop your swinging. Sure enough, it works. But now you can see you're drifting back to where the base was. Hence you've just come. It's now you remember the weather briefing you got before takeoff. Winds in the target area from the south at 20-30 knots! Wow! Since you're at about 4,000 feet and three miles from where you were hit, you just could drift back out into that flatland.

You perch up and pull down hard on all your wrist risers, collapsing part of the chute, and sure enough, just like in the book, you come down like a rock and with very little drift. You hang onto those nylon lines until a couple of hundred feet above

the jungle canopy and then let go. The chute blossoms once again and you prepare for impact.

Since you are going into the trees, you decide against deploying your survival kit and life raft from your rear pack. You've heard stories about guys getting hung upside down in the tree tops in all those dangling lanyards.

You see the trees coming closer now--much closer. Not at all like it was there at 4000 feet. At that altitude it felt as though you'd stay up there all day. All of a sudden there's no way you're going to prevent what's about to happen. You hit the trees with a crash, and the next thing you know you're dangling there in your harness about twenty-five feet off the jungle floor. The rest of all the gear and what you would be would everything is in one place. Everything seems to be intact, so your next problem is to get to the ground. A few seconds of struggling with your harness to get your descent levered angled, and you accidentally dislodge your chute canopy hanging high in the tree branches above you. The rest of the trip to the jungle floor is completed with a twenty-five foot drop and a crunch. Again, somehow you are still unhurt.

Your first impressions are, "Boy, is this jungle floor cluttered," and "Wow, are those trees tall!" You can hardly see any sign through the branches above, and moving about with ease in all this entanglement of undergrowth is impossible.

K You quickly turn off your emergency beeper radio that was automatically actuated at the time of bailout, and which has told everyone else who was airborne in that vicinity that you were out and in your chute. You switch to one of your voice radios and try to contact Dan. Sure enough, Dan comes right on the air and acknowledges the fact that he knows you're down. He tells you that rescue has been alerted and will be on the way shortly. He also tells you he must leave the area for fuel reasons, but you're darned glad someone at least knows you're down safely and that they know your approximate location.

The next thing you begin to do is inventory all your gear, throwing aside things that are useless and would only slow you down if you had to make a run for it. The parachute goes, as does the life raft, the chute harness, helmet, and so forth. You fill the small portable sack-pack provided in your seat pack with everything you think you'll need. But in all your searching, you fail to find your compass. You're sure you kept one in your flying suit, but right now you find that you're without one. You had made a mental note during your nylon descent that you would need one for sure if you were to have to hike out of that jungle. This no compass business could be trouble.

You notice the heat. Boy is it hot, and the big black ants are getting all over inside your flying suit. You open a can of emergency water and drain it. Your flying suit is by this time

drained with sweat.

You suddenly jump at the sound of a voice coming through your radio. It's Sandy 31 calling to Hoonglow Lead. Hey, that's you! You snatch up the radio and reply. He tells you to give him directions to your location. Since you can't see anything from below this 150-foot-high jungle canopy, you give him steers into your position just by the sound of his engine. You guide him into a 360 degree circle around you. He then instructs you to fire a marker flare up through the branches above, and miraculously, that beautiful Brown candle finds a patch of blue and he has you spotted. Right now you're awfully glad he's up there. He then tells you to turn off your radio to conserve battery power, and that he will be back with the Jolly Green Giant helicopter in about an hour and a half. In the meantime he tells you he's going to loiter elsewhere so he won't give your position away to the enemy. He also lays down a string of small bomblats he has stowed into a ravine nearby, just to discourage any would-be searchers. It takes a heck of a racket, and you can hear the monkey's jabbering.

You continue to wait through your gear and look at your watch. It's taking a long time for this hour and a half to go by. You think as you stridle around in that dense morass of vines and tangled foliage that you would almost have to get down on your belly underneath it all in order to make any kind of progress at traveling. You hope you don't have to try it, because you aren't very

sure you could make it as far as the edge of the jungle.

At the appointed time you switch on your radio--actually, five minutes early, you're getting anxious--and right away you hear the sound of that guy with the great voice, Sandy 31. He tells you the Jolly Green is a few minutes out, which is the best news you've heard all day. He tells you you'll have to vector Jolly Green 15 into your position just as you had before with him. That's all right with you, you're getting good at it.

You can hear the whirring of his giant rotor blades now, and continue to give him right and left heading changes as he approaches. He sounds awfully close, but the agonizing seconds pass slowly. You hope he can find you. You fight the thought that perhaps he won't.

Suddenly you can sense the jungle reacting to the tremendous downrush of the huge rotor blades, but you aren't able to actually see him until he is right over the top of you. You then catch a glimpse of the para-rescue man, Maroon First Class Samuel C. Hughes in the open side-door. Simultaneously the word comes over your radio that the pilot, Captain David S. Henry, has a glimpse of your parachute, so they lower that heavy plumb-bob shaped jungle penetrator to you. The wind blast from his rotor is tremendous as he hovers motionless over the top of the jungle roof.

You instinctively gather up most of your belongings and try to get hold of the penetrator. When it finally reaches you it's a struggle to get it unfolded, get strapped on, and then hang onto

your belongings at the same time. With the branches and tree limbs being beaten about by the downrush, you wonder whether or not you'll ever make it up into that lovely big green monster.

But you finally get saddled up, give a wave of the arm, and up you go. There's only one slight problem now. The helicopter has started to move off station a little and you're being dragged up through the tree limbs at an angle. Never mind, just hang on! You're up about 100 feet now and still in the jungle, heavy branches and limbs breaking over your shoulders. For pete sake, just hang on and worry about the battered shoulders and legs later. This might be your last chance out of here.

You finally break free of the canopy top and see that the chopper is really about to climb. You're about 30 feet from the open doorway when you look down. Holy cow! Better not look again. He's really let up in the air now, so whatever you do don't let go of this thing. As you get up to the doorway, Airman Fights calls out notions for you to let him handle you and for you not to let go. The understatement of the year! He swings you aboard on the end of that cable, unhooks you, and then the medic, Airman First Class Jerry M. Johnson nonchalantly tosses you a half-pint medicine bottle all plastered up with adhesive tape. You take off the cap and snail it. Just as you figured. Good old hundred proof "medicinal" whiskey.

You hand it back with a smile, and with a gesture that you don't really feel you need it. You then make the rounds with the crew. It's noisy, but it doesn't prevent many shouted words of thanks and good strong handshakes. You go forward and meet Captain Henry and the co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Alver Lawender, who looks to be about sixteen years old.

Then you look back at some of the jagged bullet holes they picked up in the floor while coming in to get you. You suddenly realize that these Jolly Green crews are the greatest guys in the world. You will remember this day and what they did for you for the rest of your life. Then you tell them how great you think they are, they just shrug their shoulders and say they had always thought F-101 crews were the greatest. You know now it's quite a fraternity you belong to.

Well, you ride it back to base that evening. Your squadron buddies have the champagne ready, and with everybody talking a mile-a-minute, you find it hard to believe that a few hours earlier you were where you were. You are thankful--very thankful. You also know that you are very lucky. Many of your friends before you and many after you will not be so lucky. You think about them and hope they all have some of the same kind of good fortune you have had. Although you know many of them have been captured, you hope to see them all again some day. You know also that this will not be possible in every case, but you will never forget them.

JULY 27

Flowers & Hughes with on Jolly
Greens. Two missions, made
one pickup of F 105 pilot. First
mission aborted due to intense
ground fire. Lou Bird (Hughes) took
3 hits. (Marines had already made
pickup of that pilot) Hugh understandably
shook as it was his last flying day
before returning to the States. He
made F 105 pickup on second mission
of day.