

From: Robert Zontini [mailto:zontinib@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, April 04, 2006 1:52 AM
To: John Cassidy
Subject: Beret; 301st jumps the gun.

John;

Some of the mid '60s PJs know this story but, as Roger Porter points out, it's news that some of the post '67 troopers might find interesting.

When the five reserve rescue units were formed (exact dates I don't know but the 301st has there 50th Reunion scheduled at Patrick for April 10-13in. PJ Air Reserve Technician slots were hard to fill. CONAC, the HQ Command for reserve units of all types had to amend the personnel regs to staff certain AFSCs. Retirees were, under the original regs prohibited from filling ART slots. CONAC in order to staff the slots had to waive their prohibition for retirees in C124 flight engineers and loadmasters as well as Pararescue Technicians and start looking at retiree files.

Bob Seale was hired on a waiver to staff the 301st at Homestead.

Raleigh Curtis went on board at the 302nd at Luke

Dennis Jackson (a SSgt) assumed the 303rd at Burbank CA and the military grade of MSgt.

Eugene Engram was hired at Portland for the 304th and,

Udo Fischer the 305th at Selfridge although I don't know exactly when.

Bob Seale got lucky from the git-go. He Shanghaied a fully qualified SF E-5 from a local FLA NG Special Forces unit. When the guy showed up for his first drill he brought 6 of his team members with him so Bob had 7 fully qualified (minus SCUBA) troops out of his allotted 11 at one blow. Would you believe that every one of them were full time cops from 3 units in the Metro area.

I joined the unit in July '64 fully Qualified and that made the team of 11 complete.

On New Years Eve '64-65 Bob was admitted to the base hospital for tummy cramps with a BP of something like 76/30. They opened up his gut on Jan 1st and found that he had an old (very old) ruptured appendix and that about five feet of his small intestine was one big knot of adhesions.

I got a call from SMSgt Troy Gay our First Sgt and personnel guy on Jan 2nd to see if I was available to take Bob's slot as NCOIC for 90 days which I did. Bob was in the hospital for five

months so I was given an extension for 90 more days. Bob was still DNIJ in Sept so the commander asked for and received from CONAC a second ART Slot so I went permanent. I was an E6 (TSgt) and the base personnel shop cut orders to MSgt which they had to rescind 2 weeks later as Bob Seale though still DNIJ was still in the MSgt slot and CONAC would not authorize another. No sweat, Bob and I both carried the same GS Grade. I asked Bob if we could do a records check on our people and get everyone up to an active duty level of preparedness. He approved and we immediately started sending guys to Ft Sherman, CZ for Jungle School, one new guy Mike Coontz to Portland to Jump School and slots for everyone else to Key West.

Back in April of '65 I had a team inspection by Marty Juback and Paul Jenkins from ARRS in Orlando. Paul was carrying a Maroon Beret which I borrowed and modeled for our Ops Officer Major David Stanford. His only comment at the time was "that sure looks neat, you guys should try to get it made part of your uniform as it sure beats that cunt cap and patch.

Well in Sept when I was officially team NCOIC I was having lunch with Stanford when he brought up the beret. He told me to write him a letter requesting permission for all reserve PJs to wear it as official uniform. I wrote the letter; he endorsed it as "RECOMMEND APPROVAL" got Col. Mark West (our CO) to endorse it and fired it off to CONAC HQ along with a photo of me under a beret with jump Wings.

I figured that was the end of that but we received a TWIX about ten days later that "BY ORDER OF THE CG, CONAC" all fully qualified CONAC PJs would wear the Beret w/ Jump Wings, Bloused trousers into Jump Boots as part of all AF authorized uniform combinations to include Class A. I had to run down Paul Jenkins to find a source. He was a little upset because ARRS was just getting started fighting with HQ USAF to get authorization for "ALL" fully qualified PJs to wear the beret and we were afraid I might have screwed the pouch for everyone.

Anyway, Col West told me that he had all the go ahead he needed and to get the team under maroon effective 11/15/65 per CONAC. I ordered a dozen from Dorathea Mills in Montreal on a Squadron Fund PO at \$9.00 each About two weeks later I got a call from the base PO to come sign for a package and bring a certified check to the US Customs Service for \$11 in import duty.

Our first two SCUBA grads were A1C Gene "Buzz" Nardi and A2c Jim Wilson (real job a fire LT. for Dade Metro). Next came T/Sgt Joe Davis and SSgt Bob Monroe (both detective Sgts for FL States Attorney's office). Like the 58th in '61 was the first 100% SCUBA qualified active duty team, the 301st had the (except for Seale) the first 100 percent fully qualified, in all areas required for active duty teams, reserve PJ Force. The Photo on Pages 121 of "Pararescue 50 Years" was taken in January 1966 and shows, left to right T/Sgt Joe Davis, NCOIC Bob Zontini, A1C Gene Nardi and SSgt Bob Monroe. Page 46 top right photo back and third row r. end are A2C Jim Wilson and A1C Gene Nardi respectively.

Major Dave Stanford, the Ops Officer who started us on our road to "jumping the gun" went on active duty in late '66 and many of you older guys may have met him during inspection visits to your teams. He was a hell of a patron for pararescue. Assignments included deputy for ops, SAC, deputy CO 23rd AF and he retired as a Major General to Key Largo.

That ends this note which seems to have become a small book.

My best to all members of the Brotherhood, present and future.

John, thanks for putting up with my rantings.

Bob Z.

Dear Bob and Kevin;

The 301st ARS Squadron, (Reserve) was formed in Aug 1965. Bob Seale (as well as 4 other retired or former AD PJs, Raleigh Curtis of the 302nd, Luke AFB, AZ. Dennis Jackson of the 303rd, in Riverside, CA. Eugene Enghram, of the 304th, Portland, OG, and Udo Fischer of the 305th, Selfridge MI) were the first 5 PJ Air Reserve Technicians. I was the 6th. All 5 units (except the 301st after I was hired full time in Jan. '65) had a manning authorization when they were formed of 11 PJs including 1 full time ART (Air Reserve Technician) and 10 reservists with the ART slot an E-7 until the early '70s when the 301st was raised to 35 PJs total with three ARTs one of whom was a GS-12 and a WAF slot for maintaining training records.

There was a unit (reserve or otherwise) designated as the 308th. When the 301st moved to Patrick following the destruction of Homestead by Hurricane Andrew, it remained the 301st and was co-based with the 902nd Air Rescue Wing, an all C130 unit, that drew it's PJ support from the 301st.

During my stint as NCOIC from Jan 1 '65 to Aug 12, 1968 we had a fully staffed team which included the following:

TEAM MEMBER	MIL GRADE & (CIVIL JOB)
1) BOB SEALE	MSgt... Civil Service GS-9... (Off Status DNIJ but still employed for pay). (Retired AD PJ)
2) BOB ZONTINI	TSgt ... Civil Service GS-9... (NCOIC & Stan Board P.J. Beginning 1/1/'65). (Former AD PJ.)
3) JOE DAVIS	TSgtAsst NCOIC (Under-cover Investigator for States Attorney's Office). (Former SF.)
4) FRED KEMPER	TSgt... (SGT Hialeah Police Dept... in charge of Motor Division). (Former SF.)

- 5) CLIFF PITTARD TSgt... (SGT City of Miami PD... in charge of Vehicle Patrol during his shift (Former SF.)
- 6) BOB MONROE SSgt... (CPL Metro Dade PD...Under-cover Investigator for State's Attorney). (Former SF.)
- 7) BOB CANOULS SSgt... (Inhalation Therapist....Baptist Hospital Pediatrics' Dept.). (Former SF.)
- 8) RON COLEMAN SSgt.... (SGT FHP... Road Patrolman). (Former SF)
- 9) MIKE COONS A/2C.... (Road Patrolman FHP).
- 10) EUGENE NARDI A/1C.... (Cross-Trainee into P-Rescue from A/C Engine Mech. Sky-Diver).
- 11) JIM WILSON A/2C... Trainee PJ and was a unit leader for Dade County Fire Rescue (Former SF.)

We did, of course, have a few ins and outs including Gene Nardi's going on EAD in '67 where he stayed until he retired following several volunteer tours in Nam. The 301st as a Squadron and also as a team accomplished a lot. Including our ops officer Maj Dave Stanford, a great PJ supporter who got us permission to go into berets a full year before the AD troops. He ended up a Major General, Deputy CO of 23rd AF and supported Pararescue well after retirement. Our '64--'67 First Sgt, Troy Gay ended up as Director of Personnel for Air Force Reserve.

If I can help you guys in any way you've got my email and my phone number is below.

Best of luck living "BY THE MOTTO",

BOB Z

About the 302nd at Riverside:

At the time in 62, 63, & 64 there were no formal PJ Classes as we know them today. The airborne, medical, scuba, and others were at other services Army and navy schools. So we were trained as well as any active duty team at that time. The OJT does not apply to us as the only training we received. Even today Our PJ's are OJTing, you never stop learning and if you do you are dead in this game. Again, I was in med school with Pitt and the NCOIC of 302 at Gunter AFB, Jump with Pitt at the Brick Yard at Hamiton AFB just before their deployment to Southeast Asia.

Well I need to go. I will contact all of the team that are still with us. Dennis the last time I heard was not in good shape. Nick David is close by, Sam Jeromn, Bob Watkins, Jim Murphy, Keith Chaney and other. Last Q I don't know the last Canopy Roster I have do to the project I was working on did not forward the mail for security issue. Keep in contact I'll help if I can.

Kindest regard.
GF (George Lee)

The 303rd ARRS (at March) was closed in 1985. Tom Gleisberg (PJ 1970-1981)