

17Dec71

Gunfighter 82A/B

18 Dec 1971

(tape courtesy of Robert "Black Bart" Bartunek, Sandy pilot)

Gunfighter 82 was an F-4E crew assigned to the 366th TFW at DaNang AB, RVN. On the night of 17 December 1971, Gunfighter 82 was downed by a SAM near Mu Gia Pass about 65 nm east of Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Mu Gia Pass was a notoriously bad place situated along the Ho Chi Mihn trail. One week earlier, the crew of Ashcan 02, an F-105 Wild Weasel was downed and rescued in the same general vicinity.

Both 7th Air Force News and Pacific Stars and Stripes ran [stories of the rescue](#).

Gunfighter 82A was Lt Col Arthur Blissett

Gunfighter 82B was Lt Michael Murray

There were two HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters from the 40th ARRS out of NKP Thailand, with Jolly Green 30 performing the actual pickup:

Jolly Green 30 was crewed by Maj. Clyde E. Bennett, aircraft commander; Maj Donald L. Roston, pilot; A1C William T. Lyles, flight engineer; and pararescuemen MSgt Daniel L. Schmidt, SSgt William E. Brown and Sgt Dennis E. Williamson.

Four Sandy's were involved in the pickup of Gunfighter 82. Sandy 01 and 02 were working the survivor and Sandy 03 and 04 initially remained with the HH-53s west of the survivors location.

Sandy 01 was Capt Roger Youngblood

Sandy 02 was Capt Ron Smith

Sandy 03 was

Sandy 04 was

Nail 07 was on scene and assisted in putting in air strikes to suppress enemy activity.

Nail 07 was ??

Participant's Accounts

- Sandy 01 - **Capt. Roger Youngblood**
- Gunfighter 82A - **Lt Col. Art Blissett**
- Jolly Green 30 Aircraft Commander - [Maj Clyde Bennett](#) - **Text and photos**
- Jolly Green 30 Lead PJ - **SSgt. William E. Brown**

The tape is presented here in its entirety. It runs 24 minutes and 25 seconds and is in RealAudio format. You will need RealAudio on your computer system in order to access the tape.

The tape begins with Sandy 01 about to commit the SAR force to the pick-up of Gunfighter 82A. Up until this time, there was only one objective, the pilot (A) of Gunfighter 82. Gunfighter 82B (the WSO), was not in contact with the SAR pickup force up until this point in time. As Sandy 01 briefed the rescue forces on the forthcoming pick-up attempt, Gunfighter 82B suddenly came up on his survival radio. This forced a short "fall back and regroup" delay while Sandy 01 located the back seater (Bravo).

Soon all is sorted out and both survivors were ready for pick-up. The tape ends as Jolly 30 with both survivors on board exited the area to the northwest.

Clyde Bennett's Recollection of the Gunfighter 82 SAR

As I recall, we were alerted sometime after midnight. The Fast FACs and King had been talking to 82 Alpha and Bravo, but then Bravo went off the air.

The Sandys and Jollys launched at first light for the pickup attempt. We started in to get Alpha and when we were just about there, Bravo came up [on the radio] again. We backed off while Sandy low pinpointed Bravo, and since we knew where Blissett [Alpha] was and Bravo was on more danger, the decision was made to get Bravo first. He got [his] smoke popped and we got him and then proceeded up the hill to get Alpha. His tree [personnel] lowering device would not work so we decided to hook a metal snap ring [caribeener] into his harness so when he cut loose from his chute, we

[would] have him secured. After [the PJ, SSgt] Brown got to him, some of the tree blew down and kind of entangled them in the shroud lines.

If you look at photo #3, it appears that Brown's right knee and left leg are higher than his head. As I recall he said that he was afraid that the lines across his legs might do some damage and I think he said he had his knife out and all he had to do was touch the lines and they would snap.

We finally got Alpha and the PJ on board and we got out of there, and RTBed to NKP.



Blissett in trees as we come over him. PJ's helmet in lower right corner on the way down.



PJ, SSgt. William Brown on the way down to Gunfighter 82A



Brown entangled in shroud lines. Off to the left of his helmet (toward chute) you can make out his right knee bent and sticking up through the lines. His right leg and foot are further out to left. Back of Blissett's neck (shaped like 1/4 moon) can be seen just to the right of Brown's helmet.



**Sandy 01, Roger Youngblood sips the fruits of his labors following the
Gunfighter 82 SAR**



(L to R) Rick Atcheson, Roger Youngblood, Glenn Priebe, and Rocky Smith



This poster along with a case of champagne (Corbel?) was left at Ops for the Jolly Greens



**A joyous throng greets Art Blissett after his rescue from Mu Gia Pass
(Blissett has his head down and his hand on Clyde Bennett's shoulder)
(The guy with the blue Hobo cap on just to the left of the hoist hook is 1Lt Byron Hukee)**

(Audio file is in mp3 format)

[Play Gunfighter 82 SAR tape](#)

***"I thought I,d be
left there
because my radio
was getting
weak"***

Pacific Stars and Stripes

Monday Dec. 20, 1971

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON. A U.S. Air Force pilot dangled from a 70-foot-high tree in Laos for nine hours after he and his copilot parachuted from an F4 Phantom hit by a surface-to-air missile late Friday night, 7th Air Force spokesmen said Saturday.

Low cloud cover prevented rescue aircraft from reaching the men until Saturday morning when helicopter crewmen followed a fading radio signal to the copilot and plucked the pilot out of the tree a mile away, spokesmen said.

North Vietnamese soldiers fired another SAM at the rescue aircraft and rescuers reported small arms fire in the area, but there was no damage to the aircraft, spokesmen said.

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett, and copilot, 1st Lt. Michael H. Murray, were reported in excellent condition Saturday afternoon.

The men landed in heavily forested hills five miles west of the North Vietnamese-Laotian border after parachuting from the stricken F-4, spokesmen said.

They were escorting an Air Force RF-4 reconnaissance plane near North Vietnam's Mu Gia pass when the Soviet-made SAM ripped into the fighter-bomber, according to spokesmen.

Blissett's parachute lines tangled in a tree, leaving him suspended 70 feet off the ground, and Murray landed on the ground a mile away, spokesmen said. An HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter crew from Thailand picked up Murray's faint radio signal and pinpointed his position about 8 a.m. Saturday.

"I thought I'd be left there because my radio was getting weak," Murray said after being picked up.

Minutes later the chopper hovered above Blissett and lowered a crewman who helped hoist the pilot into the helicopter. "I believe we lifted half that tree up with us," Blissett said.

The F-4 Phantom was the second U.S. warplane downed by a SAM over Laos in a week, spokesmen said.

An Air Force F-105 fighter bomber was hit by a SAM over Laos Dec. 10, and rescuers recovered only one of the two crewmen.



Lt Murray receives medical treatment aboard the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant following his rescue from the Laotian jungle.

The two fighter-bombers are the only U.S. planes that have been shot down by SAMs over Laos, according to 7th Air Force spokesmen.

Blissett and Murray are members of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing in DaNang.

Seventh Air Force News

(undated)

40th ARRS Picks up pair of downed pilots

TAN SON NHUT Two Air Force aircrew members were returned from the jungles of Laos recently by American rescue forces after their aircraft was hit by a surface to air missile (SAM).

They were flying a F-4 Phantom from the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, DaNang Afl., on a reconnaissance escort mission over North Vietnam Dec. 17, when struck by the missile. They went down about five miles west of Mu Gia Pass in Laos.

The pilot, Lt. Col. Arthur S. Blissett, and the back seater, 1st Lt. Michael H. Murray, successfully ejected from the stricken aircraft and landed in dense mountainous jungle terrain. Voice contact was established almost immediately with the downed aircrew by forward air controllers operating in the area and an HC-130 Kingbird maintained the contact throughout the night. The rescue force planned to launch for the pick-up at first light.

Colonel Blissett and Lieutenant Murray both reported that they were uninjured.

To insure their safety during the night., U.S. fighter aircraft conducted bombing and strafing strikes on the area surrounding the men who had landed about 3,500 feet apart. Colonel Blissett landed in the tree tops and spent the night there rather than risk a drop of some 70 feet to the ground.

In the morning an A-1 Sandy aircraft spotted both parachutes and directed an HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter to the area. After spotting Colonel Blissett safely tied to his tree top, the Super Jolly of the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron went to look for Lieutenant Murray.



Lt Michael Murray pauses to reflect on his recent ordeal and on his rescue from the Mu Gia Pass area.

**"I think we
brought half that
tree up with us"**

Radio contact with the lieutenant indicated that the chopper was right above him but they could not see him. Asked, "Where have you been" by one of the Jolly Green crew, Lieutenant Murray replied, "I,ve been right here all night." He was then lifted to safety.

Getting Colonel Blissett from atop the jungle canopy proved to be a bit more difficult. A pararescueman was lowered on the jungle penetrator and assisted him in cutting parachute lines that he had used in tying himself to the tree. After hacking through the lines and the heavy foliage to which the colonel had attached himself, the pair was hoisted from their tree top perch.

"I think we brought half that tree up with us" was Colonel Blissett,s remark following the successful rescue.

Members of the crew of the HH-53 making the rescue were: Maj. Clyde E. Bennett, aircraft commander; Maj Donald L. Roston, pilot; A1C William T. Lyles, flight engineer; and pararescuemen MSgt Daniel L. Schmidt, SSgt William E. Brown and Sgt Dennis E. Williamson.
