

37 ARRSQ HISTORY, 1 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 1971

high speed low altitude egress from the area was made and the aircraft recovered uneventfully at Bien Hoa AB.

12 Nov 71 Four days later Capt Griffith and crew were again scrambled from the Bien Hoa FOL. A VNAF UH-1F was reported down twenty miles northeast of Bien Hoa. A RASH FAC Briefed the Jollies on the situation while they proceeded to the area. An army hunter-killer team began preparing the area while the Jollies readied their aircraft for the rescue attempt. The survivors were located in the trees at the edge of a large clearing. Immediately upon arrival they were advised that the area had been thoroughly prepared and were cleared in for the pickup. An autorotative decent and power recovery to a landing was made in the immediate vicinity of the survivors who rapidly boarded through the crew entrance door. During the recovery, ground fire was reported north of the LZ but was never confirmed by the crew. Egress was made from the area and seven survivors brought safely back to Bien Hoa.

On 25 November 71 Jolly Green 70 and 73 were scrambled out of the Bien Hoa FOL for a Navy CH-46 shot down ninety miles south with twenty-one people on board. Major problems encountered enroute were navigation being hampered by low ceilings and poor visibility. As a result both aircraft, forced to fly at 100-300 feet AGL, were exposed to enemy ground fire as they approached the down helicopter. King advised the Jollies to withdraw to a safe holding point to await area preparation. Major Robert B. Swench the Alpha Low AC on Jolly Green 70 was advised that Dustoff and Sea Wolf helicopters had extracted seven injured survivors and that his assistance would be required to pickup the remaining personnel. Jolly Green 70

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rendezvoused with SEA Wolf helicopter and was briefed on the SAR situation. Approach and landing at the crash site were without incidents and fourteen survivors taken on board. The Jollies proceeded to Binh Thy to unload the survivors and assess battle damage. Jolly Green 70 discovered five hits and Jolly Green 73 one, but the damage wasn't critical and the return to Bien Hoa was begun.

The weather had deteriorated and both aircraft were again forced to fly low. After transiting through a heavy rain shower Capt Richard L. Wall, Jolly Green 73 AC, lost all visual and radio contact with Jolly Green 70. A run through of all normal frequencies proved fruitless and Jolly Green 73 proceeded to Bien Hoa for fuel.

On the ground it was determined that Jolly Green 70 had crashed in the Son Nha Bhe River at the same position where visual contact had been lost. Several aircraft were already in the suspected SAR area and Jolly Green 73 launched to join them. Despite poor weather Capt Wall and crew spotted a survivor, Pararescueman A1C Richard L. Steed, on the river bank and an immediate pick-up was made. The search was continued and it was learned that a Navy helicopter had rescued the Flight Engineer, Sgt Hank L. Theriot, who had been taken to Vung Tau. Low fuel finally forced Capt Wall to return to Bien Hoa. Subsequent search and investigation revealed that Jolly Green 70 had been downed by enemy ground fire.

A lunch time scramble at the Bien Hoa FOL sent Capt Steven R. Tyler and crew heading for the heart of Cambodia to rescue a downed American A-37 pilot on 29 Nov. Enroute to the scene all applicable

2320 RB CAPT GRIFFITH ON DUTY
 2385 RB From Queen in clear UQ STBF Read NMP2, XCFS
 0110 RB JG 21 ↑ for orbit
 0150 RB JG 72 ↑ " "
 0330 RB JG 21 & 72 ↓ from orbit
 0715 FR J.G. 21 & 65 ON COCKPIT ALERT BY QUEEN
 0720 PR JG 21/65 ↑ FOR SAR - OBJECT / LOCATION
 UNKN -
 0730 FR ARMY HELD DOWN AT 145/15/77 20 PAX / WIA
 5 GUNSHIPS IN AREA / SANDY'S SCRAMBLED
 0740 FR DUSTOFF PICKUP MAN WIA. J.G. 21 & 65 HEADING
 FOR HOME. NO FURTHER ASSISTANCE NEEDED.
 0755 PR J.G. 21 & 65 ↓ FM SAR-E
 0845 PR TELEPHONIC REPORT TO JOKER

25 NOV 71

2230 PR MSG Buff to duty
 2345 PR WPT / WOLCOM info posted
 2320 PR ITEM report to DT@JOKER
 2325 RB Capt Sutton on duty
 2345 RB Item 5 Queen XI AN EDRG TULS
 0100 RB JG 64 ↑ to WCR
 0105 RB JG 21 ↑ for orbit
 0107 RB JG 65 ↑ for orbit
 0111 RB JG 72 ↑ for orbit
 0345 RB JG 72 ↓
 0355 RB JG 21 + JG 65 ↓
 LATE ENTRY / FR J.G. 70 & 73 SCRAMBLED FM VVBH AT 0150Z
 LATE ENTRY / FR J.G. 70 14 SAVES. AREA 0955N 10559E. TYPE A/C
 C-7 C/S CUDDY 477. JOLLY GREENS WENT INTO CH-115
 MSN NBR. 03-019 25 NOV 71.
 BOTH J.G. 70 & 73 HAD BATTLE DAMAGE.

25 NOV CONTINUED

0530 FR J.G. 70 & 73 DEPARTED CH-115 FOR CH-73 ETA 0640Z
 0740 Zfy. QUEEN ADVISED NO CONTACT WITH JG 70.
 CALLED BEIN HOA. JG 73 SCRAMBLED TO SEARCH
 FOR JG 70. KING BIRD³ IS SEARCHING ALSO.
 0750 Zfy. NAVY GUNSHIP HAS VISUAL CONTACT WITH JG 70.
 0800 Zfy. POSITION OF JG 70 IS 148/13/102.
 0810 Zfy. JG 64 ON ^{ON HIS WAY} SCENE. WRECKAGE SITED
 0817 Zfy. IN WATER
 0817 Zfy. SEAVOLF HAS ONE SURVIVOR ON BOARD. WRECKAGE
 BY A SMALL VILLAGE ON LAND & WATER.
 0818 FR KING 22 HAS A BEEPER.
 0823 FR J.G. 73 HAS PICKED UP 1 SURVIVOR.
 0829 FR SEAVOLF HAS SAT THERIOT ON BOARD AND J.G. 73
 HAS ~~4~~ ⁴ I.P.O. ON BOARD.
 0840 Zfy. JG 73 ETA FOR 5 NOV 75 0845.
 NOTE: Additional Log Entries Attached.

26 NOV 71

25/2230 RR msg Ruff to duty
 25/2245 RR maint status posted/wr status posted
 25/2250 RR item report to JOKER (maj Lewis)
 25/2303 RT JG 64 OFFBIENHOR FOR 102
 25/2352 DP ITEM 5 YE at AZ UPFK DNRW
 26/0135 DP CALLED QUEEN JG 66 CAM RAHN B AT 1130, TONS. N. 1340
 PPR reg.
 26/0058 MS JG 21 + 65 ↑ AIRBORNE
 26/0129 DP JG 66 AIRBORNE
 26/0355 DP JG 65 + 21 down at 0405Z
 26/0445Z FR J.G. 73 WILL NOT RETURN TONIGHT BECAUSE OF
 FURTHER INTREGATION. J.G. 73 WILL RETURN

NOVEMBER 1971				SURVIVORS		
				NAME	RANK	
				SSN		
DATE	CREW	JG #	SAVE #	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	TYPE SAVE
8 NOV	GRIFFITH SARTORI GARCIA ALDEAN NARDI	65	661 THRU 668	DNB-BAN-HUE LT. 219 SQ + 7	345/120/73 ASN # 03016, 8 NOV 71	8 COMBAT SAVES
12 NOV 71	GRIFFITH SARTORI GARCIA ALDEAN NARDI	65	669 THRU 675	2LT TRUNG MINH DUC 2LT PHAU VAN HOA SGT HOANG TRUNG DUNG SGT TRUONG HUE PHUOC SGT LOUAI H.V. AIC MONLI N.V. THANH L.V.	120/73	7 COMBAT SAVES
25 NOV 71	SURACK GEORGE THEODORE THOMAS FLOSS STEED	346 TC	676 THRU 689		0955N 10559E	14 COMBAT SAVES
25 NOV	WALL DAKE GARCIA NARDI ALDEAN	788 73	670	AIC STEED ST. 1000 T. 1000 37 ARRS		14 COMBAT SAVES

Notes: at Lima Site 20, crashed on landing, hit ground, spun right, rolled down hill, flipped, burst into flames. Two flight engineers survived.

Tail No.: 68-10366 Model: HH-53C Date of Loss: 25 Nov 71 Unit: 37th ARRS
Country of Loss: Gia Dinh, SVN Call Sign: Jolly Green 70

Pilot: Robert B. Swenck (02W-72)
Co-Pilot: John W. George (02W-72)
P.J.: Thomas D. Prose (02W-72)
P.J.: James R. Thomas (02W-72)

Notes: SAR mission, crashed Song Na River

Tail No.: Model: UH-1N Date of Loss: 04 Dec 71 Unit: 20th SOS, Ban Me Thuot

Country of Loss: Gia Dinh, SVN Call Sign: Green Hornet

Gunner: Thomas E. Fike (02W-84)

Notes: Tim Fike was the last Hornet lost. If I remember right it was in Dec 71. It was his last mission before rotating home (it was to be a milk run out of Saigon and back). His crew was shot down as they were returning to Saigon. The pilot thought that they had seen a rocket launcher set up in a rice paddy. The went in low level to check it out (flying a slick), and a bad guy popped up and racked the bottom of the chopper. Tim Fike was killed, the other gunner (King) was seriously wounded and at least one of the pilots was wounded in the leg. From "Jim" (Official Squadron History does not have this information in files - History ends Sept 1971)

Tail No.: 68-10359 Model: HH-53C Date of Loss: 27 Mar 72 Unit: 40th ARRS
Country of Loss: Cambodia Call Sign: Jolly Green 61

Pilot: David E. Pannabecker (02W-120)
Co-Pilot: Richard E. Dreher (02W-119)
Flight Engineer: James Manor (02W-120)
P.J.: Raymond J. Crow, Jr. (02W-119)
P.J.: Raymond A. Wagner (02W-120)

Notes: crashed from unknown causes

Tail No.: 68-10365 Model: HH-53C Date of Loss: 6 Apr 72 Unit: 37th ARRS
Country of Loss: Quang Tri, SVN Call Sign: Jolly Green 67

Pilot: Peter H. Chapman, II (02W-130)
Co-Pilot: John H. Call, III (02W-130)
Flight Engineer: Roy D. Prater (02W-131)
P.J.: Allen J. Avery (02W-130)
P.J.: William R. Pearson (02W-132)

Robert LaPointe

From: "Lori" <cbaldea@mn.mediaone.net>
To: "LaPointe" <rlapointe@gci.net>
Sent: Saturday, May 06, 2000 12:25 PM
Attach: chuck & me.jpg
Subject: Fw: Hi

Bob, Heres some stuff on missions you asked for. Picture is after 12nov71 mission; Pilots- Griffith& Sartori; PJ's- Nardi& Aldean ; not pictured FE-Garcia.

8Nov71 mission in Cambodia Nardi & I both remember we were expecting Americans. When they broke tree line, were Viet's wearing combo good guy-bad guy uniforms & were all carrying AK's. Came in ramp by Nardi. He kept close watch on em because we still weren't sure who they were, & I layed down covering fire with mini on way out. They were off loaded pretty hush hush at Bien Hoa. We were told later they were a 'road watch' team of repatriated bad guys.

24May71 Your mission report covers it pretty well.

29Nov71 Cambodia If you remember being at Bien Hoa shortly after Jim Thomas's bird went down, the unidentified picture of pilot on your web site could have been this guy. Was burned, & I dressed his arm & cleaned up his face a little.

25Nov71 Nardi & I hi bird. Thomas , Prose , Steeds lo bird made succesful pickup. Both took hits on way in. Stopped at small army base to check for damage & had quick Thanksgiving Turkey.[Was Thanksgiving Day] On way back to Bien Hoa weather real bad. They went down. We returned & couldnt see anyone in water. I went in river but very strong current & poor visibility & couldnt locate for sure where wreckage was. Also put me down on shore but again unable to locate survivors. Short time later we did pick up Steed who apparently had been taken to different location on shore by Viet fisherman. Keep up good work. See you in Sept thanks Charlie Aldean

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

From: <Genonardi@aol.com>
To: <cbaldea@mn.mediaone.net>
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 3:40 PM
Subject: Hi

> Here is the picture you asked about
>

377th ARRS
Memorial Service

North Hanger, DaNang Airfield
Republic of Vietnam

5 December 1971 1530 Hours

ORDER OF SERVICE

- * Presentation of Colors Color Guard
- * Hymn "Just As I Am, Without One Plea"
- * Invocation Chaplain Carl T. Hawkins
- Responsive Reading "The Christian Hope"
- * Hymn "The Strife is O'er, The Battle Done"
- Scripture Reading TSgt Raymond Gore
- Tribute Lt. Colonel William Harris
- * Hymn "The Air Force Hymn"
- * Benediction Chaplain Thomas P. Keane

* Please Stand

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MAJOR, ROBERT B SWENCK - Aircraft Commander - Killed in action 25 November 1971. Major Swenck was born on 18 March 1933 in Louisville, Kentucky. He attended Grade and High School at Okaiona School in Louisville. He was a graduate of Western Kentucky State College and was commissioned in 1956 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program. Major Swenck earned his pilot's wings in January of 1957. Major Swenck's decorations include the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with 1 OLC, the Airman's Medal, the Air Medal with 8 OLC, and the Air Force Commendation Medal. This was Major Swenck's second combat tour in Vietnam. He served in SEA previously, flying the Huey Gunship. He is survived by his wife Donna, and 3 daughters, who reside at 9509 Plumwood Road, Sainsville, Kentucky 40291.

CAPTAIN, JOHN W GEORGE - Copilot - Killed in action 25 November 1971. Captain George was born on 10 June 1945 in Dover, Tennessee. He attended Big Rock Elementary School in Big Rock, Tennessee and Stewart County High School in Dover. He was a graduate of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and was commissioned in 1967 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program. Captain George earned his pilot's wings in February 1969 and this was his first tour in SEA. He is survived by his parents, Mr and Mrs Ray George, his wife Elizabeth and a daughter, who reside at P.O. Box 66, Big Rock, Tennessee 37023.

A1C THOMAS D PROSE - Pararescueman - Missing in action since 25 November 1971. Airman Prose was born on 9 April 1951 in Springfield, Illinois. He graduated from Girard High School in Girard, Illinois and attended Lincoln Community College in Springfield. Airman Prose entered Basic Training at Lackland AFB in March 1970. His decorations include the Air Medal with 1 OLC. He is survived by his Father, Lawrence E Prose and five brothers, who reside at RR # 2 Girard, Illinois 62640 and his Mother, Mrs. Jacqueline L. Epley.

SSgt JAMES R THOMAS - Pararescueman - Missing in action since 25 November 1971. SSgt Thomas was born on 5 July 1943 in Marianna, Florida. He attended grade school and High School in Florida and entered Basic Training at Lackland AFB in August 1961. SSgt Thomas's decorations include the Air Medal with 1 OLC and the Air Force Commendation Medal with 2 OLC. His wife Julia and 2 daughters reside at 406 Sherry Circle N.W., Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

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What happened On That Day

On November 25, 1971 (Thanksgiving Day), while on a TDY assignment, he was on a rescue mission with five other crew members which successfully retrieved 13 soldiers whose helicopter had been shot down. The chopper, a HH-53C (Jolly Green 70), took ground fire during the rescue. The crew stopped at a forward base camp to make sure the chopper was safe to fly. The soldiers got off at that time. My dad and the crew of the Jolly Green 70 were offered Turkey sandwiches before their flight to their home base at Bien Hoa. They ate their sandwiches, inspected their chopper and headed home.

They encountered a heavy rain storm on the flight back, when the chopper took more fire and the pilot was hit. It began a slow, controlled descent and impacted in the Nha Be River. Once it hit the water it did a severe end over flip, and the chopper sank immediately. Three men, Capt. John W. George, Maj. Robert B. Swenck, and A1C Thomas D. Prose were killed immediately. There were two survivors, the flight engineer and a third Pararescueman. My father was never recovered. There was a fisherman who said that he saw three white skinned survivors; two were holding on to the tail of the plane and the other man was by the floating cockpit. He mentioned that one of the men was wearing a T-shirt. According to statements and records, my dad was the only one that day in a T-shirt when the chopper went down. The fisherman helped the third Pararescueman into his boat, then they went for the other men by the tail section. They were unable to locate anyone. As it turned out, the flight engineer had swam to shore and hid himself for about an hour until he heard the sweet sounds of a Huey Helicopter. You see, there were hostiles in the area and one side of the bank was friendly but the other was not. The search continued over the next five days to no avail, my dad has never been found. They tried to raise the wreckage once, but the cable broke and the chopper sank into an even deeper, rougher part of the river. They have never made a second attempt to my families knowledge.

Not Jim!

In Honor of Jim Thomas



Mrs. Julie Thomas wrote our Pararescue Association one day
Asking if any of us had information about her husband she could gather.

I had slides from my experiences far away
In a place called Vietnam where he was lost in a river's water.

I looked at my slides to see
And found one with the name tag of "James Thomas."

But I wasn't sure, for with my memory
After over twenty years it was a guess.

So I copied the slide,
And sent her the picture, along with another.

I had to confide
That I did not know if it was him, or some other.

But it matched.
She wrote back and told me that the person was her husband who had died.

But she couldn't have watched
My reaction to her letter--I cried!
For at last, over twenty years thereafter,
I had learned the fate of a beloved Pararescueman.

A man who had died in the service of others who matter
More to him than his own life but this wasn't his plan.

As I read the letter, I said,

"Not him, Not Jim!"

And shed some more tears as I laid
the letter down to compose my thoughts from that time.

Jim was a family man, jovial and merry,

The kind of guy who let others know

Just how much he could carry

With an attitude which always said, "Go!"

A big man, with a smile which shined,

A slap on the back,

Encouragement when he grinned,

Which was often, even when we were down and in the sack.

Jim Thomas was lost when his pilots were shot
and the helicopter headed for a gentle crash in a Vietnam river.

Some survived the crash, perhaps even Jim, but he was not
later recovered, and was lost forever.

For one river side was friendly,

The other

The enemy,

And for this he and his family had to suffer.

Jim was a Pararescueman,

One who had earlier that day

Distinguished himself along with his fellow crewmen
By rescuing fellow Americans from enemy fire in a extraordinary way.

They took many a hit,
But were successful with those they rescued.
The ride back to base was supposed to fit
A peaceful, relaxed journey, for they were tired.

But it wasn't to be,

And they were lost.

And now, so many years later I had a key
To some of Jim's life in the pictures from the past.

I enlarged those pictures and sent them on
Not knowing how they, or my letter would be received.

But the response after many a dawn
Was more than I could have conceived.

Kimberly, Jim's daughter wrote back,
Telling me that my photograph was the one
That had accompanied her when she too was on her back
Giving birth to her first child, Jim's third grandson.

She said in her way,

"It helped me tremendously
knowing that a little part of my Dad was there that day."

And again tears came to my eyes audaciously.

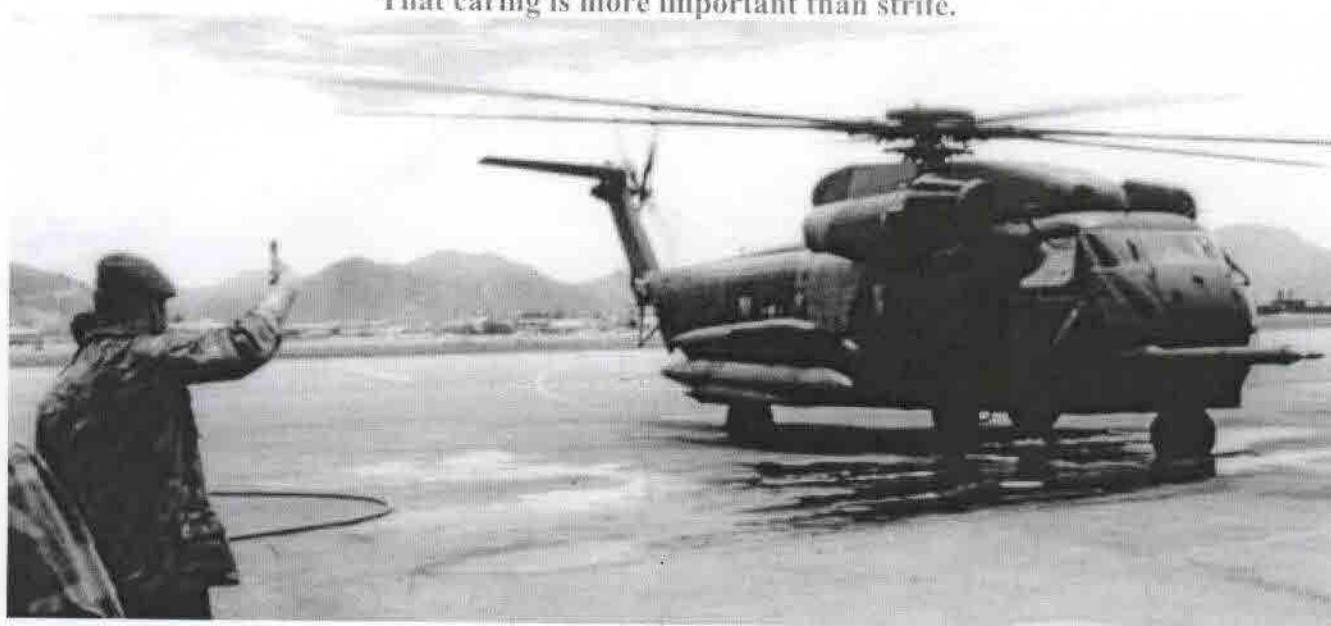
I had one other photograph,
Which only showed Jim's form from behind;

All that can be recognized of him, almost his autograph
Was his "Thumbs Up!" sign.



To all you out there seeking heroes,
Look no further than Jim Thomas.
Who like any of us "others"
Was a man we wish to be "as good as."
And look at his attitude's signature,
Observe the positive in life.

One other of Jim's traits should become your feature,
That caring is more important than strife.



John C. Ratliff

Bob -

THINGS MOVIN PRETTY FAST. SENT YOU E-MAIL
FEW DAYS AGO & JUST TALKED TO GENE NARDI &
JIM THOMAS'S DAUGHTER KIM.

GENE & I WERE HI BIRD DAY JIM CRASHED. WE'D
HAD A PICKUP EARLY & STOPPED AT AN ARMY BASE TO REFUEL.
WAS THANKSGIVING DAY & HAD TURKEY. ON WAY BACK TO
BIEN HOA, WEATHER WAS TERRIBLE, & WE WERE REALLY
MOVIN, LOW ALONG RIVER. LOST CONTACT & WE WERE BACK
AT SCENE WITHIN COUPLE OF MINUTES. I WAS READY TO JUMP
IN RIVER, WHEN GENE POLITELY (HA!) TOLD ME UNLESS I WANTED TO
LOSE MY PRIVATES LANDING ON WRECKAGE I'D BETTER USE THE
PENETRATOR! VISIBILITY WAS ZERO IN WATER & CURRENT WAS
VERY STRONG. UNABLE TO LOCATE WRECKAGE/SURVIVORS SO HOISTED
ME UP & PUT ME DOWN PENETRATOR ON SHORE. AGAIN COULDN'T
FIND ANYTHING. NARDI CONFIRMED THAT A FISHING BOAT HAD
PICKED UP STEED & TAKEN HIM TO SHORE. WE PICKED UP STEED
IN SMALL VILLAGE. NEITHER OF US REMEMBERS WHO GOT THE FE.
GEORGE SKIPPER CAME DOWN FROM DANANG & WE WENT OUT NEXT
DAY (MAYBE 2 DAYS) ON A NAYY BOAT & DOWE THE RIVER. AGAIN
CAME UP WITH NOTHING (EXCEPT I ALMOST GOT SUCKED INTO BOAT
PROP & LOST MY LEGS! BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY!). NEITHER GENE OR
I REMEMBER ANYONE FINDING WRECKAGE, HOOKING IT UP & THEN
HAVING CABLE BREAK (LOSING IT) A FEW DAYS LATER.

HOPES THIS STUFF HELPS. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!
KIM & GENE TOLD ME ABOUT A REUNION IN CANADA IN SEPT.
SURE IS GONNA BE GREAT TO SEE YOU GUYS!!!

Thanks
Charlie Alden

1/18/98

Pararescuemen Technical Sergeant James R. Thomas and Airman First Class Thomas D. Prose were lost, along with the pilots returning from a mission on 25 November 1971. Pararescueman Rich Steed and Flight Engineer Theriqux survived. The crew had rescued the crew of an army Chinook helicopter in the Delta, and were returning when their HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter was hit, the pilots killed, and it crashed in the Na Be River.

Jim Thomas' third grandson, James, was born in January of 1997 to Mrs. Kimberly Thomas-Bowles. Jim was survived by his wife, Julie and his two daughters, Kimberly and Lisa. Lisa was instrumental in helping Julie through some very rough times. Julie adopted another daughter in 1980 named Symphony, for whom Jim has always been "Daddy Jim." According to Lisa, "Symphony is only 18 so we won't let her have kids yet. Ha Ha." Lisa's two sons are CJ (Christopher James), age 4 currently, and Ryan, a 2 year old. These kids are "the lights of our lives, and I know, would be of Jim's." according to Julie.

The crews from the 37th ARRSq won the Presidential Unit Citation, Outstanding Unit Citation, and had over 613 "saves," or lives saved from its crews efforts. Jim Thomas had a number of those saves credited to him.

The motto of the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service is:

"These things we do, That Others May Live.

Webmaster, John C. Ratliff

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Revised 1/20/98

<http://www.sorcom.com/~searat/Jim.html>

contact searat@sorcom.com

POW/MIA



T/Sgt. James Richard Thomas was born on July 05, 1943 in Marianna, Florida to Buford James and Daisy Erline Thomas. As a young child, he was sent to live in the Florida Baptist Children's Home in Lakeland, Florida. He remained there until the age of 16 (the age when they "kick" the children out into the world). During his teen years, he was a reckless and even danger seeking child. One way he looked for thrills was by swinging from a rope in front of cars traveling on the road just barely missing them. His time in the Children's Home was something else entirely. Expected to wake long before dawn to walk a field to the place where the cows' were held for milking, the children were expected to get their daily chores done before the school bus picked them up.

In August 1961, at the age of 18 and fresh out of High School he joined the United States Air Force.

After basic training, he started his military career as a Reciprocating Engine Mechanic based at Hickam AFB, Hawaii for the 76th ARSq.

While stationed at Hickam, he made friends with several men in his squadron who were with an elite group known as **PARARESCUE**. He admired their look, their commitment to saving others and upon re-enlistment in 1965, he was accepted into Pararescue Training. Over the next 17 months, he would learn the following: The Pararescue/Combat Control Indoctrination Course (10 weeks), US Army Airborne Parachutist School (3 weeks), US Army Combat Divers School (4 weeks), US Navy Underwater Egress Training (1 day), US Air Force Basic Survival School (2 ½ weeks), US Army Military Free fall Parachutist School (5 weeks), Special Operations Combat Medic Course (22 weeks), Pararescue Recovery Specialist Course (20 weeks).

The day he graduated from PJ school was one of the happiest days of his life. He was so proud to wear the Maroon Beret which signifies the Pararescuemen, he walked around base with a big smile on his face.

He soon excelled in this field, and by 1968, he was an instructor at Eglin Air Force Base in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida.

He was also a prime team member on the NASA Apollo Launch Site Recovery Force for Apollo Missions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

In March 1971, he left his wife and two daughters for duty in Vietnam. He was assigned to the 37th ARRS out of Da Nang.

~Click the Bracelet to read what happened to MY DAD~

On November 25, 1971 (Thanksgiving Day), while on a TDY assignment, he was on a rescue mission with five other crew members which successfully retrieved 13 soldiers whose helicopter had been shot down. The chopper, a HH-53C (Jolly Green 70), took ground fire during the rescue. The crew stopped at a forward base camp to make sure the chopper was safe to fly. The soldiers got off at that time. My dad and the crew of the Jolly Green 70 were offered Turkey sandwiches before their flight to their home base at Bien Hoa. They ate their sandwiches, inspected their chopper and headed home.

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Pararescue has a code. It reads as follows:

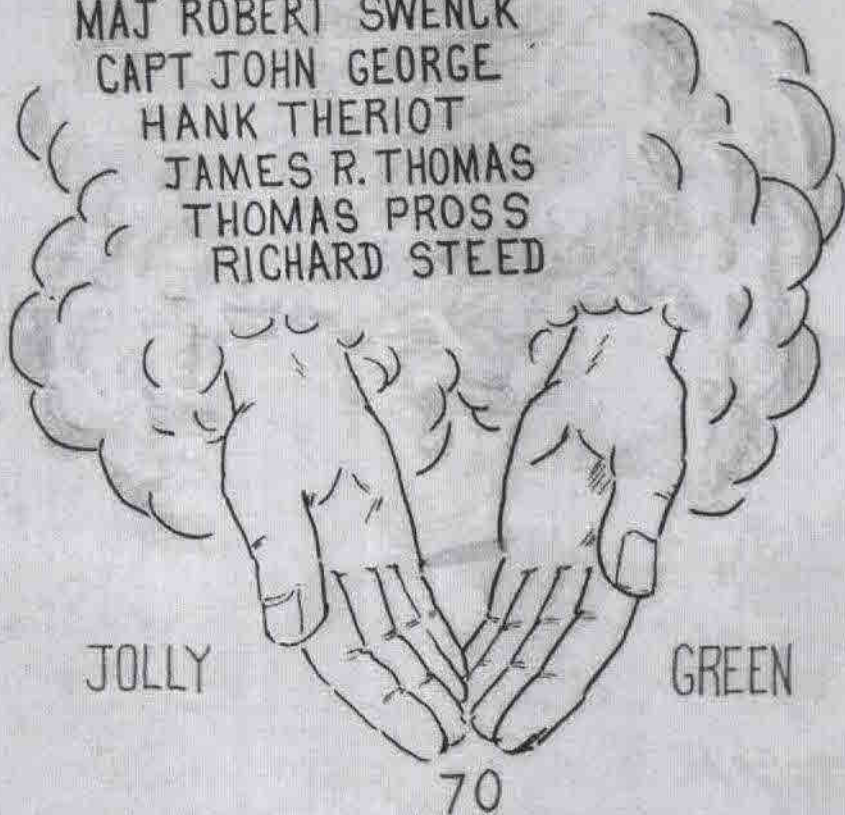
It is my duty as a Pararescueman to save a life and aid the injured. I will perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal desires and comforts. these things I do, "That Others May Live."

My father lived by this code and on that day he and the others on Jolly Green 70 gave all... "That Others May Live."

Main Page

15 NOV. 71

MAJ ROBERT SWENCK
CAPT JOHN GEORGE
HANK THERIOT
JAMES R. THOMAS
THOMAS PROSS
RICHARD STEED



NEVER
FORGOTTEN

AF Museum Photo

15Nov71.jpg



Findings From Our Recent Trip To Washington, DC

[Home](#)

[Another
Casualty
of
Vietnam-
Our
Mom](#)

[Findings
about
our
Dad](#)

[That
Others
May
Live-
Those
who
Gave
All \(my
first 9
adopted
heroes- all
pjs\)](#)

[My
10th
Adopted
Hero](#)

[Sign](#)

[Our
Guest
Book](#)

[View
Our
Guest
Book](#)

[Letters
To Dad](#)

On June 15th, 1998, my family made a trip to Washington, DC for the purpose of meeting with Casualty control, the DoD, JTF-FA, DPMO and other organization regarding my fathers case.

What we have learned, I want to share with you. Please write your Congressmen, Senators, Governors and anyone else you think may be able to help us!!! Time is running out on my dad's case. The following are quotes from different letters that we have received. However they are written VER BATUM and at your request, I will be more than happy to forward them to you for your own personal review.

This first letter, comes from the JTF-FA (Joint Task Force- Full Accounting).

Special note: Some time in July, the JTF-FA will be meeting to decide on some cases for possible re-evaluation. My dad's case is supposed to be brought up during this meeting. Please write the JTF-FA and let them know that you care and that they should at the very least investigate the possible grave site mentioned below.

The address for the JTF-FA is:

CDR JTF-FA

BOX 64044

CAMP HMSMITH, HAWAII 96861-4044

Narrative

"On 25 November, 1971, Staff Sergeant James R. Thomas was a crew member aboard a HH-53 Helicopter (serial number 68-10366) returning to base after completing its rescue mission. The aircraft encountered heavy rain showers and crashed in the son Nha Be in the vicinity of grid coordinates XS953730, approximately 9 kilometers south-southeast of Nha Be, Ho Chi Minh City Municipality. Two crew members survived the crash and were rescued. Rescue operations resulted in the recovery of the bodies of three other crew members. Staff Sergeant Thomas was not located. A vietnamese fisherman who participated in the rescue operations reported observing three Americans in the river, two of whom were rescued. The third american was reported to be wearing a Tee-shirt and was not accounted for. One of the survivors reported Staff Sergeant Thomas was wearing a Tee-shirt at the time of the crash".

This second correspondence, comes from the DoD (Department of

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[Kim's
Vietnam
Poetry](#)

[Family
Photo's](#)

[A
tribute
to Dad
by
John
Ratliff
\(retired
PJ\)](#)

[A
tribute
to Dad
by one
who
cares](#)

[Kim's
Tribute
to
Three
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Defense) dated July 3, 1997. I am writing this specifically for the intent of a narrative that was given to our government by a vietnamese fisherman. Please note the above ORIGINAL grid coordinates and the one listed in this narrative.

Narrative

"A source, (183-032, April 1983), reported that in May 1975 a body of an alleged US serviceman floated by his fishing position in the vicinity of XS950805. The source claimed he buried the body on the bank because it was bad luck for fishing if he had not done so. the source stated that he didn't think the body came from the helicopter wreck because it had floated downstream pas the wreckage. while the location near Nha Be is consistent with this case, the details of it floating downstream and the time frame do not match the details of this case".

Even though the years on this case do not match, if you disregard that, the coordinates are very close to where the helicopter my dad was in sank after an attempt to tow it UPSTREAM to a naval base out of Nha Be. Even the gentleman I spoke to who was a representative of the JTF-FA could not explain to my family why they deemed this non relevant to my father's case.

This last letter comes from Mr. James Wold, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (POW/MIA Affairs)

"Unfortunately, our analysis has identified some cases where all available evidence indicates there is no reasonable expectation that identifiable remains will ever be recovered. This is true in the case of Technical Sergeant James R. Thomas, United States Air Force, REFNO 1780".

"Given the circumstances of the loss and the fact that his remains were not recovered at the time, we have concluded that your husband's remains are not recoverable".

Not recoverable, that's what Mr. Wold thinks. Funny that they only tried to recover his body ONE time after the original loss before coming to this wonderful conclusion. How can we find the Titanic but loose my dad's chopper after the original attempt to raise the wreckage? I'm sure if my father were Mr. Wold's son, more effort would have taken place. More than one search conducted, not so quick to flush him down the proverbial governmental toilet!!!! Please write anyone you can think of. Let them know that my dad

email
me
below:



deserves better than to be casually written off due to the governments laziness in not wanting to spend more money on possible sightings and grave sites!!! Look at the letters above. On a map the body that the fisherman buried is indeed RELEVANT to my father's case. Please help me to make sure that our government investigates this report and this grave site!!! For if it is not my father, it is someone else's son, brother, husband, father.

Thank You!!!!



The
Rainbow
Ribbon

Telephone Laos. At 1231G, JG-70 landed and picked up everyone on board JG-67, along with LTC Morris, the survivor. At 1300G, the order was given for fast movers to destroy JG-67; at 1508G the SAR log reads "RUSTIC flight got a good hit on JG-67 - its burning - lots of green backs going up in flames."

hit by missile fired from MIG during SAR for SEABIRD 02 (F-105G). The Mig-21 was piloted by Vu Ngoc Dinh who then had 6 total kills. He was with the 921st Flight Regiment.

hit by ground fire during SAR for NAIL 44 (OV-10A), crash site excavated Dec 93, remains identified as a group 7 March 1995.

shot down while recovering drone.

2J SAR mission, crashed Song Na River

crashed from unknown causes

Destroyed on the ramp by a VC 122mm rocket.

SAR mission for BAT 21 (EB-66C), crash site excavated May 94, remains of crew buried in Nov. 1997.

Tail rotor lost, crashed into Tonle Sap

Down in Laos, no names for crew, SAR for JACKEL 22, F-111A crew downed on 22 Dec 72 (both crew captured and released). USAF loss listing reads "Aircraft unable to take on fuel, lost due to fuel starvation, aircraft destroyed by A-7." SAR log entries indicate refueling probe shot up, last entry reads "JG73 hit at 2049N10534E (In NVN), in a hover, down at 1957N10347E (NE of Ban Ban), destroyed by SANDY six.

19430			ARRS		07	Dargity	Libby	Futue			
66-14434	B	28 Jan 70	40th ARRS	NVN	Jolly Green 71	Holly G. Bell	Leonard C. Leeser	William C. Shinn	William D. Pruett	William C. Sutton	
68-8283	C	30 Jun 70	40th ARRS	Laos	Jolly Green 54	Leroy C. Schaneberg	John W. Goeglein	Marvin E. Bell	Paul L. Jenkins	Michael F. Dean	
68-8285	C	21 Jul 71	40th ARRS	Laos	Jolly Green 54	C. Bennet	B. Robben		Chuck McGrath		
68-10366	C	25 Nov 71	37th ARRS	SVN	Jolly Green 70	Robert B. Swenck	John W. George	H. Theriot	Thomas D. Prose	James R. Thomas	R.L. Steed (PJ)
68-10359	C	27 Mar 72	40th ARRS	Cambodia	Jolly Green 61	David E. Pannabecker	Richard E. Dreher	James Manor	Raymond J. Crow, Jr	Raymond A. Wagner	
68-10361	C	18 Aug 72	37th ARRS	SVN	Jolly Green	No Fatalities	No crew on board				
68-10365	C	6 Apr 72	37th ARRS	SVN	Jolly Green 67	Peter H. Chapman, II	John H. Call, III	Roy D. Prater	Allen J. Avery	William R. Pearson	James Alley (Photog)
68-10362	C	14 Jun 73	40th ARRS	Cambodia	Jolly Green 64	Gilbert A. Rovito	Francis E. Meador	David V. McLeod, Jr	Karl C. Morgan	Stephen L. Caldwell	
68-10788	C	27 Dec 72	40th ARRS	NVN	Jolly Green 73	Richard D. Shapiro	Miguel A. Pereira	Charles J. Rouhier	Robert W. Jones	John R. Carlson	