

Navy Corsair A-7 attack Streetcar 304, Lt. Kenny W. Fields, the downed Navy pilot. Streetcar 304 lasted three days and two nights. In the end we rescued Lieutenant Fields, Ed Leonard (Sandy 7) had, he was captured by the North Vietnamese on the third day of the rescue of Streetcar 304 and held as a prisoner of war for five years.¹

Bill Palank (Sandy 5) was a bald-headed air commando major, a B-26 combat veteran of the Korean War. After he was hit by ground fire over Tchepone, I flew in close formation and watch him eject from his stricken Skyraider.²

COUNT YOURSELF DEAD

But their most important new mission was the search and rescue of downed American aircrew, where the call sign was “Sandy”. The squadron’s operations officer first came up with the call sign Sandy. He had a dog by that name and used the name for the rescue mission. The name stuck.³

Long Tieng. It was also known as Lima Site 20 Alternate. May 31, 1968 Lieutenant Lentz, Streetcar 307. Jolly Green 7 followed him over the Gulf of Tonkin and prepared for his rescue. Broke a foot when he hit.⁴

Both Fields and I heard Leonard say he was resting before crossing a trail and planned to head northwest. That was the last we heard from Ed Leonard. Spectre AC-i30 gunship kept in touch with Fields every hour by radio. Battery life would later become a determining factor in his rescue.⁵

Nail 66 was in voice contact with Streetcar 304; Each of them carried riot control gas (CBU-i9, code name Juicy Fruit) Fields called, saying that the enemy was closing in on him. He asked Nail 66 to get some air cover or he would captured soon. Palank got hit in the fuselage. He called on the UHF radio that he was on fire and heading west.⁶

The previous day he had nursed a Skyraider about ninety-five miles back to NKP and got it on the runway before the engine seized. He wasn’t going to make it back this time; ejecting was his only hope. Palank then called in a calm voice, “I’m getting out”.⁷

I called Crown to report that Sandy I was safely out of his plane and that I needed a rescue helicopter. Jolly Green i6 jettisoned. Within a few minutes Jolly Green i6 came

¹ Ibid. p. 2-4

² Ibid. p. 5

³ Ibid. p.20

⁴ Ibid. p.26

⁵ Ibid. p.46-47

⁶ Ibid. p. 48

⁷ Ibid. p. 49

into a hover Palank. The aircraft commander for Jolly Green i6 was thirty-year-old Capt. David Richardson from Glendale, California.⁸

He had only a week remaining in his year tour and was scheduled for a choice helicopter assignment at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Flying as Richardson's copilot was Maj. Paul Reagon, with S. Sgt. Coy Calhoun As the flight engineer and Sgt. Peter Harding as the PJ.⁹

Effect rescue immediately, regardless of cost. Those of us left in the Jolly Green squadron building listened to the radio transmissions as if it were the last out of the inning of the game of the World Series.¹⁰

At 6:i9 p.m. we heard that Jolly Green 20 had an overheated transmission and was looking for a field in which to set down. Jolly Green i6, would make the pickup of Streetcar 305 but without a backup. "The area is hostile". The third attempt to get Kenny fields. Now the score was two A-7s lost, two Skyraiders destroyed and one heavily damaged, and a Jolly Green sitting in a hostile field in Laos.¹¹

Leonard carried three radios and five batteries, a virtual walking Radio Shack. While Ed Leonard was trapped in a tree, Kenny Fields was wandering all over the jungle. Twenty-eight-year-old Capt. Peter Lappin would be Nail 69, He punched out of two F-4s so he before he volunteered for a tour both a FAC and a survivor point of view.¹²

Two other Nail pilots would fly at a higher altitude a couple of miles from the rescue area and feed fast-mover jets to Lappin. He spotted several North Vietnamese soldiers strapped to the top of trees, armed with automatic weapons. At 4:55 a.m. Jolly Greens 9, i9, and 37 got airborne from NKP and aimed for Tchepone. Thirty minutes later.¹³

Green i9 reported he had hydraulic fluctuations and had begun having control difficulties. He would return to NKP, and Jolly Green 37 would escort him home. Jolly Green 9 was Captain Richardson, circling above in his O-2 and flashed a reflection of the sun from his survival mirror directly at him.¹⁴

Thomas Campbell from Farmington, Illinois was the new Sandy low lead. His call sign was Sandy 9, and Maj. D. Brock Foster, his wingman, was Sandy Io. f-io5 pilot report that he had been hit by ground fire and was heading home.¹⁵

Going to get me, do it now!" By then his radio was very weak as his last battery was running down. I didn't hear Field's call but did hear Pete Lappin say, "We're on our

⁸ Ibid. p. 50

⁹ Ibid. p. 51

¹⁰Ibid. p. 52

¹¹ Ibid. p. 53

¹² Ibid. p. 56

¹³ Ibid. p. 57

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 58

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 59

way.” Lappin added, “Get your smoke ready, we might use the agent and put you to sleep.” Lappin was referring to CBU-i9, the riot-control agent that resembled tear gas. It had been approved for use by General Momyer just moments before.¹⁶

Unlike Campbell’s aircraft, which was riddled with bullet holes, Richardson’s Jolly was undamaged. Campbell couldn’t believe the Jolly came through unscathed. He started his clock when Richardson went into a hover, and it showed he was absolutely stationary for seven minutes. While i89 combat sorties were flown to rescue him.¹⁷

Saga of Streetcar 3o4. It was an amazing story that was published in the *Air Force Times* and an AP story that my wife read about back home in the *Omaha World Herald*. Back in the states, Walter Cronkite announced on the CBS *Evening News*, “Today in Vietnam the Air Force rescued Navy pilot Lieutenant Kenny W. fields after thirty-nine hours and i89 sorties, in the largest rescue effort of the war thus far. And that’s the way it was on June 2, i968”.¹⁸

TORTURE GARDEN

Navy destroyer with the call sign Red Crown sat out in the Gulf of Tonkin and tracked the MiGs. We always had a rescue party at the Officers Club to celebrate the survivor’s return to civilization. The survivor’s personal story of doubt, fears, and finally thrills in being rescued and living to fight again.¹⁹

F-4 crew, Roman 2A and a Roman 2B, ejected in North Vietnam. They were about fifteen miles west of the Gulf of Tonkin, near Highway 101 and several small trails. From small town nearby, Lang Gieo.²⁰

The 602nd. Lt. Col. William Buice was shot down later in the day. Maj. Howard Jennings went down the next day.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 60

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 62

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 63

¹⁹ Ibid. p.76

²⁰ Ibid. p. 77

²¹ Ibid. p. 79

NAKHON PHANOM

602nd Fighter July 1, 1968. Move about a hundred miles east to Nakhon Phanom RTAFB. Our new designation was the 602nd Special Operations Squadron (SOS). Special Operations as a name was stupid. 56th Air Commando Wing, also located at Nakhon Phanom. It would now become the 56th Special Operations Wing (SOW).²²

This field was less than sixty miles from of the Ho Chi Mihn Trail. From the river you could see the Karst mountains in Laos, the beginning of enemy territory, or, as we called it, like the pioneers of the of the alien West, “Indian country.” The 1st Special Operations Squadron, nicknamed “ the Hobos,” also flew the A-1 Skyraider. They’re A-1s could be identified by a white “TC” on the trail, as opposed to our aircraft, which had a white “TT.” “gravel”- thousand of small firecracker-like explosives that detonated when stepped on or driven over by a vehicle.²³

The 22nd Special Operation Squadron, called Zorros, were assigned the night interdiction role. Their Skyraiders would have a white “TS” on the trail.²⁴

STRIKE LEAD CHECKOUT

Lt. Col. William Buice had the distinction of waiting the longest time to become a Sandy rescue pilot and serving one of the shortest combat tours on record. He become combat ready in the Skyraider and on July 2nd few into North Vietnam for the successful rescue of Lt. Col. Jack Modica, an F-105 pilot.²⁵

On July 9,1968, exactly a week after Bill Buice helped rescue the F-105 pilot, he ejected. Fortunately, Watts was able to direct an Air America UH-1 Huey helicopter, call sign Durex 401, in for the pick up. Buice was taken to Lima Site 36 and then transferred to a U-10 Courier. The Courier was a single-engine short-takeoff-and-land aircraft also flown by Air America pilots. They took Buice to a second dirt field. Finally, a Jolly Green helicopter transported him to the hospital at Udorn.²⁶

The following day Maj. Howard Jennings, also a Skyraider pilots from NKP, was shot down and on his first combat mission. Like Buice, he was a rescue by an Air America helicopter. Bill Buice spent several days in the hospital finding out that he had a broken collarbone and a crack in the socket of his shoulder. This severe injury would prevent him from returning to NKP to fly more combat. After an extensive evaluation, Bill Buice retired from the Air Force with a medical disability. He said he was only a combat lead for about four minutes, probably the shortest time on record.²⁷

²² Ibid. p. 81,82

²³ Ibid. p. 82

²⁴ Ibid. p. 83

²⁵ Ibid. p. 84,84

²⁶ Ibid. p 85,86

²⁷ Ibid. p. 86

Cricket, EC-130 Airborne Command and Control aircraft, to report the location.²⁸

8AN ASSIST, A PUTOUT, AND A BALK

I heard that wonderful sound of helicopter blades spinning in the air, *wop-wop-wop*. A Jolly Green landed on the dirt strip. I gathered my helmet, maps, strike photos, checklist, survival vest, and gas mask, and jumped aboard.²⁹

The command post ordered the Jolly Green to reverse course and fly back to Lima Site 2. The Jolly Green helicopter landed back at Lima Site 2. I assumed the crew would shut down their engines and stand rescue alert there. They informed me that it was too dangerous to leave the chopper on the ground, and they needed to be airborne in case another rescue was required. They took off, heading southeast as my wingman had done several hours before.³⁰

That evening, back at NKP, I was apprised that my Jolly Green rescue crew was expecting me at the Offices' Club for the standard rescue party, as it was the custom for every person rescued by the Jolly Green and Sandy force to buy a round of drinks for all involved in their rescue. Tradition called for the survivor to be lifted in the air by the rescue crew and thrown over the bar. A three-foot-tall Jolly Green Giant cloth doll stood on counter behind the bar. Its hands held an either-inch-square white-plastic board on which the total number of aircrew rescued by the Jolly greens was written in black grease pencil. The survivor would erase the old number and print the new to the applause and celebration of all in attendance.³¹

It was my view that the Jolly Greens should not get credit for a rescue; since I was returned to the same place I was originally rescued. They explained that they had picked me up enemy country and transported me over the Mekong River rescue. Nevertheless, I was lifted in the air. Unlike previous survivors who gladly went with this tradition, I resisted. We struggle for some time. I was finally thrown over the bar, but two of the Jolly Greens who I held tightly in my arms also crashed over the bar with me.³²

HELLBORN 20

On July 24, 1968, I flew an FCF on a single-seat A-1J, serial number 142033. Marine Corps A-6 Intruder Route Pack 1 (North Vietnam was divided into six route packs, starting with number 1 in the south, with number 6 by Hanoi). The aircraft Hell born 20³³

²⁸ Ibid. p. 92

²⁹ Ibid. p. 96,97

³⁰ Ibid. p. 97

³¹ Ibid. p. 98

³² Ibid. p. 98,99

³³ Ibid. p. 100

