

DECLASSIFIED

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
37TH AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SQUADRON (MAC)

APO SAN FRANCISCO 96337

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: 370

SUBJECT: MISSION NARRATIVE REPORT (1-3-074-8205, 25 Jul 68) (U)

26 JUL 1968

TO:

37C *JSARC*
JSARC
IN TURN

103

1. (U) This report is submitted in accordance with ARRSN 55-2/3ARRGp SUP 1, dated 15 Apr 68.

2. (C) At 0355Z while returning from Echo orbit, Jolly Green 28 heard a "Mayday" on guard from Strobe 10 (an RF-4). Strobe 10 was between Khe Sanh and Dong Ha and heading for CH. 77. He had been hit in the vicinity of 290/35/CH. 109, had smoke in the cockpit, and was experiencing some type of hydraulic difficulty. JG 28 immediately contacted Crown 4 and Waterboy. Waterboy gave Strobe 10 a vector to "feet wet" and instructed JG 28 to proceed southeast along the coastline. Misty 31 (an F-100) took up escort position off Strobe 10's left wing and both aircraft were spotted by JG 28 shortly after they became "feet wet". At 0403Z Misty 31 advised that Strobe 10's fuselage was on fire. At that time Strobe 10 indicated that they would make a planned bailout. In full view of JG 28 and Misty 31, Strobe 10B ejected at 0405Z. Strobe 10A did not eject. Approximately five seconds after Strobe 10B had ejected the aircraft started into a gradual descending right turn and was observed to periodically give off smoke and fire from internal explosions. Misty 31 remained on Strobe 10's left wing and JG 28 remained to his right. Misty 31 repeatedly transmitted on guard, "Strobe 10, bail out...Get out now", until Strobe 10 crashed and exploded on the beach (120/24/CH. 109) on a northwest heading at 0407Z. No radio transmissions were heard from Strobe 10 after Strobe 10B ejected. JG 28 then turned seaward and observed the remainder of Strobe 10B's parachute descent and was within 100 yards of him when he entered the water, at 110/26/CH. 109. JG 28 hovered near the survivor and at 0411Z deployed the Rescue Specialist to help the survivor get disentangled from his parachute and aid him into the horse collar. The survivor was hoisted aboard without difficulty followed by the Rescue Specialist. JG 28 left the hover at 0419Z and returned to CH. 77. Meanwhile, JG 24 and JG 22 had arrived in the area from Quang Tri and Da Nang respectively. JG 22 landed on the beach near the crash site and the Rescue Specialists recovered the remains of Strobe 10A. JG 28 landed at CH. 77 at 0455Z.

3. (C) The weather was clear and the visibility was excellent. The sea state was 2 to 3.

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year intervals; declassified after 12 years

Classified by
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON *31 DEC 84*

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4. (C) Crew coordination aboard JG 28 was excellent. The assistance provided by Waterboy and Misty 31 was outstanding.
5. (C) The survivor was: Major Robert Drodman, USAF FV3034623, 12th TRS.
6. Crewmembers of the Jolly Greens were: (C)

JOLLY GREEN 28

Capt Paul D. Ashley
Capt Ronald G. Spray
SSgt Jimmy L. Dodgen
SSgt James L. Miller

RCC
RCCP
FE
RS
RS
RS

JOLLY GREEN 22

Capt John D. Oliver
Capt William R. Byrd, Jr.
Sgt Alvin A. Malone
SSgt James F. Spears
TSgt Nathaniel Smith, Jr.
Sgt Steve M. Northern

Paul D. Ashley

PAUL D. ASHLEY, Capt, USAF
Rescue Crew Commander

GROUP 4

Downgraded at 3 year
intervals; declassified
after 12 years

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

To: (unknown), rlapointe
From: "James \"Pappy\" LaCasse", INTERNET:hughnrus@resortnet.com
Date: 1/26/00, 11:38 AM
Re: Fw: Strobe 01

Maybe this will fit in with one of your mission reports on the DANang Jollys

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim Studley <lStud@bsc.net>
To: Phil Prince <psprince@onramp.net>; Art Polstein <agpolstein@aol.com>; Scott 'Hot Har
Date: Wednesday, January 26, 2000 5:54 PM
Subject: Strobe 01

Got the following from Fred Dent. You may remember the author as the guy who made the non-stop round the world powered flight. #1

The Fiery Loss Of Strobe 01

The only USAF General officer to die during the Vietnam conflict did so not thirty feet from my cockpit. It was an absolutely horrific experience.

It happened sometime in the summer of 1968; although I don't remember exactly when. I do remember it was on my third MISTY tour. Third tour? Why????!!! Well, I couldn't face busting trees back in the south. I figured as long as I had to be there, I might as well be where the action was.

This day, I was in the back seat with Captain Donald E. Harland, who, sadly, is no longer with us. We had just backed off the tanker, and were filled with fuel when I heard a Mayday call to Waterboy (GCI Site). The call was from Strobe 01 an RF-4C Phantom Recce Bird coming out of North Vietnam, just above the DMZ. He reported he had taken a hit and had smoke in the rear cockpit...he was loosing hydraulic pressure and was heading feet wet. Turning on our tape recorder, I listened for a while to the conversation and discovered we were inbound almost head-on to Strobe 01. I jumped into the conversation and asked Waterboy to vector us for a rejoin so we could check him out. After a few vectors we found ourselves in a stern tail chase with too much speed and I overshot him. Idle, speed brakes, full left rudder, right aileron, I skidded right by him asking if he, Strobe 01, had an F-100 going by his left wing. Embarrassed, I slipped back on his left wing and

from what Harland and I could initially see, he looked pretty much normal - no big holes or streaming fluid. Strobe said they were still loosing hydraulic pressure and it was getting real hot in the rear cockpit. I asked him to hold it real steady so we could come in closer and do a battle damage check. We started looking just as Strobe rolled wings level, just a few miles feet wet and parallel to the coast. Now

abeam the DMZ, he said he was going to try to make it to Danang. His reconnaissance outfit (Strobe) was stationed out of Saigon so Danang, farther north was the emergency recovery base.

Since Harland was new to MISTY and I had been around a while, I took control. Still a little sheepish of my grand display of flying skill because of the overshoot, I took a deep breath and said to myself, "Okay Dumbshit, don't fuck this up anymore." I then slid close in underneath the ugliest fighter ever built (too many engines, too many seats). Harland noticed it first near the nose. It appeared to be a small hole

in
the belly
near the aft part of the camera bay. We could see a little flame
flickering

in
the hole, but not a real big fire. We had to get real close to see but
there was a small amount of smoke coming out of the seams in the belly.
As we slid out to the right side, we could also see a small amount of
flame in the camera bay through the oblique camera window.
I crossed back over to the left wing while Harland and I
forwarded these tidbits of information to Strobe. During this time, we
had no idea there was a General officer in front and we were not talking
to the pilot, but to a "seeing eye Major" in the back seat. I thought
it was just a "Poug" Captain and a Brown Bar Navigator in the back.
After all, Generals are prohibited from flying up North, and these
reconnaissance guys really hang it out. Company grade stuff, the field
graders usually find other things to do.

Strobe acknowledged the fire and said, "Okay, we're going to go ahead
and bail out." I thought, "Wow, this is going to be neat." It should
have been a very "by-the-book" ejection; 10,000 feet, straight and
level, ideal speed, under control, leading to a routine water rescue...
Up until this moment, I had not witnessed an ejection sequence up close
and the notorious F-4 Martin Baker seat, known as the "back breaker,"
with its complicated system would be neat to see.

I eased the F-100F out to route formation and waited and waited, but
nothing happened. A review of the tape later showed it was almost two
minutes before the rear seat fired. Later I asked the seeing eye Major
what took so long since he was told they were on fire, why the wait? He
said the General did not want to eject and argued about the position of
the command ejection handle in the rear cockpit. The Major,
upholding his duties, wanted it in the command position (the guy in back
command ejects the front), but the General outranked him and ordered him
to leave it in the off position, thereby making each seat a single
initiated ejection. The Major was reluctant, but after retrieving the
check list and reading each step of the bold face ejection procedures
(SOP for many engines, many seats, what can you expect) to each other,
the Major pulled the "D" ring on his seat, leaving his General to fend
for himself.

From my vantage point, this first ejection from the rear cockpit was
textbook. I can still remember it vividly today, as if in slow motion.
The aft canopy opened and separated cleanly, clearing the tail by a good
20 feet, then the seat started up the rails. Just as the bottom of the
seat cleared the canopy seal, the rocket motor ignited, burned for 1.2
seconds and the seat went straight up very stable. When the rocket
stopped, the drogue chute came out, and seat rotated back 90 degrees
eyeballs straight up, flat on his back, as he cleared the tail. Now
looking back over my right shoulder, the main C-9 canopy came out and as
it started to open/inflate, the seat separated and kept right on going.
Now with the canopy fully open, the pilot swung back underneath. The
whole thing was as neat as hell, I thought.

But when I looked back to the stricken aircraft, I could not believe the
horror I saw. The front cockpit was totally engulfed in fire. Only a
white dot of the pilot's helmet was visible through the smoke and
flames.

He was sitting straight up as before, he wasn't moving, and seemed
totally oblivious to what was happening. It looked like two huge blow
torches were coming up from the rudder pedal wells through the front

cockpit around the pilot and out the now open rear cockpit. The fire was streaming out and over the back of the Phantom, turning into a dense black smoke trail that obscured the tail. But the aircraft flew on undisturbed, not even a burble. The pilot was still not moving, still seemed unaware, as if he was enjoying the flight. The whole thing was surreal; almost dream like. How could this be? For a moment I thought he might not be aware of the fire, and I must tell him to eject. So I began hollering on the radio, "Strobe 01! Bail out! Bail out!"

I called two or three times more, but still nothing happened. The wings were level, but now the aircraft started a shallow descent. "My God!" I screamed. "What doesn't he eject? How can he just sit there? What in the hell is wrong?" Then I figured it out. It became obvious we were too far away (route formation) and he couldn't hear me. So I drove the Hun right up next to the burning cockpit and continue calling, "Strobe 01! Bail out! Bail out!" this time with more desperation in my screams. Harland calls, "Oh my God! Look at it burn!" In desperation, I drive closer, so close that the air pressure between the two aircraft causes the fiery ball to roll into a 30 degree bank, turning toward the right. As I pulled away, he rolled back wings level, now pointed directly at the beach in a slightly steeper descent.

By this time, the intense heat had charred Strobe's canopy and we could no longer see the pilot's white helmet. The paint began to blister, and there were a few small explosions that blew some of the panels loose and sent others flying off (LOX Dewars and pressure bottles, I think). Now, the whole nose was a charcoal mess. The flames subsided, and dense, thick smoke streamed from the nose area.

For some strange reason I just couldn't let go and continued to call Strobe, nearly begging him to get out. At about 500 feet AGL and still close on his wing, the old Phantom gave one last dying gasp. It pitched up a little and then dove straight into the beach, hitting about 100 yards feet dry. For some strange reason, I still couldn't let go.

Harland screamed, "Goddammit Dick! Pull Up!" I'll always felt if it had not been for Harland's stern direction, I would have crashed right beside him; I would have just followed him in. I pulled up left and told Waterboy,

"Strobe 01 just impacted on the beach." A few minutes later, Waterboy called and asked if there was any chance of survival.

My sad reply was "Negative survival, negative survival."

As we turned back feet wet to find the back seater, there was an usual amount of radio chatter about securing the area - dispatching a Medivac, etc. It seemed odd - such an intense amount of interest in this crash site. We MISTY's have seen a lot of combat crash sites, but once it was determined there were no survivors, it's instantly written off. A blue car would be dispatched to a grieving family back in the states, and that's pretty much the end of it. Although this crash interest level was way out of the ordinary, Harland and I still had no idea who was on board, and we wouldn't find out until we returned to Phu Cat.

It was time to concentrate on the back seater. We quickly located him still in his parachute about five thousand feet above an angry Gulf of Tonkin. We looked at the sea state and it was rough...real rough. We noticed a motorized Vietnamese sampan hell-bent and heading straight for

the

back seater. We came around for a closer look and saw three or four people on board the boat flying the Republic of South Vietnam flag. The sea was rough and the boat continues to pound forward. Was this good or bad? Friendly or bad guy? Even if they were friendly, they could still kill the pilot if they did not know what they were doing. Harland and I decided these signs weren't good ones, so Harland made a low pass across the boat's bow to encourage him to turn around. We pulled up, but the boat was not dissuaded in the least and continued on toward the back seater, who is drifting closer to the water. What to do now? Hell, I felt we warned 'em, so now we kill 'em. But at the last minute, we decided to give the boat one final warning and Harland placed a long burst of 20mm right close across the boat's bow. This time as we pulled up and came around, and just as the back seater hit the water, the threatening boat made a sharp 180 degree turn and "beat feet" back to the beach. Soon afterward, the Jolly Green arrived and picked him up.

This seemed just another day on the MISTY trail and Harland and I headed back to the PAC asking Waterboy where Strobe 01 got hit. Thinking Vengeance, but no one knew exactly where, so we finished our morning cycle and returned to Phu Cat.

As we taxied in, there was a sea of Colonels waiting. Before I opened the canopy, I said to Harland, "I don't know what we've done, but it must have been a major fuck up." The first colonel up the ladder said in an angry voice, "What are you doing here? You should have landed at Saigon." Boy, were we confused. The Colonel continued, "It's about Strobe 01." I said, "Yeah, that was real bad and, uh, hey, I have a tape of the whole thing." The Colonel's eyes got real big and he literally grabbed the tape recorder from my hands. Harland and I climbed out of the aircraft totally bewildered until it finally dawned on the Colonel that we had no idea who was on board Strobe 01. "It was General Bob Worley," and not knowing what to do with the recorder, he handed it back to me and said, "Get in a Class 'B' Uniform, pack a bag and a Scatback (T-39) will be here in 30 minutes to take you both to Saigon.

MACV wants you guys to brief the Generals. "Oh, Goody," I thought.

On the ride to Saigon, I listened to the tape. Thank God I did, because there was one real bad thing said that needed to be edited, so I did a 18 second "Nixon Gap" treatment. When we made Saigon, it seemed every damn General required his own private briefing and wanted to listen to the tape. These hallowed halls filled with stars was some change of pace for a couple of up country Poug MISTY's.

The real sad thing was the that the pilot was General Bob Worley, a real, honest to goodness Tactical Fighter Pilot. The rest were, as you know, a bunch of SAC Pukes. A strong and much needed voice for the fighter pilot was lost that day. What was doubly sad was it was Worley's DEROS (last) mission. In Vietnam, one receives double credit toward an Air Medal for an out-of-country mission. The Major said Bob really wanted that medal and some special photos. It seems dumb now, but you had to be there. It seems last mission shoot downs became a disease that spread so quickly the commanders would not tell the crews it was their final mission until after they had landed. Seems everyone wanted the big BDA and fly their final mission in grand style. I remember one MISTY's going away party where four of the five troops being honored got

shot down just after the party. When this dawned on someone, it was pointed out to the boss, that of the five, all but one had been shot down. The only remaining one was PK Robinson, who, at that very moment was on his final mission in Route Pac 01 (No. VN). Well, the boss ran into the Combat Ops Center and had PK abort his mission, and ordered him to land at the nearest recovery base in Thailand. They would not even let him fly his own F-100 back. To add to the humiliation, they sent a Caribou trash hauler to fetch him back to Phu Cat. Not much of a final mission for PK. He eventually did get shot down years later in an F-4 while on a second tour, and became a POW, ultimately bringing the party shoot downs to 100%.

I have often wondered why I kept calling for Strobe 01 to bail out, and why we stuck so close all the way in not wanting to let go when it was obvious Bob was dead a few seconds after the back seater ejected.

The psychology of combat...

Dick Rutan

----- Internet Header -----
Sender: hughnrus@resortnet.com
Received: from mail.greatbasin.net (mail.greatbasin.net [207.228.35.39])
by spangaaa.compuserve.com (8.9.3/8.9.3/SUN-1.7) with ESMTTP id PAA15916
for <rlapointe@compuserve.com>; Wed, 26 Jan 2000 15:38:42 -0500 (EST)
Received: from PRhughnrus (rno-max7-58.gbis.net [207.228.61.250])
by mail.greatbasin.net (8.9.3/8.9.3) with SMTP id MAA23124
for <rlapointe@compuserve.com>; Wed, 26 Jan 2000 12:38:34 -0800 (PST)
Message-ID: <006401bf6804\$b8c8f9c0\$fa3de4cf@PRhughnrus>
From: "James \"Pappy\" LaCasse" <hughnrus@resortnet.com>
To: <rlapointe@compuserve.com>
Subject: Fw: Strobe 01
Date: Wed, 26 Jan 2000 13:53:26 -0000
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: multipart/alternative;
boundary="====_NextPart_000_0061_01BF6804.B8105820"
X-Priority: 3
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 4.72.3155.0
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V4.72.3155.0

Summary Report 1-3-074-8205, 25 July 1968

At 0355Z, 25 July 1968, Jolly Green 28 while airborne intercepted a May Day from an RF-4 which had received battle damage. Airborne and surface SAR directors vectored the RF-4 to the Gulf of Tonkin and obtained F-100 escort enroute. Fire developed in the RF-4 and a planned bail-out was initiated. The rear seat crew member ejected at 0405Z. The pilot of the RF-4 crashed even though repeated attempts were made to contact him between 0405Z and 0407Z. Jolly Green 28 deployed the rescue specialist and retrieved both the survivor and specialist from a hover. Jolly Green 22, whom had been launched, investigated the crash site of the RF-4 and recovered the remains of the pilot. The survivor was Maj Robert Brodman, FR3034623, USAF, 12th TRSq.