

ARPCMB *They Read*
ARPCB *AK*
ARPCA *1200*
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MISSION 2-3-9-16 FEB 67

RESCUE NARRATIVE

OF

COLONEL FRANK C. BUZZE

31ST TACTICAL FIGHTER WING

*001
DWIGHT W PETERSON
39 APR 65
SF 96237*

The flight mounted up and started engines at 1130 hours, taxiing in the order of Dusty 71, myself, Dusty 72, Lt Staub, USN Exchange Officer, and Dusty 73, Colonel Raymond Lee, our Wing Vice Commander. Our flight of three F-100D aircraft launched from Tuy Hoa at 1155 hours for a pre-briefed target in the Tiger Hound area 0+35 minutes flying time from our base. Each aircraft was configured with 4 five hundred pound, low drag bombs and 800 rounds of 20MM cannon ammunition. We climbed through a 4000' overcast and contacted PEACOCK control for flight following and artillery clearance. Abeam PEACOCK, I received permission to switch UHF frequency to HILLSBORO control for clearance into the TIGERHOUND AREA and was assigned COVEY 54 as our FAC.

Contact was made with COVEY 54, and inbound to the target we were briefed on the target description, recommended direction of attack headings and initial aiming points. The target was a road, winding down the side of a mountain in a steep incline. Our job was to cut the road making it impassable for vehicular traffic. We were on target at 1230 hours, our fragged TOT.

A total of three bombing passes were accomplished per aircraft, with 100% ordnance on target. The road was cut at five points with direct hits. The other bombs caused landslides across the road at various points.

The FAC, COVEY 54, asked for straffing passes, south of the road area, along the mountainside. I rolled in from 10000' (Target Elevation-1500') and fired two bursts, one at 5000' indicated, the second at approximately 4000' indicated altitude and immediately broke left and high. My aircraft received 3-5 hits in the center and aft bottom fuselage. The first reaction, after immediately checking my instrument panel, was that they were near-misses exploding under my bird, of 37MM type. I called "Dusty 71, received automatic weapons fire on last pass". Then requested permission to strafe the gun position. No response. Requested a second time and rolled in on the gun position. Prior to reaching an aiming point, the "FLIGHT CONTROL FAIL" light came on, I pulled back on the control stick and received a slight nose-up response, then the control stick froze.

The first strafe pass was made from the SE, with the second attempt from the SSW.

Immediately thereafter, I noted "FIRE WARNING" and "AFT SECTION O'HEAT" lights, then the whole warning light panel came on. I stowed gear for ejection and assumed the ejection position as the aircraft swung to the south, nose still level.

Colonel Ray Lee called that I was on fire. I answered with "Roger, Dusty 71 Punching Out". Placed my left hand on the handle,--pulled both handles to blow the canopy off. As the canopy departed, I noted the cloud of moisture fill the cockpit from decompression, and reached down, pulling both triggers to eject the seat and myself.

My ejection altitude, as confirmed by my wingmen, was 8000' at 400 to 450 knots. The helmet visor fell into place on ejection. I tumbled violently, but can not determine the direction of roll nor the number of tumbles. I do recall during the short duration of tumbling action, opening my hands on the seat handles. The seat left and immediately thereafter the chute popped.

Prior to starting my straffing runs I had connected the zero delay lanyard and failed to disconnect it prior to ejection. This item completely slipped my mind. As a result of the high speed and lanyard hooked, the opening shock of the parachute was tremendous, causing minor face lacerations from my helmet and oxygen mask, and multiple body bruises from the parachute harness.

I do not recall placing my helmet visor to the up position. The visor adjusting knob had been left fairly loose and on ejection it came down into place, shielding my eyes. I assume it was lost during the tumbling action, or on parachute opening shock.

With the chute deployed I looked up to take stock of its condition. I found two complete panels torn and missing, with one good panel between them.

I had ejected approximately 2 miles south of the target and was to drift 5 to 6 miles further south before touchdown. The aircraft impact area was roughly 5 miles south of the target. The aircraft was completely demolished on impact and consumed by fire.

During the parachute descent, I studied the terrain, seeking the best route to the southwest (safe area-20NM) and tried to ascertain where my touchdown point would be. Everything below looked peaceful. My two wingmen were following me down, and the FAC was flying toward my position.

The parachute descent was uneventful until the last 200 feet of altitude. Crossing a high ridgeline and settling into a valley, I experienced a high volume of small arms fire. All shots were above me into the shroud lines and chute canopy (indicating they were aiming at me, rather than taking a lead computation). The two shroud lines retaining the panel between the

two missing panels were severed, apparently by small arms fire. The chute canopy revealed a pie shaped opening, increasing my rate of descent appreciably.

Crossing the ridgeline, I had deployed my seat survival pack to prevent injury to my legs on landing. The one-man raft did inflate properly. As the landing was approached, I noted it would be an area of tightly meshed bamboo thicket. I cinched my helmet strap and connected my mask back onto my face. I could hear many voices shouting what appeared to be commands in an unknown tongue. The firing abated as I approached touchdown.

I assumed a landing position of legs together, knees slightly bent, elbows pulled into my chest, and arms across my face, with fists clenched. My rapid descent was broken considerably by the bamboo. I crashed through the 10 feet high thicket in a backward fall, ending up on my back, on the ground, in an extremely confined position. My head was down hill and my feet up, on a 45° slope. Considerable difficulty was experienced in unbuckling my parachute, due to the close proximity of the bamboo growth. My actions were expedited by the sounds of unfriendlies thrashing through the bamboo toward my position and the multitude of voices bearing down on me.

In my haste to depart the immediate area of landing, I neglected to silence my URT-21 radio installed in the parachute. This radio continued to emit a signal on Guard Channel, which no doubt was irritating to those airborne, and hampered rescue control in that it partially blocked Guard frequency.

I departed the scene equipped with G-suit, gauntlet gloves, pistol (plus belt and holster), and survival vest. No attempt was made to locate my seat survival kit, and my helmet was left behind. The G-suit pockets contained: Hunting Knife, Scabbard and Honing Stone; issue Blood Chit Packet; and 250 feet of NYLON TAPE.

I climbed NORTH, up the slope, for 25 feet before clearing the bamboo thicket. In making my way through this tightly meshed bamboo, my Survival Vest RT-10A radio antenna was inadvertently (by vines or bamboo) extended and broken. The break incurred at the last extension, that turns it on and off.

As I entered the tree line, the heavy bamboo foliage gave way to trees, gray in color (100 feet tall), with no lower trunk growths, but considerable upper branches and leaves forming a solid canopy over the majority of the route I traveled. The trees grew in varying distances from 5 to 10 feet apart. The ground was thickly covered with dead leaves (4 to 5 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide, in appearance). The bamboo in this area grew in clumps of 3 to 5 feet in circumference. Vines were interspersed throughout the lower growths. Fallen bamboo, dried and dead, from the clumps lay in every direction. The combination

of dry leaves, vines and dead bamboo, made quiet and rapid travel impossible. My flight suit, G-suit, boots, and survival vest blended in very well with the terrain. Dirt was rubbed into my boots to dull the shine. The only portion not blended with the terrain was my face. At one point I put my gloved hands, fingers open, on my face, to break up the expanse of light coloring.

I moved to a point 150 feet up the slope from my parachute, where I found an opening in the overhead canopy. Concealment was found in a small bamboo cluster at the base of a large tree. Searchers could be heard moving in all directions from my position. Shortly after stopping I was able to flash my mirror to an A-1 type aircraft. He acknowledged with a wing dip. From this position I was able to observe two flights strike the slope south and opposite me. All aircraft flew through intense automatic weapons and small arms fire on each weapons delivery. I was able to ascertain the approximate positions of the unfriendlies on my slope from their fire. I also noted two automatic weapons were above me on the ridge which I estimated as 14.7MM or 50 Cal type weapons. No tracer type munitions were observed in use by the enemy forces. One attempt was made to transmit on my RT-10A radio, by speaking in a soft voice into my hand, cupped over the microphone. Due to the broken antenna I was unable to receive instructions issued by the controller. To speak loudly would have revealed my position.

I continued to flash my mirror on aircraft which appeared within my field of vision through the clearing. The strike subsided and I could hear Jolly Green 56 approaching. A pen-gun flare was fired and the gun immediately reloaded. As the rescue chopper came into sight I fired the second flare. On his approach intense weapons firing was noted from both the slope on which I was located and the adjacent slope to the South. The Jolly Green stopped directly over me, but received such a concentration of ground fire, he was forced to withdraw. My first impression was that he had been shot down, as he rolled away and down from my position.

I began to receive gun fire from the opposite slope, forcing me to move noisily to a new position 30 feet further up the slope (north). A searcher was approaching me from the top of the ridge, so I rolled under some fallen bamboo. As he approached he called out, "Flyer, me---", I did not respond. I estimate he was 20 feet or less from my location. A second voice called out below me, the man responded and moved down slope from me.

The strikes resumed and under the cover of noise I moved slowly toward the ridgeline (north). My pattern of movement was to select a point approximately 5 feet away, with decent cover, and as an aircraft approached and throughout his pass I would move slowly to the preselected delivery. Following this pattern of evasion, I reached the ridgeline, passing between two automatic weapons.

The north slope was much steeper (60° incline and in places near vertical). With the same type growth; however, the steepness appeared to afford more cover.

Approximately 15 feet down the north slope I encountered a fairly clear area of overhead canopy, with good concealment cover. When the opportunity presented itself, I used the mirror to signal my position to an A-1 aircraft flying overhead. My new position was verified by a low pass executed by the A-1 pilot. Shortly thereafter the second helicopter, Jolly Green 36 appeared over me. On his approach, I fired a Pen Gun Flare. He, too, flew through an intense barrage of enemy fire to reach my location. As the whirly bird stopped, it received heavy and accurate automatic weapons and small arms fire, sustaining many hits, forcing him to withdraw.

At this point, rescue from the air seemed impossible. It appeared senseless to expose any further rescue crews to the terrible onslaught of gunfire. I planned to find good concealment approximately half way down the mountain and hole-up until two hours after dark.

Next! { The air strikes were moved to the hillside facing me to the north and the base of the hill. This was brilliant thinking on the part of Sandy 5, A-1 aircraft rescue control. The strike placement permitted me to travel once again under the cover of exploding munitions.

My movement down the north slope, moving north, was considerably faster. The steep incline permitted me to slide in the prone position from cover to cover. I would select a tree or bamboo thicket downslope that could be used to arrest my slide.

Approximately one-third of the way down the hill, I encountered a dry wash, with sides varying from 3 to 10 feet high. I elected to travel down it since it was rocky, affording much quieter travel. At the half-way point, I left the gully and traveled 15 feet to my right (East) to an area devoid of overhead canopy. The intent was to signal my progress. The growth, mostly vine-type bushes was six feet high; however, I was able to spread them and flash a signal to the Sandy aircraft orbiting 2 or 3 thousand feet above me. I returned to the wash and continued downhill. I startled something to my left and it took off on a downhill traverse (Southwest) away from me, making considerable noise going through the foliage. Considering it a human, I again left the wash and took a position 15 feet East with excellent cover. This was the only time during the trek that I had my pistol in hand. I laid in hiding for approximately 20 minutes, then moved back into the dry wash and proceeded downward.

The decision was made to continue downhill, as close as possible to the strike area now at the base of my hill, to avoid detection. I finally stopped an estimated 300 feet from the bottom of the hill. The noise level from exploding munitions

was deafening. On several occasions dirt showered my position. The bombing stopped and strafing passes were made just to the east of my position.

At this point I was quite dehydrated due to the extreme physical exertion. Skin peeled from lips and roof of my mouth. I had left my seat survival kit at the chute landing site containing cans of water. A mental note was made to acquire plastic bottles to carry in my G-suit pocket on my return home.

I surveyed the area surrounding me on cessation of the strikes and noted a napalm or phosphorus burned area approximately 40 feet to my right and downhill (Northeast). I traveled to the spot in the prone, stomach down, position to avoid being observed from the opposite slope. On approaching the site, I discovered it ideal for hiding out. At the south (up-hill) side a "rabbit hutch" type hole had been previously dug out, facing northwest. A five foot level spot spread out from the hole, and downhill growth, not burned, extended upwards to give cover from the opposite slope. I slid into the hole, and pulled burned vines over me. I had an excellent field of vision to the west through north. I mirror signaled the A-1, Sandy 5, to give him my location. He made a low pass, at which time I crawled on my knees onto the level spot and waved. All through his pass, I was able to keep my mirror on him. The use of my mirror was confined to a high position well over the ridge to the north, to avoid detection.

Sandy 5 and 6 then set up strafing passes. On each pass from a westerly to easterly direction, I was able to keep my mirror on the bird. They afforded me very close support. Strafing from just above my position they moved each succeeding pass up the hill to the ridgeline (south). I am sure they knocked out the two automatic weapons on the ridge. This assumption is based on the fact that the two guns stopped firing after the fourth series of strafing passes. Both lads exposed themselves to intense automatic weapons and small arms fire on each pass made.

Much to my surprise a third chopper, Jolly Green 37, came overhead and overshot my position. The noise created by the chopper permitted me to yell into my radio "Playmate, Dusty 71 here, you just overshot my position". I found later the transmission was weak, but readable. He returned and hovered over my position. The jungle penetrator seat was lowered, but downhill and to my right. I noted he could not clear high trees to my rear without further exposing himself to the already intense small arms fire. I removed my survival vest to avoid snagging and started toward the rescue seat through thick growths of burned vines. To manage this, I used my arms much like swimming underwater, i.e., arms forward, head down and moving my arms outward. With the seat in sight, one might say, I was inspired and made rapid progress. I pulled the penetrator to me and extended and mounted 2 of the 3 pull down seats. I might add, the downdraft from the chopper caused considerable difficulty in sight due to burned debris milling around and getting into my eyes.

Immediately on mounting the seat and locking my arms around the vertical shaft, I took a wild, exhilarating, ride. The pickup was affected at 1700 hours, Tuy Hoa local. Before I knew it, I was at the door and whisked inside, safe, happy, relieved, but most of all, humble over the self-sacrifice, raw courage, outstanding airmanship and determination demonstrated by all the participants involved in my rescue.

My total ground time was 4 yours and 20 minutes.

So ended a long, long, afternoon.