

40th ARRSq Hist, 1 Apr - 30 Jun 1970

6

Buff crew involved in the pick up of Cowpoke
18 on 22 April. Standing from the left: Capt
D. H. Sattler (CP); Lt Col R. F. Hegewald (AC);
Sgt J. E. Corcoran (FE). Kneeling from the left:
TSgt R. H. Pambrun (PJ) and Sgt W. A. Werber Jr. (PJ)

FILE

22 APR 70



21 April 1970

COWPOKE 1P

OV-10A 155423 VMO-2, MAG-11, USMC, Da Nang
Maj Eugene Lacy Wheeler (KIA)
Capt Charles E Hatch (survived)

In addition to its role as an FAC and close air support aircraft, the Bronco carried cameras that gave it a photographic reconnaissance capability. Maj Wheeler and Capt Hatch were taking photographs of a road near the border between South Vietnam and Laos about 12 miles west of Kham Duc when they were shot down. Flying at about 1,000 feet the aircraft was hit in the rear fuselage by either 37mm or 57mm AAA and caught fire. The crew ejected and Capt Hatch was recovered the next morning by helicopter but although Maj Wheeler was in voice contact with the rescue forces he was not recovered. It was assumed he had been killed by an enemy patrol that he reported was closing in on his position. Maj Wheeler had only started his tour of duty with VMO-2 the day before he was shot down.

SANDY 1

A-1H 52-135336 22 SOS, 56 SOW, USAF, Nakhon Phanom
Capt J M Dyer (survived)

SANDY 3

A-1J 52-142070 602 SOS, 56 SOW, USAF, Nakhon Phanom
Maj C E Whinery (survived)

About four hours after Maj Wheeler's OV-10 was shot down west of Kham Duc two USAF Skyraiders flying RESCAP during the search for the aircrew were also shot down. Capt Dyer was making his second pass over an enemy position just west of where the Bronco went down when the aircraft was hit by 23mm AAA. Capt Dyer ejected from his burning aircraft and landed safely to await rescue. Half an hour later another of the escorting Skyraiders was lost at almost exactly the same location. Maj Whinery was making his fourth pass from just 300 feet on a target close to where Capt Dyer had landed when his Spad was hit by 14.5mm ground fire. Maj Whinery ejected and landed safely close to Capt Dyer. They were both rescued by one of the SAR helicopters of the 40th ARRS, making the Squadron's 99th and 100th combat rescues.

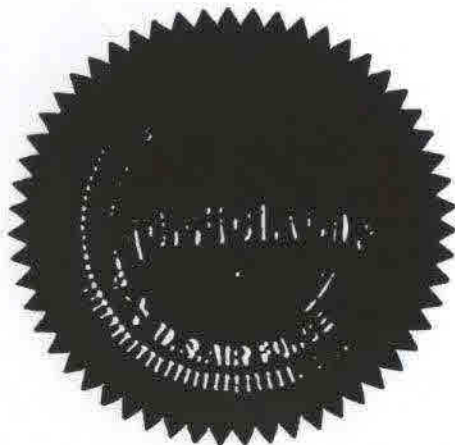
CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
(FOURTH OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

TO

TERRY E. CAFFERY

Sergeant Terry E. Caffery distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as an HH53 Pararescue Specialist in Southeast Asia on 21 April 1970. On that date, Sergeant Caffery and his fellow crewmember rescued a downed American airman from deep in heavily fortified hostile territory. Even though exposed to intense and accurate hostile ground fire that had driven off another helicopter and seriously wounded one crewmember, he maintained his unprotected position on the helicopter's ramp, providing precise maneuvering instructions to maintain rotor clearance, and laying down a steady stream of suppressive fire against the numerous gun positions during the extended hover required to complete the rescue. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Caffery reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



James Corcoran

From: "Joe Copalman" <joe_vee_ten@hotmail.com>
To: <jcorcoran@ci.livonia.mi.us>
Cc: <benjieraymond@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 28, 2002 10:53 PM
Subject: Re: [FACNET] Cowpoke 18 SAR, 22 Apr 70

Mr. Corcoran,

I saw your request on the FACNET and thought I might be able to help. Eric Raymond (CCed in this message) is the OV-10 Bronco Association's listkeeper and might be able to put you in touch with Chuck Hatch.

Also, I'm not sure if Chuck Burin (ccburin14@msn.com) has contacted you about your request, but along with being the Bronco Association's historian, he served in VMO-2 at the same time Hatch and Eugene Wheeler (pilot, callsign HOSTAGE NAN) were shot down. He might be able to give some input. I think Peter Colt was actually airborne during the shootdown and witnessed some of the SAR, so you might want to track him down. The shootdown and SAR are also documented in the book "Ground Attack: Vietnam" (pg.133-164) by J.M. Moriarty, who was VMO-2's CO at the time of the shootdown - Wheeler was the squadron's new XO at the time.

Lastly, there's a story involving Capt. Hatch on our website that may be of interest, as it involves his first flight in an OV-10 since the shootdown. Here's the URL:

http://www.ov-10bronco.net/ov10stories_detail.cfm?NewsID=160 Hatch was a rarity among Marine Aerial Observers, as his background was in Armor, whereas most AOs came from the Artillery and Infantry communities.

Hope this helps some.

All the best,

Joe Copalman
 Researcher/Newlsetter Editor
 OV-10 Bronco Association

>From: "corcoran48154" <jcorcoran@ci.livonia.mi.us>
 >Reply-To: FACNET@yahoogroups.com
 >To: FACNET@yahoogroups.com
 >Subject: [FACNET] Cowpoke 18 SAR, 22 Apr 70
 >Date: Wed, 28 Aug 2002 12:13:14 -0000
 >

>I would like to contact a Charles E. Hatch. He was a Captain in
 >1970. Drove an OV-10 for VMO-2, MAG-11 USMC DaNang 1970. Call sign
 >was Cowpoke 18 during that period. I am helping do some research for
 >a retired Pararescueman who is writing his second book on SEA rescues.
 >The mission took place on April 21 and 22 1970. There was an OV-10
 >and at least 3 A1E's shot down and several Jolly Greens shot up. Any
 >help would be appreciated. Send me an e-mail at:
 > jcorcoran@ci.livonia.mi.us
 >

8/29/2002

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Created: 12/11/1999 12:00 AM

URL(s): <http://www.ov-10bronco.net/contributors.cfm#RolfeHunt>

Updated: 11/12/2001 03:26 AM

ROCKS!! ROCKS!!

Rolfe Hunt's hair-raising tale of cutting things just a little too close in Elephant Valley!

By [Rolfe Hunt](#)©1999 [Rolfe Hunt](#), All Rights Reserved.

I served with Major Wheeler, Hostage Nan, in VMO-2 at the time he was shot down. A great guy and somewhat unusual among us OV-10 drivers - to me he seemed kind, gentle, thoughtful, dedicated to his family. Igor was also in VMO-2 at that time so knew him.

A little sidelight: Captain Chuck Hatch was the AO shot down with him. Chuck spent a couple of nights on the ground with the bad guys beating the bushes all around him before he was finally rescued. He took a week or two off from flying then went back at it with me as pilot on his first flight back in action.

While we were doing a photo mission near the east end of Elephant Valley, we were called to support a recon team out in "Yankee Charlie" company, the area of YC map coordinates west toward the Laotian border. A low ceiling covered the tops of the mountains on both sides of the valley but rather than go around the long way I chose to go through the tunnel formed by the mountains on the side and the clouds overhead (flying VFR of course and with poor radio contact down in the valley). Fortunately I knew this valley like the back of my hand because after we were committed - not enough room to turn around - it began to rain. The OV-10 windshield wiper seems quite busy but does little good. I could see nothing but the rain whitened windshield.

I knew the valley just ahead dog-legged a little to the left so I hesitated a moment, made a slight turn and went to full power to climb straight ahead down the valley and punch up through the clouds. Just as I turned I heard Chuck yelling in the back seat over the sound of the engines at full power. Then he keyed the intercom and I realized he was yelling, "Rocks! Rocks!" Sure enough, a few feet off the right wing were the huge rain blackened rocks of the valley wall. My guess at where to turn had been correct but just barely. I went on the gauges and continued the climb straight ahead and contacted control for an IFR clearance.

We completed the mission with the recon team and returned home safely, but that was Chuck's last flight as an AO. Having cheated death on two flights in a row, he quit and went back to tanks.

Maybe he's online with us now and can add to this or correct any errors my memory allows after almost 30 years. He was one of the best of our AO's. I flew with him many times and enjoyed knowing and working with him in the air ground team.

[Rolfe Hunt](#)
Hostage Hornet
Danang, 1969-1970

If you have any additions or corrections to this item, please let us know!

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Cowpoke18, draft

On April 21, 1970

Jolly Green 82 and Jolly Green 83 had been sent to NKP from Udorn to stand "EAST" alert

The enlisted members of both crews were having lunch at the NCO club at NKP. The NCO club had a notice on the menu that they had received a shipment of fresh strawberries for strawberry shortcake and everyone was looking forward to having a special desert that we had not had for a long time. Just as the strawberry shortcakes had been served, the portable radios blared, "Launch the Jollies!" I couldn't believe the timing because we all really wanted the strawberry shortcake. I mentioned to Terry Caffery (who was sitting across from me) that it was a shame that we couldn't have the shortcake. He looked over at me, thought for a second, then picked up the shortcake in his bare hand and jammed the whole thing in his mouth. It was hilarious and I remember getting some real strange looks from everyone sitting around the dining room (non aircrew). We all ran out of the NCO club without paying for the lunch. I still laugh when I think about him jamming that whole cake in his mouth like that.

It turned out that the reason we were launched was one of the Jolly Greens on the cowpoke mission was diverted because Sgt. Colbert had been shot in the arm during an attempt. It also seems to me that at that point in time there were two people on the ground Cowpoke 18 Alpha and Hostage Nan. They had been in an OV-10 out of DaNang

We arrived in the holding area and began orbiting while the Sandy's were working the area over. From the radio traffic we could tell that there was a lot of very active and accurate Triple-A (23mm and 37mm) in that area. While the details are a little hazy of that day I seem to remember that the A1E's had their hands full and a number of them were taking serious hits. Either during the close-in orbit or during our first attempt we received ground fire that caused our #2 engine to either quit or leak fuel bad enough that we had to divert to Da Nang for repairs. We went to Da Nang because we did not want to cross the "route structure" back to NKP with just one engine. The repairs took long enough to prevent us from making another attempt that day so we remained over night a Da Nang.

April 22, 1970

We got up for a "first light effort" but the weather was Delta-Sierra (dog-shit) and we had to wait around for the ceilings to lift so we could take off. During the night one of the survivors was killed or captured. When the weather permitted us to take off we proceeded to the area and again orbited close to the survivors position. Our first attempt was abandoned because of some confusion on directions from the on-scene commander and/or ground fire. After the first attempt both Jolly Green 82 and 83 left the immediate area and hit a C-130 tanker and took on fuel. We then returned to the holding point, which was a couple of miles from the survivor's position. I clearly remember that while we were orbiting a couple of miles from the survivor I spotted the survivors signal mirror.

I was surprised at how clear it was and how much it helped orientate me as to where he was on the ground so I would know where to look for him when we went into a hover. While inbound during the second attempt we received small arms fire and Sgt Pambrum and Sgt Werber returned the fire with their miniguns. When we went into a hover I went on "hot mike" and lowered the penetrator. I had disconnected my intercom cord so there was some confusion that extended the time in a hover. I finally got the intercom working and spotted the survivor about 2/3 up a slope of tall grass with a line of small but thick trees along the top of the ridge. Because of the slope we had to hover down-slope and the survivor ran down the slope to the penetrator. He quickly secured himself to the penetrator and I reeled him up to the door. Our hover had put the helicopter level with the top of the slope, even with the tree line, which was about 100' straight-out from my position. While the survivor was coming up on the penetrator I looked around and spotted some bad guys sitting along the top of the slope in the tree line. I was really surprised on two accounts. One, that they were so close to me and two that the survivor had been hiding so close to them for an extended period of time. They had rifles and for some reason they did not bring accurate fire at us although back at Da Nang we did find several bullet holes around the entrance door where the hoist was. I also remember that when we got the survivor into the aircraft and off the penetrator he broke loose and ran back to the door. Initially I thought he had panicked and was about to run out the door but he stopped at the door and was giving the bad guys the finger.

With the survivor on board we began exiting the area as fast as we could with Sgt Pambrum & Sgt Werber suppressing ground fire with their miniguns. During the climb out one of the Sandy's (Spad 01) pulled up along side and the pilot bailed out. We followed his chute all the way down to the ground (it went around in large circles) and the Jolly Green 82 immediately picked him up. That could be the record for the shortest time on the ground in enemy territory. We then returned to Da Nang with both of the survivors.

During the time period this mission was going on I seem to remember that an AC-130 gun ship had been shot down somewhere near there and that rescue was going on at the same time, which really added to the overall confusion.

Crew of Jolly Green ____

Pilot: Lt. Colonel Hedgewald

Co-pilot: Captain Dennis H. Sattler

Flight Engineer: Sgt James Corcoran

Pararescuemen: Sgt. Dick Pambrum

Sgt. Bill Werber

This is to the best of my recollections

Jim Corcoran

Flight Engineer, 40 ARRS

James Corcoran

From: "CHARLES E BURIN" <ccburin14@msn.com>
To: <jcorcoran@ci.livonia.mi.us>
Sent: Wednesday, August 28, 2002 10:59 PM
Subject: Fw: [FACNET] Cowpoke 18 SAR, 22 Apr 70

J,

I was a pilot with VMO-2 in Vietnam 6/69-7/70 and was the squadron safety officer from December 69 until I left.

I am not sure where Chuck Hatch is today. I understand he retired from the Marine Corps as a Col. Maybe the HQ USMC locator service could find him.

Here's some of what I know about the loss.

Gene Wheeler joined the squadron from the 1st MAW HQ just prior to the day he was shot down. Chuck Hatch was an Aerial Observer and had been flying with VMO-2 since at least late October 69. My log book shows I flew with him the first time October 27 and at least 7 times prior to the shootdown. I flew an orientation mission with Major Wheeler March 9 and Flight schedule copies show that Major Wheeler was flying missions as Hostage NAN by April 1.

There is a good write-up of the loss of Wheeler and Hatch in Lt. Col. J. M Moriarty's book, Ground Attack Vietnam: The Marines Who Controlled the Skies, pages 133-164. The account has several factual errors but is basically correct.

As to the other aircraft losses they included A-1H 52-135336 Captain J. M. Dyer; A-1J 52-142070 Major C. E. Winery and A-1J 52-142015 Captain D. E. Friestad (second shoot down) An F-4 was also damaged 4/21 as well as a Jolly shot up badly. Aircraft information is from Vietnam Air Losses by Chris Hobson.

They were flying Mission 76 which was a twice daily deep recon that required two aircraft. I had flown the same mission numerous times. This particular mission was deep in western Vietnam very close to the border with Laos. I complained about two weeks earlier when I flew a Msn 76 in the same area and inadvertently crossed into Laos. We were supposed to be looking for some trail or other in the jungle canopy. The weather was not the best and keeping track of where we were was difficult at best even with 4 sets of eyes trying to figure it out. I crossed over a ridgeline and saw what looked like a freeway built of dirt that split and went around a large hill. I headed over the road and realized I was obviously not where I was supposed to be. I added full power and quickly headed back east across the ridge line. All this was at 1000 Feet AGL or less. My wingman was probably at 2500 ft. AGL. My complaint to the Air Wing Intell was that we were not briefed about what was in Laos very near where we were doing our visual recon mission. The information would have helped keep us out of harms way. Gene made at least two passes over the same area in much better weather and was hit by a 37mm.

I have talked to one of the Covey FACs who was involved in the rescue. He said it was not a good area to be flying in at a low altitude. He said the area was designated Strike Zone Yankee.

If I can provide any further information please let me know.

Chuck Burin (Hostage IGOR)
 Bronco Association Founder, board member and Historian

----- Original Message -----
From: corcoran48154

8/29/2002

Sent: Wednesday, August 28, 2002 7:13 AM
To: FACNET@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [FACNET] Cowpoke 18 SAR, 22 Apr 70

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