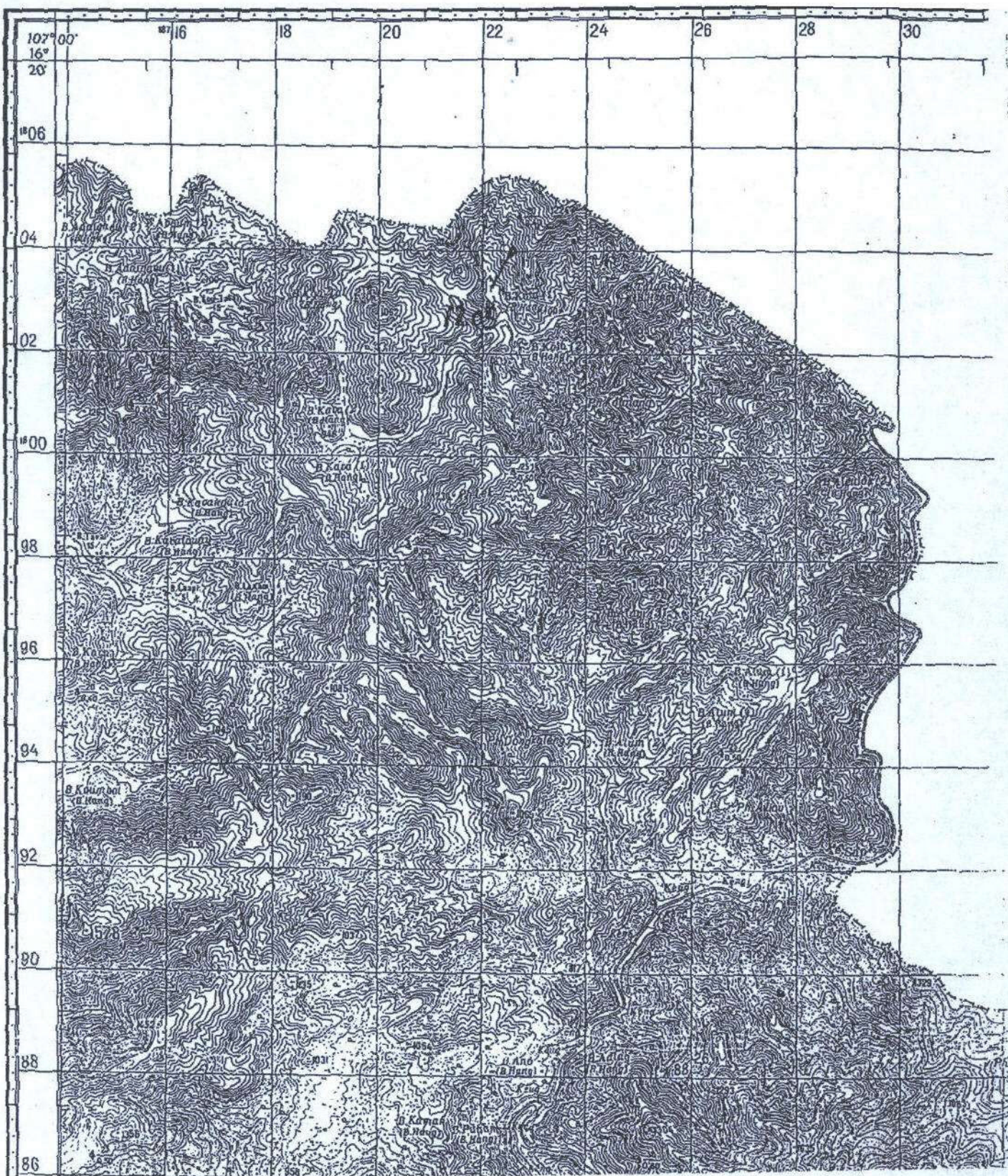
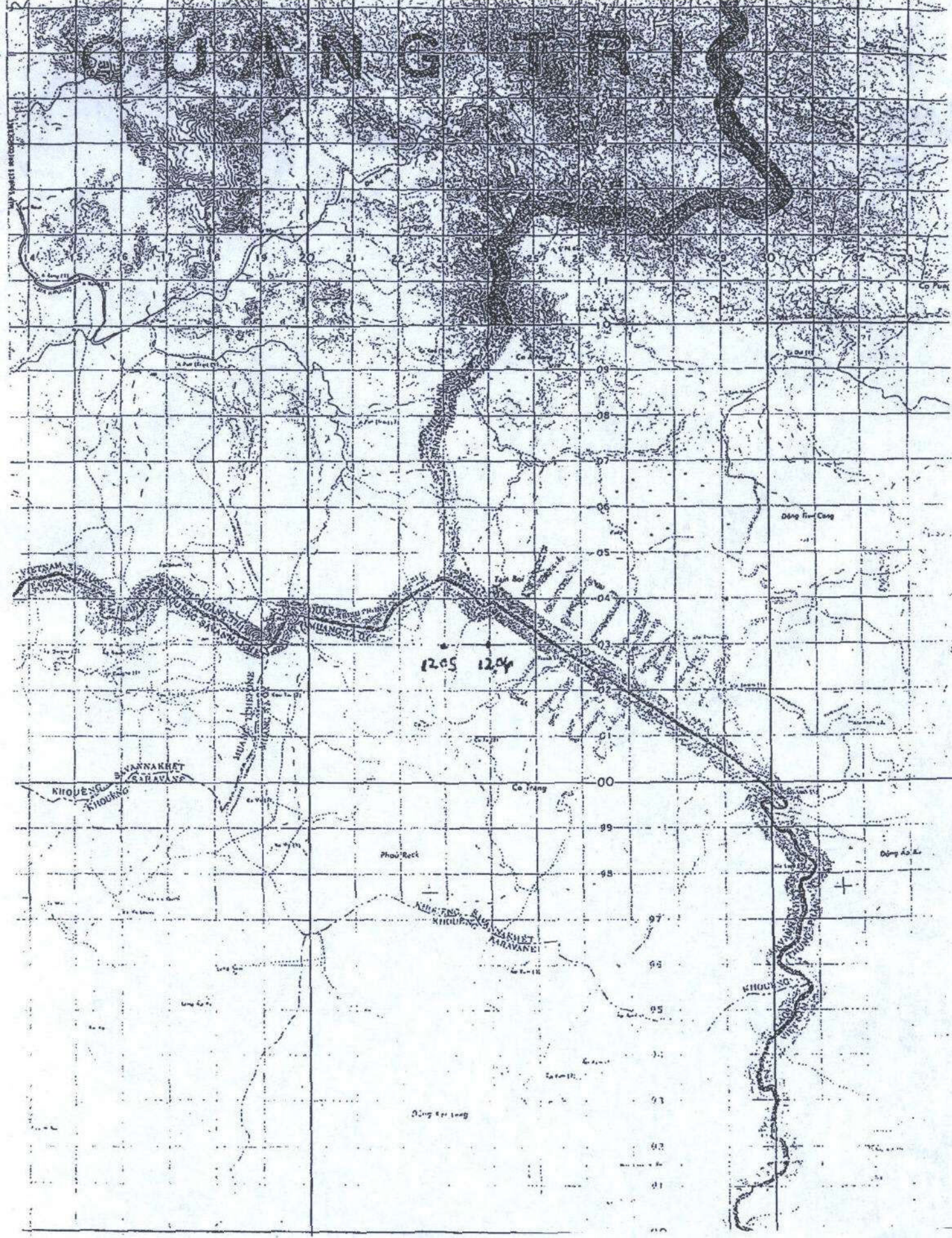


Système de coordonnées de Vientiane





Jolly Greens Defy Cong Traps in Futile Rescue Efforts

By JOHN T. WHEELER is, N.C., and his crew were near DA NANG, Vietnam (AP) — at the scene. He said: "After a downed Marine pilot, crumpled the Skyraiders worked over the area below his parachute drop area, we went in. When we entered enemy territory, became un-started to hover over the burning part for a huge Viet cone, it seemed the whole right Cong ambush against helicopter side of the countryside erupted with groundfire. I could feel the

Enemy troops pointedly ig- hits on the aircraft." nored the flier, who lay with a Griggs' ship also caught fire broken leg and arm, trying to bus the copilot, Capt. Harry Hagan Jr., of Seattle, Wash., re- sists. The Viet Cong were dig- ported later: "Somehow we got ging in all around the pilot, just away."

out of sight and earshot, wait- Away from the ridgeline trap, ing. but far from home free.

Suspect Trap

When the camouflaged chop- The severely damaged heli- pers arrived with their fighter- copter tried to land some dis- bombers escorts, they suspected- tance away "and the whole a trap at once. They had seen place blew up in our face. There many before. But traps are part, were so many streams of tree- of the business and pilots of the ers that it looked like 1,000 red Jolly Green Giant rescue ships pencils drawing lines in front of never questioned their next us," Hagan said.

move—try and get their man, out.

In the past year, the 37th Air- With luck, a great deal of rescue Recovery and Rescue luck, this crew limped into the Squadron has rescued more Marine base at Khe Sanh. than 250 men from North and By now the Marine on the South Vietnam. The cost, three ground had stopped his radio helicopters and eight killed of transmission. With the odds against them, the rescue men the 11 crews assigned to this might have assumed he was dead.

squadron. Many of the sav- Maj. Harvie L. Stringer, Cookville, Tenn., who escorted Griggs to Khe Sanh, returned and "figured most of the guns were silenced and that was worth another try."

These time there was no mira- cles along the ridge line over- looking the A Shau Valley hard on the Laotian frontier. Unless it could be said, as some did later, that it was a wonder things weren't worse.

Still Shooting

Two skyraider prece- Stringer's craft, two V-10s, each side and two followed by into the pickup zone. Despite the bombing and strafing run, no one was too surprised when Sgt. Robert Baldwin, 28, Bur-

Withering Gunfire

After fighter-bombers hit the area, the first camouflaged heli- copter dipped its nose and sliced in for a rescue attempt. Wither- ing groundfire greeted the chop- per as it neared the Leather- neck pilot, and the craft shud- dered under the impact of the bullets.

The pilot pulled up and fight- er-bombers went back to work.

A second chopper slowed above the downed man but heavy fire raked the twin-engine craft. One of the spotter plane pilots called in, "Your left side is on fire, Jolly Green. Get outta there."

The pilot tried, pulling his stricken craft up and away from the trap and limping to the east. The fire diminished, but the bird's rotors began turning more and more slowly and the chopper fell. When it hit the ground, a huge fireball consumed the fragile craft. The four men aboard presumably were killed instantly.

Rescue Volunteers

Back at the Da Nang base the radioed news of the disaster first brought shock and then a mass of volunteers to go after him, their friends and the Marine jet.

Capt. Jerry (Irish) Kannapil- chopper hit several times before

being forced to abandon the spot. It was a bad day—but it was almost a glorious day. Other Jolly Greens from Da Nang had rescued five pilots. The sixth would have made a record for one day.

Next day aerial spotters found

the Marine pilot and his chute- gun. He is listed as missing and presumed dead.

Lt. Col. Kenneth D. Caughlin, the Jolly Green squadron com- mander, said: "It's been appar- ent for some time that the ene- my is not capturing downed pi- lots immediately. He knows that will give him a chance about down more of our plane and get more of our people. I think we're up against—ever- one of us knows it. But we'll try to capture downed pi- everytime. That's our job."



LOCKER.JPL

By JOHN T. WHEELER

DA NANG, Vietnam (AP) —

A doomed Marine pilot, crumpled below his parachute deep in enemy territory, became an unwitting bait for a huge Viet Cong ambush against helicopters.

Enemy troops pointedly ignored the flier, who lay with a broken leg and arm, trying to call in Air Force rescue helicopters. The Viet Cong were digging in all around the pilot, just out of sight and earshot, waiting.

Suspect Trap

When the camouflaged choppers arrived with their fighter-bombers escorts, they suspected a trap at once. They had seen many before. But traps are part of the business and pilots of the Jolly Green Giant rescue ships never questioned their next move—try and get their man out.

In the past year, the 37th Aerospace Recovery and Rescue Squadron has rescued more than 250 men from North and South Vietnam. The cost, three helicopters and eight killed of the 11 crews assigned to the squadron. Many of the saves were called miracles by the men who were picked up and those who did the job.

This time there was no miracle along the ridge line overlooking the A Shau Valley hard on the Laotian frontier. Unless it could be said, as some did later, that it was a wonder things weren't worse.

weren't worse.

Withering Gunfire

After fighter-bombers hit the area, the first camouflaged helicopter dipped its nose and sliced in for a rescue attempt. Withering groundfire greeted the chopper as it neared the Leatherneck pilot, and the craft shuddered under the impact of the bullets.

The pilot pulled up and fighter-bombers went back to work.

A second chopper slowed above the downed man but heavy fire raked the twin-engine craft. One of the spotter plane pilots called in, "Your left side is on fire, Jolly Green. Get outta there."

1. The pilot tried, pulling his stricken craft up and away from the trap and limping to the east. The fire diminished, but the bird's rotors began turning more and more slowly and the chopper fell. When it hit the ground, a huge fireball consumed the fragile craft. The four men aboard presumably were killed instantly.

Rescue Volunteers

Back at the Da Nang base the radioed news of the disaster first brought shock and then a wave of volunteers to go after their friends and the Marine jet pilot.

Capt. Jerry Briggs, Kannaapil-

is, N.C., and his crew were next to be at the scene. He said: "After the Skyraiders worked over the area, we went in. When we started to hover over the Marine, it seemed the whole right side of the countryside erupted with groundfire. I could feel the hits on the aircraft."

Griggs' ship also caught fire but the copilot, Capt. Harry Hagen Jr., of Seattle, Wash., reported later: "Somehow we got away."

Away from the ridgeline trap, but far from home free.

Severely Damaged

The severely damaged helicopter tried to land some distance away "and the whole place blew up in our face. There were so many streams of tracers that it looked like 1,000 red pencils drawing lines in front of us," Hagen said.

With luck, a great deal of luck, this crew limped into the Marine base at Khe Sanh.

By now the Marine on the ground had stopped his radio transmission. With the odds against them, the rescue men might have assumed he was dead.

Maj. Harvie L. Stringer, Cookeville, Tenn., who escorted Griggs to Khe Sanh, returned and "figured most of the guns were silenced and that was worth another try."

Still Shooting

Two skyraider" preceded Stringer's craft, two more each side and two followed him into the pickup zone. Despite the bombing and strafing runs, no one was too surprised when Sgt. Robert Baldwin, 28, Burnet, Tex., the flight engineer, shouted: "Pull up! Pull up! They're shooting."

Baldwin and Sgt. Steve Northern, 21, Riverside, Calif., began pouring machine-gun fire into the Viet Cong positions, killing some of the enemy and forcing the rest to keep their heads down.

Northern, the paramedic, was at the helicopter's door waiting to go down via a cable hoist to pick up "the downed pilot. Then "the whole hill opened up on us," he recalls.

"Charlie All Over"

One of the covering F-4 Phantom II bombers radioed, "Get away from the ridge, Jolly. Get away from the ridge. Charlie is all over the place."

Ominously the center of the fire was only 20 yards from the downed pilot.

Maj. Stringer reported that the downed Marine was crumpled up and not moving, but it was decided to try one last time.

The results were about the same. Heavy fire. The rescue chopper hit several times before

being forced to abandon the
fort.
That was Glorious Day
The total cost of the
was four Jolly Green
summed killed one
destroyed one heavily

and two moderately damaged.
It was a bad day—but it was
almost a glorious day. Other
Jolly Greens from Da Nang had
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the Marine pilot and his chute
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everytime. That's our job."

36p CC LTR 4 JULY 68

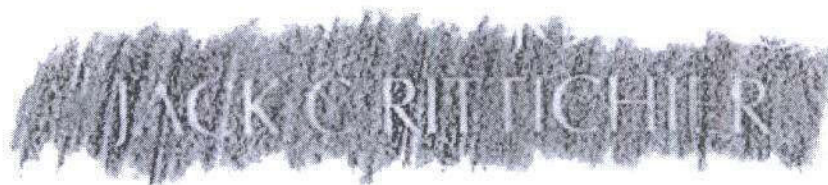
I assume that there is some action occurring to rectify the imbalanced situation. Incidentally, the problem is not peculiar only to the HH-3 since 431X0 manning for the HH-43's is forecast to fall below 70% by the end of August.

4. I would appreciate it if someone could provide us with the rationale for WRM in this theater. Those spares that are easy to get we don't need, while those which are short we can't get for WRM anyhow. I assume that careful planning was employed in developing this program and that due consideration was given to warehousing requirements, inspection, etc. as well as the additional personnel required and workload imposed in a theater which is already extremely critical for headroom as related to manpower ceilings. I was most disturbed to be advised that 44 MA-1 kits had arrived at Tuy Hoa for WRM in addition to the 37 on hand. These kits will provide flotation for 3240 personnel but, to date, we haven't used one yet. I think someone should take a look at positioning this stuff out of country, in Japan, Okinawa, or the Philippines. It would be comparatively simple to establish a contingency plan to airlift it in when and if required.

5. We bailed the Navy out again this month by providing a Jolly Green and crew to the carrier Yorktown for 3 days. During a coastal penetration of North Vietnam after a downed Navy pilot, one of their Big Mothers (SH-3 armored) was shot up pretty badly but made it back to the DLG. Due to the confined space, they couldn't move it after landing so that it blocked the second bird. All the rest of their armored helicopters were out of commission so they swallowed their pride and asked the Air Force for help. No missions were accomplished for the Navy during this period.

6. The 9th of June was Black Sunday. The 37th used 9 helicopters to prosecute two missions, one of which was in the A Shau Valley with the other in North Vietnam above the DMZ and inland from the beach some 5 miles. The A Shau Valley mission was unsuccessful, however, on the other mission, the F-105 pilot was successfully retrieved from North Vietnam. The persistence and sheer guts of our crews was nothing less than magnificent. Even after Jolly Green 23 was shot down, destroyed, and the crew KIA, the remaining crews wanted to press on to recover the wounded Marine pilot (Hellborn 215) in the A Shau. However, the mission was terminated late that evening by direction of General Momver after all attempts failed to isolate the downed pilot. Jolly Green 28 was hit earlier in the mission and, with an engine out due to fire, headed for Khe Sanh, jettisoning equipment

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[remembrance](#) - [texans](#) - [students](#) - [patriotism](#) - [photos](#) - [words](#) - [resources](#)



USCG LT. JACK COLUMBUS RITTICHER

BARBERTON, OH

17 AUGUST 1933 - 09 JUNE 1968

SOUTH VIETNAM - KILLED IN ACTION/BODY NOT RECOVERED

Remarks

R/R CONTACT LOST OVER WATER - SAR NEG
Border Laos, Thuan Thien 22 miles NW of A Shau
ATTEMPT RESCUE DOWNED PILOT, GROUND FIRE, EXPLD/BURN

UPDATE : The Jolly Green 23 crash site has been located ! More info here.

About The Jolly Green Helicopters

The first HH3E Jolly Green Giant helicopters specifically outfitted for search and rescue arrived in Vietnam in the fall of 1965. By the beginning of 1967 there were 50 Aerospace Search and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) rescue aircraft in five squadrons in Southeast Asia. Later models of the HH3 were equipped with aerial refueling capability that gave them the range necessary to fly missions deep into North Vietnam.

The Incident

When North Vietnam began to increase its military strength in South Vietnam, NVA and Viet Cong troops again intruded on neutral Laos for sanctuary, as the Viet Minh had done during the war with the French some years before. This border road was used by the Communists to transport weapons, supplies and troops from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and was frequently no more than a path cut through the jungle covered mountains. US forces used all assets available to them to stop this flow of men and supplies from moving south into the war zone.

On 9 June 1968 US Coast Guard Lt. Jack C. Rittichier, pilot; and US Air Force Capt. Richard C. Yeend, Jr., Co-pilot; SSgt. Elmer L. Holden, flight engineer; and Sgt. James D. Locker, Pararescueman; comprised the crew of a HH3E helicopter (tail #67-14710), call sign "Jolly Green 23." Their mission was to rescue a downed Marine Corps A-4E Skyhawk pilot, 1st Lt.

Walter R. Schmidt, call sign "Hellborne 215," who was downed in the northern end of the infamous A Shau Valley, Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

At 1020 hours, 1st Lt. Schmidt's aircraft was struck by ground fire after making a bombing run on an enemy position. His aircraft continued to the northwest and crashed in the densely forested mountains approximately 5 miles northwest of the northern edge of the A Shau Valley, 2 miles northeast of the South Vietnamese/Lao border and the same distance southwest of a primary road leading from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This road ran east/west from the border eastward to a point near the northern tip of the A Shau Valley. It then turned south-southeast running along the full length of the east side of the dense jungle covered valley.

Walter Schmidt was seen to eject from his crippled Skyhawk and descend safely to the ground. Other pilots saw his parachute caught in trees and were able to immediately establish voice contact with him. He reported to the other pilots that he sustained a broken leg while ejecting and was unable to move. Search and rescue (SAR) aircraft were immediately called to pick up the downed pilot, and as they arrived on site, NVA troops were observed approaching Walter Schmidt's position.

Jolly Green 23 quickly moved into the rescue area and hovered over the rugged jungle covered mountains approximately 9 miles northwest of the A Shau Valley floor near the downed pilot. As the helicopter attempted to pick up Walter Schmidt, it was struck by heavy enemy ground fire and seen to fall to the ground in flames and disintegrate upon impact by the onsite Forward Air Controller (FAC) just to the west of a primary road used by the communists to infiltrate troops and supplies into South Vietnam from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The location of loss was approximately 1300 meters northeast of the village of Ka Kou, 12 miles northwest of the village of A Luoi, 25 miles southeast of Khe Sanh and 29 miles west-southwest of Hue. This location was also 4 miles north of the South Vietnamese/Lao border, near the border between Thua Thien and Hue Provinces.

Another aircraft flew over the wreckage, but its crew saw no survivors and heard no emergency beeper signals. Because of the intense enemy presence in the area, no ground search was possible. At the time the formal SAR was terminated, Jack Rittichier, Richard Yeend, Elmer Holden and James Locker were immediately listed Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered.

On 12 October 1991 a villager turned in to the "Office PA15 - Public Security", Dong Ngai Province, Vietnam, a dog tag and remains reportedly belonging to Lt. Rittichier. The information on the dog tag correlates with the correct data for Jack Rittichier. That information was provided to US personnel; however, the dog tag and remains were not turned over by the Vietnamese. There was no information provided by the villager as to the fate of Elmer Holden, James Locker or Richard Yeend. Lt. Rittichier's name can be found on Panel 58 W, Line 14. More information about Rittichier, including family photos, can be viewed [here](#).

armstrong | harwood and kinsman | vietti | rittichier | forrester | green, jr.

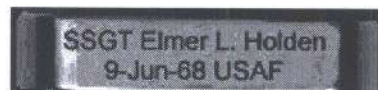
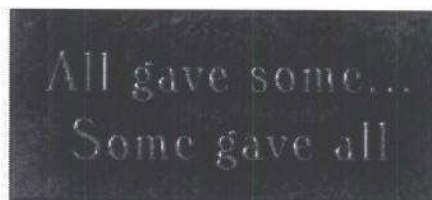
All Biographical and loss information on Vietnam Era POW/MIA's provided by Operation Just Cause have been supplied by Chuck and Mary Schantag of POW/NET. Please check with POW/NET regularly for updates. Additional info (if source is not mentioned above) was obtained from Task Force Omega, Inc. Photos obtained through POWMIAFF's photo site (no longer available).

[top](#)

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+ ELMER LARRY HOLDEN

In Tribute • A Visit To The Wall • From The Other Side • Still The
Noblest Calling
SGT Larry Wayne Maysey • COL Gregory Inman Barras
SGT James Douglas Locker • CMS Charles Douglas King • MAJ
Carl Berg Mitchell



Thanks to our Guestbook, Douglas J. McGill Jr., USAF PARARESCUE, RETIRED, (66-87) and I were contacted by Brandie Freeman, the daughter of Judy Freeman, Larry Holden's widow. It inspired us to create a page in his honor.

This is the information about Larry Holden:

- **Name:** Elmer Larry Holden
- **Rank/Branch:** E5/US Air Force
- **Serial Number:** 18639399
- **Unit:** 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, DaNang, Republic of Vietnam
- **Date of Birth:** 19 February 1944
- **Home City of Record:** Oklahoma City OK
- **Date of Loss:** 09 June 1968
- **Country of Loss:** South Vietnam
- **Loss Coordinates:** 162144 North 107053 East
- **Status (in 1973):** Killed/Body Not Recovered
- **Category:** 2 - Suspected Knowledge
 - This category includes personnel who were:
 - A. Involved in the same incidents as individuals reported in category 1 (Confirmed Knowledge), or
 - B. Lost in areas or under such conditions that they may reasonably be known by the enemy, or
 - C. Connected with an incident which was discussed but not identified by name in the enemy news media, or

- D. Probably identified through analysis of all-source intelligence.
- **Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground:** HH3E Jolly Green Giant Combat Rescue Helicopter (Jolly Green 23)
- **The Wall:** Panel 58W - Row 9

Other Personnel In Incident

James Locker, Jack Rittichier, Richard Yeend (all Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered)

Source

Compiled by the P.O.W. NETWORK from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews and CACCF = Combined Action Combat Casualty File; Pararescue History Book

Synopsis

JOLLY GREEN 23 was flying a SAR mission for HELLBORNE 215, a USMC A-4E piloted by 1Lt Walter R. Schmidt Jr. (MIA), who was downed northwest of the Ashau Valley, in the middle of a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) encampment, thirty seven miles west of Hue RVN. Voice contact was established with the survivor, who reported he possibly had a broken arm and leg. The enemy was using him as bait to lure SAR aircraft, especially the very vulnerable Jolly Green Giants, within killing range. Air strikes pounded the area and brutalized the enemy, but with little effect.

Three times the lead helicopter, JG22, attempted to reach Schmidt, but they were unsuccessful due to the intense ground fire. When that Jolly was forced to depart because of low fuel, Larry's aircraft assumed the low bird role. After suppressive fire was put in, JG23 moved in to attempt the pickup. The crew fought its way in but was forced to withdraw. Again it went in, this time surrounded by gun ships, but again the enemy met them head on. As the crew hovered over the survivor, bullets punched into the aircraft and it began to burn. The pilot of Jolly Green 23 attempted to land in a small clearing, but the helicopter exploded when it hit the ground and burned intensely, killing Larry Holden and all the others on board.

The pilot of JG23, LTJG Jack Rittichier, was a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter pilot. He is the only USCG man who is unaccounted for in SEA and was the first USCG casualty of the Vietnam war. He was part of a pilot exchange program between the USAF and Coast Guard.

Who Was Larry Holden



Larry Holden

Special thanks for the pictures to the family of Larry Holden.
Click on the photos to view the full pictures and other photos of Larry.

Larry Holden was a young man with many years already served in the Air Force when he volunteered for flight duty as a flight engineer on the HH3E Jolly Green

Combat Rescue helicopters.

He was a fun loving man who loved to play practical jokes on people, to tell jokes, and to try and get a smile from everyone he flew with. He loved to barbecue steaks and hot dogs and drink a little beer, at times... but always, he loved to smile and sing little songs.

He always seemed to bring sunshine into a room when he entered, and made people smile. I can still see him playing around and joking and being silly... he calmed everyone who was worried about their plight of being in a war time situation, and was loved by all who served with him.

Larry was the truest of real American heroes, who always considered the feelings of others, put people first and loved his fellow man. He died trying to save another human being from death... and there can be no greater love.

I feel privileged to have been associated with Larry and blessed to be able to call him my friend. He will never be forgotten!

- Douglas Joseph McGill Jr., USAF PARARESCUE, RETIRED

The Search for Larry Holden November 14, 1998

Advocacy And Intelligence Index
For Prisoners Of War/Missing In Action, Inc. (AIPOWMIAI)
Bob Necci and Andi Wolos

THE POW/MIA E-MAIL NETWORK (c)
aainov14.98b
Air Force Looks for Missing Copter
The Associated Press

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. (AP) -- The Air Force is hoping flight simulations can help solve the disappearance 30 years ago of a rescue helicopter in Vietnam.

The project may lead to similar efforts to find other aircraft that vanished during the Vietnam War, former flight engineer Bob Baldwin said Wednesday as the nation marked Veterans Day.

Baldwin is part of a team of veterans teaming up with the Air Force to find an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant and its four-man crew. The helicopter named Jolly Green 23 vanished June 9, 1968, while searching for a downed attack pilot, who also remains unaccounted for.

Baldwin was part of the wartime effort to find the helicopter. Thirty years later, he's helping with a new search despite being thousands of miles away from the scene.

Black and white aerial photos taken in the late 1960s were converted into digital photos and matched with current maps to recreate the wartime landscape near the Vietnam-Laos border. Baldwin then used a computer joy stick to fly through the scene displayed on a console.

"I just closed my eyes and when I opened them up, it was like stepping back 30 years," Baldwin said. "The only thing missing is that the tracers aren't coming at you" from antiaircraft guns.

The simulations at the Hurlburt base in the Florida Panhandle allowed Baldwin and another former pilot to pick out three spots where the helicopter may have crashed.

A military team in Vietnam searched for four days before the monsoon season forced them to stop. They plan to resume when the rains end next year, said Maj. Mike Vaughn, who helps supervise computer mapping and flight simulator work at Hurlburt.

The team found no sign of Jolly Green 23, but did find wreckage of a Marine helicopter that had been forced down. All but one of the crew members had escaped.

February 16, 1999

Doug,

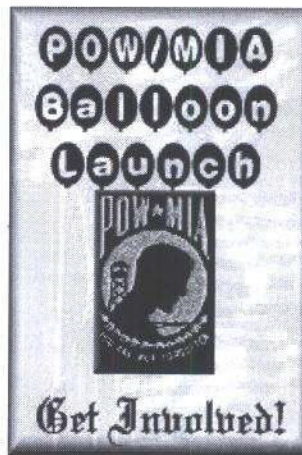
Update! From Bill Forsyth;

Next scheduled attempt to locate Jolly 23 and Helborne is 17 Aug - 19 Sep 1999. Reason, political climate, operational planning and weather. They have 80 sites in Laos alone to dig and at the present rate they will be excavating sites into 2004. They are currently working Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes, Savannaakhet Province and Route 9 from Tchephone and Lam Son. Very rugged territory. They hated to see Jolly 23 slip that far on the schedule because of the weather... the time of year can be Delta Sierra. I'll keep you informed.

Bob "MOUSE" Baldwin

UPDATE September 27, 1999

JTF-FA is scheduled to look at Jolly 23/Hellborne sites 19 October - 17 November. Weather has kept the team out this year. It didn't look good for the remainder of 1999 but right now it's evidently looking good.



SGT James Douglas Locker

Pararescue Creed

It is my duty as a
Pararescueman to
save a life and to aid the
injured.

I will perform my assigned
duties quickly
and efficiently, placing these
duties before
personal desires and comforts.

These things I do,
"That Others May Live."



Sgt. James D. Locker
June 9, 1968 USAF-PJ

In Tribute • From The Other Side • Still The Noblest Calling
SGT Larry Wayne Maysey • COL Gregory Inman Barras
SSGT Elmer Larry Holden • CMS Charles Douglas King



All gave some...
Some gave all



This page was created at the request of a very special man, Douglas J. McGill Jr. USAF PARARESCUE, RETIRED, (66-87). He provided me with information for my page for SGT. Larry Wayne Maysey and we have collaborated on this page. All I can say is "Thank you so much, DJ. I will try my best to be worthy of your belief in me."

This is the information we have about Jim Locker:

- Name: James Douglas Locker
- Rank/Branch: E4/US Air Force
- Serial Number: 15754661
- Unit: 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, DaNang, Republic of

Vietnam

- ❶ Date of Birth: 25 February 1947
- ❷ Home City of Record: Sidney OH
- ❸ Date of Loss: 09 June 1968
- ❹ Country of Loss: South Vietnam
- ❺ Loss Coordinates: 162144 North 107053 East
- ❻ Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
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 - C. Connected with an incident which was discussed but not identified by name in the enemy news media, or
 - D. Probably identified through analysis of all-source intelligence.
- ❽ Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: HH3E Jolly Green Giant Combat Rescue Helicopter (Jolly Green 23)
- ❾ The Wall: Panel 58W - Row 010

Other Personnel In Incident

Elmer Holden, Jack Rittichier, Richard Yeend (all Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered)

Source

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The pilot of JG23, LTJG Jack Rittichier, was a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter pilot. He is the only USCG man who is unaccounted for in SEA and was the first USCG casualty of the Vietnam war. He was part of a pilot exchange program between the USAF and Coast Guard.



If you're interested in learning more about Pararescue, please visit these excellent sites:

- [The Jolly Green Association](#)
- [Pararescue Association](#)
- [Pararescue Online](#)
- [Jim Thede's USAF Pararescue Homepage](#)

To read the story of another PJ, be sure to visit [Gone But Not Forgotten](#), for T/Sgt. James Richard Thomas. He was lost on Jolly Green 70 in 1971, and his daughter Kim has created a wonderful page in his memory.

Another story can be found at Sgt. Gregory P. Lawrence, by his daughter Debbie. He was a Flight Engineer on Jolly Green 10 (which went down in 1968) and she is searching for people who knew him.

Who Was James Douglas Locker

James Douglas Locker was my friend!

He was a man of quiet demeanor and strong stature. A principled man of high ideals with a strong sense of commitment, Jim was devoted to serving his fellow man, friend and foe alike. We spent many med-evac hours on the HH43 Pedro rescue helicopters patching up and tending to wounded combatants from both sides. Jim's attention and skill to the wounded was indiscriminate and always one hundred percent.

Rewarded with some R&R days for being lowered to the ground on a mission to North Vietnam, we decided to tour the Orient. We spent seven grand days visiting the Philippines, Thailand and Japan, and had many great adventure stories to tell on our return to home base at the 37 ARRS in DaNang. Unfortunately we never got that chance. On an early morning mission, the day after our return, Jim Locker was killed.

That morning I helped him prepare for his mission. Gathering up his gear we hurried to the Jolly Green for pre-flight and on the way talked about the impending mission and the familiar dangers of combat rescue. To this day, Jim's words on that last walk echo in my head. "This is my mission... and this what we were trained to do." A little while

later, on the way back to the flight line from the gun locker, I became increasingly concerned when upon approaching the HH3E I witnessed Jim giving away what I didn't know at the time were about to become "personal effects" to his ground crew. Instantly, an empty feeling descended on me, never to leave; not even in all these years.

Pararescuemen (PJs), including the total rescue community, lost four brothers that day. Closing my eyes, I can still see those heroes posed in my mind next to their Jolly Green rescue helicopter, making ready to do their duty... risking it all to save another.

Jim Locker (PJ) and his crew; Jack C. Rittichier, Pilot ; Richard C. Yeend Jr, Co-Pilot ; and Elmer L. Holden, Flight Engineer, performed the ultimate sacrifice and gave their all, "That others may live".

A nation grateful to its warriors saves its highest praise for the soldier pulling a brother-in-arms out of danger. Pararescue warriors are professionals voluntarily dedicated to that very mission, and often times beyond. A grateful country should never forget their whole hearted dedication to duty, to country, and to their fellow man. It was my honor and a privilege to have known and served with Jim Locker and his crew.

Til I See You Again My Friends, may God hold you in his special care.

- Douglas Joseph McGill Jr., USAF PARARESCUE, RETIRED



Jim Locker

donated by Duane I. Beland, HH3E Flight Engineer, DaNang RVN, (1967-68)

The Search For Jim Locker

The following are letters detailing the ongoing search for Jim Locker and the others who died with him.

This is posted to Jim Thede's Pararescue website. It's the most visable throughout the world. Site location Okinawa, Japan.

To:MSGT Jim (TE) Thede, USAF PARARESCUE

TE,

As a service to Mr. Forsyth and to the family and friends of these fallen comrades in arms, I urge you to please make contact with him so that he may update us old Vietnam types about needed information to their location and update reports from their location. Your page seems to be frequented more often then all the other related sites. SGT Jamas Douglas Locker was the PJ on Jolly 23 and my closest friend in this lifetime. I want to see that he makes it home soon. Your help in posting the information requested from the Joint Task Force that are on station at the crash site would be most helpful to achieving this goal. Congrats on your accomplishments and your fine dedication the the Pararescue Family.

Respectfully, Douglas J. McGill Jr. , USAF
PARARESCUE, RETIRED, 66-87
Jolly Green 23 & Hellborne 215

From: Mr. Bill Forsyth
Mission: Jolly Green 23 & Hellborne 215
Date: 9 June 1968
Aircraft: AF HH-3E & Marine A-4E

I request your assistance in locating the crash site of JOLLY GREEN 23, an HH-3E that was shot down on 9 June 1968 northwest of the Ashau Valley. JG23 was attempting to rescue HELLBORNE 215, a USMC A-4E piloted by 1Lt Walter R. Schmidt Jr., who had ejected from his aircraft and once on the ground reported he possibly had a broken hand and leg. After the survivor had popped smoke, JG22 made several attempts to rescue the downed airmen, but each time they received heavy ground fire and were forced to pull out. After SPADs and other aircraft in the area attempted to suppress the ground fire, JG23 went in to attempt a pickup, but was forced to abort their first attempt due to the ground fire. More suppressive fire was put in on the area and JG23 again attempted to rescue the pilot. On this attempt JG23 reported taking hits, then caught fire and moved to a small clearing and possibly attempted to land, but exploded when the helicopter reached the ground. There was no indication of survivors. Additional attempts were made to rescue the downed A-4E pilot, but his lifeless body was observed on the ground and it was felt it was being used as bait for a trap. The four crewmembers of JOLLY GREEN 23 and the A-4E pilot remain unaccounted for. The pilot of JG-23 was U.S. Coast Guard Pilot LTJG

Jack C. Rittichier, who was participating in an exchange program. Lt Rittichier was the first Coast Guardsman killed in action is SEA and the only USCG unaccounted for from the war. The record locations for both the A-4E and HH-3E are in Vietnam and Joint teams from JTF-FA have conducted several investigations of the case in the area, but have not located any villagers who know of crash sites in the area. Reporting from the time of the incident suggests that both incidents probably occurred across the border, in Laos. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who participated in the rescue attempt who may be able to help me pinpoint the crash site location. My E-mail address is forsythwl@hq.pacom.mil

Thank You,
Mr. Bill Forsyth
Laos POW/MIA Analyst, JOINT TASK FORCE- FULL ACCOUNTING

Dear Mr. Forsyth,
Read your messages on the Jolly Green Association Page regarding gaining needed topography information of crash sites of Jolly Green etc. Please post your requests to the "Official A-1 Skyraider website at <http://209.39.156.3/skyraider/index.htm>. These folks had a ring side seat and were in the area much longer than the Jollys, besides having memories like God.

I've waited over thirty years for my friend, James D. Locker, on Jolly Green 23, to be found and returned home. You and your team will always be remembered as true Americans for embarking on this endeavor of finding, identifying, and returning our fallen comrades to their homeland and families.

I was able to attend the interment ceremony for the Jolly 67 crew at Arlington in November 1997. The event was able to occur as a direct result of the Joint Task Force - Full Accounting and their untiring efforts to find our fallen comrades in arms of so long ago.

Thank you and GOD SPEED Mr. Forsyth,
Respectfully,
Douglas J. McGill Jr., USAF PARARESCUE, RETIRED, 66-87
DaNang and the 37th ARRS Jolly Greens , 67-68

Date: Tue, 28 Jul 1998 9:43am
From: "Forsyth, William L. GS12"
To: DoctorD@nvsn.com
Subject: RE: CONTACT

Doug
Thanks for the good detective work, I have sent an e-mail to Bobbie requesting his help.
Bill

From: Douglas McGill
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 1998 1:34 PM

To: forsytwl
Subject: CONTACT

Dear Mr. Forsyth,
Please be advised that I have found a witness to the Jolly 23 & Hellborne Mission. His name is Robert (BOBBIE) H. Baldwin.

Bob is a retired Chief Master Sergeant who was the NCOIC of the Fight Engineers of the 37th ARRS, DaNang 68. Bob was on one of the choppers that penetrated the site looking for survivors. He says that he remembers the exact location and is willing to help you in any way necessary.

Respectfully,
Doug McGill, USAF PARARESCUE RETIRED, 66-87

Date: Wed, 29 Jul 1998 8:52am
From: "Forsyth, William L. GS12"
To: Bob Baldwin
Cc: DoctorD@nvsu.com
Subject: RE: Jolly Green 23

Bob

Thanks for the info, I will get the maps and a copy of my lead sheet in the mail to you. No rush on getting it, the team won't be going out until October. I found a LTCol (Retired) Harvie Stringer in Troy MI, he may be your pilot on the rescue; Air Force Casualty says he is the only retired Harv** Stringer; he has an unlisted number, so I will have to send him a letter to see if he is the right guy, the more people I can talk to on this the better.

Bill F

From: Bob Baldwin
Date: Fri, 31 Jul 98 11:08:49 -0600
To:
Subject: Jolly 23

Doug,
We are working the mission. Mr. Forsyth provided me all the information and we are presently constructing a visual database of the area and I will be able to fly the mission in the simulator just as if I was there today. We plan to use the coordinates for HELLBORNE 215 not Jolly 23. I think the coordinates for the A-4 is more accurate than the ones for the Jolly. If the coordinates for the A-4 driver is close to a road (trail) running from N/W to slightly S/E I feel I will be able to orient myself to the direction and proximity of the Jolly crash site.

I will keep you informed as to the progress.

Bob (Mouse) Baldwin

This was an e-mail sent to Chief Master Sergeant Bob Baldwin, USAF RETIRED. Bob is currently gathering information to find the actual crash site. JTF-FA have already been in the area but was unable to find the exact location. Bob was on the mission, as I have previously indicated, and will pinpoint the exact site for excavation.

BOBBY,

I know that you have the experience and the expertise to find the site.

There could be no other individual other than YOU that I would like to have searching for me after 30 years of being lost in a strange country... so far away from friends and most importantly my family. Thank you for your continued dedication and support to this rescue mission.

Jim Locker was a special friend . We, if you remember, had just returned to DaNang from a seven day adventure touring the orient. In Tach, Japan we visited a bar called the "CHERRY BAR". The base commander had listed it as an OFF LIMITS establishment, so naturally as any good PJ knows... that's the place to be. While there one night someone slipped me a mickey and robbed me. Jim was on the dance floor I remember. The next thing I remembered was waking up in the hotel room seventeen blocks away.

Jim had retrieved the stolen money from the bar owner (with some persuasion... and you know what I mean) and ultimately carried me back to the hotel over his shoulder. True PJ comitment to a brother PJ. His friendship has always been missed... and his memory constantly with me. He was killed the following morning after arriving back to DaNang. Enough said... starting to get all friggin misty eyed again.

With Greatest Respect,
DJ

UPDATE November 14, 1998

Advocacy And Intelligence Index
For Prisoners Of War/Missing In Action, Inc. (AIIPOWMIAI)
Bob Necci and Andi Wolos

THE POW/MIA E-MAIL NETWORK (c)

aiinov14.98b
Air Force Looks for Missing Copter
The Associated Press

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. (AP) -- The Air Force is hoping flight simulations can help solve the disappearance 30 years ago of a rescue helicopter in Vietnam.

The project may lead to similar efforts to find other aircraft that vanished during the Vietnam War, former flight engineer Bob Baldwin said Wednesday as the nation marked Veterans Day.

Baldwin is part of a team of veterans teaming up with the Air Force to find an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant and its four-man crew. The helicopter named Jolly Green 23 vanished June 9, 1968, while searching for a downed attack pilot, who also remains unaccounted for.

Baldwin was part of the wartime effort to find the helicopter. Thirty years later, he's helping with a new search despite being thousands of miles away from the scene.

Black and white aerial photos taken in the late 1960s were converted into digital photos and matched with current maps to recreate the wartime landscape near the Vietnam-Laos border. Baldwin then used a computer joy stick to fly through the scene displayed on a console.

"I just closed my eyes and when I opened them up, it was like stepping back 30 years," Baldwin said. "The only thing missing is that the tracers aren't coming at you" from anti-aircraft guns.

The simulations at the Hurlburt base in the Florida Panhandle allowed Baldwin and another former pilot to pick out three spots where the helicopter may have crashed.

A military team in Vietnam searched for four days before the monsoon season forced them to stop. They plan to resume when the rains end next year, said Maj. Mike Vaughn, who helps supervise computer mapping and flight simulator work at Hurlburt.

The team found no sign of Jolly Green 23, but did find wreckage of a Marine helicopter that had been forced down. All but one of the crew members had escaped.

UPDATE November 16, 1998

National League of Families

UPDATE LINE: November 16, 1998

US-Lao joint field operations concluded just prior to the start of activities in Vietnam on November 5th. The US-Lao teams succeeded in recovering remains at 2 of 3 excavation sites and are hopeful that remains will be found at the 3rd site where numerous items of crew-related equipment and aircraft wreckage were recovered. A follow-up excavation of this site will occur during the next joint field operation that begins in mid-January.

UPDATE February 16, 1999

Doug,

Update! From Bill Forsyth;

Next scheduled attempt to locate Jolly 23 and Helborne is 17 Aug - 19 Sep 1999.

Reason, political climate, operational planning and weather. They have 80 sites in Laos alone to dig and at the present rate they will be excavating sites into 2004. They are currently working Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes, Savannaakhet Province and Route 9 from Tchephone and Lam Son. Very rugged territory. They hated to see Jolly 23 slip that far on the schedule because of the weather... the time of year can be Delta Sierra. I'll keep you informed.

Bob "MOUSE" Baldwin

What You Can Do

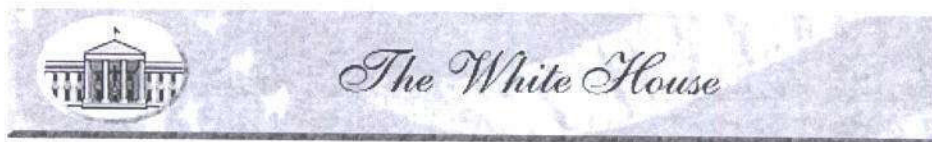
While it is a great sadness to know a loved one is dead and his body is lying far from home, the greater tragedy is those known to have been prisoners of war who did not return, and those who are missing in action.

Since the war ended, "several million documents" and "over 250,000 interviews" have been reviewed relating to Americans prisoner, missing or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. Many officials who have reviewed this largely-classified information are convinced that hundreds of Americans are still alive in captivity today.

These reports increase the agony for families who want to know what happened to their sons, fathers and brothers. If, as the U.S. Government seems to believe, all the men are dead, it's time the information was declassified so that all can understand the fates of these heroes. If, as many believe, men are still alive, it's time they were brought home to bring the war in Vietnam to an honorable end.

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to keep pushing this issue inside the Beltway. The need to get specific answers is more important now than ever before. If still alive, some MIAs are now in their 70s. They don't have much time left. We have to demand the answers from the bureaucrats and keep standing on their necks (figuratively speaking) until they get the message that THEY work for US and that we are serious about getting these long overdue responses. Diplomatic considerations aside...

Write your government officials. Let them know that WE CARE about these abandoned men and women! To obtain email addresses for the Senate, Congress and White House, and sample letters, click the White House banner:

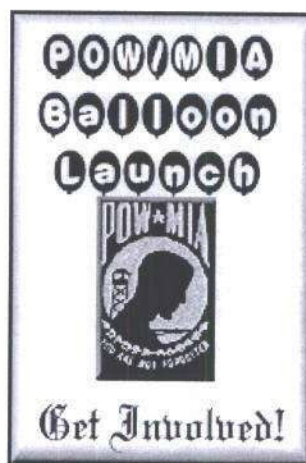


We can no longer allow questionable protocols established by pseudo-aristocratic armchair strategists, to determine or influence the fate of the men who were in the trenches while the diplomats were sharing sherry and canapes and talking about "Their Plans" for the future of SE Asia.

In addition, check out the [MIA List](#) of other people who have joined the cause.



To learn more about the POWs and MIAs, and help the cause, please visit [Operation "Just Cause"](#) and adopt your own MIA. We can't rest until they're all home. Thanks Gunny!



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is owned by [Lorrie Scally](#) Site ID#231.

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Operation Just Cause

Web Ring

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Jack Columbus Rittichier



Name: Jack Columbus Rittichier

Rank/Branch: Lieutenant/US Coast Guard

Date of Birth: 17 August 1933

Home City of Record: Barberton, Ohio

Date of Loss: 09 June 1968

Country of Loss: South Vietnam (over water)

Loss Coordinates: 162143 N 1070533E

Status (in 1973): Killed In Action/Body Not Recovered (KIA/BNR)

Category: 3

Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: HH-3E Aircraft

Others In Incident: (none missing)

REMARKS: R/R CNTCT LST OW/SAR NEG

SYNOPSIS: Jack Rittichier is carried as Category 3 by the U. S. Government. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) assigned categories of degrees by suspected enemy knowledge of POW/MIAs. Category 3 is "doubtful knowledge". This category contains individuals whose loss incident is such that it is doubtful the enemy would have knowledge of the specific individuals (e.g. aircrews lost over water or remote areas).

Jack Rittichier is the only member of the U. S. Coast Guard still listed as Missing In Action

(MIA). Not much else is known about the fate of LT Rittichier. He is one of nearly 2,500 U. S. servicemen still missing in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War.

The Vietnamese have "discovered" and returned the remains of scores of missing men, releasing the information at what appears to be politically strategic intervals.

The U. S. Government has applauded the Vietnamese "cooperation" while continuing to insist that the POW/MIA issue is a separate, humanitarian issue apart from issues such as the Vietnamese desire for diplomatic recognition.

Meanwhile, the nearly 2,500 missing wait. Those who are yet alive in captivity are declining in number. We must bring them home while there is still time. One of them could be Jack Rittichier.

The above information was taken from a sheet that came with Lt. Rittichier's MIA Bracelet, Warriors Incorporated; U. S. Veterans' Affairs; POW & MIA Awareness; P. O. Box 1873; Winchester, Virginia 22602; (703) 667-0696; (703) 768-4037.

The following is taken from Lt. Rittichier's citation to the Silver Star Medal as well as the photographs of the Lieutenant above.

Citation to accompany the award of
THE SILVER STAR
(Posthumous)
to
JACK C. RITTICHER

LT Jack C. Rittichier, United States Coast Guard, distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as Rescue Crew Commander of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 9 June 1968. On that date, LT Rittichier attempted the rescue of a downed pilot from one of the most heavily defended areas in Southeast Asia. Despite intense accurate hostile fire which had severely damaged another helicopter, LT Rittichier, with undaunted determination, indomitable courage, and professional skill, established a hover and persisted in the rescue attempt until his aircraft was downed by the hostile fire. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, LT Rittichier reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.

Jack Columbus Rittichier was born on August 17, 1933, at Akron, Ohio, and received a B.F.A. degree from Kent State University in March 1957. He received his U. S. Air Force pilot wings in December 1958 and then served as a B-47 jet bomber pilot with the Strategic Air Command. In September 1963 he accepted a commission in the U. S. Coast Guard.

He subsequently served with the Coast Guard at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and Selfridge AFB. He later volunteered for exchange duty with the U. S. Air Force 37th Aerospace Rescue Recovery Squadron in Da Nang, Vietnam.

Of the 8,000 Coast Guardsmen who served in Vietnam between 1965 and 1975, 12 were helicopter and fixed-wing pilots who flew with the Air Force out of Tuy Hoa and Da Nang,

Vietnam, as well as from Thailand and the Philippines.

On June 9, 1968, 37 miles west of Hue, a Marine Corps fighter pilot lay on the ground with a broken arm and leg. The Marine pilot also had the further misfortune of having parachuted into a North Vietnamese Army bivouacking area. The enemy used the injured pilot as bait to lure the *Jolly Green Giant* rescue helicopters within killing range. Air strikes pounded the site around the downed pilot. The first helicopter made three attempts to reach the Marine pilot before breaking off to refuel. LT Rittichier dove his aircraft in for the pickup. Heavy enemy fire forced him off. He swung around to let the gunships clear the area and followed them in for another pickup attempt. As he hovered over the pilot, bullets punched his aircraft and it began to burn. He tried to pull away, but the *Jolly Green* would not rise. The helicopter settled to the ground and exploded. Within 30 seconds a ball of fire consumed the aircraft.

LT Rittichier's awards include the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, Air Medal with third oak leaf cluster, and the Coast Guard Unit Commendation.

The following is from another sheet of information.

Lieutenant Rittichier was one of the first three Coast Guard exchange pilots to fly combat search and rescue with the Air Force in Southeast Asia. Quickly he showed them the kind of courage Coast Guardsmen have. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross in less than three weeks after he arrived in Vietnam when he flew through enemy fire to pluck four Army fliers to safety. A couple of weeks later under the faint light of illumination flares he pulled nine men from the side of a mountain, five of whom were badly wounded.

This is in addition to the information above from the citation to the Silver Star Medal...The helicopter settled to the ground and exploded. Within 30 seconds a ball of fire consumed the aircraft leaving only ashes where moments ago there had been life. Lieutenant Rittichier died for the proudest Coast Guard mission of all--saving lives.

**And...the following is a biographical Sketch from the Public Information Division;
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters; Washington, D. C.**

**LIEUTENANT JACK C. RITTICHER,
U. S. COAST GUARD**

Jack Columbus Rittichier was born on August 17, 1933, at Akron, Ohio, where he graduated from Coventry High School, South Akron, in June 1951. He received a B.F.A. Degree from Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, in March 1957.

He was trained as a pilot at the Air Bases in Brainbridge, Georgia, and Loreda, Texas, while serving on active duty in the U. S. Air Force Reserve from August 1957 to November 1962. After receiving his wings in December 1958, he served as a B-47 jet bomber pilot with the Strategic Air Command at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. During that tour of duty he advanced from 2nd Lieutenant to Captain.

Following a period of inactive duty, he was discharged from the Air Force to accept a commission as Lieutenant (jg) in the U. S. Coast Guard Reserve on September 26, 1963. While assigned his first tour of duty at the U. S. Coast Guard Air Base at Elizabeth City, N. C., he served as search and rescue pilot, acting legal assistant, and public information officer among other duties. He was advanced to Lieutenant in the regular Coast Guard on March 28, 1966.

In May 1966, he was reassigned to the Coast Guard Air Station at Selfridge Air Force Base, Detroit, Michigan, as search and rescue pilot, assistant head operations office, and public information officer. While there he laid the ground work for a public information program on the activities of Coast Guard aviators flying with the U. S. Air Force Rescue Service in Viet Nam. Volunteering for duty in Southeast Asia, he was assigned to the 37th Aerospace Rescue Recovery Squadron at DaNang Airport, Viet Nam, in November 1967.

LT Rittichier was declared missing in action on June 9, 1968, the date he piloted a "Jolly Green" helicopter HH-3E, with three Air Force crewmen on board, out of DaNang on a rescue mission to pick up a downed pilot. While attempting the rescue the helicopter was hit by automatic gunfire and crashed approximately 27 miles southeast of Khe Sanh.

LT Rittichier received a Coast Guard Unit Commendation for rescue work during hurricane "Betsy" in September 1965. He was awarded the AIR MEDAL in June 1967 for his role as co-pilot of a Coast Guard helicopter that flew 150 miles from Detroit in hazardous snow and ice conditions to rescue eight seamen from the grounded West German motor vessel NORDMEER on Thunder Bay Island Shoal in Lake Huron minutes before it broke up, November 29, 1966.

I would like to send out a huge THANKS to MCPO Vince Patton, USCG, for supplying me with all of the above information, including the photo of The Wall, on this "Great Coast Guardsman and Hero".

I also did a little research on the Internet and found that the hangar facility at U. S. Coast Guard Air Station Detroit is dedicated to Lieutenant Rittichier. Lieutenant Rittichier was assigned to Air Station Detroit from 1966 to 1968.

Thanks to all for the information about Lt. Rittichier when I had very little.

06-04-97: Thanks to some of the crew members from Fred's Place, I have been able to find out more information on Lt. Rittichier. Lt. Rittichier was a voluntary exchange pilot with the Air Force and was flying an Air Force HH3 on a rescue mission to rescue a downed pilot when he and his crew were shot down by enemy fire in Vietnam on 06-09-68. (Thank you Jack McCormack, LCDR USCG (ret); John D. Klemm, LCDR USCG (ret); Ron Bartholomew, MK2 USCG (also served); and William H. Kiley, DT2 USCG (also served).) They also directed me to the Vietnam Casualty Search Page where I was able to retrieve

the names of other casualties that occurred on the same date. From there I searched the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall Page and found the following information. Lt. Rittichier was married and was age 34 at the time he went missing. The incident occurred in Quang Tri, South Vietnam. The records say: HOSTILE, HELICOPTER, AIR LOSS, CRASH ON LAND. Lt. Rittichier was the pilot. There were three USAF casualties that occurred on the same date and at the same place. The records on these three all state the following: HELICOPTER - CREW, AIR LOSS, CRASH ON LAND. It also states that none of the bodies of these four men were recovered. The other names are: SSGT Elmer Larry Holden, USAF; SGT James Douglas Locker, USAF; and CPT Richard C. Yeend, Jr., USAF Reserve. Gunny has directed me as to where I might do some further research, so I hope to continually add to this MIA.

Obtain E-Mail Addresses for the Following and Ask Them to Help Find Our Men:

President and Vice President

Congressmen

Senators

*My husband is in the U. S. Coast Guard and I want to help
bring this member of our "family" home!!*



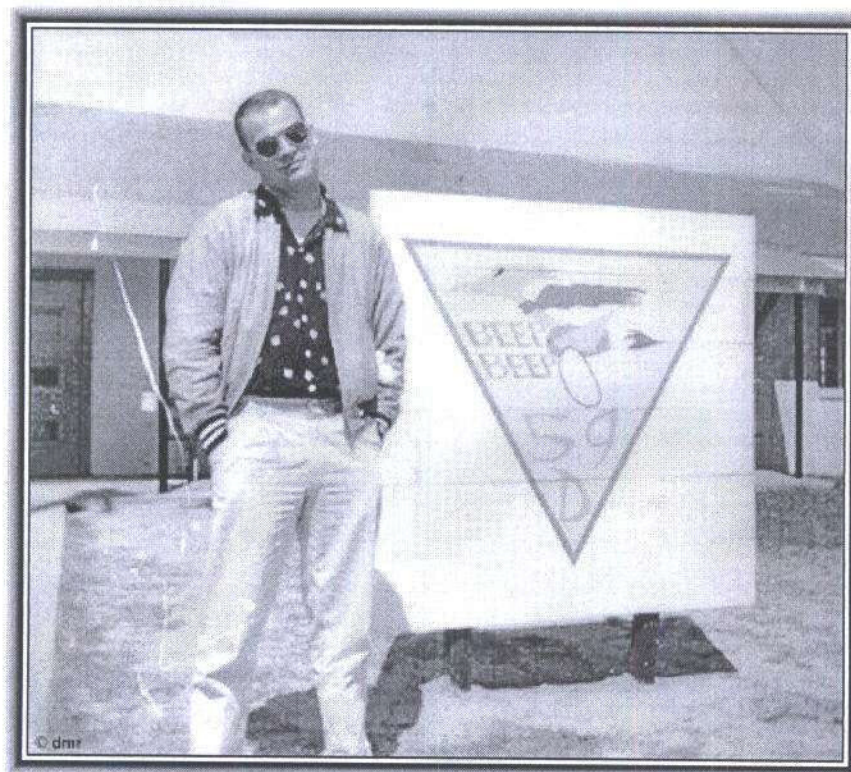
I have written letters to President Clinton, Congressman Richard Gephardt, and Senator John Ashcroft on behalf of Lt. Rittichier. Please click [here](#) to see the letters and responses. The only response I have received is the auto response from the White House.

Back to Bernard Plassmeyer and the POW/MIA Ring.

Home Letters

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Jack, in his Air Force days, standing next to a patch he designed : [view more photos](#)
 links marked with an * open in a pop-up window

It is with great pleasure that I inform you that, in November 2002, the Jolly Green 23 crash site was located. Excavation began in January of 2003, and on 14 February 2003, the remains of the crew were repatriated. On 11 August 2003, the military called Dave and Maggie to confirm that Jack's remains have been ID'd ! Jack will be buried at Coast Guard Hill in Arlington National Cemetery; a Commandant gave up his spot for Jack. The funeral is on 06 Oct 2003 at 1300 hours. The funeral is an open one; however no one may attend unless their name is on a list that will be given to base security. So, if you are planning on attending the funeral, please contact LCDR. Jim Brewster at 202-267-4009 or jbrewster@comdt.uscg.mil.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend". The words from St. John 15:13 echoed true on the 9th of June, 1968, when the crew of an HH-3E, the Jolly Green 23, was killed in action. United States Coast Guard Lt. Jack Columbus Rittichier, pilot; Air Force Capt. Richard Carolinus Yeend, Jr., co-pilot; Air Force SSgt. Elmer Larry Holden, flight engineer; and Air Force Sgt. James Douglas Locker, Pararescueman; all perished while attempting to rescue a downed Marine pilot, 1st Lt. Walter R. Schmidt, who is listed as Prisoner of War. Lt. Rittichier was the first of seven Coast Guardsmen killed in Vietnam, and the only one still unaccounted for following the War's end. This is his story* ...

Lt. Rittichier was no stranger to heroism. In November of 1966, Rittichier led a rescue mission in dangerous, wintry conditions, which saved the lives of all crew members aboard the West

German Motor Vessel *Nordmeer*, which had run aground in Thunder Bay Island Shoal, Lake Huron; he was awarded the Air Medal for his heroic actions. Within three weeks of his arrival in Vietnam [in 1968], Rittichier flew through heavy enemy fire to save four Army fliers; for this he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. A couple of weeks later, under the faint light of illumination flares, he pulled nine men from the side of a mountain, five of whom were badly wounded.

In addition to the Air Medal by Presidential Presentation and the Distinguished Flying Cross, Lt. Rittichier was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (First Oak Leaf Cluster), the Air Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster), the Distinguished Flying Cross (Second Oak Leaf Cluster), the Air Medal (Second and Third Oak Leaf Cluster), the Silver Star, and the Purple Heart*. All awards, save the Air Medal, were awarded posthumously. In 2003, Rittichier was also awarded the "Honored Veterans Award"* by the Vietnam Veterans World Wide [online] committee.

Other items related to Lt. Rittichier : Special Order (G-2123), Special Order (G-3134), Special Order (G-3637), Special Order (G-299), and a copy of a letter* sent to Lt. Rittichier regarding his being awarded the Air Medal. You should also read this newspaper article, published on 27 Aug 03.



Off-site links of interest : Honoring a Hero : A Coast Guard Story; a comprehensive bio on Jack; Rittichier remembered on Virtual Wall; My American Heroes ~ Lt. Jack C. Rittichier; and Leilani's POW/MIA pages. Two excellent sources for information about the Jolly Green 23 and her crew, from the day of the loss to now, can be found at Thomas Pilsch's site and at the Check-Six site.



I wish to make three acknowledgements. The United States Coast Guard's Historian Department deserves a big thank you for replying to my simple e-mail request for info on Lt. Rittichier with a package that contained virtually all the information contained in this section, as well as an 8*10 photo of Lt. Rittichier and Lt. Cmdr. Lonnie Mixon. Gratitude also is sent to Maggie Rittichier and Janet O'Reilly Herron, both wonderful ladies whom I am proud to call friends, and both of whom have kept me abreast of updates since the repatriation.

	This POW/MIA Ring site is owned by Stacey Site ID#757 [Next Previous Skip Random Site] [List Sites Stats MessageBoard Join] Proud Member of the POW/MIA Freedom Fighters. Get a POW/MIA Honor Page of your own.
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Jack Columbus Rittichier was born on August 17, 1933, at Akron, Ohio, and received his B.F.A. degree from Kent State University in March 1957. He received his U.S. Air Force pilot wings in December 1958 and then served as a B-47 jet bomber pilot with Strategic Air Command. In September 1963 he accepted a commission in the U.S. Coast Guard.

He subsequently served with the Coast Guard at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and Selfridge AFB. He later volunteered for exchange duty with the U.S. Air Force 37th Aerospace Rescue Recovery Squadron in Da Nang, Vietnam.

Of the 8,000 Coast Guardsmen who served in Vietnam between 1965 and 1975, 12 were helicopter and fixed-wing pilots who flew with the Air Force out of Tuy Hoa and Da Nang, Vietnam, as well as from Thailand and the Philippines.

On June 9, 1968, 37 miles west of Hue, a Marine Corps fighter pilot lay on the ground with a broken arm and leg. The marine pilot also had the further misfortune of having parachuted into a North Vietnamese Army bivouacking area. The enemy used the injured pilot as bait to lure the Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters within killing range. Air strikes pounded the site around the downed pilot. The first helicopter made three attempts to reach the Marine pilot before breaking off to refuel. LT Rittichier dove his aircraft in for the pickup. Heavy enemy fire forced him off. He swung around to let the gunships clear the area and followed them in for another pickup attempt. As he hovered over the pilot, bullets punched his aircraft and it began to burn. He tried to pull away, but the Jolly Green Giant would not rise. The helicopter settled to the ground and exploded. Within 30 seconds a ball of fire consumed his aircraft.

LT. Rittichier's awards include the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, Air Medal with third oak leaf cluster, and the Coast Guard Unit Commendation.

His widow, the former Carol Ann Laux, remarried several years after his death to another Coast Guard Aviator, John Wypick, who retired as a commander in 1980. They currently live in Fountain Valley, California.

Source : the "Above and Beyond" Section of the Spring 1991 edition of Foundation

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as Rescue crew Co-pilot of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 21 April 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Rittichier was instrumental in the rescue of four crew members of two United States Army helicopter gunships shot down by hostile ground fire. With great determination and superior airmanship, Lieutenant Rittichier effected the rescue in the face of hostile ground fire. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Rittichier reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS (FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as Rescue Crew Co-pilot of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 2 May 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Rittichier penetrated the extremely hostile, heavily defended A Shau Valley to investigate an aircraft crash site for possible survivors or confirmation of an aircrew fatality. With great determination and superior airmanship, Lieutenant Rittichier braved numerous thunderstorms and hostile antiaircraft position to complete this mission. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Rittichier reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

THE AIR MEDAL (FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as Rescue Crew Commander of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 4 May 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Rittichier entered the A Shau Valley, heavily defended by hostile forces and numerous antiaircraft sights, and landed at a bomb cratered landing zone to prepare two downed helicopters for aerial recovery out of the hostile area. Lieutenant Rittichier then on-loaded a crew, complete with all personnel equipment, and all portable aircraft equipment, and departed the landing zone littered with unexploded bombs and mines, for recovery to Da Nang Air Base. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Lieutenant Rittichier reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as an HH-3E Rescue Crew Commander near Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam, on 12 May 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Rittichier twice entered an extremely hostile area to effect the rescue of four survivors of a downed helicopter and five seriously wounded personnel. The survivors were located in an extremely small landing zone, surrounded by tall trees, on the side of a steep mountain slope. With great determination and superior airmanship, Lieutenant Rittichier executed the second approach and departure at night by flarelight even though the distress site was obscured by smoke and clouds. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Rittichier reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

THE AIR MEDAL (SECOND AND THIRD OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in sustained aerial flight as a combat crew member in Southeast Asia from 10 April 1968 to 9 June 1968. During this period, Lieutenant Rittichier participated superbly in accomplishing highly intricate missions to support Free World Forces that were combating aggression. The energetic application of his knowledge and skill were significant factors that contributed greatly to furthering United States goals in Southeast Asia. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishments of Lieutenant Rittichier reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

THE SILVER STAR

Lieutenant Jack C. Rittichier, United States Coast Guard, distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as Rescue Crew Commander of an HH-3E helicopter in Southeast Asia on 9 June 1968. On that date, Lieutenant Rittichier attempted the rescue of a downed pilot from one of the most heavily defended areas in Southeast Asia. Despite intense accurate hostile fire which has severely damaged another helicopter, Lieutenant Rittichier, with undaunted determination, indomitable courage, and professional skill established a hover and persisted in the rescue attempt until his aircraft was downed by the hostile fire. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Rittichier reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.



Coast Guard Story

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Honoring a Hero

Story by PA3 David Schuerholz

Atlantic Area Public Affairs

The U.S. Coast Guard re-named its recently commissioned Administration and Electronic Systems Support Unit building, at the Integrated Support Command in Portsmouth, Va., in honor of a Coast Guard pilot killed in the Vietnam War, during a formal ceremony Nov. 10.



Lt. Jack Rittichier (left) with Lt. Cmdr. Lonnie Mixon at Air Station Detroit before he deployed to Vietnam. Photo courtesy of Cmdr. Doug Kroll, Chaplain, U.S. Navy Reserve (retired)

The Lt. Jack C. Rittichier Building was named for the Coast Guard helicopter pilot who was shot down by enemy fire while attempting to rescue a downed Marine Corps helicopter pilot in Vietnam, 37 miles west of Hue, June 9, 1968.

Rittichier was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade in the Coast Guard Reserve Sept. 26, 1963, following six years of service in the U.S. Air Force, and was promoted to lieutenant as an active-duty pilot March 28, 1966.

He arrived in Vietnam on April 10, 1968, having volunteered for exchange duty with the Air Force's 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang Air Base, following two years of service at U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Detroit.

From Da Nang he flew rescue missions in Air Force HH-3E

9 JUNE 1968 JB-23 LOST

Coast Guard



Military • Multimission • Maritime

IN THEATER

The Coast Guard deploys to the Middle East and the Mediterranean in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Liberty Shield

Strike Force

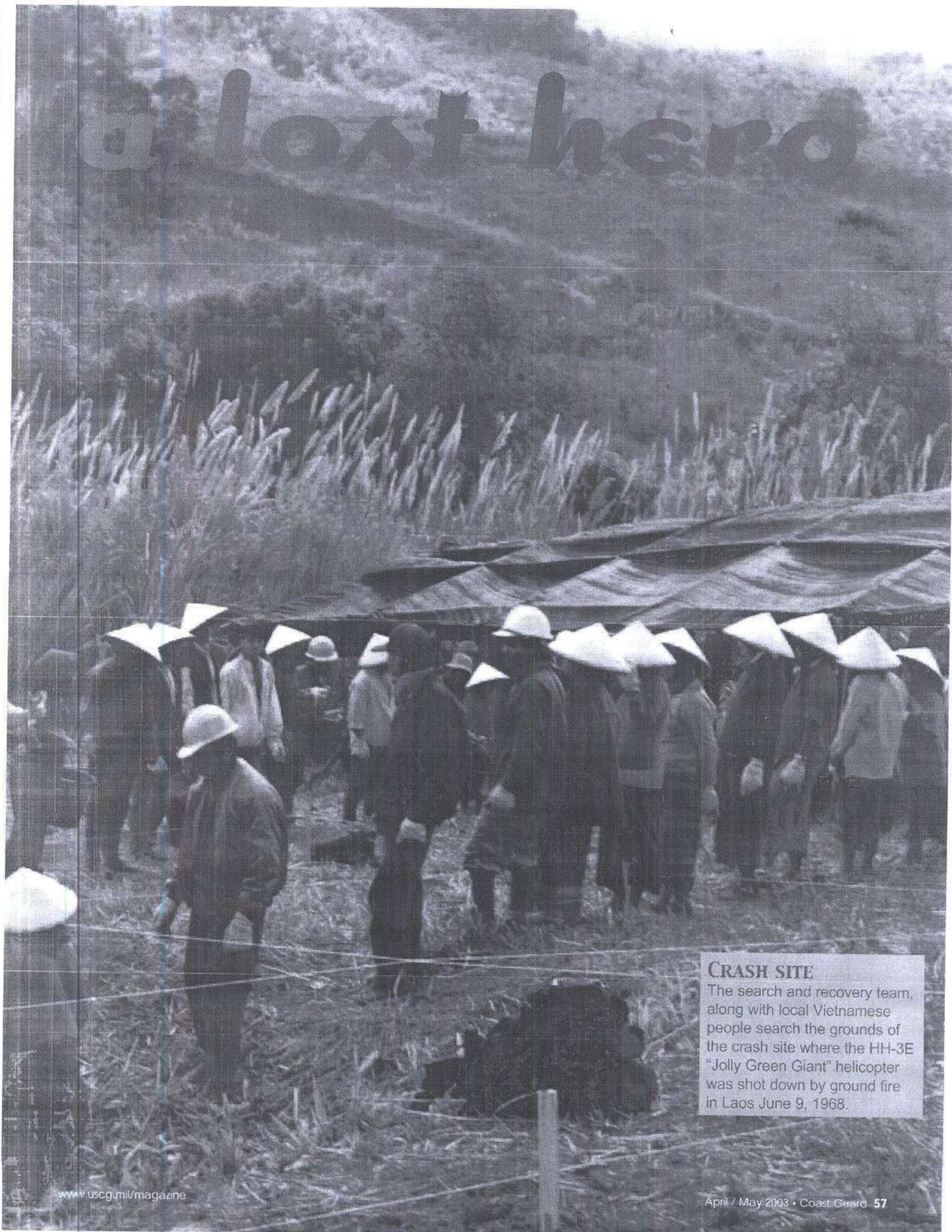
Recovering a hero

Looking for

Story and photos by PA2 Lauren Smith, 14th Dist.



A lost herd



CRASH SITE

The search and recovery team, along with local Vietnamese people search the grounds of the crash site where the HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter was shot down by ground fire in Laos June 9, 1968.

Coast Guard search and rescue pilot Lt. Jack Rittichier drank chocolate milk shakes every day of his life and called being a part of the Coast Guard "food for the soul." As a student at Kent State University, he was captain of the football and track teams, and also was a great artist, singer and dancer. His widow, the now remarried Carol Wypick, said he looked like a cross between "Burt Reynolds and Marlin Brando," and that he had a "biting sense of humor."

"He was interested in making better men out of the men that were around him by being an example himself," said Carl Rittichier, his younger brother by one year. "He was always my idol."

Like many family members at the time, Carl did not understand why his older brother was volunteering to go to Danang Air Base in 1968 during the Vietnam War to work as an exchange pilot with the Air Force 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron and conduct search and rescue missions.

"Why would you volunteer, you're breaking mom's heart," pleaded Carl, before his brother shipped out.

Jack had heard stories from other rescuers who were in Vietnam at the time and felt a sense of duty. "What am I still doing here waiting for the next boat to wash up on the rocks?" Jack rhetorically asked his brother. "This is what I've trained for for years, this is what I know, this is what I want to do," he said.

"Maybe in time, you'll understand," he explained to his brother.

Wypick said his reasons for going were to save lives, contribute to the war ending sooner and to experience the adventure of it all. Already a published author, he wanted to someday write a book about his experiences in Vietnam. His wife didn't rest easy with his decision.

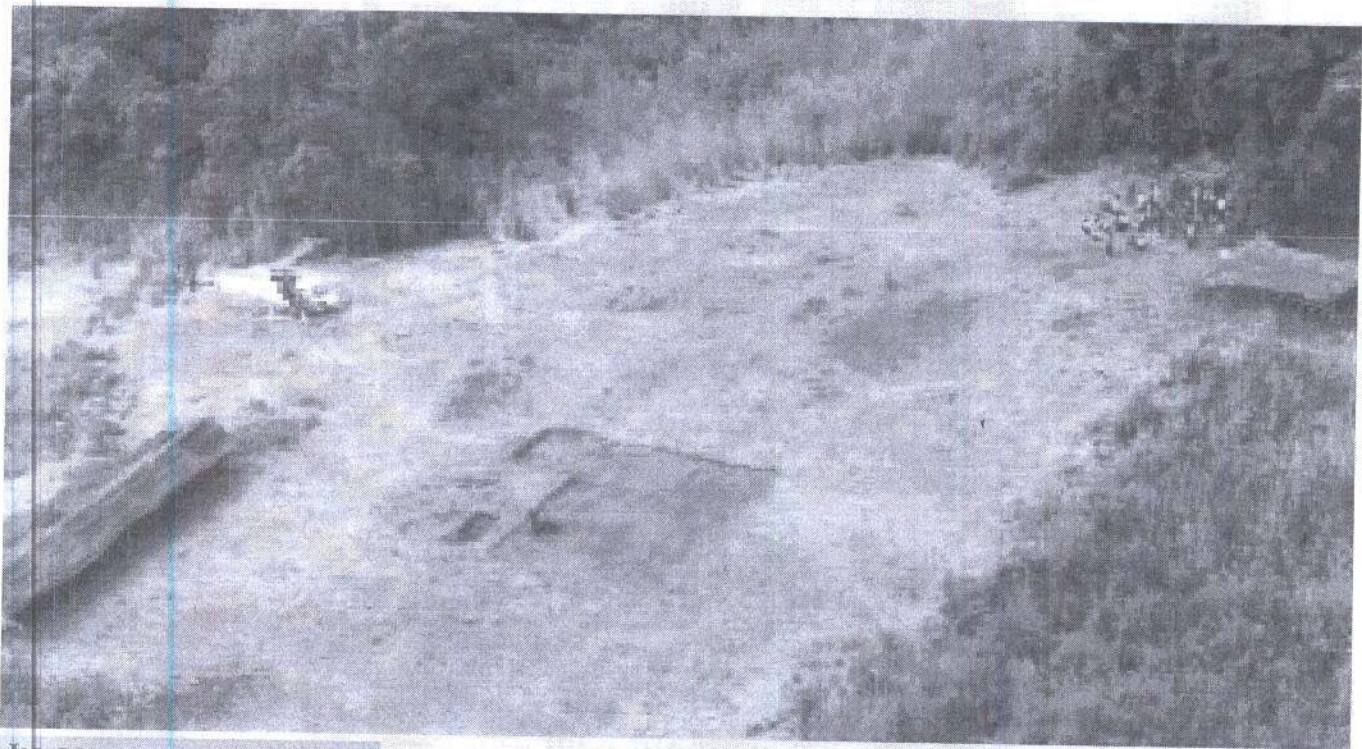
"I hated that he was going," she said. Their lives were so complete together, and she feared the imminent danger he would face.

"Our marriage was an 11-year honeymoon. Neither of us wanted children, which was good. We were together all the time and had an absolutely wonderful life," she said.

His family members reluctantly honored his wishes, and on March 17, 1968, he saw his wife and family for the last time.

Today, the ground in the remote Ta-Oy district of the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic is abundant with greenery. Isolated, hand woven huts, villages and dirt roads dot the lush peaks and valleys. The once anarchic Ho Chi Minh Trail is now peaceful and isolated. Thousands of craters left by bombs are now used by the villagers as ponds. They also serve as reminders of the vicious combat that once took place there, killing almost 60,000 Americans.

On the morning of June 9, 1968 the backdrop was much different than it is today. Rittichier and his three-man crew, Air Force Capt. Richard Yeend, Staff Sgt. Elmer Holden, and Sgt. James Locker, set out on their HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter, JG 23, to rescue 1st Lt. Walter Schmidt, a Marine Corps pilot whose A4-E Skyhawk jet had been gunned down by enemy fire on the ferociously fought-over Ho Chi Minh Trail, nine miles west of the Ashau Valley in Vietnam. According to declassified reports, visibility was good that day, but automatic and anti-aircraft weapons fire filled the sky. Several foxholes



IN COUNTRY

The crash site in Laos, Vietnam.

and bunkers were observed in the immediate vicinity. Other assisting rescue aircraft which had contact with Schmidt reported that he survived the crash, but had a broken leg, possible broken arm, and would likely require a parajumper to assist him.

Another HH-3E helicopter, JG 22, made the first two attempts at reaching Schmidt, but was forced away by severe ground fire. Eventually, the crew was forced to abort because the helicopter was about to run out of fuel.

JG 23 then approached, entered a hover, and began to lower a parajumper to assist Schmidt. As the aircraft made a clockwise turn over the site, the pilot reported receiving heavy ground fire.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Dubois, an eyewitness who flew 1500-feet overhead on that day said, "I saw fire coming out of the left side near the engine and told JG 23 that he had a fire on the left side. He started pulling out and I advised him that there was a clearing 1000 meters north if he had to set down. He said he was going for the clearing. The fire appeared to extinguish and I advised JG 23 of that. He said he was going to set it down as he reached the clearing. When he started down

into the clearing, the blades just stopped and the jolly green just dropped. There wasn't anything but a black hole in tall grass."

"When it burst into flames, it was just a ball of fire, it looked like someone had just dropped a can of napalm there," he said.

Alexander Christensen, the investigator in charge of the recovery site, and an anthropologist with the Army's Central Identification Lab located

at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, said, "It was a very hot fire. It was hot enough to melt the aluminum in the cockpit and it deformed the fiberglass. The only thing it didn't burn was iron and steel."

Because of these circumstances and witness accounts stating there was no chance anyone could have survived the crash, all four crewmembers were immediately listed as "killed in action, body not recovered."

Schmidt was never recovered either, and his remains are unaccounted for.

Rittichier became the first Coast Guardsman killed in action in Southeast Asia and the only Coast Guard serviceman unaccounted for in Vietnam. All told, six other Coast

Guardsmen lost their lives in the war.

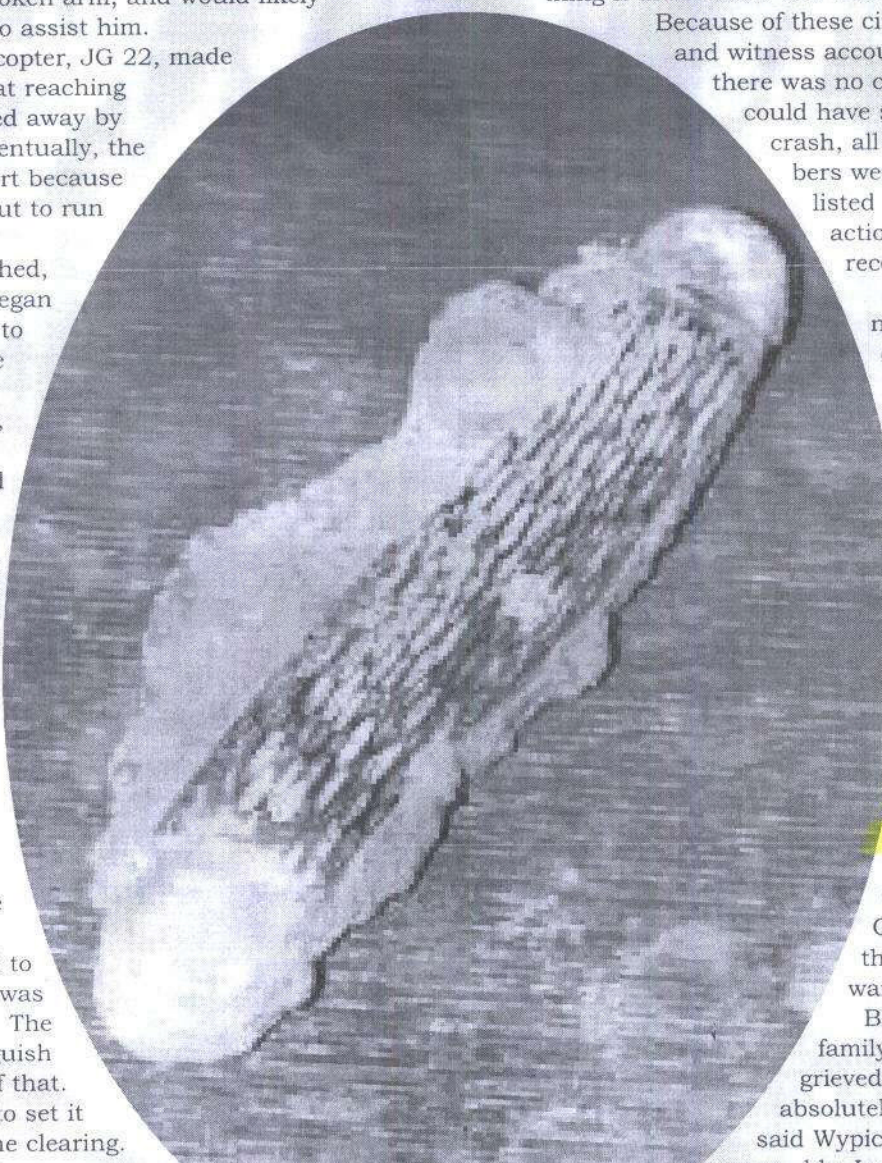
Back at home, family members grieved. "I was absolutely devastated," said Wypick. "It was horrible, I can't describe how terrible it was ...After all these years, it is still so fresh in my mind."

At the time, no ground search for remains was possible because of intense enemy presence in the area.

Thirty-four years later, beginning in November, 2002, investigative teams from

Joint Task Force-Full Accounting at Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii, set out in 12-foot-high elephant grass to look

continued on page 61



LOST MARLINSPIKE

Personal effects such as a watchband, pocket knife, and captains bars were found Jan. 28 at the crash site of Coast Guard Lt. Jack Rittichier and his three crewmembers, who were killed June 9, 1968 when their HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter was shot down by ground fire in Laos during an attempt to rescue a downed Marine Corps pilot. Rittichier is the only Coast Guard casualty from the Vietnam War whose remains have not been recovered, but an effort is under way to identify what remains were found at the site. The search and recovery team is comprised of mostly Hawaii-based U.S. military and Defense Department civilian specialists including personnel from Joint Task Force-Full Accounting and the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii.



LOCAL HELP

A Laotian villager assists the joint-service recovery team in sorting through a crash site to look for remains of Lt. Jack Rittichier and his crew.