



THE INTAKE

Journal of the Super Sabre Society

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JOURNAL OF THE SUPER SABRE SOCIETY

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About the cover: Adapted from 20th TFW aircraft photographed in 1964. Courtesy of Tick Loitman

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The society is open to all F-100 fighter pilots, F-100 Wild Weasel Bears and F-100 Squadron Flight Surgeons. Associate memberships will be offered at the discretion of the Membership Committee. There is no political agenda although we support and respect the office of the President. There is no religious agenda although men who trust their lives to a slatted wing and a single J-57 also trust in a higher authority. There is no social agenda except to meet each other in mutual respect and admiration. We are the men who flew the mighty Hun.



Les Frazier [l], CEO; Dave Hatten, Procurement Officer; and Lee Graves, CFO, display the first check received by the Super Sabre Society. It was written by charter member Whiskey Bill Weiger.

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Editorial

By Ron Standerfer Editor and Publisher

We're In Business!!!

It was not a new idea---far from it. People had been talking about forming an organization for former F-100 pilots, or "Hun drivers" as they like to call themselves, for years. But somehow it never happened. At one point, someone suggested that Hun drivers be admitted to the F-86 Sabre Jet Society. Their answer was simple and direct. No! "Let them form their own society," their President said. Enter Les Frazier.

Those of us who know Les Frazier know that he is a blunt, outspoken man who doesn't like the word "no." If anything, it makes him dig in his heels and become more determined. "I'm going to start the organization myself," he told his friend Bill Weiger. "I think you should," Bill replied. And so he did.

The first email was modest---just fifteen addressees, mostly pilots he knew in Misawa. "I intend to find out if there are enough guys interested enough to start an F-100 Society," the message said. "I don't mean a web site where you go to look, but an organization that gets together biennially to tell lies; a quarterly magazine; accoutrements, dues, etc." He clicked "send" and at that moment, the Super Sabre Society was born. The date was January 11, 2006.

Les was skeptical at first. The dues he proposed were stiff---\$100 for charter members---but he wanted to go first class in everything we did. How would prospective members respond? "If we can just get a hundred members, we'll be in business," he confided to his friends. He needn't have worried. That first message flashed through cyberspace at an astounding speed gathering members wherever it went. Exactly eight days later, the membership reached 100, followed rapidly by 200 and then 300. On January 31st, less than three weeks after the first email was sent, 450 Hun drivers expressed interest in becoming charter members. As of this writing, the total membership is over 750.

So now that the dues have been collected and baseball hats, coffee mugs and other accoutrements have been distributed, what's next? The answer is publishing the quarterly magazine Les mentioned in his first email---and that's where The Intake comes in. It's tempting to make the magazine all things to all members---from those not connected to the internet to the most avid PIF reader--- but the Editorial Board decided to strike a balance in the first issue between the "three Hs"--- History, Heroism and Humor. If you look at the table of contents on the previous page, you'll see that's exactly what we did.

The Intake magazine is a work in progress, so we hope you will share your comments about the first issue by sending an email to editor@supersabresociety.com or by writing us at the address listed in the inside front cover. That way we can make the second issue even better. Meanwhile, there is one point on which everyone agrees. It's about time the old Hun gets the respect it so richly deserves!

For me, it all began in Las Vegas.

In the Beginning There Was The F-86

By Wally Mason

Part I. Nellis

On my way to Las Vegas from James Connally AFB at Waco, Texas, I was full of excitement. Checking into the BOQ at Nellis and checking out the base, somewhere there was a sign: "Through these portals pass the greatest fighter pilots in the world." Wow! It was early '54 and I just finished transitioning from the T-33. Meanwhile I went from cadet corporal to 2/Lt and \$105 a month to \$400, from restricted to the base to anything anytime 24 hours a day in Las Vegas. Louis Prima was in the lounge at the Sahara Hotel, and so was Don Rickles. Drinks were less than a buck and every hotel had a chorus line. All you had to do was show up and fly a couple of times a day.



Wally Mason is a Super Sabre Society charter member and a member of The Intake's Editorial Board. During his distinguished aviation career he has been an accident investigator, aviation writer, and an airline pilot.

I was in the 3496th Squadron. Whisener was the C.O., 'Boots' Blesse was the exec. Ivan Kincheloe was one of the IP's, as well as a lot of the famous names from Korea.

I got my first Sabre flight briefing and I remember one of the things my instructor said was, "When you set the trim, push the button until you get the green light and then run it forward about 4 inches," among a whole bunch of other things.

Whoa! Wait a minute. I remember reading in the book that you're supposed to set the trim by pushing the button until you got the green light, but it never said anything about doing anything else. My first real conflict. I know he's the real pro, but here it is in black and white in the official dash one manual.

On the day of the big event, my first flight, I tried to keep up with everything and when I came to the trim, I recalled the briefing and figured I'd play it safe and split the difference. So I zapped in a little forward trim, then we taxied out and headed for the runway. The instructor waved me ahead and got on my wing.

I remember another thing they said, that it really accelerates a lot faster than what I've been used to, and then I heard a garbled call on the radio and the next thing I heard was "Alright come on, let's go." The next thing I knew we're heading down the runway, and I'm trying to locate the airspeed, and then just before I'm going to start to apply back pressure, the nose starts going up, and up and up and someone's yelling "What the hell are you doing?" and I'm holding a lot of

forward pressure while this wild beast is climbing on out. I didn't know what was going on but pretty soon figured it out and the rest of the flight was just a big blur. So much for the book. I've been a big skeptic ever since.

One day they announced there was going to be an air show. A demonstration, like a confidence thing, and they released us to head for Base Ops for viewing. The show started with J.O. Roberts, test pilot for North American Aviation, and he took off in a T-28B, Navy version of our T-28 but with the hopped up engine. He took off from Ops heading west and did a roll after lift off and continued into a double Immelman. That plane really had a lot of power.

But the main event was this sleek, shiny, brand new, handmade TF-86, tandem seats with big clamshell canopy. At the time they were going around giving dignitaries world-wide the opportunity to go through the speed of sound and perhaps buy some airplanes for their countries. Joe Lynch, chief test pilot for NAA, dressed in a brown leather flight jacket, got in, cranked up and taxied west so as to take off right about where we were all standing. Although it would be a downwind takeoff, the runway was pretty long so it didn't matter. We saw the exhaust in the distance as he started his roll and then he got closer and closer. As he lifted off, the nose went up to a pretty high angle, about 45 degrees, then the gear retracted and then he started a roll and at just about 90 degrees, he paused -- at that very moment you got a sort of sick feeling -- and then he tried to

roll back out but, the nose started dropping and he never did, and then the plane just went in and there was a big ball of flame. Not a sound. That was it. I was there with Neil Fossum, and we just looked at each other and walked away.

We heard a lot of things about that. One was that he had a heart attack. Another that it was the rudder. To us it looked like he was

just too low and too slow. At one of our re-unions one of the old time tech reps was there, Swede Nutzman, he was at George and at Hahn. He told us they found that the drops were supposed to be empty but that they weren't. Lynch would have never known.

Leaving Nellis was pretty scientific. The instructor told us they got a slot in Panama City

(Tyndall AFB) flying 86D's and another at George, flying 86F's. There were two of us. He said call it as he flipped a coin. I forgot who called what but I was heading for George, and the F-100s.

Next Issue: Part II. George.

What are you waiting for? Stake your claim!

Fighter pilots like to brag and are not known for being shy---so here's your chance. Belly up to the bar and tell us what you've done in the Hun that nobody else has ever done. What if someone else has already done it, or done it better? Not to worry. You'll hear about it soon enough. In fact, we'll *all* hear about it. That's the name of the game, right? Several SSS members have already staked their claims. Here they are:

- "Fire Can" Dan Walsh claims the longest non-stop flight in an F-100 --- 6400 NM, 12 hours and 35 minutes, with three refuelings. To learn more about this world record setting flight and the pilots who participated in it, see "Operation Double Trouble" on page 6.
- Fire Can also claims the longest consecutive time period flying the F-100---11 years. He checked out at Nellis in 1955 and flew his last flight at Bien Hoa in 1966. He flew the A,C,D, and F, and no other fighter during that time.
- Although he hasn't specifically staked his claim, Bob Titus can safely say that he is the first and only USAF pilot to ZEL launch the F-100. See his story on page 10.
- During the retirement ceremony for the F-100, North American Aviation presented Jack Doub an award for flying the most combat hours in the F-100---572. To read about one of those missions see the Battle of Loc Ninh on page 14.
- Flying the F-100 was a tradition in the Icenhour family. James O. flew the Hun at Kadena in 1957-58. His son, James O. Icenhour, Jr., checked out in the Hun in 1968 before flying a combat tour at Tuy Hoa. His last F-100 flight was in 1972 when he delivered a bird to the Turkish Air Force. Unfortunately, his father died a year before he was commissioned so he didn't see his son carry on the tradition. Are there any more father-son Hun drivers out there? Let us know.
- Wee Willie Wilson claims to be the only F-100 pilot to fly the F model solo from the back seat. Well...sorta...ummm...not actually. His story is on page 12.
- Several members have ejected from the Hun twice. Has anyone done it three times? Let us know.

Read anything here that makes you want to raise the B.S. flag? Have a claim of your own? Or maybe we missed one you sent in. Don't be shy. Lay it out on the table and see if it gets stepped on. Don't forget, a faint heart never....well...you know. Send your claims to editor@supersabresociety.com or mail it to the address on the inside cover.

It's a family thing!



James O. Icenhour Sr.



James O. Icenhour Jr.

When there's trouble, get there on the double!

Operation Double Trouble

By Ron Standerfer

It began suddenly, with an unexpected and bloody uprising in the Middle East. In a matter of hours, the geo-political situation in the region had become destabilized. The question in everyone's mind was, what will the Soviet Union do? Washington didn't wait to find out. Within an hour after learning of the coup, a flash alert went out to two troop carrier wings in the States. They were to proceed immediately to Augsburg, Germany. A combat group of 1,800 paratroopers was about to be deployed to Incirlik Air Base near Adana, Turkey, and from there to Lebanon. The date was Tuesday, July 14, 1958.



Lt. "Fire Can" Dan Walsh was one of the five pilots to complete the record setting non-stop flight to Myrtle Beach, SC to Adana, Turkey.

A package of air power had to be in place before the combat group arrived in Lebanon to provide air superiority, close air support, reconnaissance, and airlift. The next alert went out to various TAC bases ordering the formation of a Composite Air Strike Force, or "CASF." The force put together

came right out of the Emergency War Plans document, including the code name, "Operation Double Trouble," as in, "where there's trouble, get there on the double." It consisted of F-100s, RF-101s, B-57s, B-66s, KB-50s and various airlift assets. It was an audacious move. In one fell swoop, American air power was about to be positioned within striking distance of every capital in the Middle East as well as the underbelly of the Soviet Union.

The message arrived at Myrtle Beach Air Force Base at 0945 that Tuesday morning. Deploy twelve F-100s non stop to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, it said. Take off time will be 1550 hours. Five and a half hours---that's all the time the pilots had to grab some clothes from home, flight plan, and brief. But somehow they made it. At 1550 hours, twelve F-100s took off and headed east. They had a 6,400 nautical mile journey ahead of them.

There were three flights of four in the deployment. Each was led by a two seater, which provided an extra pilot to navigate and handle the communications. Since many of the pilots had never made an over the water deployment, care was taken to place at least one experienced pilot each flight. The mission leader was Lt. Col. Devol "Rock" Brett.

Things were looking pretty good as the twelve aircraft passed the last landfall at Cape Fear, VA. The sun was shining brightly and everyone was throttled back to long range cruise at 30,000 feet.

Then things fell apart

Two hours later, just as it was getting dark, they spotted the tankers for the first refueling. That's when things began to fall apart.

There were supposed to be six KB-50s on station---but there were only four. Sorting all this out would take precious time and fuel. Meanwhile, one of the tankers aborted, leaving only three to work with. Any way you looked at it, there wasn't going to be enough fuel to go around. To make matters worse, there were thunderstorms and high cumulous buildups in the refueling area. After milling around in the turbulence, one aircraft got only a half a load, and another got none. Colonel Brett sent them off to an emergency airfield in Nova Scotia. But the field was socked in with fog. One managed to make it to Greenwood, Nova Scotia. The other punched out over the town of Caledonia.

Meanwhile, Fire Can Dan found himself chasing a tanker in the soup as he was making a 120 degree turn. The turbulence was bouncing the tanker every which way as Dan grimly hung on, the nose of his aircraft wobbling at a high angle of attack, airspeed dangerously low.

"I kept telling myself that falling off the tanker was not an option," he recalled. Somehow he stayed hooked up, but by the time it was over and he had climbed to 35,000 feet, he was 150 miles behind the rest.

The first refueling was accomplished at the cost of two aircraft and twenty five minutes of precious cruise time. Worse yet, there was no time to regroup when it was over. Colonel Brett's flight of four was still intact but the rest were strung out behind him in two flights of two aircraft with Fire Can Dan bringing up the rear.

Communications began to break down. Brett could talk to his own flight but not to the others. Fire Can Dan could talk to nobody. Meanwhile, the tail winds they had been enjoying shifted to a headwind. Everyone was short on fuel and concerned that they would not make it to the second refueling.

I'll circle the steamer, then eject

The next to fade was an element of two aircraft flown by Lieutenants Clyde Garner and Anthony Zielinski. Flying in the weather with no reliable navigation aids and no communication with the others, they calculated that they had ten minutes of fuel left. Convinced that he would have to punch out, Zielinski made a Mayday call and began to descend into the darkness below. Shortly thereafter, Garner spotted a bright red glow in the water. Certain that his squadron mate had crashed, he descended and spotted a tramp steamer. I'll circle it until I run out of fuel and then eject there, he decided.

But Zielinski was alive and well. The red glow Garner had spotted was from an active volcano in the Azores, not Zielinski's aircraft.



Miraculously, Zielinski had obtained a DF steer from nearby Lajes Field. The two aircraft joined up and limped into Lajes, landing on the fumes. Immediately after landing they rushed out to buy a bottle of bourbon for the tower operator who had given them the DF steer.

The remaining aircraft were hurting for fuel by the time they reached the second refueling point. Things would have to go well, or more aircraft would have to divert. Things didn't go well. It was a repeat of the first refueling, only worse. The weather down at refueling altitude was "delta sierra" with heavy turbulence that bounced both the tankers and fighters so severely that it was almost impossible to refuel. To make matters worse, two of the tankers ran out of fuel. Colonel Brett and three other aircraft couldn't get enough to continue, and diverted to Lajes. "Try to form a single flight," he advised the remainder before he left, "and push the tankers east."

And then there were four

For the remaining aircraft, it took an agonizing ninety minutes to refuel. During that time Fire Can Dan finally caught up with the others. When it was over, the four aircraft soldiered on into the night, joining up with each other as they went. An hour later, the sun came up and they spotted the coast of Spain and Portugal off in the distance. A local GCI site gave them a positive fix on their position. The pilots were elated. Water bottles were drained, and lunch boxes were broken out. It was the first time they'd had a chance to eat or drink. "It was a big moment for us," Fire Can Dan said. "I remember that guys were singing Oh What a Beautiful Morning and The Rains in

Spain on our discrete squadron freq."

When the flight arrived at Incirlik they decided to make a statement. Joining up in a crisp, tight, diamond formation, they made a low pass over the runway before making a lazy turn into the traffic pattern. But there was one more surprise left. As he turned on to final approach, Fire Can Dan saw that the aircraft ahead of him was about to land gear up! A quick radio call sent him around, but Fire Can Dan had to go around too. "It was just what I needed," he commented later, "another five minutes of flying time."

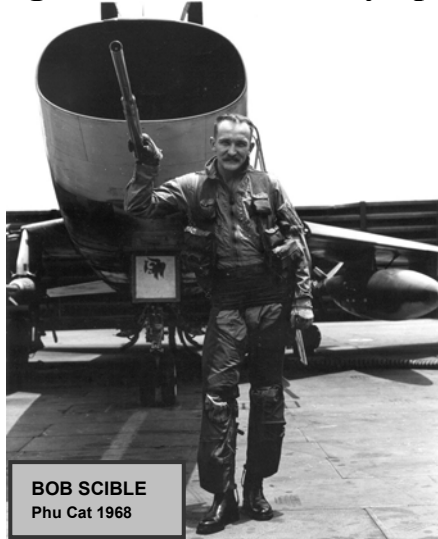
The adventure ended as many deployments do with the "final four"---Captain George Branch and Lieutenant Russell Youngblood, who were in the F model; Lieutenants Craig Fink and James Cartwright; and, of course, Lieutenant Fire Can Dan Walsh---sitting outside at the Officers Club in Incirlik savoring juicy hamburgers and knocking back cold beers. During the night they had flown nonstop from Myrtle Beach, SC in twelve hours and thirty five minutes from takeoff to touchdown, with three refuelings. They were the first to arrive and in doing so, had set a world time-distance record for an operational flight under non-simulated conditions. Another ho hum day at the office!

And the Middle East crisis? While the Russians growled and threatened, and the Arabs complained, a special envoy from the U.S. arrived in the theater to sort things out. He was able to speak softly because 1,800 paratroopers and a CASF had delivered a big stick---right to the negotiating table.

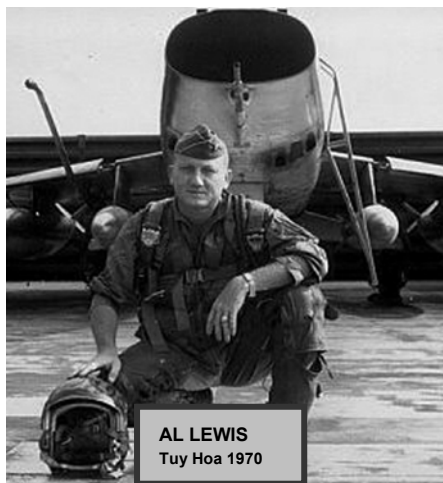
Ron Standerfer is a charter member of the Super Sabre Society, a former Misty, and the Editor and Publisher of The Intake magazine. His latest novel, *The Eagle's Last Flight*, chronicles the life of an F-100 pilot and his family during the Cold War years and Vietnam.

The Way We Were

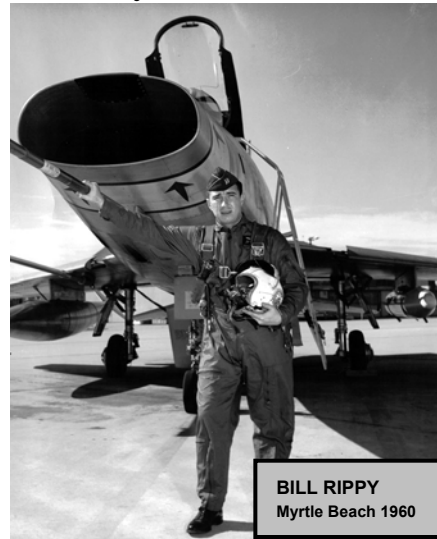
We were forty years younger and forty pounds lighter; and always ready to kick the tires, light the fires, and belly up to the bar at happy hour. Those were the days!



BOB SCIBLE
Phu Cat 1968



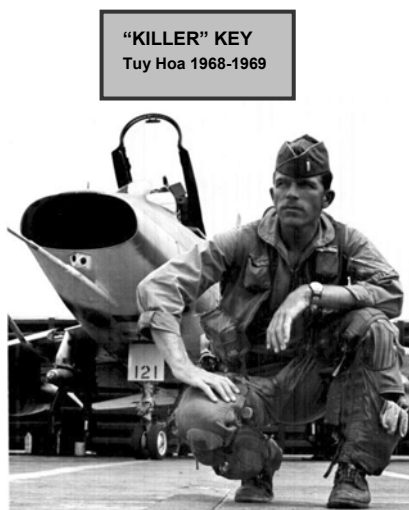
AL LEWIS
Tuy Hoa 1970



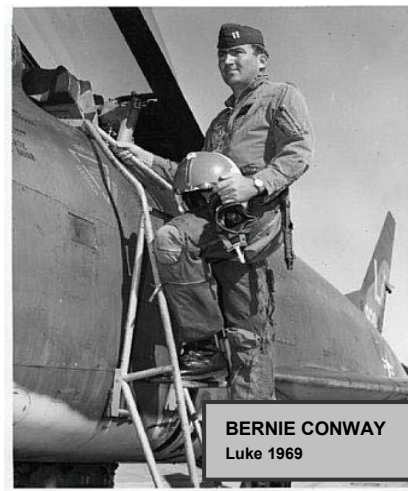
BILL RIPPY
Myrtle Beach 1960



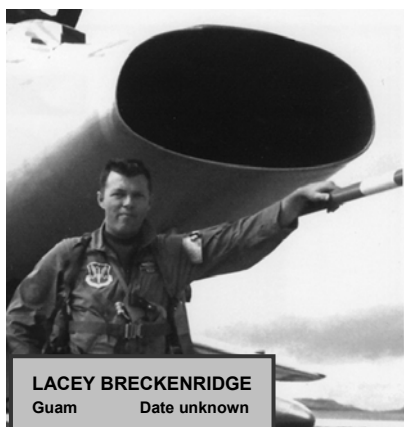
DENNY CORDERO
Misawa Early 1960s



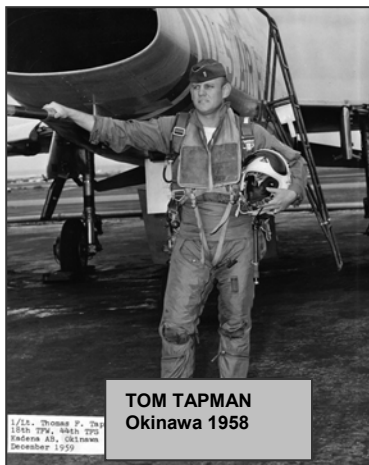
"KILLER" KEY
Tuy Hoa 1968-1969



BERNIE CONWAY
Luke 1969



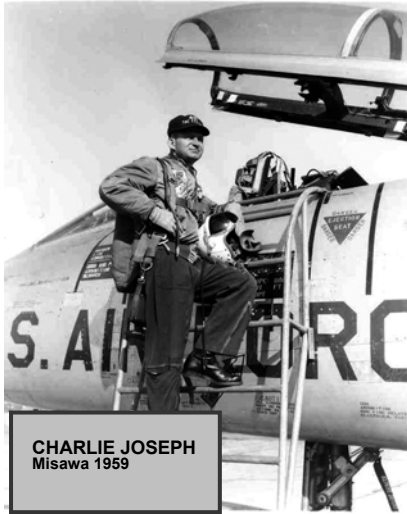
LACEY BRECKENRIDGE
Guam Date unknown



TOM TAPMAN
Okinawa 1958



DON NICHOLS
Ramstein 1959



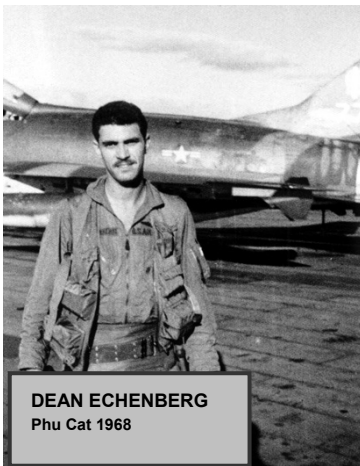
CHARLIE JOSEPH
Misawa 1959



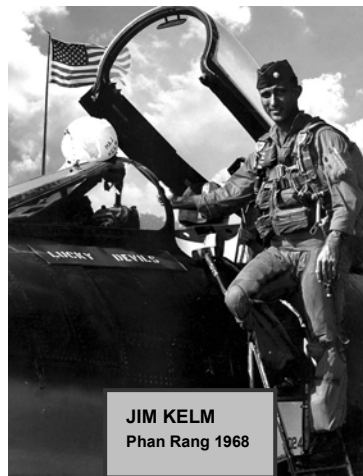
CHUCK MACGILLIVRAY
Myrtle Beach 1957



GORDIE PETERSON
Cannon 1963



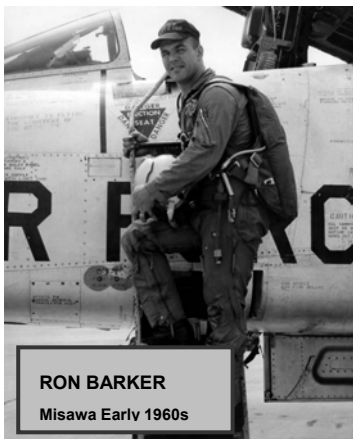
DEAN ECHENBERG
Phu Cat 1968



JIM KELM
Phan Rang 1968

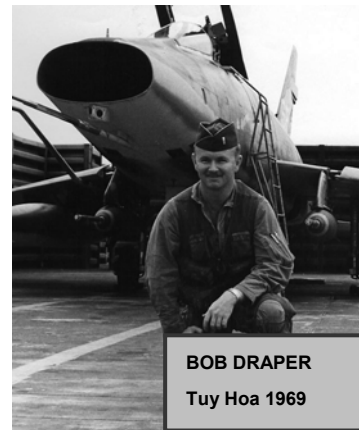


RUSS VIOLET
Misawa Early 1960s



RON BARKER
Misawa Early 1960s

MACK STAPLES
Phan Rang 1968



BOB DRAPER
Tuy Hoa 1969

If we didn't print your picture in this issue, don't worry. We plan to continue printing "hero pics" in The Intake as long as readers send them in. If you would like to have your picture printed in the magazine we ask that you follow two simple rules: 1) Scan the picture and email it if at all possible to our photo editor, Wally Mason [wallybird@iqmail.net]. Our scanning capabilities are limited, and exchanging pictures in the mail takes time and money; and 2) make sure the focus of the picture is you, not the aircraft. Sometime after the first of the year, all pictures submitted will be placed in the hands of a group of discerning, but anonymous ladies who will choose twelve lucky Hun drivers to be featured in a calendar that will be distributed at the first Super Sabre Society reunion. Ed.

He stepped out of the car, climbed into the cockpit, and zero launched right in front of the crowd.

Bob Titus “ZELs” The Hun, In Public!

By R. Medley Gatewood

For those of you who don't know about this small slice of Hun history; or did know, but can't recall it anymore, here's a tale that deserves to be told---with some twists that echo from and between other memorable adventures of true single engine, single seat fighter pilots.

What the Heck Was “ZEL?”

In the mid-1950s, NATO officials became concerned with the possibility that Soviet nuclear weapons could obliterate Allied aircraft sitting on the ground in a surprise attack, leaving NATO powerless to retaliate. One of the potential cures for this problem was to disperse aircraft in hardened shelters far away from targeted airfields, and launching these aircraft by rocket propulsion from special platforms when the balloon went up. The concept was known as Zero-Length Launch or ZEL for short. An excellent article called “Runways of FIRE” by Ed Regis about this extensive program is in a 1995 issue of Air & Space Magazine at

<http://www.airspacemag.com/ASM/Mag/Index/1995/ON/roff.html>.

Check it out.

The F-100 was one of several aircraft types to have a ZEL program attached to its basic procurement contract. In a nutshell (from the above article), on October 12, 1956, a contract change stipulated that two F-100Ds (56-2904 and 56-2947) were to be loaned by the USAF to North American Aviation (NAA) for tests of the proposed F-100 ZEL system. In order to launch the F-100D, NAA's Rocketdyne division developed a solid-fuel rocket motor that would be attached to the bottom of the rear fuselage. This engine was capable of delivering a thrust of 130,000 pounds for four seconds.

This was sufficient to accelerate the F-100D from zero to 300 mph in that time frame. Following burnout, the rocket motor would drop off the aircraft, leaving the Super Sabre free to fly.



The first live launch of an F-100D took place on March 26, 1958. On that day, NAA's test pilot Al Blackburn climbed into 56-2904, started the engine, pushed the throttle to full afterburner, then lit the rocket motor by squeezing the trigger. Within four seconds, he was flying at 300 mph. The rocket booster dropped off, and Blackburn entered the standard pattern and landed safely.

On his second flight, things did not go so well. After burnout, the rocket motor would not drop off the aircraft and Blackburn was forced to eject. However, the remaining 18 of

the 20 total live launches were incident-free.

A postmortem of the second flight revealed that the booster had gotten hung up on the attachment bolts, which were supposed to shear off but failed to do so. The next test aircraft was equipped with a redesigned booster attachment system featuring explosive bolts that could be detonated on command. After that, there were no problems of any consequence. Between March and October of 1958, North American performed 14 successful launches, often making one flight per week.

The whole procedure became so routine that after flying many test support missions (including chase on Flight 2 on which the single failure occurred), the ZEL Air Force Project Officer and test pilot (then) Major Bob Titus flew a public demonstration of the concept during the first Air Force Worldwide Weapons Meet (Project William Tell, 1958) hosted at Nellis Air Force Base. Extracurricular activities on a stand-down day included a fire power demo and the ZEL demo event, both conducted at the Indian Springs Auxiliary field.

On this first public F-100 ZEL demonstration, Titus executed an aileron roll after burnout. "I thought of doing it as I came off the launcher," he recalled. "It was a four-second rocket burn, and when the rocket fell off, I just did a roll. It's only every now and then that you get to shine in front of a

crowd." Such a modest and published public statement like that is remarkable for a Charter Super Sabre Society Member. But maybe it wasn't the whole story?

A Tale of Two Witnesses

The Intake received inputs from two eyewitnesses to this historic event: Gene Tatro and "Fire Can" Dan Walsh. Gene reports:

"The 1958 William Tell team from Seymour Johnson AFB was lead by Colonel Tim O'Keefe and ably assisted by Larry Guarino, Captain Jeffries, and the now famous Garry Willard. Colonel O'Keefe told Garry he could go wherever he wanted in Las Vegas as long as he stayed within fifty feet of him. I was along as head Gofer, dart tow pilot, high speed rag pilot, and flying judge for some events. Our team was in the stands to watch ZEL demo. As you can imagine, we all wanted to observe Bob Titus do his thing.



R. Medley Gatewood is a SSS Charter Member and is on the Intake's Editorial Board. He flew a combat tour in the F-100 at Bien Hoa in 1967-68, and was an instructor pilot at Luke AFB.

Eventually, a staff car drove up and out stepped Bob. We could tell he was anxious to go because he did

not preflight the plane but rather, climbed right into the cockpit, fired it up, and zero launched it right off the flat bed trailer that brought it to the show! It all looked pretty uneventful from the stands. I'm sure he was ready because he was still at the club when I left the night before."

Gene failed to report, didn't see, or has forgotten the aileron roll described by Bob's published statement above, so maybe he was at the club pretty late too? Read on for "Fire Can" Dan Walsh's report.

"Bob Titus, Garry Willard, and I were gathered at Nellis for the 1958 William Tell gunnery meet. The day before Bob was scheduled to do his difficult and dangerous ZEL trick, the three of us sauntered into town for dinner (after the Club stint reported by Tatro) and a bit of frivolity. Well, one thing led to another, and before you knew it (sleepless days and sleepless nights – been there, done that), it was time to catch a helicopter to take us to the ZEL launch site. We jumped into our flight suits, boarded a helicopter and arrived at Indian Springs, having to wake Garry, who was taking a "combat nap." As we strolled toward the ZEL launch site, Garry remarked "Bob, you know we had a few drinks last night. Do you think you really ought to do this?" Without hesitation, the reply from Bob was, "For Christ's sake Garry, you don't think I'd do this sober, do you?" Which just goes to show that the closer you get to the main characters, the more accurate the story.

Editors Note: Although the several ZEL systems were reliable and relatively simple to operate, they were never deployed operational. Still, they remained under consideration for years.

The War Zone in a Nutshell

By Jack Doub

The first night I spent in the big war was in the 90th Squadron bar at Bien Hoa. The place was crowded, the drinks were flowing, as I met my new comrades in arms.

Suddenly there was the loudest "BOOM!" I'd ever heard, followed by a loud "SWOOSH!"

I flinched - visibly - but not another soul in the bar seemed to notice! Soon-to-become-dear-friend, Frank Loftus a.k.a. J. Fred Muggs, was apparently the only person to notice my discomfort. He stepped over and commented, "ARVN one-fifty-fives. Just down the street harassment fire. They do it every night."

"Oh." I nodded with a gulp.

"Besides," he continued, "That was "bam-whoosh. Outgoing. That's good." "Now, " he continued, "whoosh-bam" on the other hand? Incoming. Very, very bad!"

"Remember, "bam-whoosh - good; "Whoosh-Bam - bad!"

Never was a complicated situation explained more simply than J. Fred Muggs did that evening.



Jack Doub is a SSS charter member and is on The Intake's Editorial Board. He flew three tours in Vietnam, including eighty two missions with Misty. When the F-100 was retired, North American Aviation presented him with a plaque for flying more combat missions than any other F-100 pilot--572.

I was the only pilot who ever soloed the F-100F from the back seat...well...sort of.

“Wee Willie’s” Back Seat Solo

By “Wee Willie” Wilson

Hi! It's me...Willie. Don't know if you've heard of me or not. I was the gifted master of pulling pranks and making mischief throughout the civilized world. (Well, actually....I managed to fool and hoodwink some pretty 'uncivilized' types too---usually Navy or Army pilots). Needless to say, my practical jokes didn't bode well for my military career. I have Article 15's with oak leaf clusters! Where it counted, though, was amongst my fellow fighter pilots. My pranks took the heat off of them! I was their champion. I was their hero. I liked that!

In 1961, I was a young captain assigned to the 80th TFS at Itazuke Air Base, Japan. It was there that I became part of aviation lore as THE ONLY fighter pilot to ever solo the F-100F from the back seat! Honest, it's true! Well...um...sorta. Let me explain.

My immediate superiors (the flight commander and the D.O.) tried to watch me closely or tried to get me transferred, but I out-foxed 'em. For some strange reason the really BIG guys - the Birds and Stars - liked me a lot. I think maybe they pulled a few jokes in their day. This story centers around Col. Bill Daniel, the wing commander at Itazuke. He liked me. I liked that!

One morning, Col. Daniel stopped by our squadron. Four or five other pilots and I were hanging around the ops counter throwing the bull back and forth. We all hit a brace when the ops clerk called the room to attention.

"At ease, gentlemen - I'm here to see Capt. Wilson," he explained.

Whooo - did my stock ever take a climb! The Wing King was here to see me personally! Or...maybe he caught me at something! Wonder if he found out

about last Friday at the stag bar...or...maybe someone ratted me out about my last cross-country.

"Willie, do you have any plans this weekend?" he wondered.

"No sir, not that I can recall at the moment, sir!" I respectfully replied.

The Colonel continued, "Good! How would you like to fly me to Tainan Air Base tomorrow? After you drop me off, you can take the plane and go wherever you want."

Yahooo! A free ticket to go cross-country anywhere I want!! I liked that!

There's gotta be a catch to this - it's too good to be true. Oh - I know - he wants to catch the Gooney bird shuttle up to Hong Kong to do a little duty free shopping. Time to cash in on this, I thought.

"How about I go to Clark AB, sir?" I responded.

The Colonel countered sharply, "Willie, you know Clark is off limits to you! No way."

Ahhh - as I looked in his eyes I knew that he knew that I knew that...well, anyway, I decided to have some fun.

"Well, sir, just thinking,- maybe I do have something to do this weekend...and...ah..."

My fellow fighter pilots stood there with their mouths agape!! Here was a mere captain busting the chops of a "full bull." Col. D. loved the back and forth give-and-take we always did together.

"O.K. Willie, just have the aircraft back for Monday's schedule," he said.

Scenes like this always furthered the legendary tales of Wee Willie and boosted my standing amongst my peers. I liked that!

The flight to Tainan was

uneventful. Colonel Daniel, of course, took the front seat (he never flew in the back seat - even on his instrument check). After landing, Col. D. asked if I was able to taxi from the back seat.

"Of course sir, it's very easy. Do you want me to taxi all the way in?" I asked.

"Willie, the Gooney Bird is over at base ops and getting ready to go. I want you to keep the engine running, drop me off there, then you can taxi over to the alert pad on the other side of the field for a quick turn-a-round for your cross-country. I'll take my chute and helmet with me since the Gooney Bird is going back to Itazuke tomorrow," Col. D. responded quickly.

Ah ha! I knew he was just going shopping in Hong Kong. What did I care? Whatever made the Colonel happy was fine with me. It would give me more time to fool around at Clark. I liked that!

I enjoyed taxiing from the back seat - it's something that's seldom, if ever, done. If anything ever happened, I could always say the Colonel told me to do it. As I taxied into the alert pad, it dawned on me that the crew chief was unaware that I had dropped off the Colonel on the other side of the field. An idea for a monstrous prank began to form in the back of my brain. This could make my reputation soar amongst the enlisted ranks - the crew chiefs and mechanics that knew the '100 so well. I liked that!

A lone crew chief started to give hand signals to guide the aircraft to its parking spot. I kept my helmet and mask on so he couldn't see me laughing and guffawing. As I got closer, the chief stopped dead in his tracks, dropped his jaw and froze. THERE WAS NO PILOT IN THE FRONT SEAT! He chocked the aircraft, threw a ladder onto the front canopy rail and scrambled up to assist the pilot who was probably slumped over in his seat. The expression on his face was priceless! I knew this was going to be one of my best jokes. I liked that!

I nonchalantly continued with engine shutdown and disconnecting from the seat while he just stood at the top of the ladder with his mouth open.

He finally came to and questioned, "Sir, did you fly in the rear seat all the way from Itazuke?"

With my best dead pan expression, I replied, "Yeah, sure, why do you ask?"

"But...but. why did you fly it from the rear seat, sir?" he stammered.

"Well, I'm an instructor pilot and all IPs are required to make a back seat landing every 30 days to maintain currency. Today was my 30th day, so I decided to get it done on this flight," I explained as I casually climbed down the ladder.

To set the hook, I started to fill out the -781 with only my name as being on board. This was the official aircraft log. I had him. This was great! I liked that!

"Are you going to be continuing on sir?" asked the bewildered Sergeant.

"Well, I thought I might try Hong Kong, or Saigon, or maybe Guam - I hear they have a hell of a Mongolian Barbeque at the O Club," I countered, in an attempt to look like a real off-the-wall, carefree fighter pilot.

The crew chief rolled his eyes and finally let out, "Will you be flying in the rear seat again, Sir?"

"Nah," I replied. "I filled that square. Killed two stones with one

bird on this flight. Time to go have some fun."

After I started for the alert operations building to visit with some old buddies, I noted the crew chief heading for the maintenance shack. He couldn't wait to tell his fellow crew chiefs about this CRAZY fighter pilot! I liked that!



Gail "Wee Willie" Wilson is a charter member of the Super Sabre Society. During his long and colorful career in the Air Force and Air National Guard, he flew in numerous F-100 squadrons including the 80th TFS in Itazuke AB Japan. He was an IP in the Tucson F-100 CCTS until that unit converted to the A-7. By then, he had logged over 5000 hours in the F-100.

On entering operations, I spotted my 'ol buddy Capt. Chuck Stamschror and 3 other Hun pilots I knew from Clark. I quickly gathered them around and told them about the 'back-seat solo' story. They soon were rolling on the floor laughing so hard they had tears in their eyes. I checked out the window and, sure enough, there was my crew chief with five other maintenance guys, pointing at my airplane, gesturing wildly and then pointing toward operations. I'm sure the other crew chiefs were not buying his story - it was impossible! Preposterous! Can't be done!

"Hey Guys", I whispered, "the crew chiefs are heading over here to see for themselves. Let's

keep the story going! I'll be famous!" We all started giggling and chuckling like a bunch of 8th graders who'd just gotten their first feel at the sock hop. I liked that!

The group of non-believing crew chiefs gathered around me like I was a god on a pedestal.

Their spokesman, a grizzled master sergeant calmly asked, "Sir, one of my chiefs says you came in that bird SOLO in the BACKSEAT! Is that true? That's never been done. It's against all the rules."

My good buddy, Charlie, jumped in and said, "No, Sarge, TAC is the one that won't allow it - we here in PACAF got a waiver last year. It's in our ops plan 'Bent Arrow'." (What a good bullshitter Charlie was!)

Another non-com piped up, "But Sir, the F-100F can't be started from the back seat. How do you explain that?"

"I had the crew chief press the button for air and bring the throttle around the horn for me. You guys ARE qualified to start the engines, remember? It was easy," I fibbed.

At that, I knew I had them by the short hairs! The confused group of crew chiefs retreated from ops in a cluster of bafflement. An hour later, my jet was fueled and ready to go. The entire group of (former) non-believers were on hand to see me off. The icing on the cake was when Charlie had ten of the squadron pilots (including two majors and a light colonel) stand at attention to salute me as I taxied out of the chocks.

Have to admit, it was one of my best pranks. I was famous! I liked that. I liked it a lot!

Wanted: Old Fighter Pilot Flicks

Wee Willy is gathering up all the old "Fighter Pilot Flicks" and will publish them on DVDs in approximately the Fall of 2007 (at cost). If anyone has or knows where to find any old VHS or movies about the Hun or Hun pilots, E-Mail him at: F-100jock@earthlink.net.

How two pilots on a routine mission made history in SEA

The Battle of Loc Ninh

By Jack Doub

Lou Daniels and I were sitting alert with wall-to-wall bombs when the horn went off. Scramble, Dice! Within minutes we had launched into a dark and stormy sky over III Corps near Tay Ninh Mountain. It was 1967 in South Vietnam.

We were scrambled for a "Skyspot" mission, meaning that we would be radar vectored to a release point and then drop two Mark-117's "slicks" with each pass. For the Hun drivers of the 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron, (call sign, Dice), missions like this were routine. The night and bad weather would probably provide the only excitement.

After our first "sky dump", the controller broke in with a request. There was a "hot troops in contact" up near Loc Ninh and they desperately needed our strafe. "Can you give it a shot?" he asked. We reminded him we were the Dice, and yes, we could! This lemon to lemonade mission might get real, after all.

After our final bomb run, we were vectored to our Forward Air Controller, Rattlesnake 30. I started my glide toward the rendezvous and joined Lou up tight on my right wing.

The FAC told us that the weather was "delta sierra" and that F-4's from Cam Ranh and Huns from Phan Rang had already tried to get under the soup and gone home. But the fort was under fierce attack from "thousands of troops" so, would we stay? We were the Dice. We would!

I briefed Rattlesnake that Loc Ninh was a fort we had studied at Bien Hoa in order to be ready for

night missions. We were familiar with the layout and terrain. Surrounded by hills, it was situated about sixty-five miles slightly northwest of Bien Hoa with an elevation of five hundred feet. I figured we could work under low clouds if we could find the place. We had lots of gas and with our two-gun option could give the short bursts the FAC needed. I suggested the best in-run would be up the road from the south, just east of the fort. We could give him eight passes.

Lou and I briefed a left 90-270 after shooting from south to north, then a right break and reverse going north to south. Rattlesnake briefed us to get the first burst right on the base of the fort, if and when we got VFR. The bad guys were at the wall and our guys were going into bunkers!

As we ticked off the miles, Lou fell back to get spacing and I called five-mile hacks. Ten miles out I sucked it up and pressed down, looking, looking. Three thousand--- nothing! Two thousand---zip! Eighteen hundred--- nothing! Remembering that fifteen hundred would be one thousand feet AGL, I watched fifteen hundred tick past. Then I caught a flash of something. Was that the ground? A hill? I leveled a bit and glimpsed a glow ahead for the first time! It was a truly unbelievable sight. Tracers arced through the blackness, flares drifted down through the scud, and white explosions were going off everywhere. I stabbed the power to hold four hundred knots rather than usual four fifty to hold down our turn radius.

I picked out the four-pointed fort, moved the pipper, rolled into a slight bank to get the nose down, put the pipper at the base of the wall and hosed a quick half-second burst. Then I pulled up sharply, banked a hard left and climbed back into the soup.

"Lead's off, left!" I called.

"Great hit!" The FAC said. "Two, same place."

"Roger, that," responded Lou, somewhat laconically. Good old Lou, always calm!

I fought vertigo as I racked the bird around on the gauges, leveling at two-thousand feet or so. "I've got to relax," I told myself. I was grasping the throttle so hard my hand ached. Meanwhile, Lou was calling off left while the FAC was going able-sugar over his hits. I called in and poked the nose down. There it was again ---an amazing panorama of tracers, explosions, smoke and people. I could actually see the bad guys streaming out of the rubber plantation and moving toward the fort. There were thousands of them! I tracked a split second and fired another controlled burst---a short one--- right at the base of the wall. "Lead's off right," I called.

"Great shooting, Lead!" the FAC said enthusiastically. "Two, move your strafe just off the wall, maybe twenty meters!"

"Two's in...., roger, twenty meters east," Lou said.

I fought the bird through another hard 90-270, listening to Lou's progress and trying to figure the perfect spacing for the modified butterfly pattern we had going.

“Lead’s in from the south, Snake. Target?”

“Dice 01, put your strafe right on the wall, maybe a bit into the fort!”

“Lead, roger. Are our guys all in their holes?”

“Roger that, lead. You’re clear. There’s a log flare inside the wall!”

It almost seemed the weather was clearing a bit. I lined up for a shot along the wall and squeezed off another short burst.

“Excellent! Dice, two ...same place, same place!”

I listened to Lou’s calm voice as the FAC slowly began pulling us across the clear area toward the rubber trees. The bad guys were pulling back!

Snake broke in, “Can you guys come back?”

“Roger, that. We’ll be back in forty-five after the turn-around! I’ll call ahead for CBU and napalm for the next load, okay?”

On our last pass I selected “four guns” and fired out. By then, the bad guys were in full retreat. “Lead’s off straight ahead, RTB,” I called. Lou came up on radar frequency and we hustled back to Bien Hoa.

The alert pad was abuzz with activity. Guys were crawling all over the airplane even before they started pushing me into the revetment. Everyone knew something big was going on. An intel guy even showed up for a personal debrief, along with the Wing D.O.

Entering the glide for Loc Ninh again, the FAC was explaining the bad guys had regrouped and were moving towards the fort. Ground fire and mortars were intense. Just as I broke left after pickling the first nape, I heard Rattlesnake call it “right on” and ask Lou to put his CBU to the right of the burn. Racking the bird around in the soup was getting easier. We had put nape

on the wall and another on the rubber trees. Now we were systematically covering the open area in between, walking the CBU over the trapped troops. In the turn I fumbled with the armament switches, going from napes to CBU. We had an “other than official” method of fooling the switches (a.k.a. boogering), so only one wing would release at a time, since we wanted multiple passes. I wondered for the millionth time how any cockpit designer could put all the armament switches so far back on the left console--- a sure route to vertigo!

The bad guys were in full flight now, bugging out through the rubber trees, back to their sanctuary in Cambodia. We sprayed our 20 mm along their path, a few hundred meters wide. Several times I noted heavy automatic weapons’ fire coming from the fort. The grunts were out of their bunkers now, and firing, but always away from our flight path. As we started out final attack, Rattlesnake cut in. “How about high drags and nape for another mission? Are you up to it?”

“Back in another forty-five!” we called, and headed home. As I gazed ahead at the lights of Saigon, it suddenly hit me. I was tired. But the ground crews did their usual magic and after a quick trip to the john, a cup of battery acid that passed for coffee, filling in the crew chiefs, and a quick debrief, we were off again.



Photo courtesy of William Hayes

On the last mission it was napes and high drags

The first pink light of dawn cracked the otherwise dark horizon as we started our letdown. Sporadic automatic weapon fire spurted out while mortars popped their sparkling white lights in the rubber trees. We dropped our high-drags singly, along a contiguous line that stretched for a mile or so. Then we wheeled around for four nape drops along the same route. Finally we were out of ordinance and it was time to go.

Snake was holding west of the fort and I asked if the troops could come out of their bunkers. He rogered that. I took the bird down over the fort at 450 knots, lit the burner, pulled straight up and did a few snappy rolls for the beleaguered grunts. Lou, of course, followed with his encore performance. “The grunts are going able-sugar!” reported Rattlesnake. “Stand by for BDA.”

Our combined BDA was impressive: an estimated 400 KIA, plus numerous mortars and automatic weapons destroyed. Snake claimed our first flight had broken the attack. Later, we read in Time Magazine, that Loc Ninh was the first major use of North Vietnamese regulars in the South. They chose the isolated fort as their target and had ten to fifteen thousand troops poised on the Cambodian border.

We loafed along, going home. Something great had just happened to us, something unforgettable. I glanced across at ole, casual Lou. He had shucked off his mask and had a cigarette in his hand. He gave me a little wave and a thumbs up. I returned the gesture. The Battle of Loc Ninh was over.

He gave a new meaning to the term "snakes and napes."

Ramrod

By Mark Berent

"Hey, guys," said Beaver 72 as he placed a very large cardboard box on our Ops counter, "I brought you a present."

Now, Beaver 72 was a FAC from IV Corps who flew a fine O-1 airplane, had great eyes, and had brought us presents before.

We were F-100 pilots of the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron, stationed at Bien Hoa Air Base in South Vietnam. Our call sign was "Ramrod." The year was 1966, and, although we had been in-country for only a few months, we all had well over a hundred missions. Many of our sorties had been in IV Corps' Delta country, and naturally we had gotten to know the Beaver FACs by their individual call signs. Frequently they would fly up to Bien Hoa where their parent organization, the 504th Tactical Air Support Group, was located, to get their O-1 Bird Dog planes worked over. Then we would get to know them personally; they would fly with us in one of our two-seater "F" models, and we would fly with them in the back seat of their O-1s.

Those FACs were a hardy lot who were given an airplane, a maintenance man who doubled in weapons, a small strip, and a very large portion of South Vietnam to patrol daily. Sometimes after a particularly successful battle, they would fly up to Bien Hoa to present us with gifts from various AFNV units or maybe from the Province Chief himself. Our squadron walls bore such items as VC flags (real), an AK-47 or two, battle unit insignia, and other flotsam/jetsam trophies fighter pilots are so wont to collect. In those days, we were living in tents, the squadron was our home, and we were proud to decorate it with such things. So we

were pleased when Beaver 72 showed up with what obviously had to be a very large and important addition to the collection.

Beaver 72 assumed an air of benign altruism as we all crowded around the Ops counter. Someone opened the box and peered in. He didn't peer long.

"GOOD GOD ALMIGHTY!" he bellowed as he went straight up and back about four feet.

Stunned, the rest of us froze in place. I recall thinking, "Good grief, you don't suppose he brought in some heads, do you?"

Then a very green, very large snake rose majestically from the box and calmly surveyed the stupefied onlookers.



Ramrod and squadron mate Ron Barker circa 1968

That was how we received Ramrod, our beloved, unfanged rock python who grew from his five-foot length the day Beaver 72 brought him in, to nearly twelve feet when we lost him through, we were sure, some very foul play. All any of us then knew about snakes was that they were slimy creatures that could poison you, eat you, twist your bones, crush you at their leisure, or,

in other words, generally give you the willies for days. Snakes were among God's vilest creations and always had your worst interests in their dark, cold hearts.

Fortunately, we had some farm lads in the squadron who knew a lot more about nature life than we city types. Of course, even they hadn't really encountered anything much larger than a bull snake, which may account for the fact that the first cage built for Ramrod would have held King Kong in his wildest frenzy. But we were learning.

We learned, for example, that Ramrod would eat only every two weeks. He would eat, sleep for several days, awaken, deposit a large, white, odorless plaster-of-Paris-like lump, and then shed his skin. After that, he would take a swim, then prowl for days before he was hungry again. It took a while before we got to know Ramrod's cycle, so at first we tried to feed him live rats trapped in our tent area. We thought he ought to eat every day or every couple of days at least, like a normal human being, so we put the rats in his cage and expected him to gobble them up. After their initial terror, wherein they jumped eighteen inches straight up once released, the rats raced around having a great time. As they scrambled over Ramrod's body and nibbled at this agitated tail, our fierce snake would recoil and look quite pained about the whole indignity. Then one morning there weren't any rats in the cage. There were, instead an identical number of bulges in the sleeping snake's belly. So we got to know Ramrod's dietary habits.

Vern Nordman, for some now forgotten reason, became our Snake Control Officer. He and a few of his

cronies would ensure that Ramrod's needs were well cared for. Vern built him a swimming pool out of several large barrels he halved and welded together. Vern also showed us how to carry Ramrod. One simply slung him around the neck like an old flapper-era fur boa. As Ramrod became longer, one would merely take two turns around one's neck and torso with his body. It was the only practical way.

Peripatetic Python

One day I was pedaling my bike by the BX with Ramrod curled around me. With a turn round by neck, his tail snugly wrapped about my chest for balance and stability, we cruised with his head about two feet forward of my right arm as I pedaled along. He liked to move his head gently up and down in the breeze, sample the air with his black, rubbery, forked tongue, and benignly survey all we passed. It so happened that as I came up to the BX, one of those big deuce and a half Army trucks was parked in front, disgorging about fifteen or twenty GIs. I drew abreast of them on the road, maybe five feet out from the truck. When they saw Ramrod, they froze. Some had been climbing down, some jumping the last two feet, some hanging. And they froze. We just pedaled on by, Ramrod and I, well aware of the impression we created. Ramrod turned his head, tracking the troops as we glided on down the road.

Things were always happening to Ramrod. As he outgrew his cage, we gave him the complete run of the building. He had the whole squadron area to slide around in. Under counters, in the rafters, behind desks, along the molding high up the walls, it was his place. By that time we thought nothing of it and were happy. He kept the place free of rats. Of course, it was somewhat disconcerting to a visitor to have four or five feet of inquisitive snake, tongue darting, suddenly hang from the rafters to check out the newcomer.

Shortly after 3:00 o'clock one black, rainy morning, Ramrod somehow crashed out of the squadron. The roads were muddy and unlighted. Ramrod evidently grooved down the road to the only light showing, a Vietnamese guard shack. Vern got a frantic call from the Air Police and raced down to the area on his bike to find the terrified guard standing on top of his shack pointing and gesturing at Ramrod, who was curled up watching the performance. Vern casually slung Ramrod around his neck and pedaled off in the dark. The guard stayed on top of his post the rest of the night.

Often we wouldn't get out of the squadron until late in the day. By the time we made it to the Officers' Club, the long plywood horseshoe bar would be crowded with wing weenies cashing in on Happy Hour. We soon found how to make room right up front for our squadron. Two or three pilots would slip through the crowd, one behind the other, up to the bar. Then we would feed Ramrod through the crowd much like a fire hose to the lead man, who would then change our mascot's direction ninety degrees and slide him flat out along the bar. We could always count on Ramrod's length for bar space.

Ramrod Goes to War

One day we decided Ramrod should have a combat mission. I believe it was Ken Smith who said he would take him along on his next sortie. Now the cockpit in the F-100 isn't all that big, and just where would you stow a ten-foot snake, anyhow? Ken had it all figured out. He crammed Ramrod into a parachute bag, zipped it shut except for a few inches so the snake could breathe (a great mistake, he was to find out), and pushed the whole thing behind his head, up along the canopy and took off. Everything went just fine at first. The climb-out was smooth, Paris Control got the flight squared away with the FAC,

the FAC marked the target, and Ken rolled in.

The first pass was dive-bomb, and evidently Ken pushed a little forward stick as he lined the pipper up on the target. That bit of forward stick gave just enough negative G force to cause old earthbound Ramrod to go berserk! The next thing Ken knew, he was plunging down in a screaming dive, on target to be sure, with ten feet of very panicked snake all over him, the cockpit, and the instrument panel.

Ken did the only sensible thing; he aborted the run. He then slammed in the afterburner and pulled sharply up laying about six Gs on Ramrod, which, of course, glued him wherever he happened to be which was all over Ken and the cockpit. Ken got off a garbled radio call to the FAC about going through his run dry and that he would be out of the pattern for a while. I mean, how do you tell a FAC you have a ten-foot snake in your cockpit?

Ken zoomed up to 25,000 feet or so and dumped the cockpit pressurization.

Ramrod went quietly to sleep from lack of oxygen, giving Ken the chance to stuff him back in the bag. This time he zipped it completely shut. He poked the bag back above his head, repressurized, and got back into the war. So Ramrod got his mission, leaving Ken not quite convinced of the python's potential as a pilot.

The war became long, and so did Ramrod; longer and, we noticed, more docile. His tracking, aim, and launch after live, scurrying food no longer seemed quite so precise. In fact, some of his attacks were downright out of phase. He'd miss, look very embarrassed, and try again. (Yes, Virginia, a snake can look embarrassed. It's all in the way he curls his body.) Brain damage, we said. Ramrod must have received brain damage from lack of oxygen on his one and only combat mission. We talked about some sort of decoration or medal for him, like a Purple Heart. We gave that up

since we didn't know just where in the world we could hang the thing.



Mark Berent served in the Air Force for more than twenty years, first as an enlisted man and then as a fighter pilot. He has logged 4,350 hours of flying time, over 1,000 of them in combat. He has five books out; *Rolling Thunder*, *Steel Tiger*, *Phantom Leader*, *Eagle Station*, and *Storm Flight*.

Foul Play

As Bien Hoa was built up, our squadron moved into a new building down on the flight line. We also got a new commanding officer about that time who was totally convinced that snakes were ugly, slimy creatures that could poison you, eat you, twist your bones, crush you at their leisure, and always had your worst interests at heart. In other words, he was terrified of Ramrod. So the word went out no more snakes running loose in the squadron area. Build a cage for Ramrod.

We did. We built a cage that would have done the Los Angeles Zoo justice. It was large about ten by ten by six, had sand, a little swimming pool, and was very airy. The door was man-sized and had a firm lock in place. To no avail; Ramrod didn't crash out...somebody put the spring on him.

We came to work one morning and Ramrod was gone, door open, lock hanging. Someone wanted him

gone. We searched for days, with no luck. Since everybody at Bien Hoa knew Ramrod was missing, we anxiously waited for the usual call saying he had been seen. Many times Ramrod had gone off on expeditions of his own, and invariably Vern would get a phone call saying to come and pick up your damn snake. Not this time.

Then, late one dark and stormy night, Vern received a call from the Air Police Desk Sergeant. A guard in the ammo dump, he reported, had spotted Ramrod among the stacked cases. Vern and some friends happily tore down there armed with flashlights. In the black of night they slopped through the mud to where a slightly terrified Air Policeman was pointing with his light at a foul place, dripping and full of spider webs.

About four feet back, through a small space between stacked-up circular munitions cartons, Vern saw Ramrod's tail. Only one thing to do; lean way in, arm and hand outstretched along the hole, head bent, shoulder up against the cases, rain dripping down the neck, and blindly feel around for a tail to pull. Vern reached, groped, and finally grabbed hold of the reptile's tail, the best method of hanging on since, without its use, the snake couldn't anchor himself.

Vern tugged mightily and got a few feet of tail assembly stretched out along the narrow channel. Enough, in fact, so he could back off to see and use both hands. For some reason, Ramrod seemed quite perturbed about the whole operation. He thrashed, tried desperately to crawl further back, pulling his aft section and Vern in behind.

It was a long struggle, and Vern was rapidly losing patience with his green friend. The snake thrashed on, squirmed, and started hissing, something he rarely did. Vern got angrier and meted out a healthy swat. Cussing and sweating, he gave a tremendous heave that brought the

snake boiling out, only to reveal that it wasn't Ramrod.

Well, that new snake never did quite catch on to our way of life. He hissed and churned all over his cage and never seemed to enjoy himself as much as Ramrod had. It didn't really make any difference, for one morning we came to work and, as with Ramrod, the cage door was agape, lock hanging, no snake. We caught on: There Will Be No More Snakes.

So Ramrod, the First, wherever you are, here's to you! Vern, Ron Barker, Bob Graham, and all the rest of us Hun jocks who flew the green Delta country with "Ramrod" as our call sign salute you.

May you crank in enough mils, compensate for drift, and bore sight so your aim is right on, and may you live a long life.

Do You Remember?

The following was sent to The Intake by charter member Hal Hermes:

"Back in maybe the late 70s, early 80s, a couple of guys in the Tucson guard did an F-100 nostalgia piece called "Do You Remember?" This was a little while after they had transitioned into the A-7. Most of it was one liners about the little, day to day stuff, like the sometimes "chug" taking the active, followed by the Guide Vane Anti-ice light, laying on your back on the ramp to shut the drag chute doors. I had a copy for years but can't locate it now. It was great! Parts or all would be perfect for the magazine. At least one of the Tucson old timers is sure to have a copy."

If anyone has a copy of 'Do You Remember?' and would like to share it with our readers, please contact our story editor, Medley Gatewood
[rgatewood@comcast.net]. Ed.

Humor in the Air

By Jack Hartmann

A light approach, in plain language, for questions about commercial or military planes, pilots, or aviation.

Q: Back in the days when I was an F-100 IP, we were allowed to choose our own call sign. Do they do that today? Do airlines use 'call signs'?

A: Several airlines chose to go thru the mountain of paperwork to use call signs: America West used "Cactus", Pan Am used "Clipper" and British Airways uses "Speedbird". Kinda' boring, eh? On the other hand, would you put your mother on an airline named "Killer", "Dynamite" or "Smoke"? Imagine their sales pitch: "Dynamite trips to exotic destinations!!" Then of course, there is Hooters Air. Imagine the ATC controller keeping a straight face and saying: "Hooters 44, (whew!) what is your ...ah... (cup size?)...position, over. (hee hee..snork..gasp*)

Fighters use call signs out of necessity - they're short, snappy and make for quick reactions (that's the call signs - not the pilots!). Imagine if they didn't: "November four two zero alpha bravo three niner lima, you have a MIG at your 6 O'clock 1 mile and closing...I think you'd better turn - over." It would be better to hear: "TALON - BREAK LEFT - NOW!"



Jack Hartmann has been an aviator for over 44 years – Airline Captain (TWA), Corporate Pilot, Sky Marshal, Fighter Pilot (USAF & ANG), General Aviation pilot (CFII) and Asst. Professor, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. With over 5000 hrs of single-sea fighter time, his favorite remains the F-100.

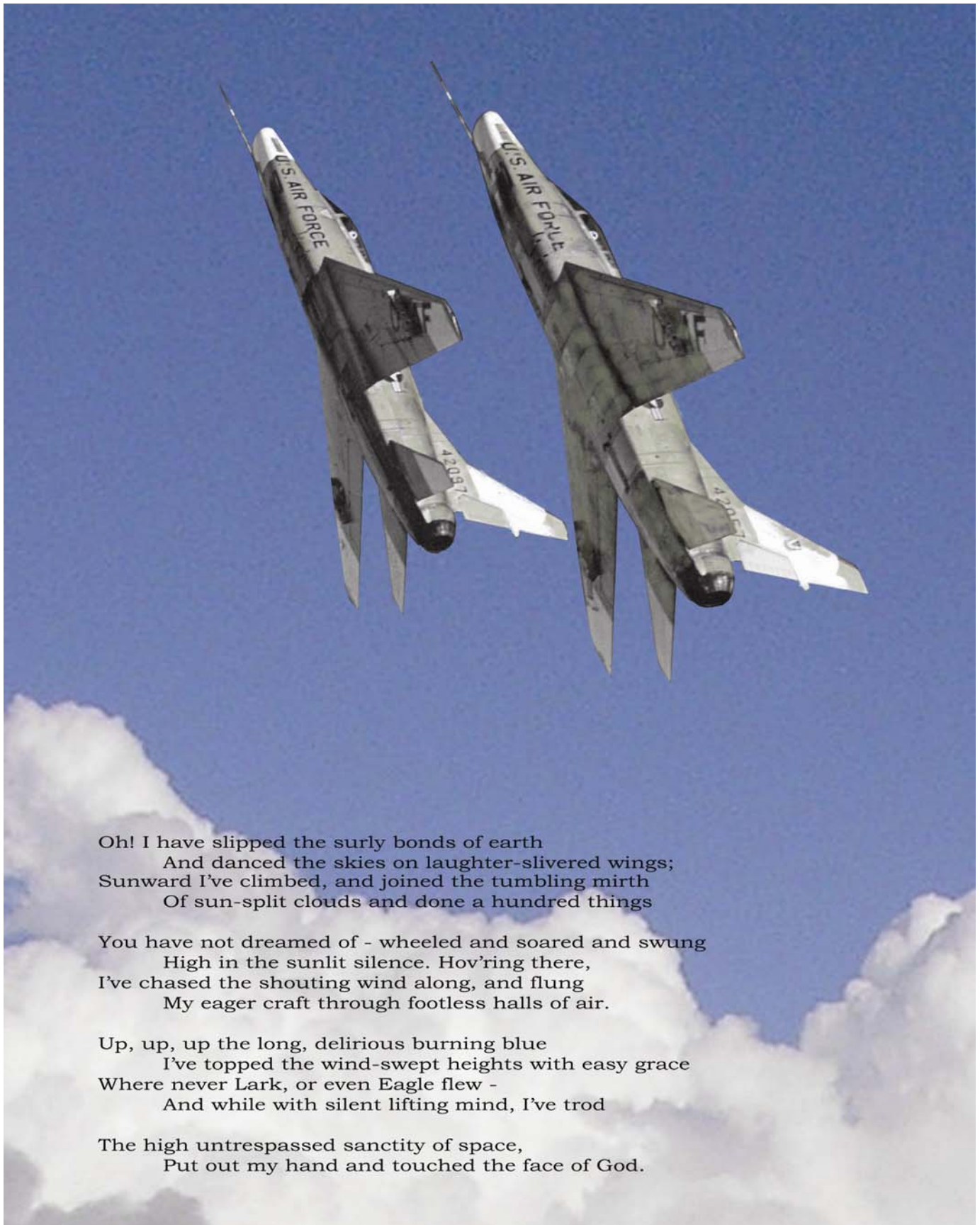
Most pilots try to pick a call sign that sounds fierce and aggressive (Maybe we'll scare the enemy?) At my squadron in Tucson there was: BADD OG, MAVERICK, BEAR, JACKAL (mine), COYOTE and MOOSE. (Sounds like a zoo and it was). After a combat mission wouldn't a pilot like to hear the whisper as he swaggers into the bar: "Here comes ZORRO - man did he kick some butt on today's mission?" On the other hand, who wants to hear the commander order: "OK - I want LILAC, WIMPY and ROSEBUD to take out that SAM site while PETUNIA and GOOFY fly top cover." Doesn't give you a lot of confidence, does it?

Some pilots are "given" a call sign because it fits them so well: DOC (had a PhD), DUMPY (he was that), TOAD (no comment), BEEFEATER (his favorite beverage), SALTY (last name Morton), and STUMP (I'm not tellin').

We weren't allowed to pick a call sign that might be misunderstood. Imagine if someone chose the call sign of "REJECT" and the controller clips off the first part of the transmission: "EJECT 2, do you read me?" BOOM - there goes the number 2 man ejecting from his perfectly good airplane! By the way, we weren't allowed to use parts of the anatomy either.....(except for Wee Willie who managed to sneak one thru... I'll let him tell it!)

I chose Jackal because my first name was Jack and it caught my attention right away. The dictionary says "Jackal": (1) A wild dog that travels in packs and eats animals that have been killed by others. (2) One who collaborates in the commission of base acts. (Whoo Hooo!) BTW - the MOA near Tucson is now named the JACKAL MOA.

All you Hun drivers: send me your former call sign and why you chose it (or why it was given to you). My email is jrhartmann@msn.com. Or send us call signs you've heard in your squadron. We'll pick the best of the best and publish them in a future article.



Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-slivered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds and done a hundred things

You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.

Up, up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never Lark, or even Eagle flew -
And while with silent lifting mind, I've trod

The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

"High Flight" was written by Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (1922-1941). An American/British fighter pilot in World War II, who went to England, flew Spitfires with the No. 412 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and was killed at age 19 on December 11, 1941. Photo courtesy of R. Medley Gatewood. It was taken by "Big D" Simmons and enhanced by Wally Mason.