

V. (S) NARRATIVE:

(S) The month of November marked the end of the combat operations for one of the oldest units in Southeast Asia, The 1st Special Operations Squadron, and the last combat strikes by U.S.A.F. A-1's. The 1st SOS and the A-1's have earned a chapter in Air Force history for their search and rescue operations in Southeast Asia. In November all the A-1's were turned over to the South Vietnamese Air Force and all squadron personnel were reassigned.

(C) On 7 November Capt. Screws and Maj. Ohr (Sandy 07/08) successfully completed the last SAR for the 1st SOS. Coachman 159, an Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors, was downed the evening before by an unknown cause on the Song Tra Khuc River approximately 15 miles west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. A typhoon was forecast to hit the coast of South Vietnam around 1800 with winds as high as 140 knots. The weather had prevented King and several Army helicopters from spotting the exact location of the survivors. The Sandys launched knowing any delay would cause the SAR force to be grounded by the typhoon, leaving the survivors in enemy territory. The first two attempts to reach the survivors by the Sandys were thwarted by heavy rain, severe turbulence, and low clouds. Capt. Screws, Sandy 07, was able to reach the survivors' location on his third attempt by flying at dangerously

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(S) The last SAR involving the SANDYS occurred on 7 November.

An Army Huey helicopter with seven survivors was downed approximately 15 miles west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. With time of the essence, the SANDYS were launched, despite the forecast of a severe typhoon. Because of the heavy rain, turbulence and low clouds, the A-1 crews were forced to fly at dangerously low altitudes (200 ft or less) in order to locate the survivors. Once their exact location had been determined, the SANDYS protected the departing rescue helicopters by effectively silencing the small arms fire that was harassing this bold rescue.

(S) During this final five month period of 1972, only one major accident occurred. 1Lt Lance Smith successfully ejected and was rescued over Northern Laos. He sustained only minor injuries.

(S) The loss of this aircraft reduced the assigned A-1 inventory from 20 to 19. The officer strength decreased from a high of 31 in July to 25 in November. On seven separate occasions the A-1s received extensive battle damage. However, as a tribute to the outstanding professionalism of the men of the 1st SOS, no pilots or additional aircraft were lost to the enemy during this final period.

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low altitudes and sheer determination. The Jollys were scrambled from Quang Ngai, They had landed there to refuel. During the ingress, the clouds forced Sandy 08 and the Jollys to fly up the river at less than 100 ft., but the Jollys were able to reach the area and pick up the seven survivors. During the egress the Jollys came under small arms fire, but one low pass by Sandy 08 silenced the ground fire. The last SAR for the 1st SOS exemplified the resourcefulness and courage displayed by the Sandy aircrews in their efforts to recover downed airmen. During the first four days of November, the Hobos continued to strike enemy positions in the Barrel. The last Hobo flight was typical of the type air support the 1st SOS, flying the A-1, has provided throughout the war in SEA. Capt. Kramer and Capt. Caughlin struck a TPC late in the afternoon of the fourth. When the Hobos departed the target area, they had left five sustained fires and the Raven had observed seven secondary explosions.

(S) On November 3rd the first group of four A-1s, was turned over to the VNAF at Bien Hoa. The following day four more A-1's were flown to Bein Hoa to strengthen the Vietnamese Air Force. The last remaining A-1's at NKP, five E models, were flown out on the 5th. The 1st SOS was left with six A-1N's on Sandy alert at Da Nang, until the 7th when they were turned over to the VNAF at Bien Hoa.

On the 9th, 7th Air Force decided that six A-1's were needed for Sandy Alert at Da Nang; Six pilots left for Bein Hoa to pick up the aircraft on hand receipts from the VNAF. By the 11th the six A-1's were on alert at Da Nang. On the 15th the aircraft were returned to the VNAF, and the Air Force's A-1 inventory was zero.

(U) As the squadron closed down, the aircrews were reassigned throughout the USA and PACAF. Returning to the USA are: Lt Col. William Latham, Bnt AFB; Maj. Danny Roberson, Laredo AFB; Capt. Gene Bardal, Reese AFB; Capt. Don Screws, Lt Mike Cahill, and Lt Tim Brady, England AFB; Lt Bob Carlsen, Shephard AFB; Capt. Dave Finch and Capt. Don Caughlin have not received their assignments; Remaining in PACAF are: Maj. Ed Rider, Maj. Sam Westbrook, Maj. Doer Kari, and Maj. Ken Ohr, Korat RTAFB; Capt. Bob Simica, Capt. Robert Plant, and Lt William Gilbert, Osan AB; Capt. Jim Barden and Capt. Gary Koldyke, Udorn RTAFB; Maj. Jim Rutledge, Capt. Jim Elliott, Capt. Willie Kramer, Capt. T. Q. McCammon, and Capt. Gerry Homewood (arrived at NKP on 31 October), Clark AFB; and Capt. Ron Boatwright, Tan Son Nhut.

(U) The outstanding job the 1st Special Operations Squadron has done in SEA can best be expressed by the countless number of downed aircrews who have been saved from the POW/MIA list. Col. Norbert Simon, Commander of the 56th Special Operations Wing, summed up many peoples feelings in a letter to the 1st SOS when he said "It

SURVIVOR
NAME, RANK,
SSAN & UNIT

DATE	CREW	SAVE	JG	LOCATION	TYPE SAVE
27 NOV	BRUNSE	878	71	UNKNOWN	7 COMBAT
7	HOOK	↓		mickey wilson CW02 XXXXXXXXXX	
	VICTOR	888/4		G2 AVN CO 11 CAC	
	WILSON			Bert Schriebsman CW02 XXXXXXXXXX	
	RICHARDSON			G2 AVN CO 11 CAC	
	SUMNERFIELD			William Stephenson SP5 XXXXXXXXXX	
				TODDY AGUIRRE SP5 XXXXXXXXXX	
				LTJG) Culhane Edward USNA	
				1st Ang/Co	
				1LT (USMC)	
				MEYERS, Francis	
				CPT McCHOE	
				1st Ranger Group	
23 NOV	LATHAM	886	PEDRO	SUNDRON,	1 COMBAT
	MOULTON		61	JOHNSON 1LT	
	PARCHMENT			XXXXXXXXXX	
	GASKINS			23 TASS	
	MCCOY				

Robert LaPointe

From: Bert Schreiberstein [bertrand.schreiberstein@verizon.net]
Sent: Wednesday, December 19, 2001 6:33 PM
To: Donald Screws; roush@servtech.com
Cc: Shotwell, Lance; rlpointe@gci.net
Subject: A Thank You, 29 Years Late



four.jpg



one.jpg



three.jpg



two.jpg



6 Nov 1972.doc

Don,

November 6, 1972 started out uneventfully. Our four member UH-1 crew (first pilot, aircraft commander, door gunner and crew chief) woke up after remaining overnight at Chu Lai. We picked up three passengers at the 1st ARVN Division HQ in Quang Ngai; a Navy LT (jg), a Marine 1LT (ANGLICO) and an US Army Ranger Advisor. Then proceeding to our area of assignment for a naval gunfire mission in a valley running north-south 5 kilometers inland from Quang Ngai. Unknowingly and without any warning of an oncoming typhoon, we spent the morning and afternoon orbiting the valley directing 5" naval gunfire at suspected enemy facilities and troop concentrations. When the typhoon arrived, we were blocked by the bad weather and not able to return to Quang Ngai. Trying to circle the bad weather was not possible and the Navy ship off-shore could not pick us up on radar. As darkness approached, we were able to find a safe landing area along a river bank. After landing our helicopter (Army Helicopter Tail# 69-15159, Call Sign: Coachman 159), we managed to move inland before the monsoon rains came. During the hours of darkness, we were probed by enemy small arms fire (AK-47). It was after the encounter with the NVA, that an Army fixed wing flying from Saigon to Danang heard our distress signal on his Guard frequency. During the night we heard the drone of a C-130 trying to find our position on the ground. It wasn't until later that next morning November 7, long before dawn, that we were able to make contact with you, Call Sign: SANDY 08. I remember how you were able to locate our position by having us send one beep when you were left of our position and two beeps if you were to the right. You cannot imagine how happy we were when you finally dipped below the clouds and we could see your A-1 Skyraider. You were then able to direct two Jolly Green Giant USAF helicopters from the 37th ARRS to a successful pick-up. I assure you, your calmness, professionalism and dogged determination that day to locate and secure our rescue, worked wonders to relieve the fears of 7 very wet and very scared survivors.

You have no idea how satisfying it is for me, after 29 years, to finally thank you for saving my life. Because of your actions that day (which to you may have been just another rescue mission), I survived to marry my sweetheart (married now nearly 28 years), have a daughter that is now 21 years old and continue to serve in the Army until 1992. Don, there are significant images that have stayed with me through out the years; the green nylon parachute opening on my first airborne jump, my wife's eyes when I said "I do", the first time I saw my daughter after her birth, and the A-1 Skyraider that saved my life.

Thank you Don Screws.

Bert Schreiberstein, LTC US Army Retired
12506 Rock Chapel Court
Herndon, VA 20170

>>>
>>>Ron
>>>I was one of the Army crew members saved by an HH-53c on 7 Nov 72.
>>>
>>>I noticed that your web page
>>>www.jollygreen.org/research/ronthurlow/NotableH53s.htm, lists the
>>>following information:
>>>HH-53 -- 68-5784 -- US Army x 7 saves -- 7 Nov 72 -- Bruner 'JG71"
>>>crash or grnd team -- Unk
>>>
>>>If you would like a detailed account of the events leading to the
>> loss
>>>of the Army Helicopter and the successful rescue of the 7 survivors,
>> I
>>>can provide more information than you could ever dream of.
>>>
>>>I would like to get in touch with "Houk" and the other crew members
>> of
>>>JG71; Bruner, Victor, Wilson, Richardson, and Summerfield, and offer
>> my
>>>29 years too late thank you.
>>>
>>>I have declassified documents regarding this rescue, handwritten
>> journal
>>>entries, names of survivors, Army aircraft tailnumber, name of the
>> A-1
>>>Skyraider pilot that found and directed the Jolly Greens into the
>>>pick-up site., etc.
>>>
>>>Regards,
>>>
>>>Bert Schreiberstein, LTC US Army Ret.
>>>12506 Rock Chapel Court
>>>Herndon, VA 20170
>>>
>>>phone:703-430-8943
>>>

On November 6, 1972 we were given the mission of flying two naval gunfire officers so they could call in 5 inch rounds from a Navy Destroyer just off the coast to our east. The targets were houses in a village that was allegedly built the night before in a valley to the south west of Quang Nhai. At the end of 1972, every one thought that the war would be coming to an end very shortly. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, had been shuttling between Hanoi and Geneva. I was even told by some of the pilots upon my arrival in Da Nang that it would be a waste of time to unpack as we all would be going home soon. Each night the NVA, who were to the west of the main highway, QL1, would rush to the hill tops and place NVA flags on the tree tops, and would force villages to build fake villages. The theory was that when the cease-fire took place, the flags and villages under the control of the NVA would be the cease-fire lines. Needless to say, the ARVN would then go out in the day-time and remove the flags, replacing them with RVN flags and it was the mission of the Naval gunfire teams to destroy the villages.

On this mission, CW2 Mickey Wilson was the Aircraft Commander of the helicopter mission. He was only a Warrant Officer and I was a Captain but he had been in country longer and had many more hours of flying time than I had.

On the afternoon of 6 November 1972 (coincidentally election day in the States) our helicopter mission was simple: Use naval guns to destroy the huts and suspected enemy positions that had sprung up in the valley southwest of Quang Ngai. We refueled at Chu Lai. As we were flying up and down the valley looking for targets, a typhoon, unknown to us, was brewing off the coast and fast approaching our area. With limited numbers of U.S. troops in Vietnam at the end of 1972, there were no air weather warning stations in our area either.

We spent most of the afternoon flying up and down the valley looking for targets. On board our UH-1D helicopter designated ARMY 159, was the four man crew of CWO Mickey Wilson (pilot SSN 459-82-5796), myself - CPT Bertrand Schreiberstein (co-pilot, SSN 452-76-7426), SP5 William Stephenson (door gunner, SSN 555-80-3740), SP5 Tobias Aguirre (crew-chief, SSN 585-40-0907) and the three passengers -- CPT McCabe a MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) Ranger, 1LT Francis Meyers, a Marine Naval Gunfire Observer and LT (jg) Edward Culhane, his replacement, a Navy Naval Gunfire Observer (ANGLICO).

When we finally called it a day, we turned to fly north in the valley only to see that the clouds from the typhoon had blocked our exit. We then climbed in altitude in order to fly over the clouds back to Quang Ngai and then to Chu Lai. Unfortunately, the clouds were over 30,000 feet high. We were already thinking about flying to the Destroyer and ditching the helicopter if necessary in the ocean. We had only 30-40 minutes of fuel left, so we called the Destroyer and asked if they could pick us up on their radar. They couldn't. The weather got nastier. Now we really were in a bind. Flying now at 8,000 feet and in midst of clouds, we couldn't lose altitude without fear of striking a mountain or hilltop. On top of all this, it was freezing at 8,000 feet and except for the door gunner who had a flight jacket, the crew were wearing only a thin Nomex flight uniform.

We decided to descend in a slow spiral, hoping to see the hills in enough time to soften the crash. We descended for over what felt like an hour, but was probably only fifteen minutes. The door gunner got on the intercom and said that he saw a hole in the clouds and a clearing below. I remembered from my psychology training at the Safety Officers Course, that pilots sometimes see what they want to see and not what is really present. We asked him to make sure he wasn't imagining the hole in the cloud. We couldn't see out of any of our windows because of condensation and the thick clouds. The door gunner had the side door open and could see better than Mickey or I. We proceeded through the hole and at the last moment turned on the landing light. All I could see was white. I thought we were in a middle of a cloud. What I really saw was the sand of a sandbar along side a river. What river and where we were were unknown.

We landed on the sandbar. One thing was for sure, we were west of the valley. This meant that we were somewhere in the middle of territory undisputedly controlled by the NVA. We tried to contact our base at Quang Ngai by radio but we were too far a way. We figured that the best thing to do was shut down the helicopter and get away from it, just in case our landing was heard by troops in the area. We removed the two machine guns, I "zero'd" the communications encryption box, and we proceeded in the dark away from the river about 100 meters. It was there that we discovered that we had left behind one of the machine guns. We didn't go back. I was carrying an M-72 grenade launcher and had about 40 rounds, with the exception of the one machine-gun the other people had M-16s. We layed down on the ground in a circle with our feet touching and weapons pointing outward. Both Mickey and I had aircraft survival radios. We tried repeatedly to contact someone on the emergency frequency but apparently without success. It started to rain. It was around 9 o'clock in the evening when we first heard what sounded like a motor boat. Then the sound stopped as it approached our vicinity. We heard some people speaking Vietnamese, then without warning, they sprayed the area with AK-47 fire. The AK-47 was the Soviet or CHICOM weapon of choice of the Viet Cong and the NVA. This firing continued for a few minutes. The NVA were conducting reconnaissance by fire. This meant they didn't know where we were, but were hoping that if they fired in our direction we would return the fire and give away our position and strength. We did not return the fire. The firing stopped but the rain didn't. We continued to call on our survival radios with no success. Since we were not sure if the enemy was still in the area we tried to be real quite. The door gunners, SP5 Aguirre, was lucky, he brought a fatigue jacket which repelled some of the rain. I didn't have a rain parka or poncho. I'm not sure if it was getting colder or if I was scared, but I was beginning to shiver. The door gunner shared a part of his jacket with me. During the night I couldn't sleep, but the door gunner tried. Unfortunately, he snored. So every time he snored, I'd poke him in the ribs with my elbow.

During the evening, we finally were contacted by someone in an aircraft flying between Saigon and Da Nang. He was able to hear our beeper signal but not our voice transmissions. Our radio batteries were getting weak. He asked us a series of questions and we replied with one beep for yes, and two for no. He got the message that we had come under fire and that no one was injured, as yet. He said that he'd get some help. I wondered how, since he had no idea where we were. During the night I could hear large

fixed wing aircraft overhead. I later found out that these were the "Kingfisher" US Air Force planes based out of Thailand that used direction finding radios to pinpoint pilot downed over North Vietnam. In the early morning before daybreak, we thought we heard helicopters and the sound of 51 cal. machine-gun fire. A friend later told me that the Air Force planes had pinpointed our position within a 10-kilometer square area and some of our 11 CAG unit helicopters and gunships were trying to scout the area. Only to come under heavy 51 caliber machine-gun fire as they got closer to our position. By the time morning came, Mickey and I decided that we should try to get back to the helicopter. We figured that if we could get it started we had enough fuel to get to the coast, which was under RVN control. We were also aware that the helicopter could be the bait for an ambush or that it could be booby-trapped. We crawled on our stomachs toward the sandbar. I mentioned that it rained all night. When we got to the vicinity of where we thought the helicopter should be, all we saw was a raging torrent of water coming down the river. It was the same river that when we landed was just a brook with sandbars. The monsoon rains had changed all that. We looked at each other and realized that the \$250,000 helicopter had washed away during the night.

When we got back to the other passengers, and figured that escape by helicopter was no longer an option, we decided to move further inland. In the jungle, the foliage is always denser near rivers, so by moving inland we could move faster. It was going to be slower than using a helicopter, but our only hope for survival was to escape and evade (E&E) downstream along the river. As we moved inland and it got lighter, the clouds started to rise and we could see that we were next to a large open field.

The sound of the small fixed wing aircraft was a good sign. We could hear the plane (A-1E) but couldn't see it. We could now hear the pilot but again would only talk to him by beeping for yes or no. He told us not to move or to fire on any targets. This was confusing. Why shouldn't we fire on any target? Across the large field we saw movement. Was it enemy or friendly forces? The small plane tried to get closer to our position, by asking if he was left or right of us. After about an hour, he dropped down below the clouds that were still hugging the terrain, and we attempted to signal him with the pencil flares that were part of our survival equipment. He saw us when we fired our last remaining flare. Again he told us not to fire on any targets because if he saw any firing he would drop/fire some of his ordnance on any flashes he saw.

About fifteen minutes later we saw some observation helicopters accompanied by Cobra gunships swoop over the field and fire on targets in the tree line on the other side of the field. They kept that up for a while. Then they moved off the field and in flew two huge Jolly Green Giant Air Force Helicopters. I didn't know why we needed two helicopters, one was enough to pick-up the seven people on the ground. I later found out that the Air Force sent in two helicopters because they wanted to ensure the mission was successful. They thought that one was going to get shot down. The two giant helicopters landed in the open field. We ran to the aircraft through the gale force wind of the rotor wash. It was then that I saw that SP5 Stephenson was still wearing his "chicken plate" armor. The rotor wash was so strong it tore off Stephenson's heavy armor chicken plate vest and it blew away in the wind. He did not recover it. We hastily got on board the helicopters and

were flown down the river at speeds that threw us off balance with the centrifugal force of each turn. We landed at the abandoned airfield at Quang Ngai. It seemed that every one was there when we got off the helicopters. The medics gave us a once over. No one was injured. The most uncomfortable condition was that we were water-logged. Our skin was so wrinkled by being half submerged in water for nearly 15 hours that just brushing my hands against something took off clumps of skin.

It wasn't a joke when we told the Aviation Group Commander that we had no idea where the helicopter was. The loss of the helicopter and weapons were investigated as standard procedure (depending on the results of the investigation, either Mickey or I or both would have to pay for the loss or not. The investigation had to be conducted so the Army could eventually order a new, complete helicopter. The Aviation Company Commander, Major Ollie Craddock, told me that we were very lucky. It seemed that we had been located by two elements of an NVA Regiment working in the area and by morning we were about an hour away from being captured. A few days later, all the survivors were awarded Vietnamese medal for bravery. I later had a rain parka made from a camouflaged poncho and poncho liner, which I always took with me when I flew. To the best of my recollection the position of the helicopter was north west of Quang Ngai, coordinates BS345610, Army Helicopter tail # 159, callsign Coachman 159. All crew members were awarded Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry by the Vietnamese Major General in command of the Division we were supporting.

Footnote: On January 8, 1973, after completion of a Report of Survey investigation, I was told that Mickey Wilson was not being held liable for the loss of the helicopter that washed down the river. Mickey never learned of the decision, as on that same day his helicopter were shot down by an SA-7 heat-seeking missile, just north of the Qua Viet river, near Quang Tri. He was listed as missing in action for years, but later changed to "missing presumed dead". His name and the names of all on his helicopter are etched on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC.

Robert LaPointe

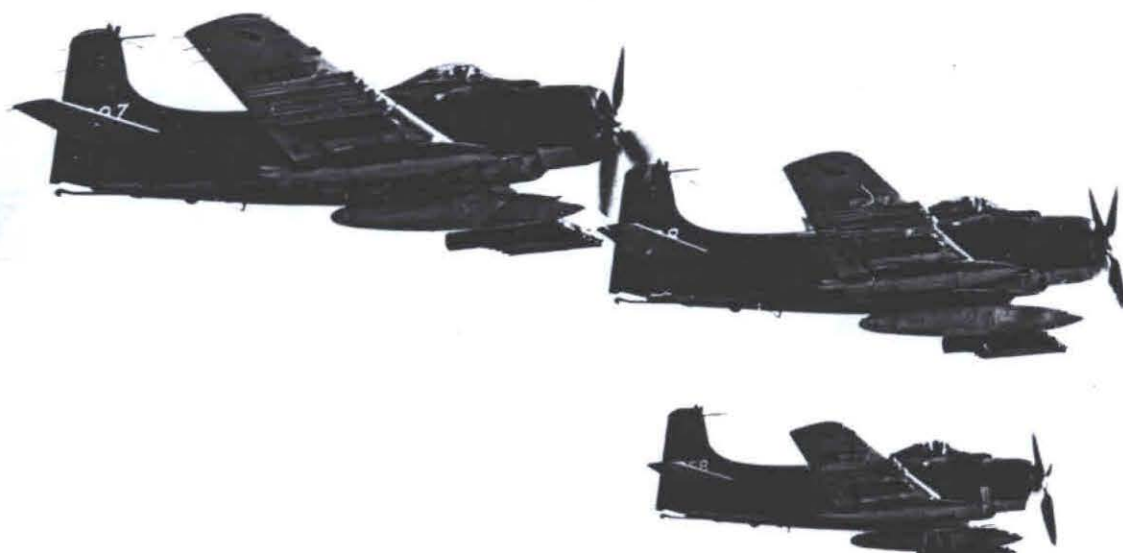
From: BertJS@aol.com
Sent: Sunday, November 25, 2001 6:09 PM
To: rlapointe@gci.net
Subject: Rescue of Army Aviators 6-7 Nov 72

On the afternoon of November 6, 1972 while assigned to the 62nd Cbt Avn Company (Royal Coachmen) I was a co-pilot of a UH-1D supporting the 2nd ARVN Division in Quang Ngai Province (I Corps). On that day, my helicopter (Army 159) with its 4-man crew, an Army Advisor (CPT), a Naval officer and a Marine Corp ANGLICO were directing naval gunfire on suspected enemy positions when we were forced down because of bad weather and low fuel. After landing the aircraft on a river sand-bar, we exited the aircraft and set up a defensive perimeter about 100 yards from the river. During the night, we came under fire from NVA units. We attempted contact using our survival radios and were later told that "Kingfisher" out of Thailand attempted to DF our position with out success. As the morning came, we were spotted by an A-1E aircraft and two Jolly Green Giants swooped in for our rescue.

I would like to know if documents exist of that rescue and the names of the crew on both rescue helicopter. I have always assumed that the Jolly Green Giants came from Da Nang AFB, and assume that the rescue was accomplished by the 37th ARRS. Perhaps one of its last rescue before being deactivated.

Any help you can provide would be welcomed.

Bert Schreiberstein
US Army, Lieutenant Colonel (retired)
Herndon, VA



15 NOVEMBER 1972

THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN TODAY AS THE LAST SIX A1E SANDIES IN THE AIR FORCE FLEW OUT OF DANANG AFLD ON THEIR LAST FLIGHT. IT BRINGS TO AN END THE LAST FIVE YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE BY THESE VENERABLE AIRCRAFT AS ESCORT AND CONTROL BIRDS ON SARS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE JOB OF ESCORTING THE HH-53 SUPER JOLLY GREENS WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY THE A-7 CORSAIR--BUT THE MEN OF THE 37 ARRS CAN NEVER AND WILL NEVER FORGET THE DARING YOUNG MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES CALLED:

SANDY

low altitudes and sheer determination. The Jollys were scrambled from Quang Ngai, They had landed there to refuel. During the ingress, the clouds forced Sandy 08 and the Jollys to fly up the river at less than 100 ft., but the Jollys were able to reach the area and pick up the seven survivors. During the egress the Jollys came under small arms fire, but one low pass by Sandy 08 silenced the ground fire. The last SAR for the 1st SOS exemplified the resourcefulness and courage displayed by the Sandy aircrews in their efforts to recover downed airmen. During the first four days of November, the Hobos continued to strike enemy positions in the Barrel. The last Hobo flight was typical of the type air support the 1st SOS, flying the A-1, has provided throughout the war in SEA. Capt. Kramer and Capt. Caughlin struck a TPC late in the afternoon of the fourth. When the Hobos departed the target area, they had left five sustained fires and the Raven had observed seven secondary explosions.

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is with pangs of regret that I see 5 November 1972 come to pass. This day marks the last time our ramps and runways will respond to the throaty roar of the mighty A-1. God knows we hate to see the valiant crews of the Hobo Squadron disband and leave NKP. There is a vacuum that cannot be filled. I can only extend my thanks to a magnificent group who have done a fantastic job in Southeast Asia. I can only say good luck and God speed to you loyal Hobos and Sandys." On the 15th of December the 1st SOS will be transferred to Kadana AB without personnel or equipment.

VI. (S) COMMANDER'S COMMENTS:

(S) As we finalize the last historical report of the 1st Special Operation Squadron, it might be appropriate to acknowledge the fine briefing and instructing the 1SOS pilots accomplished teaching the A-7 pilots to assume the SAR role in Southeast Asia. Several weeks of intense briefings, instructing and playing the role of a survivor in the field encompassed the training program. The A-7 assumed the responsibility for the SAR role on 15 Nov 72 and to date have accomplished 3 successful SARs. The first one in North Vietnam, a real tough one, gave the A-7 personnel the confidence required to pick up this new and demanding task. The personnel of the 1SOS are sure the A-7 will be able to accomplish this mission and continue the fine traditions started by the A-1 Sandys. We are all pleased that the A-7's will use the "Hobo" and "Sandy" call signs while flying their demanding missions in Southeast Asia.

(S) Although the A-1's are gone, the mission will be carried out. For the A-1 and the 1SOS Sandy and Hobo pilots this is the end of an era.

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(C) Bobbin 05. On 16 November, Bobbin 05, an F-105G Wild Weasel with Captain Kenneth D. Thaete as pilot and Major Norbert J. Mair as electronic warfare officer, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over North Vietnam. During the ejection sequence and subsequent landing, Captain Thaete suffered facial burns and a wrenched leg. Major Mair severely bruised his right thigh, sprained the right side of his back, and injured his right arm. Shortly after reaching the ground, both crewmen camouflaged their extra survival equipment, went into hiding, and attempted to contact U.S. aircraft on their survival radios. Although Major Mair and Captain Thaete did not know it, SAR forces had already been alerted by other members of the Bobbin flight.

(C) Major Mair and Captain Thaete were unable to make radio contact with friendly forces until approximately 0500 on 17 November when they reached two F-4 Fast FACs. The RCC at Nakhon Phanom ordered the 354th TFW to launch A-7 Sandys which were on 15-minute ground alert. The weather in the rescue area was 1,000 foot overcast, and the two downed crewmembers were situated in terrain characterized by rugged mountains and deep valleys. The weather did not clear, and the survivors were told that a pick-up would be attempted the following day.

(C) Enemy defenses near the rescue area included three known SAM sites, and numerous AAA sites with 85 and 100 millimeter radar controlled guns. Considering the heavy enemy defenses, the JRCC decided to launch a first light SAR effort. A myriad of details were worked out including the composition of the SARTF, ordnance, and the responsibilities of 16

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A-7 Sandy aircraft. The Search and Rescue coordinating officers from the 354 TFW and the Jack RCC staff worked through the night arranging support aircraft, planning ingress/egress routes, selecting orbit points, scheduling tanker support, and preparing briefings. Included in the SARTF, in addition to the Jolly Green/A-7 Sandy team and the HC-130 Kings, were F-4 Anti-MIG Combat Air Patrol (MIGCAP), F-4 Gunfighters, F-105 Wild Weasel SAM suppressors, EB-66 Electronic Intelligence aircraft, and KC-135 tankers.

(5) On 18 November, the general planning of briefings and the mission data packages were completed. Briefings were held and pertinent information distributed. Sandys 01 through 05 were launched at 0358 hours, Sandys 11-16 launched at 0434 hours, and Sandys 08 and 09 launched at 0608 hours.

(6) Contact was made with Bobbin 05B (Major Mair), but there was initially no contact with Bobbin 05A (Captain Thaete). However, on a pass over the survivors' area, Sandy 01 and Wolf 01, a Fast FAC, made contact with both crewmembers. Attempts were made to find routes for the helicopters to ingress/egress through the weather and mountains, but these attempts were unsuccessful. The first light effort was abandoned, and Sandy forces began recycling through the tankers.

(5) Tanker support was a serious problem because the tankers on station were becoming fuel limited. Several Sandys rendezvoused with tankers which already had F-4s and F-105s waiting to refuel. At one time, 16 fighters were waiting to receive fuel from one tanker. The tankers responded by allocating fuel as equitably as possible, providing information about other tankers in the area, obtaining permission to go

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below Bingo fuel* or to land at other than home bases, and requesting that the appropriate agencies launch all available tankers.

(C) Sandy 01, the OSC, had found an ingress route from the coast to the survivors. Because of heavy AAA fire, the helicopters could not reach Major Mair and Captain Thaete along this route. Sandy 01 led Sandy 04 and 05 over the route to familiarize them with the area. Sandy 04 and 05 backtracked to the helicopters' orbit area and tried several times to get at least one helicopter through the clouds and into a valley for a pick-up run. These attempts failed. The helicopters, using radar altimeters, descended until they were 500 feet above ground level (AGL), but were still in the clouds and had to climb back up.

(C) The aircraft were getting low on fuel again. The Sandys and Jolly Greens refueled using the increased numbers of tankers that had become available. Sandy 01 had been airborne over six hours, flying in bad weather, over rugged mountain terrain, and through heavy enemy defenses. Major Clarke, a Sandy pilot, remarked:

(C) I guess the adrenaline took a pump break about this time, because I realized how tired I was getting and how good a sandwich would have tasted right then. All I had was my water bottle which was almost empty. I knew that if the next effort failed again, we were through for the day.

(SC) The Jolly Green and Sandy force refueled from King and KC-135s respectively. Sandys 01, 04, and 05 proceeded to the helicopter orbit point. Sandy 01 escorted Jolly 03 in an attempt to find an ingress route.

*A predetermined fuel quantity at which an aircraft returns to base.

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Sandys 04 and 05 proceeded on top of the clouds to the Gulf of Tonkin, went under the clouds, and ingressed to the survivors' position. Sandys 04 and 05 received a barrage of AAA, and it took two attempts for them to reach the objective area. They then had to backtrack from the survivors towards the Jolly Green's orbit, hoping to intercept Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 and lead them to the survivors. Sandys 02 and 03 rendezvoused with Sandys 11-16 and proceeded to the coast to try to break under the weather. Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 proceeded eastward above the overcast. Sandy 01
121
remarked:

(C) I asked him (Jolly 03) how low the ground was under him. He said he was in a valley, so I punched down into the stuff. . . . when I got under him and broke out underneath, I was in a valley, sure enough.

(C) Captain John M. Gillespie, the aircraft commander of Jolly 03
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stated: (U)

(S) Circling the valley, with a 1,000 foot or less ceiling Major Clarke used his direction finding equipment to vector my aircraft into the valley. The two aircraft, an A7D and an HH-53, then began the long run inbound to the survivors. Originally the route was 27 miles long, but due to low ceiling and obscured mountain ridges, the run in went up and down valleys covering about 45 miles. During the run in, Major Clarke displayed great skill and courage maneuvering his high speed aircraft between narrow valleys made even narrower by the low clouds. It was difficult for me in a slow flying helicopter to maneuver through the mountains and weather, for Major Clarke it was a fantastic example of bravery and skill.

(C) Maneuvering around villages and other possible enemy defenses, Sandy 01 and Jolly 03 reached the ridgeline where Major Mair and Captain Thaete were located. Sandy 01 flew over the survivors and received ground

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fire near Major Mair's location. Two smoke flights, Sandys 11-13 and 14-16 led by Sandys 02 and 03, made their run in from the coast. By this time, all aircraft were subjected to heavy AAA fire. The flights delivered their smoke perfectly and the smoke screens were effective in shielding the helicopter from the view of the AAA sites. Captain Thaete estimated that each aircraft that passed over him took 40-80 rounds of AAA fire and that the rate doubled during the smoke flight run. Shielded by smoke from the AAA fire, Jolly 03 began the pickup of Captain Thaete and Major Mair. Jolly 03 received small arms and automatic weapons fire and returned the fire using miniguns. The survivors were picked up successfully, but Sandy 01 was hit and had to be escorted to Da Nang. Jolly 03 returned to Nakhon Phanom
123
without incident.

(C) The SAR mission, from the time the first Sandy took off until the last one landed, lasted nine hours. While this mission was being conducted, F-4 and F-105 aircraft were attacking SAM and other radar sites in the area. At least seven different kinds of aircraft were
124
involved in the rescue.

(C) Several problems were encountered during the Bobbin 05 mission. These were insufficient initial tanker support, lack of planning beyond a first light effort, poor radio discipline, occasional absence of an OSC in the rescue area, and improper use of the King aircraft. Many of these
125
problems were a result of incomplete training of the A-7 crews.

(C) The Bobbin 05 rescue effort was the first use of the A-7 for a SAR mission. Two characteristics of the aircraft were significant:

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(1) the higher speed increased the survivability of this RESCORT aircraft, and (2) its navigation system was very effective in locating survivors¹²⁶ and leading the Jolly Greens to them.

(C) Jackel 33. On 22 December 1972, Jackel 33, an F-111 from Takhli¹²⁷ RTAFB, was downed by unknown causes¹²⁸ 17 miles southwest of Hanoi.

After several days delay due to weather, SAR forces attempted to rescue the Jackel 33 crew on 27 December during a LINEBACKER II mission. The task force consisted of 13 A-7 Sandys, four Jolly Greens, two HC-130 Kings, and¹²⁹ 32 F-4s.

(C) Upon reaching the objective area, Jolly Green 01 began ingress 18 miles from the survivor. With the aid of a smoke screen set up by two Sandys, the Jolly Green reached the rescue area without encountering enemy defenses. As the Jolly Green neared one survivor, enemy gunfire came from all directions. Using miniguns and automatic rifles to engage the enemy, the helicopter hovered over the survivor and dropped the penetrator. The survivor got within five feet of the penetrator but was blown off his feet¹³⁰ by the helicopter downwash.

(C) At this time, the copilot of the Jolly Green was wounded and five or six enemy soldiers attempted to run under the aircraft. The helicopter had been in a hover for over 60 seconds and the enemy was still firing from all directions. There was blood all over the cockpit from the copilot's¹³¹ wound. With the situation hopeless, the pilot left without the survivor.

(C) During egress, the aircraft experienced stability and control problems and was low on fuel. An attempt to refuel with King was unsuccessful

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helicopter flight mechanic gave the "Jolly Green" pilot hover information to properly position the helicopter. The jungle penetrator was lowered and the survivor(s) were brought aboard the HH-53. The A-7 "Sandy" pilot again became OSC, and the "Sandys" escorted the helicopter from the pickup area, suppressing enemy fire as necessary.⁸ (GDS-82)

Rescue of "Bobbin" 05

(S) Nearly all of these combat rescue elements functioned during a successful SAR mission over North Vietnam on 18 November 1972. On 16 November 1972 "Bobbin" 05, an F-105G Wild Weasel* with a two-man crew, was shot down by a surface-to-air missile (SAM). During the ejection and subsequent landing Captain Kenneth L. Thae[†], the pilot, suffered facial cuts and a wrenched leg; and Major Herbert J. Mair, the electronic warfare officer, bruised his right thigh, sprained the right side of his back, and injured his right arm. After landing, both men camouflaged their survival equipment, went into hiding, and attempted to summon aid with their survival radios. Unknown to the crew, other members of the "Bobbin" flight had already contacted SAR forces. (GDS-82)

(S) Major Mair and Captain Thae[†] established a radio contact with two F-4's at 0400 on 17 November 1972. Having pinpointed the location of the survivors, the RCC at Nakhon Phanom (NKP) RTAFB launched two A-7 "Sandys" from the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing. The weather in the rescue area was found to be 1,000 feet overcast and it did not clear, so the survivors were told that a pickup would be attempted on the following day. (GDS-82)

(S) The JRCC at Tan Son Nhut AB planned to launch a first light SAR effort. During the night a myriad of details were worked out, including the composition of the SARTF, the ordnance, and the responsibilities of the A-7's. Enemy defenses in the rescue area were known to include SAM sites, and 85 and 100 millimeter radar-controlled guns. At the RCC at NKP the staff worked out the arrangement of support aircraft, ingress and egress routes, orbit points, and tanker support. (GDS-82)

(S) They "put it all together" in a SARTF consisting of HH-53's, A-7's, HC-130's, an F-4 anti-Mig Combat Air Patrol, F-4 Gunfighters, F-105 Wild Weasel SAM suppressors, EB-66 electronic intelligence, and KC-135 tankers. (GDS-82)

(S) In the early hours of 18 November 1972 briefings were given and information was distributed. "Sandys" 01 through 05 were launched at 0358, 11 through 16 at 0434, and 08 and 09 at 0608. Radio contact was established with both survivors in the rescue area, but the "Sandy" could not find any routes for the helicopters to penetrate into the area. Therefore the first light effort was abandoned and the A-7's began aerial refueling. At one point the "Sandys" led an HH-53 into the rescue area, but although the helicopter was about 500 feet above the ground, clouds still covered the area and it was forced to egress. (GDS-82)

(S) Finally "Sandy" 01 and "Jolly" 03 were able to break through the overcast and found themselves in a valley. After flying up and down a series of valleys for about 45 miles, they reached the site of the survivors. "Sandy" 01 flew over the survivors and encountered ground fire. "Sandys" 11,

8. Project CHECO Rprt (S), "Search and Rescue Operations in SEA," 1 Apr 72-30 Jun 73, in MAC/CSH files (GDS-82).

* The mission of wild weasel aircraft was to ferret out enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and destroy them.

** This was probably the first SAR mission in SEA involving A-7's.

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12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 02, and 03 all came in low from the Gulf of Tonkin and layed a smoke screen shielding "Jolly" 03 from the AA guns. (GDS-82)

(S) "Jolly" 03 began the pickup of Major Mair and Captain Thaete. When "Jolly" 03 received small arms fire, it returned fire with its miniguns. The survivors were picked up successfully and returned to NKP, but "Sandy" 01 was hit and had to be escorted back to Da Nang. The total airborne time for the mission lasted approximately nine hours.⁹ (GDS-82)

Rescue Support during Israeli Airlift

(U) Between 14 Oct per 1973 and 17 November 1973 ARRS aircrews were brought to an increased state of readiness in response to the Arab-Israeli crisis in the Middle East and the ensuing Israeli Airlift (Operation Nickel Grass). ARRS forces were positioned at Lajes Field, Azores, and Rota AB, Spain, to provide search and rescue support as might be required and to provide precautionary orbit support for fighter aircraft moving to Europe and the Middle East. A total of 366 flying hours were logged by HC-130's, and HH-53's flew 40 hours.¹⁰ Fortunately there was no need to rescue anyone.

Total Saves*

(U) ARRS units and their personnel saved the lives of 1,559 persons during FY 1973 and 453 persons during FY 1974. Approximately 1,600 were civilians and about 400 were military personnel. Total cumulative saves by ARRS units between the establishment of ARRS in 1946 and 30 June 1974 numbered 10,840 persons. This figure included 996 combat saves during the Korean War and 2,628 combat saves during the War in Southeast Asia.¹¹

(U) Total ARRS Saves from 1 July 1972 through 30 June 1974 were:¹²

	<u>Jul-Dec</u> <u>1972</u>	<u>Jan-Jun</u> <u>1973</u>	<u>Jul-Dec</u> <u>1973</u>	<u>Jan-Jun</u> <u>1974</u>
Combat, SEA	95	14	0	0
Non-Combat, SEA	62	32	24	17
Non-Combat, Other	1,088	268	181	231
Semiannual Totals	<u>1,245</u>	<u>314</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>248</u>
FY Totals		1,559		453

9. Project CHECO Rprt (S), Search and Rescue Operations in SEA, 1 Apr 72-30 Jun 73, in MAC/CSH files. (GDS-82)

10. Ltr (U), ARRS/DO (DCS/Ops) to MAC/CSH (Historical Off), subj: Developments of Possible Historical Interest, 1 July-31 December 1973, 1 Mar 74, Sup Doc 344; a chronology (S) of all ARRS significant actions during this crisis, "ARRS in the 1973 Israeli Crisis" (in draft format), Sup Doc 345. (GDS-81) (Info used is UNCLASSIFIED.)

* For a further breakdown of these figures, see Command Data, Appendicies M(2), FY 1973 and FY 1974, this rprt, and News Releases (U), "Rescue Service Crews Save 1,748 Lives in 1972," 2 Feb 73, Sup Doc 346 and "Air Rescue Crews Save 519 Lives in 1973," 25 Jan 74, Sup Doc 347.

11. Intvw (U), ARRS historian w/Mr W J Nee, Reqmts & Analysis Div, Dir of Current Ops, DCS/Ops, HQ ARRS.

12. ARRS Ops Performance Digests (FOUO), Jun 72 through Jun 74, in MAC/CSH historical files.

and Brown took off in a camouflaged F-111 from Takhli Air Base, Thailand, for a mission against the Luat Son highway ferry in North Vietnam. The last contact with the aircraft was at 0306 hours and an attempt to establish contact with them at 0400 hours was unsuccessful. A search effort was launched and continued until November 20th without locating any evidence of the crew or the aircraft.

On November 8, 1972, the Vietnam News Agency reported that according to the Reuters News Service, an F-111 was downed in Nghe An Province and two airmen were missing. Another report on that date stated this was the third F-111 lost over North Vietnam and the F-111 was downed over Nghe An at 0400 hours.

On November 9, 1972, a People's Army of Vietnam unit reported the shoot down of an F-111 which was said to have been downed in Nghe An Province but actually had crashed in Quang Binh Province. Another report transmitting information about the reported downing of an F-4 on November 7th stated the pilot had been captured and they were to "conceal the accomplishment." This F-4 related report was placed in the files of these two missing airmen. A further report on November 14th stated a special team was being sent to recover the F-111A in Quang Binh and oversee movement of its hulk.

Both airmen were initially reported missing. Returning U.S. POWs had no information on their precise fate. After Operation Homecoming they were declared dead/body not recovered, based on a presumptive finding of death. Major Brown's name was recently the subject of a dog tag type report which reached DIA.

In January 1992 U.S. investigators in Vietnam reviewed a People's Army report of air defense operations in Military Region 4. One item dated November 7, 1972, listed the shoot down of a low flying F-111 downed by the 359th Company, Quang Binh forces, with two (crewmen) killed. In July 1992 U.S. investigators in Le Thuy District, Quang Binh located an F-111 strut used as a fence post, part of one ton of aircraft wreckage in the possession of a local resident near the crash site associated with this incident. The suspected crash site was near a mountain peak on a 45 degree slope.

A photo of Major Brown's identity card was located in the Quang Binh Provincial museum together with an F-111A data plate. The material referred to a "Major Robert" as "dead" in an F-111A shoot down over Quang Binh Province.

In October 1992 Major Brown's son visited Moscow and was told by Russian officials of KGB officials who apparently had knowledge of an F-111 transfer to the USSR in November 1972.

Laos
Donald C. Breuer
(1947)

On November 20, 1972, Captain Breuer and Captain Anderson were the crew on board an F-4J, one in a flight of two aircraft on a combat operation over Savannakhet Province, Laos. Their aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed 35 kilometers southeast of Tchepone and 300 meters from Route 90. This is in an area southwest of the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam. Captain Anderson parachuted safely from the aircraft, was located by search and rescue forces, and was recovered. He stated

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Narrative Cont.

that followed, numerous flight were made to carry safety and investigation teams to and from the crash site.

The night recce flight was also diverted from its normal mission on Nov 22nd. NKP tower called on the night recce aircraft to inspect a large flame or light. The sighting was a B-52 which had received battle damage and the crew was forced to bail out of the damaged plane. The plane crashed on the 250° Radial, 12 miles from the NKP TACAN. Fortunately all crew members were able to bail out and was safely rescued. The night recce aircraft was able to pick up four of the crew members, while a H-43 Pedro recovered the other two crewmen. The 21st SOS was also used to transport investigation teams to and from the crash site on following days.

VII. (U) COMMANDER'S COMMENTS:

The Squadron Commander has no comments for the month of November, 1972.

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<u>DATE</u>	<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT EVENT</u>
<u>Nov</u>		
21	(C)	EC-47, SN 43049771 went out of control following attempted landing at NKP and crashed. Two of ten crewmembers were fatally wounded.
22	(U)	21st SOS crew successfully recovered four B-52 crewmembers after ejecting from their battle damaged aircraft.
23	(C)	OV-10, SN 6714632 crashed near Da Nang after experiencing engine loss. Pilot recovered without injury.
27	(U)	OL-1, 361 TEWS was activated at Ubon RTAFB, Thailand.
27	(U)	Lt Gen William G. Moore, Commander, 13th Air Force, arrived for staff visit and mission update.
<u>Dec</u>		
7 - 9	(U)	Maj Gen George J. Keegan Jr., asst Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Hq USAF, arrived for mission tour.
15	(U)	^{1st} Forst Special Operations Squadron was relocated at Kadena AB, Okinawa and assumed new mission.
20	(U)	21SOS crew recovered two B-52 crewmembers who had ejected near NKP after suffering battle damage over North Vietnam.
27	(U)	21st SOS crew recovered two B-52 crewmembers who had ejected near NKP after suffering battle damage over North Vietnam

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Vietnam War Aircraft Losses

1545	16 Sept 1972	OV-10A	SVN	Poling R. L.	Capt	Rescued	Army Helo	Personnet J. A.	Capt	Rescued
1546	17 Sept 1972	F-105G	Sea	Zorn T. O.	Capt	KIA		Turose M.	1Lt	KIA
1547	21 Sept 1972	F-4D	LAOS	Carroll R. W.	Maj	KIA		Cook D. W.	Lt	KIA
1548	22 Sept 1972	RF-4C	Sea	Watts J. G.	Capt	Rescued	USAF Helo	Pomeroy J. H.	1Lt	Rescued
1549	26 Sept 1972	OV-10A	SVN	Anderson V. C.	1Lt	KIA				
1550	28 Sept 1972	A-1H	LAOS	Smith L. L.	1Lt	Rescued	AA Helo			
1551	28 Sept 1972	F-111A	LAOS	Coltman W. C.	Maj	MIA		Brett R. A. Jr	1Lt	MIA
1552	29 Sept 1972	F-105G	NVN	ONeil J. W.	LtCol	POW (returned)		Bosiljevac M. J.	Capt	MIA
1553	5 Oct 1972	F-4D	NVN	Lewis K. H.	Capt	POW (returned)		Alpers J. H.	Capt	POW (return)
1554	5 Oct 1972	F-4E	NVN	Latham J. D.	Capt	POW (returned)		Bates R. L.	1Lt	POW (return)
1555	6 Oct 1972	F-4E	THL	u	u	Rescued	AA Helo	u	u	Rescued
1556	6 Oct 1972	F-4E	NVN	Anderson R. D.	LtCol	MIA		Latella G. F.	1Lt	POW (return)
1557	6 Oct 1972	OV-10A	Sea	u	u	u		u	u	u
1558	10 Oct 1972	F-4E	u	Cleary P. M.	Capt	MIA		Leonor L. C.	Capt	MIA
1559	12 Oct 1972	F-4E	NVN	Young M. A.	Capt	POW (returned)		Brunson C. H.	1Lt	POW (return)
1560	16 Oct 1972	F-111A	NVN	Hockridge J. A.	Capt	MIA		Graham A. U.	1Lt	MIA
1561	17 Oct 1972	F-4D	THL	u	u	Rescued	Army Helo	u	u	Rescued
1562	27 Oct 1972	F-4E	Sea	Jones R. B.	Capt	Rescued	USAF Helo	Bleak E. L.	Capt	Rescued
1563	6 Nov 1972	F-111A	LAOS	Brown R. M.	Maj	MIA		Morrissey R. D.	Maj	MIA
1564	7 Nov 1972	O-1	LAOS	u	u	KIA				
1565	16 Nov 1972	F-105G	NVN	u	u	Rescued	USAF Helo	u	u	Rescued
1566	20 Nov 1972	F-111A	NVN	Stafford R. D.	Capt	KIA		Caffarelli C. J.	Capt	KIA
1567	22 Nov 1972	B-52D	THL	Ostozny N. J.	Capt	Rescued		Foley P. A.	Capt	Rescued
1568	23 Nov 1972	O-2A	SVN	u	u	Rescued	Army Helo			

				SURVIVOR NAME, RANK, SSAN & UNIT		
DATE	CREW	SAVE	JG		LOCATION	TYPE SAVE
1 NOV	BRUNER	878	71	UNKNOWN		7 COMBAT
<u>7</u>	HOOK	↓		^{Mickey Wilson} CWO2 XXXXXXXXXX		
	VICTOR	8884		G2 AUN CO 11 CAC		
	WILSON			^{Bert Schiebstin} CWO2 XXXXXXXXXX		
	RICHARDSON			G2 AUN CO 11 CAC		
	SOMMERFIELD			^{William Stephenson} SP5 XXXXXXXXXX		
				^{TODDY AGUIRRE} SP5 XXXXXXXXXX		
				LT(JG) Culhane Edward		
				USNA		
				1st Angl Co		
				1LT(USMC)		
				MEYERS, Francis		
				CPT McCHBE		
				1st Ranger Group		
23 NOV	LATHAM	886	PEDRO	SUNDRON,	DMUANG AB	1 COMBAT
	MOULTON		61	JOHNSON 1LT		
	PARCHMENT			XXXXXXXXXX		
	GASKINS			23 TASS		
	MCCOY					

DOC D47

	OCT	NOV	DEC
RADAR VAN DEST		1	
BRIDGES DEST		2	6
51 CAL DEST		1	
12.7MM DEST		1	3
BARGES DEST		2	

V (S) (U) NARRATIVE

A. Deployment of the 23rd TASS to Danang AB in South Vietnam continued until 14 December. The mission for the 23rd was cancelled at this time and the regular missions of Steel Tiger and Barrel Roll was started again. At this time the 23rd returned to NKP and began flying their regular Frag with the weather inclement at Danang from November through December, this was the major factor in returning the 23rd to NKP.

B. The completion of installation of RHAW gear in the OV-10 fleet was accomplished in December. This gave the fleet an added praction against enemy missile systems that threats part of the OV-10's flying area.

C. On 23 November, Nail 36 (Lt John Sundgren) experienced an engine failure on take off at Danang. Due to low altitude and low airspeed due to take off configuration Lt Sundgren ejected to eject since the aircraft was going out of control. Three Minutes later he was recovered. Three hours later, the enemy had removed parts of the wreckage from the area.

D. During these three months, the 23rd participated in 12 SARS. The 23rd being primary SAR Sq for location of down crewmens was busy during this period. The increase in activity in both North and South Vietnam was factor in the increased. The 23rd flew 92 Sorties and 335.5 hrs in direct support of rescue activities. In the 12 SARs, the 23rd Nails was on score commander in each SAR. During the SAR's, the 23rd received no battle damage or loss of aircraft.

30 November 1972

Officially we were called the 37th ARRS, but to any downed pilot who heard the heavy chop of the six bladed rotors from the HH-53C helicopter, it was the sound of the Jolly Green Giant's. After six years at DaNang and rescuing 887 downed fliers¹ or troops in contact, a flight of six HH-53's departed "Rocket City" for the last time. Only two weeks earlier the scramble klaxon had sounded, but instead of the expected loudspeaker cry of "*Scramble the Jolly's*" a voice unexpectedly announced that all squadron members should gather in the main hanger for an important announcement from our commander. Twenty minutes later almost 200 aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel milled around openly wondering what this was all about. No one in the squadron could ever recall the scramble klaxon being used for any purpose except launching our aircraft on a combat rescue. LtCol. Stephen L. Sutton soon walked out of Jolly Operations, smiling from ear to ear. He wasted no time, and in a loud voice proclaimed simply "We're all going home, it's over." The squadron erupted into spontaneous turmoil and cheers. We were all screaming, jumping up and down, patting each other on the back. It took some time to quiet this squadron down. After repeated orders to quiet down Col. Sutton was able to speak once again. His next announcement was going to surprise us almost as much as his first. "You will all be out of here in less than three weeks." Again chaos erupted. This meant that we would not be spending Christmas in Vietnam. It was almost too good to be true. Could we really shut down our entire rescue squadron, pack up our gear, and process each of us for reassignment in 21 days? The answer was an unequivocal yes. Throughout DaNang Air Base, this process was repeating itself at all of the American units. I suspect that it was repeating itself at all U.S. combat units throughout the country of Vietnam.

The powers to be in Washington had negotiated a peace treaty with the North Vietnamese. They now wanted us to pack up and get out of town as fast as we could, if not faster. We had essentially declared victory and were now going extricate ourselves from the quagmire Vietnam had become. The men of the 37th ARRS were more than glad to enthusiastically execute this order. To expedite our departure all unit facilities, equipment, weapons, and munitions were to be turned over to the VNAF. The only exception to this policy would be our aircraft and individually issued professional gear. The aircraft would be transferred to the 40th ARRS at NKP Thailand. Each individual's professional gear would be boxed, inspected by customs, and shipped to our next base of assignment. The same process would repeat itself with our personally owned possessions.

The next three weeks would consist of long days of furious activity. During the day we packed personal and professional gear for shipment back to the states. Performance reports and awards and decorations packages had to be completed on everyone. There was serious concern among U.S. commanders to ensure that we did not ship any weapons or munitions out of the country for war souvenirs. They also wanted to ensure that no one shipped any illegal drugs out in their gear. This led to extensive inspections of all boxes being shipped out of country. Col. Sutton knew that we PJ's probably had some weapons and explosives that were not listed on unit supply records. To provide a means to turn them in legally he instituted an amnesty policy. He placed a wooden box, about 4x4 feet size, in the PJ section with an amnesty sign on it.

PJ weapons in Vietnam had long been an issue that rescue unit commanders struggled with. We had entered the war with .38 caliber pistols and an M-16 rifle. These were the only official weapons authorized by the Air Force for use by its PJ's. As the war dragged on the character of the pararescue mission also changed. Dozens of pararescuemen attended Recondo school at Nha Trang and became trained in the full spectrum of infantry weapons and explosives. These pararescuemen in turn trained other PJ's who arrived in country but could not get to Recondo school. Pararescuemen routinely found themselves on the ground, in enemy territory for longer periods than the Air Force anticipated. The North Vietnamese also placed a bounty on PJ's, to motivate their troops to capture or kill pararescuemen who were attempting to rescue a downed pilot. This led to pararescue teams in country deciding which weapons were needed to survive in this hostile environment. The only problem with this arrangement was that the weapons carried by PJ's at the end of the war were not authorized in USAF supply tables of allowance. In the last few months of the war, Col. Sutton was under pressure from his superiors to ensure his PJ's carried only a pistol and a rifle. He in turn put pressure on TSgt Harwell Quillian, the PJ NCOIC to ensure that only authorized weapons were carried. When Sergeant Quillian told us to turn in our illegal weapons a couple of months earlier, the PJ's assigned were smart enough not to try and argue the illogic of unilateral

¹ *The Gunfighter Gazette* (DaNang), 2 December 1972

disarmament in the middle of a war. We turned in a couple dozen weapons and a few crates of explosives and told him to tell Col. Sutton that he had all the "illegal" weapons. This made everyone happy. It was an open secret among the rescue aircrews that we flew with that we were still armed to the teeth. But now that we were all going home, we did not require these weapons. It was now the proper time to take the amnesty policy to heart. We did have one minor problem, Col. Sutton's box was a "little too small." In one of the most infamous PJ photos of the war, the 37th PJ team displayed *one* of each type weapon that we owned. These included: .50 cal. heavy machinegun, 7.62 M-60 machinegun, M-79 grenade launcher, XM-148 grenade launcher, M-72 LAW rocket, M-3 silenced grease gun, 9mm "Swedish K", AK-47, AKM, M1911 .45 pistol, Browning 9mm pistol, claymore mine, various types of hand grenades and 40mm explosives and a few weapons that had been so heavily modified that they rightly had no name. Col. Sutton was not amused when he was asked to take a look at his amnesty box. It was buried in high explosive fragmentation grenades. He phoned for the DaNang EOD team to pick up the PJ weapons. They required a flat bed truck to haul it all away. One of them commented that we had enough to outfit an infantry company for a week of heavy battle.



From left to right: Buck Beaucannon, Steve Jones, Larry Kimball, Bruce Johnson, Ron Charlsworth, Dennis Baker, John Carlson, Clay Hammock, Bob LaPointe, Dudley Green, Buzz Beauchamp, and Bill Bradley. Not in photo was Harwell Quillian. He was in Col. Sutton's office getting his ass chewed.

The weapons amnesty issue was the only minor sour note in the shutdown of the 37th. But it only took one passing moment in the blur of other happy activity that was occurring. Everyone received PCS assignments and processed out through the DaNang personnel office. Most would be going straight back to the United States and would be assigned to CONUS air rescue units. About one third of the aircrews and PJ's would be reassigned to the 40th ARRS at NKP, Thailand. Virtually all those going to Thailand were volunteers. Another issue that needed to be resolved was what to do with "Stretch". Stretch was an 11-foot long Indian Rock python, that had been the PJ mascot for years. The snake cage was rather large and located outside but adjacent to the Pararescue Section. No one with any sense at all went into this cage without having one of the PJ snake handlers with them. No one ever realized that the cage's extra large size was a result of it serving the dual purpose of a munitions storage area for all the "illegal high explosives" that the 37th PJ's owned. Thank God that a 122mm rocket never hit this cage, the secondary explosions would have been rather spectacular. It was decided that "Stretch" would PCS with the men going to NKP. It would be flown there on one of the Jolly's when they departed. Stretch's new cage at NKP would be located next to the 40th ARRS's mascot, "Buffy". Buffy was a black Malayan sun bear.

At sunset we ceased work and celebrated the end of the war. Raucous parties were occurring all over DaNang. Most of the 37th gravitated the PJ barracks bar or the Jolly Green Inn, the maintenance bar. The night before the "Jolly's" departed for NKP the squadron had its last official party. Appropriately it would be at the Jolly Green Inn. All realized that it would be their last social gathering before the squadron was deactivated. Everyone was glad to soon be leaving Vietnam. However it was a mixed emotion. We would also be saying goodbye to many of our brothers in arms, men who we had gone to battle with, laughed with, cried with. Most realized that it was likely that they would never meet again. As the free drinks flowed it was impossible to not recall the exploits they shared, the men they had saved, and the teammates they had lost in combat. These rescue missions had been some of the most hazardous type of flying activity in this unpopular war. The rescuemen were clear about their mission. "Rescue shot down American pilots from capture or death by the NVA", unpopular war be damned. We were not politicians, we were American warriors. Tonight the warriors celebrated one last time. Pilots, maintenance men, PJ's, clerks, supply men and other squadron members toasted each other. The drinks flowed freely, the music was loud, the mood was buoyant. Late in the night someone started singing a song we had all heard sung before. Soon everyone was singing. The song was "The ballad of the Jolly Green Giants." It had been written many years earlier by Bull Durham. It went like this:

Insert after obtaining permission to use.

All party's end. They next morning found us all on the flightline ramp. The crews were in the "Jolly's", rotors turning. Those of us remaining at DaNang, awaiting the arrival of the "Freedom Bird", waved to the departing crews, they waved back. The mood was serious, the men quiet. We were witnessing the end of an era. After takeoff, the "Jolly's" formed up in tight formation and then over flew Jolly Green Operations. It was a final salute to their teammates who gathered on the flight line to witness the last Jolly Green Giants over flying DaNang Air Base. There was more than one moist eyeball in the men left on the now very quiet flightline. In an interview with the DaNang newspaper, the Gunfighter Gazette, Col Sutton stated the following "I cannot begin to describe the dedication these guys have for their job. It is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, always alert and ready to pick someone up so 'Charlie' does not get him. When we bring a downed pilot back to DaNang the guys in my squadron act like he is a long lost brother. They really have empathy for the jet jocks and all men in trouble. They are the greatest bunch of guys I have ever known."²

In a few days the last rescuemen assigned to the Jolly Green Giants departed for home. But they would not be the last rescuemen leaving DaNang. That honor would belong to the Pedro's. The HH-43 LBR unit was redesignated Det. 7 40th ARRS and remained at DaNang until the peace treaty was signed on 30 January 73. The Pedro's were the first into the war. It was fitting that they would be the last rescuemen out of Vietnam.

² *The Gunfighter Gazette* (DaNang), 2 December 1972



THE GAZETTE

Vol. 1, No. 22

December 2, 1972

Jolly Green's leave Da Nang

After six years at Da Nang and rescuing 887 downed flyers, the Jolly Green Giants left Da Nang Thursday, November 30.

To the officially minded, the unit was called the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (37th AARRS), but to any downed pilot who has ever heard the heavy chop of the six-bladed rotors from the HH-53 helicopter, it is the Jolly Green Giants, the men who have the job of going into hostile terrain and plucking out our downed airmen.

In most of the rescues made by the Jolly's, the downed pilots were in North Vietnam, while in many other cases the rescued were in threatened areas in South Vietnam.

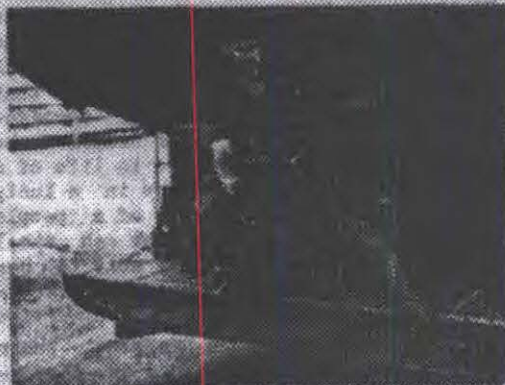
As the men of the Jolly's packed during the last few days, they recalled some of the exploits they had shared, the men they saved and the buddies they lost. "I'm glad to be leaving Da Nang," said 1st Lt. Frank Land 26, Baton Rouge, La. "but I hate leaving the 37th." His comment stated the feelings of all the Jolly's who, under the command of Lt. Col. Stephen L. Sutton, 40 Monterey, Calif., experienced one of their most successful years.

In their rescue operations, the Jolly's were on alert 24 hours a day with five

(continued on P.7)



Two Jolly's gain altitude as they take off from Da Nang for the last time. (U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Gus Vinas)



Sgt. Steve Jones, a paratrooper and deadly gunner with the Jolly's secures his mini-gun for the voyage from Da Nang. (U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Gus Vinas)

Unit I.G. system begins

Personnel who feel they are the victims of an injustice or who need assistance with a problem will soon have a system working for them here at Da Nang that begins at unit level and extends to the Wing Inspector General.

The system is designed to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to seek a solution to a problem and gives supervisors at each echelon of organization the fullest opportunity to learn about the problem and solve it.

In a letter to all commanders this week, Col. Clifford Allison Jr., Wing Vice Commander and Wing Inspector General, pointed out that complaints and grievances may be presented to him at any time. "The individual's right to present complaints is assured and absolutely no intimidation or retaliatory action against him will be tolerated," he emphasized.

Each unit has been directed to designate Unit Complaint Officers who will be assisted by senior, mature NCO's. These additional duty personnel have direct access to unit commanders and the Wing I.G. in resolving complaints. If an individual is not satisfied at the unit level, he may petition the Wing I.G. or

(continued on P.7)

Turkey Day

The China Beach Protestant Orphanage has been in operation since 1962 and is under the direction of Rev. and Mrs. Gordon H. Smith.



Chaplain (Capt.) Kenneth E. Nelson lends a helping hand and points out the correct way for a little girl from the China Beach Protestant Orphanage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Sgt. Paul Kennedy)



Col. Jack H. Eppinton, commander of the 620th Tactical Control Squadron, chats with Rev. and Mrs. Gordon H. Smith, directors of the China Beach Protestant Orphanage. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Sgt. Paul Kennedy)

Unit I.G... (continued from P.1)

higher, including the I.G., Headquarters USAF. Individuals always have the right to see the Wing I.G. on any matter but we believe that the new procedures will result in increased communication at the most vital level, the squadron or unit level.

"Our objective," he emphasized, "is to give everyone an opportunity to listen and solve the problems of individuals locally. We want everyone on Da Nang to have the confidence that he will get a sympathetic and objective hearing and that something will be done for him if it can be done at all. As the Wing Inspector General, I have an open door policy. I expect each commander to have the same policy through their unit complaint monitor and NCO assistants. Assisting me as my senior NCO advisor will be the Wing Sergeant Major, MSgt. W.D. McCombs."

Personnel having need of Inspector General assistance are urged to contact their unit complaint officer and NCO's and rely upon this new system so it will become a visible and workable part of the Wing program.

Jolly's... (continued from P.1)

aircraft and 10 crewmembers. With the aid of a tanker aircraft the Jolly's could refuel and go anywhere they were needed. On Monday, May 1, of this year Jolly's played a major role in the evacuation of Quang Tri City just before the enemy captured the city. In that incident, they evacuated more than 100 South Vietnamese personnel.

Dr. (Capt.) Jerry Howell, 29, Enterprise, Ala., the flying flight surgeon with the Jolly's said, "My numerous combat missions with the Jolly's have been the most rewarding of my medical career."

An oddity with the Jolly's is a U.S. Coast Guard officer. Speaking of his tour with the unit, Lt. Jack Stice, 33, Sarasota, Fla., said, "My tour here has been the best experience of my life. I've saved many people in the states, but rescuing a guy over here is saving him from becoming a POW and makes a guy feel really great."

Colonel Sutton speaking of his men said, "I can't begin to describe the dedication these guys have for their job. Its 24 hours a day, seven days a week, always alert and ready to pick someone up so 'Charlie' doesn't get him. When we bring a downed pilot back to Da Nang the guys in my squadron act like he is a long lost brother. They really have empathy for the jet jocks and all men in trouble. They are the greatest bunch of guys I have ever known."

The men of the Jolly's leave Da Nang with a proud past because, as evidenced by their 887 saves, they have lived up to their motto, "So That Others May Live."

From: Rouhier, Chuck <Chuck.Rouhier@Deskbook.wpafb.af.mil>
To: 'Robert LaPointe' <rlapointe@gci.net>
Date: Thursday, April 01, 1999 4:13 AM
Subject: RE: The closure of the 37th

Good story Bob. Did you know that one of the Jolly's spent an extra three or four days at DaNang? Remember Cayetano Pina? He was the FE. Shortly after departing the base they got an MGB chip light and returned. They tried for a number of days to fix the problem. Only couldn't find anything wrong. Nothing in the screens or on the plugs. Pina finally said to hell with it and they flew it to NKP with the chip light glowing. Pina said they were getting a little nervous being there all by themselves. Guess the Viets were not to friendly.

Chuck

Jolly FE '71-'74

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

From: Robert LaPointe [mailto:rlapointe@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 1999 9:30 PM
To: Rouhier, Chuck
Subject: The closure of the 37th

Attached is a story about the closure of the 37th ARRS in December 72. I will be putting it up on my site later this week.

Bob

Robert LaPointe

From: "Lynn Coffelt"
To: <rlapointe@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, August 17, 2001 8:24 AM
Subject: Pedro

Bob,

Wish I could remember more clearly, things were moving so fast that even at the time, the scene was surreal.

One Jolly wouldn't start on departure day, and if I'm not mistaken, another aborted in flight with a chip light, shortly after take-off. Anyway, there were two birds left over when the 37th was gone and VNAF took over our old hangar. Six of us maintenance types, now 40th ARRS troops, went on an unofficial and unauthorized TDY with Pedro. We were to get those two last Jollys fixed and out of RVN without creating and attention. Lie low, work fast, get it done, don't be visable. I don't remember if the air crews stayed at DaNang and waited, or flew back to fly them out. It seems like the TDY with Pedro, who were a very tight knit, fun loving and cordial group, was about ten days long. Pedro was pretty much self contained. They had their own mess hall, bar, pool hall, you name it, they had it. All in one building several feet from their alert bird. Their birds had wooden wings, and when it rained covers had to be slid over them, (and removed immediately after the rain quit). At Danang (and probably most places in SEA) that ment covers on or covers off, several times a day (and occasionally a couple of days straight)

But I digress!

Old Chief Lynn

CMSGT Lynn Coffelt, NCOIC 37th ARRS Maintenance Quality Control (Do you remember when 3rd Group ordered Pedro to remove the politically incorrect picture and slogan from their building?) They wouldn't do it, and heads were to roll, but I'm not sure anything ever happened except maybe their Det. Commander had disparaging remarks in his ER. I think I remember Col. Sutton was ordered to order them to take it down, and he did, but also said he would be proud of them if they refused. Perhaps some of this story is gaining speed in my mind. What do you remember about this?

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