

The Intake

Journal of the Super Sabre Society



December 2006
Issue Number Two

The Intake

December 2006, Vol. 1, No. 2

JOURNAL OF THE SUPER SABRE SOCIETY

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356 TFS - "Green Demons" Myrtle Beach 1964 Photo: Herb Meyr.
Cover design: Wally Mason



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Story Editor	R. Medley Gatewood
Photo Editor	Wally Mason
Editorial Board	Jack Doub Bob Krone Jack Hartmann
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Graphic Designer	Sara Gosselin



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Professionals deserve a professional organization.

Notes from the President

Well here's the second edition of The Intake and once again our publication team, headed by Ron Standerfer, has done a great job --- a professional job. And that's the goal we are trying to achieve in all SSS endeavors, but more about that later.

First, I want to thank Les Frazier for starting the SSS ball rolling. If he hadn't taken the advice of Jerry Johnson, the president of the F-86 Sabre Jet Society, to form our own Hun Society, we all would have missed out on renewing old friends and remembering the wild and wonderful times we had flying the Hun. Personally, the SSS and particularly the PIF has brought me back to the Air Force and allowed me to reestablish contact with many old, and I do mean old, friends.

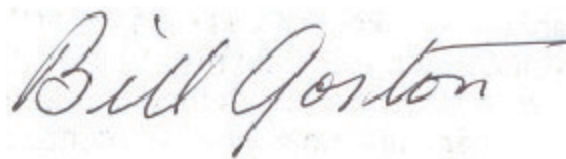
Speaking of the PIF, the 'Too late, too late' multiple message problem has been put to rest. Ron Doughty, our Web Master, has unloaded and stowed the SSS Shotgun. It has been replaced with Nukes messaging. Using Nukes as the vehicle for mass message transmission will eliminate the shotgun message problems. But in order to use Nukes you must sign up for it. All it takes is going to our web page (supersabresociety.com) and clicking on Nukes. Skip all the commercial offerings and they will then send you an email to put you in their system. All you have to do is answer it and you can get Nuke messages. Now the problem is that only a couple of hundred SSSers have sign up. If you want to get any messages destined for all SSSers, such as Les Frazier's monthly SSS updates, you have to have signed up and then go to our web page to get the message. OK, I'll admit this all seems overly complicated but anyone who could fly the Hun and survived should find this to be a piece of cake.

We have been working to put the SSS on a professional foundation and so far, thanks to Les and others, we are well on the way. One of the major tasks we have undertaken is to develop a sound set of bylaws. We are in the final stage of review, and we should have them approved by the Board of Directors by next month. We'll then distribute them to the membership for approval. We can do this at the first annual meeting in Vegas or possibly via email before the meeting --- that is if we all sign up for Nukes! (See above for simple instructions.)

Regarding the Board of Directors they be three --- me, Les Frazier and Jack Van Loan. The great Hunster in the Sky --- whoever that is? --- anointed us from on high. Or to put it another way, we be interim. That is one thing our bylaws will solve once they are approved and published. They will provide for the nomination of and voting for the real Board of Directors.

And finally, we are now somewhere near 900 members. As an example, the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association is at 1,800 and declining. Now we Hun drivers, Bears and Flight Docs must far out number the 86 drivers. So let's get with it. Spread the word and every member get a member. Let's see if we can double our membership by the time of our first annual meeting in Vegas next year. And by the way, it's 10-12 April. (See pages 13 & 14 for more details.)

Cheers and Check 6.



Bill Gorton
President and Founding Member



Incoming

Letters to the editor

I really enjoyed our first issue of The Intake. Good Show! Your article "Operation Double Trouble" brought back a lot of memories about F-100 ocean crossings, particularly those with KB-50s. In the spirit of fighter pilot "one-up-man-ship", there was a later and longer non-stop F-100 ocean crossing made with KC-135s and 8 in-flight refuelings (4 at night), in which I had a front row seat. This one was made during the winter over the North Atlantic Polar route with pilots wearing the God-awful poopy suit (which directly contributed to the death of Gene Lexion by inflating through the neck ring during his high speed bailout en route). An excerpt from the 31st Fighter Wing History follows:

"Aviation history was made by the 31st again when the 308th Tactical Fighter Squadron flew 6,600 miles non-stop from Homestead AFB to Cigli AB, Turkey, on 8 February 1964. This was the longest mass flight of jet aircraft across the Atlantic using in-flight refueling. For this effort the wing was recognized with the TAC's Outstanding Fighter Wing Award for 1964." The pilots that completed the flight were awarded Air Medals, which was a really big deal at the time. The pilots were: Colonel Frank "Spot" Collins, LTC Alfred King, Captains Russ Schultz, John Varnum, Dick Mason, Jim Field, Glen Cheney, Billy Vinson, Dick Suhay, Earl Richmond, Don Risser and Jack Gilchrist.

- Dick Mason

Really enjoyed the first edition of The INTAKE magazine and your article about the ZEL (Before my time in TAC). The pictures are great and the stories are wonderful, giving me new insight on the pilots who endured all in the fight for our country. The Luke historian may have info on a program called : "It Happened to me". A Luke Wing commander in the '60's wanted fighter pilots to report anonymously some scary incident that could have led to a crash; what happened, what caused it, and how did they recover. I don't know if there were any reports recorded, but if there were, it might be interesting reading in the INTAKE.

About call signs- I remember a Captain Davis who had the call sign of ARMPIT, and of course you know PLAY-BOY. I recall a flight to Cannon from Luke, right after they assigned call signs-yep, the copilot's (Bud's) call sign was really LILAC. My flying these days is relegated to commercial flights, though I did have one exciting flight in a glider over the desert here in the Tucson area. Brad Sharp who lives in Casa Grande, Arizona, has offered a ride in his plane. Hope you will be able to attend the Fighter Pilot Reunion at Luke on 30 September. If you are not on the mailing list for the party, e-mail Gary Blake, SSS member.

- Bud Stoddard

The first issue is a real winner. You've done a great job putting it all together and have some really great articles from the drivers. I want to raise the BS Flag on one item. I think I have Fire Can Dan beat on the longest consecutive flying period in the Hun. I checked out at Luke in late 1958 and had my last flight during the summer of 1971 at Lakenheath, about three months short of 13 years. Can't quite match him on the longest flight, but can come close along with a full squadron of Hun drivers. The 352nd TFS flew from Myrtle Beach AFB to Hickam AFB in 1967. I don't have the actual distance, but we hit the tankers six times on the trip of 10 1/2 hours.

Keep up the good work. I can't wait for Issue Number Two.

- Leigh Holt

This may be a unique event, so here it is for the book. While over Lake Taal in the Philippines watching the volcano erupt, I bounced a Navy A-3, who promptly turned into me---much to my surprise, and then with me at his six, extended a hose and probe. Well, what the hell, so I hooked up. Has anyone noticed how all the probes on Navy birds are bent up and then forward. I found out when I rode in a foot or two that my canopy was about six inches below his fuselage. I didn't take on any JP-8 since it would have required a hot section inspection; plus I wasn't that comfortable, not having radio contact or knowledge of this jock's proficiency in smooth flight. Great magazine and looking forward to Vegas! Cheers,

- Tom Godfrey

Stake Your Claim

By Ron Standerfer

Well it happened. Just the way I said it would. A few brave souls bellied up to the bar and made their claims, and a horde of golf shoe-wearing readers stormed in, ready to stomp on anything that was exposed. It was not a pretty sight. Here's where we stand:

- The claim that drew the most incoming, twelve in all, was made by Fire Can Dan Walsh who claimed the longest consecutive time period flying the Hun---eleven years. He wasn't even close. The hands-down winner so far is Bob "Root Beer" Hires who flew the bird for just short of fifteen consecutive years. He started at England AFB in August of 1957, followed by; Misawa, England again, Vietnam, Luke, Wheelus, and Lakenheath. His last flight was June 1972. By the way, he was in the 416th TFS for five and a half years which he thinks might be a record for being in one squadron. Any takers?
- A few readers failed to note the word "consecutive" and therefore, responded with some pretty impressive claims. Obviously there's a lot of guys out there with a lot of Hun time! So, what if there was a category for the most non consecutive years flying the Hun? Who would be the winner then? So far, that would be Charlie Friend who flew the bird for over thirty three years starting at Luke in 1968. After twenty years in the Air Force, he worked for several contractors as a Hun pilot flying drone and target tow missions. His last F-100 sortie was in October of 2002, ferrying the bird from Decimomannu, Sardinia to Witmund, Germany after a deployment to supply target tow services for the German Air Force F-4s.
- Dick Mason posted a new claim for the longest non stop flight. He participated in a KC 135-assisted deployment that covered 6,600 miles and lasted eleven hours and forty minutes. See his letter in the Incoming section for more details. I believe claims involving the use of jet tankers should be in a separate category, since plunging into the murk at night over the North Atlantic with questionable navigation equipment to find a KB-50 not once, but three times, is a whole different ball game than making the trip on the wing of a KC-135.

- One of our readers, while unsuccessfully challenging an existing claim, came up with an interesting one of his own. Tom Godfrey says he may be the only Hun driver to hook up on a Navy tanker. Details of this feat can also be found in the Incoming section.
- Speaking of interesting claims, read R Medley Gatewood's story on page 24. Has anyone else flown a Hun with winglets? Let us know.
- I felt certain more SSS members who were father and son F-100 pilots would check in since Issue One, but none have. Are the Icen-hours really the only ones out there? Also, I am still looking for that rare and unlucky Hun driver who's punched out of the bird three times. I have a feeling he's out there somewhere.

Well, that's it. There have been very few new claims so far considering we have almost nine hundred members. Are we really all a bunch of pussies, or are we just too lazy to step up to the bar? Time will tell. Send your claim to ron3930@hotmail.com or mail it to the address listed under the table of contents.



"Do You Remember" – Found!

On page 18 of Issue One, we relayed Hal Hermes' recollection of a missing nostalgia piece called "Do You Remember?" It was created by a couple of Tucson Guard guys, and we asked if anyone had a copy of it to share with our readers. Shortly after publication, Charter Member Randy Steffens stepped up to the plate and provided exactly such. Sure enough, this historical relic is filled with exciting one liners about the little, day-to-day stuff that made being a Hun Driver "special." Watch for snippets from time to time in this and future issues. Attaboy Randy! Maybe Randy's possession of the last known copy should be in the Stake Your Claim Department too, 'cause we haven't heard a peep from any of the old Tucson Guard gang yet? *Story Editor*

George was the focal point of all new planes--- tested at Edwards, built at LAX, and assembled at Palmdale.

The Golden Years---George Air Force Base, 1954

By Wally Mason



Wally Mason is one of our earliest Hun drivers having checked out in the F-100A in May 1955. He 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 airline pilot.

Part II: Enter the F-100A

When I first got to George from Nellis in June 1954, it was in a state of flux. The 479th Fighter Day Wing was made up of two groups; the 479th and the 21st. Colonel George Laven was the Wing CO. The 21st was scheduled to transfer to France in a few months to bases at Chambley, Etain and Chaumont.

My group, the 479th was made up of the 434th, 435th, and the 436th Squadrons. The Group commander was Craig Dixon. I was assigned to the 434th led by Bull Harris, and the Ops Officer was Charley Lind. The 436th was scheduled to be the first unit in the Air Force to get the Hun. It was supposed to be in September, but we heard there were problems with stability and not sure when it would arrive.

After the 21st Group left, they were replaced by the 413th Fighter Day Group which consisted of the 1st, 21st, and 34th Fighter Day Squadrons who were going to get the new F-86H models.

Before the birds came, about seventy brand new 2/Lts showed up at the 413th waiting for the start-

up. They shipped about fifteen of the old ex-Korean guys from our group over to help crank them up. Ralph Creighton was the new commander. Steve Bettinger, Pete Fernandez, Stack Gately, and Robbie Risener were among the other guys that went over to help out. Our group got some of the new guys to replace the old heads. Bob Thorpe and Al Beuelman came to our squadron. Cool guys.

There was a big scramble on base to get these guys their flying time, and so the base Gooney bird and T-bird were kept in constant use.

At the time, Joe McConnell was TDY to Edwards from the 436th, testing the 86H model. He crashed in August 1954 trying to nurse an H home after losing control of the stabilizer. We heard that a bolt was missing.

There was a great funeral for him with caissons, an Air Force band, all units on base in the marching procession, and the missing man flight formation.

At the far east end of the ramp was the famous Hat in the Ring 94th Fighter Interceptor Squad-

ron. They were flying the 86D's and were scheduled to get the F-102s.

George was the focal point of all the new planes at the time. The Air Force tested them at Edwards, built them at North American at LAX, and assembled them at Palmdale.

This was the era of "Every Man a Tiger" and everything in the sky was fair game---all the fighters around including anything that happened to be passing by. When things were scarce over George we'd head over the hill to Miramar at San Diego for the Navy with all of their new planes.

The Huns finally got to George on 1 October 1954. They went to the 436th Squadron and I don't really remember much activity. Just a few guys got rides in them. And then shortly after that on 12 October, George Welch went in during a high speed, high G test. There was a couple more crashes and they were grounded. As I understood it, it was the ninth crash. They were putting new tails on them. All I heard was that the plane seemed to be pretty unstable.

Several months later we were

sent to Palmdale to ferry some of the planes back to George, and I talked to a NAA production test pilot named Smith. He was the guy who bailed out of a Hun going supersonic, and we were told he really got beat up. He mentioned that Welch's idea for the test was to get the 'G's fast rather than a slow acceleration, for less strain on the body, and in doing so Smith said he thought that created a gyroscopic yaw and exacerbated an already unstable condition. With the small rudder it never achieved stability. Rather, it got more unstable until it literally came apart. The official report mentioned that Welch was in a yawed state when he rolled in and never recovered. Either way it was an unstable bird.

After the grounding we kept busy chasing after all the new stuff on the base. The 86H was a good bird, a lot of power and it could out climb our F models, but it just couldn't turn with us. And with new guys flying it was not a good match. The same with the new F-102s, especially with new guys in them. It was survival of the fittest and a good learning process. Of course the same thing happened to us when we did eventually check out. At first, we'd go after everything in the sky, including T-6s. There was lots of talk in the bar about someone nabbing a Hun. It turns out that every plane in the sky could out turn a Hun so eventually we started learning that we'd better keep our speed up.

We finally got the bird about six months later. I was supposed to go first but the weather went down that day – we had minimums of ten thousand feet and ten miles visibility at George. Consequently, Bobbie Bagshaw, a class-mate who came from Nellis with me, was the first 2/Lt to do so. He got a write-up in the NAA newsletter. Bob Thorpe was the second by thirty minutes.

Meanwhile, there was a slot for Stead survival school and guess who got it? Me. Two days slopping through the mud in the escape and evasion part and then nine days in the High Sierra's on snow shoes with temps of 20 degrees below zero. All I learned is if you punch out in the mountains – you're going to die. No problem. Just get under a tree and go to sleep, because you're never gonna fit all the layers of clothes I had into a plane. Or the snow shoes.

I finally checked out on 24 May 1955. I hadn't flown for 6 weeks. The only note I had on the first ride was a hairy take-off.

Later in the day we were scheduled to ferry some 86's to Sacramento. I was on some guys wing and he kept checking the fuel as we kept climbing, and then pretty soon he pointed out Sacramento and said you're on your own. We glided in and called out Minimum Fuel and landed with about 300 lbs.

After about twenty rides we were set up for a night check-out. Don't forget we were "DAY" fighters, and night time in the desert was not fun. I noticed in my log book that in that one hour flight, thirty minutes was day time and thirty minutes was night. Just the right amount of night.

I think that it was on a Friday when one of the other new guys in the squadron, Al Beuelman, was scheduled for night flying the next night. He was kind of a hot rodder, and a wise-guy. He drove a motorcycle and scared the hell out of me riding on it. Even though we were both 2/Lt's, I didn't detect the proper amount of respect from this newer guy.

I remember one time after we checked out a "wing" type came to our squadron for a flight. I was on his right wing. Just after we broke ground---we couldn't be more than 400 feet---someone said "Number two check your 4 o'clock".

I looked back and here was somebody coming at me from



Some ladies come out to check out the competition. George AFB, circa 1955

I flew three more rides in May and four in June. Planes in commission were hard to come by and everybody was trying to get checked out. In July the flying got to be more steady.

above.

We had sort of a rule that if the lead didn't protect the wingman you were on your own. So we went round and round. I found out later it was Beuelman.



A "short tail" F-100A on the ramp at Nellis.
(Photo courtesy of Curtis Burns.)

As I mentioned, Al was scheduled the next night. He told me his buddies in Redondo Beach wanted him to come on by and he was going to give them a show. I went into L.A. for the weekend and didn't think any more about it.

On Sunday the papers in L.A. reported "Sonic Boom Blasts Southland!" and about all the havoc it caused. Crying and weeping and windows broken and ceilings cracked etc. I was anxious to get back to George.

Not a word, but there was a release from the Base: "Folks, the sound you have just heard was The Sound of Freedom."

And there was nothing more. Way to go higher-ups!!!

That was 26 July 1955. On 30 July, I was one of the guys from our squadron to go on another TDY – this time as a detachment from the combined group – about thirty guys and planes for an operational exercise called Operation Hot Rod. It was at North Field, South Carolina, kind of an auxiliary airfield right near Pope AFB. Ten thousand feet of runway – period! Zero facili-

ties and just flat dirt and a million gnats. They put up tents for all the "buildings", and that was our home for thirty days. I wound up going there on a C-124 along with all the other new guys while the old heads flew down. But once there, the missions were great. I guess they were dreamed up by the guys from Eglin and they included every kind of mission.

A cross country and then a one time strafing pass, then they set us up to be bounced by 86H's and every day another type of mission. And every time we ended a mission, it was a free for all to see how you could beat up the field or put on your own personal airshow. A lot of fun.

Major Stanfield was the detachment commander. He was a cool guy, one of the ops officers from the 436th.

At the beginning during one of the early briefings, Major Stanfield finished up with, "Alright Guys, let's let the people know we're here."

Everyone picked a different city or town. I picked Asheville.

Ka-boom from about 40,000 ft!
Again the papers were filled with Sonic Blasts and Terror!

And again – "Folks, what you've been hearing is the sound of freedom!"

And then it happened. Someone blinked. The Air Force said it would start accepting claims for damage to houses. And it never stopped. And that was the beginning of the end.



Departures

The following SSS members have left us. They will not be forgotten. Our sincere condolences to their families.

Jim Hiteshow
Feb 2006

Frank Street
March 2006

Ken Tobiason
March 2006

Jim Sharp
May 2006

John Regan
July 2006

So that we can continue to honor our fallen brothers, please provide departure information to The Intake as soon as it is known.

The rescue crew had to play it by ear---But somehow they managed!

The First Successful Rescue of a Hun Pilot in SEA

By Ron Bigoness and Jay Strayer

Editor's Note: Search and Rescue (SAR) stories have always had a warm place in the hearts of aviators. This one will be a special story for F-100 pilots because it's about the first successful combat SAR for a Hun driver at the beginning of the Vietnam era. The tale is told by two eyewitnesses--- the downed F-100 pilot, Ron Bigoness, and the rescue chopper pilot, Jay Strayer, both Captains at the time.



The aged HH-43B was scarcely qualified for hostile SAR ops, but it was all they had.

Ron Bigoness' Story

My squadron, the 615th of the 401st TFW out of England AFB, was the first TFS to operate in North Vietnam (NVN) and Laos. We were TDY to the Philippines in June, 1964, when Lt. (jg) Everett Alvarez, the USN pilot, was shot down in Laos; thereafter becoming the very first US aviator POW in SEA. Shortly after that event, several of us flew "retaliatory" strikes in Laos near the Plain-of-Jars. That '64 TDY provided most of us with our first taste of combat.

The 615th returned to SEA in March, 1965. This TDY sent us to Da Nang, South Vietnam. On March 31, 1965, I found myself leading one of the very early "Operation Rolling Thunder" missions headed up North. My two-ship flight's mission that morning (call signs Panther 10/11) was a weather recce for the strike flights scheduled for that afternoon. The target for the strike package was on the bor-

der between NVN and Laos at the northern end of the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail—a place called Mu Gia Pass.

When we arrived at altitude in the target area, there were multiple layers of clouds below. Descending through the layers we finally got under the broken ceiling at about 1,500 feet. We set up our weaving recce formation headed toward the pass, individually jinking like crazy. But as fate would have it, I was immediately nailed in the tail section by automatic weapons fire.

"I'm hit!" I called out to my wingman, Lawrence "Dutch" Holland. "Yeah, you're on fire, Lead! You better get out!" Dutch replied.

"I ain't getting out of here yet. This thing is still flying!"

My immediate concern was maintaining aircraft control. Somehow, I was able to get the nose headed up before the flight controls froze, and the good old Hun eventually climbed to about thirteen grand. I still had trim control, but soon all systems failed, and every red light in the cockpit was flashing.

The heading remained between 200–220 degrees, sending me toward the nearest friendlies. The right wing was on fire, and there were small explosions in the aft section; but that J-57 just

kept on churning! As we topped out, the airspeed fell off, and the nose dropped below the horizon as the old bird tried to maintain the "trimmed-for" airspeed of around 400 knots. About then, with frozen controls and throttle, I was just a passenger riding a roller coaster. But as long as I was getting further and further away from Mu Gia Pass, I was more than willing to go along for the ride ... with good ol' Dutch in chase.

As we descended through about 8,000 feet, the speed and lift increased, the nose rose, and we climbed back to about ten grand. However, as the next descent began, the aircraft started a slow roll toward the inverted. Either rolling or upside down, I knew the nose would never come above the horizon again. It was time to leave. But I knew the leaving wouldn't be easy because I was doing about 450 knots, nose down, and upside down—well out of the safe ejection envelope.

I raised the ejection handles which blew the canopy and ejected. Upon hitting the slipstream, my helmet was torn off along with my kneepad and other unsecured objects; and, worse yet, my right arm was jerked out of its socket. Then came the chute deployment. It looked like a streamer because of the high speed, and I just knew that was gonna be the end. But

suddenly the streamer ballooned into a “good chute,” albeit one with two adjacent panels blown out. Those missing panels compounded my concern about my impending penetration of the rapidly approaching, triple-canopy jungle.

Meanwhile, Dutch had watched my ejection, seen the apparent streamer, and noted the two blown panels. He also saw the stricken bird go in, leaving a long flaming scar on the ground. Dutch circled until he saw me disappear into the vast jungle, and wisely marked the range and bearing of that spot in reference to the wreckage, having figured out rough coordinates for both. Then he climbed for maximum endurance altitude and got on the horn with the initial “May Day” call. The SAR effort was about to begin.



Ron Bigoness flew the Hun at England AFB, Aviano, DaNang, Clark AB and Phan Rang. After being shot down in 1965 he returned to Viet Nam in 1968 for 220 more combat missions for a total of 250. He was also an F-100 IP and a maintenance flight test pilot.

The SAR Situation

Editor’s Note: As the Vietnamese War intensified, the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) found its worldwide plans for deployment and its existing rescue equipment ill suited to the SAR

mission in a hostile combat environment. As they scrambled to provide a rudimentary capability to support the growing U.S. airpower presence in SEA, they were unable to deploy intact and experienced units. Rather, they deployed personnel and equipment piecemeal from existing units and stationed them TDY at bases that offered maximum utility to support the developing tactical warfare operations. One such base was Nakhon Phanom (NKP) in Thailand.

The Aircraft Commander (AC) of the HH-43B helicopter which eventually found and rescued Panther 10 was Jay Strayer. In the letter he wrote to Ron years later, he described the SAR situation he encountered upon his arrival at NKP.

Jay Strayer’s Story

I was stationed at George AFB at the time, and arrived TDY to the then unheard-of-place called NKP. The red dust was terrible in the heat of summer.

There were six of us “heli” (helicopter) pilots assigned to the new Pacific Air Rescue Center’s Provisional Detachment 3, located there. None of us had served together before, so we suffered a bit of conflict as we struggled to come up with operational plans and tactics to conduct combat rescues. Good personal equipment (PE) for our aircrews was woefully lacking, and the venerable HH-43B “Husky” was way out of its design environment in the new combat SAR role.

The new Det. 3 didn’t even have any survival vests. Luckily, I had brought with me the WW II survival vest that had been issued to me back at Kincheloe AFB. In

a former life I had been stationed there supporting the F-106 ADC mission. For about \$6 US apiece, we got a Thai lady to make very serviceable copies for each aircrew member. GI weapons were also scarce, so most of us carried our own handguns. My weapon was a Ruger Blackhawk 357.



Jay Strayer checked out in the HH-43 in 1963 and upgraded to the HH-53 in early 1970. He flew Jolly Greens out of Udorn. His adventures included piloting one of the raiding HH-53s that attempted a rescue of our POWs out of Son Tay Prison in NVN.

The Husky was originally designed to respond to aircraft crashes fairly near airports where a rescue unit was stationed, carrying a 1,000 pound bottle containing fire retardant and a couple of firefighters dressed in silver fire-proof suits. So, its operational range was very limited—about 75 miles. But thanks to Yankee ingenuity, one of our pilots (Fred Glover) came up with a way to use up to three 55-gallon drums as jettisonable auxiliary fuel tanks. You don’t want to hear about the plumbing, but needless to say, the smoking lamp was never lit when that configuration was installed. Each drum extended our normal sortie time by about 35 minutes and 30 miles. We cleverly named this jury-rig the Range Extension Fuel System (REFS).

Our tactics always included flying with two rescue helicopters if assets were available. We dubbed the two choppers “low bird” and “high bird.” The low bird was the lead and the first to attempt rescue when the downed aircrew was located. The high bird would set up in trail about a mile or two away as a radio relay and spare in case lead aborted or its crew became “rescuees” themselves. Once launched, we were on our own because the sophisticated SAR “system,” which subsequently developed from our early, and hard, lessons learned, was yet to come. Hell, we didn’t even know to call for fighter cover!

All of us were fresh from the States, and none had any combat time or even knew how to spell the words. We were just hell bent to rescue fellow Americans who were in deep trouble.

The Main Event

Ron Bigoness: After Dutch Holland put out the initial “May Day” call on Guard about 1000 Hours Local, he contacted the airborne alert HU-16 “Albatross” (Call sign Basil 66, playing the later-to-be developed role of the C-130 “King” bird) on a secondary SAR frequency and told them his lead was down about 65 miles from NKP in Laos. He gave them my coordinate information and reported that he was unable to contact me via his hand-held UHF survival radio. The proto-King bird asked him to orbit the area, conserve fuel, continue trying to contact me on the UHF, and stay as long as he could. Dutch did just that until he RTB’d at BINGO fuel ... but he never heard from me on the ground.

Jay Strayer: At NKP, two Huskies were rapidly prepped to include installation of the REFS on both birds. They launched at 1050L as “Alban 21 and 41,” climbed to 4,000 feet, and headed northeast into Laos — with no fighter escort. Based on the estimated 65 mile distance to the downed F-100 and with our REFS, this should have been an easy rescue. But I screwed up and got the outbound heading wrong. So we wound up spending lots of valuable time searching in the wrong area about 25 miles north of the actual crash site’s location. By the time we realized our error, we had already gone through all of our aux fuel. Very frustrated, we finally corrected our initial error and moved south to intersect the right radial off of INVERT, the NKP TACAN.

Ron Bigoness: While the SAR was mounted and the Huskies launched, I was taking stock of my situation. As I descended toward the ground ... I was concerned about further injury to my arm and shoulder as I crashed into the jungle canopy. Luckily, my arm didn’t catch any limbs as I passed through the branches. The chute hung up in the treetops leaving me suspended about ten feet above the jungle floor. I got out of my harness and managed to drop to the ground with only minor further injuries.

I could hear my wingman, Dutch, circling helplessly overhead, but I couldn’t see him through the thick jungle canopy. As I moved about in the dim light below it, my shoulder was very painful. I tried to raise Dutch on my hand-held UHF survival radio, but the radio wouldn’t work. I guessed that the battery was dead. Our entire supply of PE came directly from our TDY



In shock and severe pain from a dislocated shoulder and fractured upper arm, Bigoness is pulled aboard the HH-43B helicopter.

kits which, obviously, were not well maintained.

It was a little after 1030L when the noise from Dutch's plane disappeared, and it suddenly got real lonely. After that, I heard nothing ... except for screaming monkeys!



Once he was safely on the ground at NKP, more morphine was quickly administered.

Jay Strayer: We arrived in the vicinity of the downed F-100 about 1150L and searched diligently and frantically for what seemed the longest time with no useful results. We had heard a few beeps from Panther 10's URT-21 radio beacon, but the signal was faint and neither of us (the two Huskies) could home in on it. At 1230L, we were almost bingo fuel when one of my crewmembers caught a glimpse of a flashing, bright glint of metal and steered me to it. It was the still smoking wreckage of Panther 10's plane, so we knew we were getting close.

We circled it at 3,500 feet four or five times. Suddenly, the URT-21 signal strengthened and we were able to home on it with the ADF. At 1250L, we spotted a parachute in the trees and dropped a smoke grenade to mark it. Shortly after the visual on the chute, the two PJs ("Parajumpers"—SSgts. Enson

J. "EJ" Farmer and Herbert Romisch) on my low bird spotted some smoke coming up from a small (really tiny) clearing near the chute. Upon closer approach, the PJs saw Panther 10 beside his smoking fire below, wildly waving one arm. Wasting no time, we went to hover directly above him and practically in the 100 foot treetops because our hoist cable was only 100 feet long! (see Husky in the trees photo.)

Ron Bigoness: After about two hours on the ground listening to the monkeys, and starting a fire hoping to create a smoke beacon since my UHF radio was useless; I heard the noise of the circling SAR flight. When I heard the choppers, my dismal thoughts soared with hope. I tried to position myself in a spot where I could see through one of the few small openings in the jungle canopy.

One brief moment in time which I vividly remember was when I looked up through one of those small breaks and saw a PJ (Sgt. Farmer) looking out the back of a Husky and staring straight at me. I'll never forget it. I was the proverbial needle in the haystack of the jungle! And, they had found me!!! I wildly waved my one good arm and he waved back. I could almost taste a cool one in the Club. But Jay and his crew's pick-up work was just beginning.

Jay Strayer: All we had at that time, for lowering a PJ or bringing up a survivor with our power hoist cable was the ancient "horse collar." Unlike the tree penetrators that would come later and could carry both a PJ and a survivor, this one person device was not very sophisticated. So, Sgt.

Farmer donned the horse collar and Sgt. Romisch lowered him into the dimness below. Upon reaching the ground, his first words were, "Don't worry Captain, we've got you now."

When Sgt. Farmer discovered the pilot's arm and shoulder injuries, he told the captain that it would hurt like hell, but that he'd have to put the horse collar under both his arms. This he did, and up went the captain, screaming in agony.

He was still screaming when Sgt. Romisch pulled him in. And he kept screaming as Romisch began lowering the horse collar to Sgt. Farmer, still on the ground. When the cable was about 20 feet down, I told Sgt. Romisch to stop and give the pilot something for his pain—it was tough enough holding the hover in the tops of the trees without this distraction, and I really did "feel his pain."



Bigoness shortly after his ordeal. He returned to flying status after five months and finished his tour in South Vietnam in 1968.

On the ground, Sgt. Farmer became concerned that the hoist had stopped. What was going on? His concern was growing because he had removed his survival vest to

get into the horse collar easier (unknown at the time to me, the AC), and he realized that he'd be in deep trouble if we had to suddenly depart the area for some reason—and leave him with no survival equipment, particularly a radio to help us find him again. (Rescue men too, as well as fighter jocks, were learning their lessons at the “school of hard knocks.”)

In a couple of minutes, the morphine administered to the injured pilot took effect, and Sgt. Romisch resumed and completed the retrieval of Sgt. Farmer. We proceeded to RTB to NKP as fast as we could go, all of 85 knots, and landed long after the fuel low light came on. We logged 3+30 hours on that sortie which established a time-in-flight record for the HH-43B. And ... we had saved our first F-100 pilot; who happened to be the first Hun driver successfully rescued in the long, difficult conflict; just beginning ... way back then.

Epilogue

Ron Bigoness: An HU-16 flew me from bare-base NKP to Ubon where U.S. Army doctors put my arm back in its socket and pronounced me fit for further travel. (Also, it turned out that my upper arm bone was fractured, but we didn't know that at the time.) The following day I was returned to my squadron at Da Nang where I remained for about a week before departing for the States. After five months rehabilitation at Wilford Hall Hospital in San Antonio, I was discharged and returned to flying status. I managed to get back to Nam in 1968 by volunteering to complete my tour, flying another 220 combat missions before being reassigned to USAFE HQ.

Jay Strayer: After surviving the steep learning curve of my TDY introduction to combat SAR operations, I managed to get back to SEA two more times. Strangely, I never “got”—meaning was never credited with—another successful combat rescue. I did, however, participate in the planning for the November 21, 1970 raid on the Son Tay Prison Camp, 21 miles northeast of Hanoi. I also flew one of the Jolly Green's trying to rescue some of our POW friends. I was bitterly disappointed to find they had been moved. But, that's another story.

Editor's Note : Regrettably, lots of SAR operations don't end in the relatively happy way this story did. Case in point is Ron's wingman on that 31st of March, '65, mission over Mu Gia Pass. Just nine weeks later, Dutch Holland was shot down over South Vietnam. He survived the ejection, but got into a fatal shootout with the Viet Cong—his Combat Masterpiece pistol was no match for their AK-47 assault rifles. A rescue helicopter arrived on scene too late to help, but just in time to see the VC dump Dutch's limp body into a ditch ... a bad and sad ending for a very good guy.

To paraphrase the title of Ernest K. Gann's bestselling 1964 book about how fate and luck are so intertwined, particularly for aviators: “Fate Is (indeed) the Hunter.”



2



SQUEEZE EITHER TRIGGER TO EJECT SEAT.

It will be a happy hour to end all happy hours!

By Ron Standerfer

In less than a year, we've recruited almost nine hundred members, put up a web site, and published two issues of The Intake. Meanwhile, we've exchanged emails, reconnected with old friends, told lots of war stories, and in general, begun to act like a family. Now it's time to tie it all together with our first reunion.

The reunion---which is being ably organized by Pote Peterson [Herk and Boots]---will be held in Las Vegas at the Gold Coast Hotel and Casino, April 10-12. Las Vegas---“Fighter Town”---what better place to hold a get together of Hun drivers? For those of you that still haven't reserved a room, you can call the Gold Coast at 888-402-6278, with credit card in hand. Reservations are open Monday through Friday 6:00 AM to midnight, and Saturday and Sunday seven to midnight, Pacific time. Give them our alphanumeric code SUP0408 or “Super Sabre Society” for the reunion discount. To register for the reunion, download the registration form from the SSS web site or, if you don't have access to a computer or the web, photocopy the registration form on the next page, fill it out, and mail it in.

As of this writing, events and activities during the reunion are still being added and fine-tuned, and they are too numerous to describe here. Suffice it to say it will be one long happy hour to end all happy hours. You can't afford to miss it. See you there!

HUN DRIVER REUNION



REGISTRATION FORM

**Hun Drivers, Bears, Flight Surgeons LAS Reunion, 10 - 12 April 2007
Gold Coast Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV**

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____ MI: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Best contact phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

Guest Names: _____

Arrival/Departure Dates: _____

Hotel: _____

Gold Coast Reservation Instructions: best method is to call [888] 402-6278, M to F: 0600 – 0000 or S & S: 0700 – 0000. Have credit card handy and give them SSS code SUP0408 or “Super Sabre Society” for \$55.00 per night plus tax room fee. Or you can email the Gold Coast at coastres@coastcasinos.net with name, address, phone, number of guests, arrival & departure dates and credit card information, including expiration date. Don’t forget to include the SSS code. The code voids unless you register for the SSS reunion.

Make check out to SSS Reunion and send to Super Sabre Society Reunion 07
PO Box 3100
Georgetown, TX 78627

SSN for Red Flag & Threat Tour: _____

REGISTRATION for members: \$50.00, Guests: \$25.00

Date:	Program:	Cost:
Tuesday, 10 April 07	Welcome Reception. 1500 - 1900. Hors d’oeuvres and no host bar.	Member Registration: \$50.00 Guest Registration: \$25.00 TOTAL: \$ _____
Wednesday, 11 April 07 Attn: golfers. USGA Index No. _____ or 18 hole stroke average _____.	Golf Tournament, 0800 shot gun start \$55.00 x number Red Flag & Threat Tour, 0800. \$12.00 x number SSS Banquet, 1800 - 2200 \$45.00 x number	\$ _____ \$ _____ \$ _____
Thursday, 12 April 07	Hospitality Suite 0900 - 1700 \$20.00 x number	\$ _____
TOTAL ENCLOSED:		\$ _____

The Way We Were

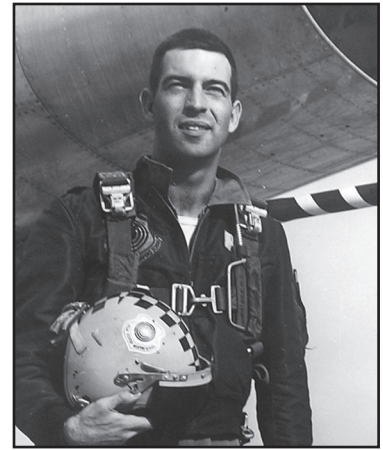
Forty years younger and forty pounds lighter; we were always ready to kick the tires, light the fires, and belly up to the bar at happy hour. Those were the days!



Art Draut



Chas "Pete" Peterson



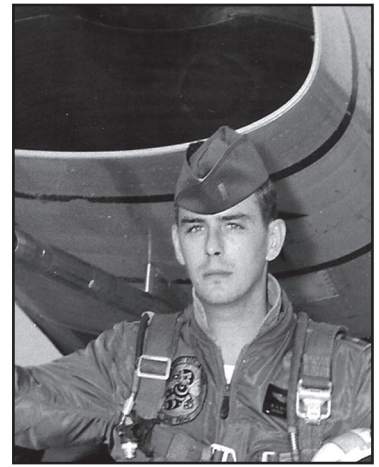
Dan Druen



Don Tanner



Don Tubb



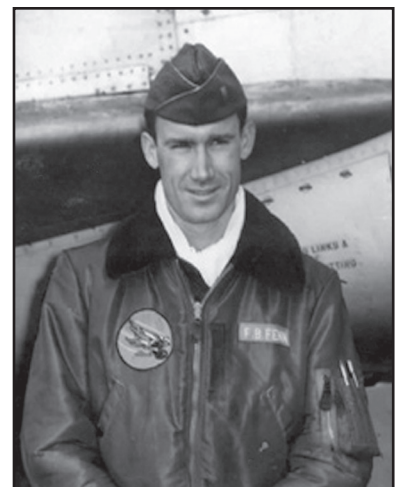
Jim Doggette



Bob Dunham



Eddie Levell



Forrest Fenn

The Way We Were



Lloyd Houchin



Ira Holt



Jim "Bird Dog" Ellis



Jim Fleming (RAAF)



John Pirkkala



Les Leavoy



Paul Kimminau



Rusty Gideon



William Hayes

Qaddafi wanted the Americans gone---immediately if not sooner.

Last Call for Wheelus

By Bob Fizer

Editor's note: Wheelus Air Base was located on the Mediterranean coast, just east of Tripoli, Libya. In its heyday 4,600 Americans called it home, and the United States Ambassador to Libya once referred to it as "a little America...on the sparkling shores of the Mediterranean." Wheelus witnessed its share of military aviation history. Captured by the British in 1943, it was used by Army Air Corps B-24s flying bombing missions against targets in Italy. After the war it was closed briefly and later became a transport base.

As the Cold War overtook post-WW II international politics, the base became a Strategic Air Command forward operating location, hosting 45 day rotational deployments by bombers staging for planned strikes against the Soviet Union. In 1958, the 20th Fighter Bomber Wing, based at RAF Wethersfield, UK, established an operational detachment there. This detachment managed the USAFE Weapons Training Center for month-long squadron rotations by USAFE tactical fighter wings. Both SAC and USAFE deployments continued there until September 1969 when Colonel Muammar Qaddafi overthrew Libya's king and demanded that Wheelus be closed and its facilities turned over to the Libyan people.

SSS charter member Bob Fizer was based at Wheelus when it was ordered closed and witnessed its final days, including the evacuation of the F-100 rotational squadron currently on the base. This is his story.

We were usually awakened by a call to prayers at 0630 ... a horrible recording from the minarets sounding like a wind-up RCA record machine with the little dog sitting beside it. But the morning of Sept 1, 1969 was different. Instead of a call to prayers, we heard gunfire and sounds of celebration. The day before, King Idris had gone on vacation to Greece by boat. He had a large entourage and most of the treasury with him, as he usually did when he left the country. Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, with the full backing of the military, took over the country. The coup was over by sunrise the next day.

Once the new government was in place, Qaddafi wasted no time in demanding that Wheelus -- which he saw as a vestige of European colonialism -- be closed and its facilities

turned over to the Libyan people. Technically, the status of forces agreement had two more years to run, but he wanted the Americans gone immediately. After several weeks of intense negotiations the US agreed to vacate the facility by June 1970.

I was attached to the 20th TFW as their liaison representative at Wheelus. My first concern was to ensure that the rotational aircraft were evacuated in a timely manner. I needn't have worried. It all went quickly and efficiently. The ramp was clear by mid-morning, and the silence after their departure was deafening.

The Libyan coup occurred just nineteen months before my planned retirement from the Air Force. I had a choice of where I wanted to finish my twenty years,



Bob flew the Hun from 1958 until he retired in 1971, logging over 3,000 hours in the aircraft. He then joined Cessna Citation where he became Manager of Demo Flt Ops. He retired from Cessna in 1980 and took a job flying a Challenger with Bill Hosmer based in Tokyo, Honolulu and Long Beach, CA.

so I elected to stay at Wheelus and assist in the shutdown and withdrawal of US Forces, and then proceed to Luke Air Force Base for my final assignment. I do not regret that decision, as my remaining seven months at Wheelus ran amok with some of the weirdest events I had ever witnessed or taken part in. It was interesting to say the least!

The Air Force agreed to sell the Libyans whatever equipment they wanted. The real property, buildings, etc., would be turned over to them without cost. Warehouses full of supplies would be sold, destroyed or flown out on C-141's. A committee, chaired by a cigar-chomping, full colonel, (I cannot remember his name), was handed a list of items to be sold. Also seated on the committee was a Libyan representative from each of the military services. The Libyans were only allowed to spend \$200,000 at a time. Once that amount was reached, negotiations were suspended until their check cleared the US Embassy. Once the check cleared, purchases continued for another \$200,000, etc. The business of closing the base took place in an atmosphere of mistrust, suspicion and ill will on both sides. I'll give you some examples.

Jet fuel in storage was offered at something like six cents per gallon, plus a small service charge. The Libyans refused to pay, thinking they were going to get it all anyhow. They were wrong. We brought in tankers off shore and pumped the fuel back out of storage and into the

tankers. Afterwards, the fuel storage system was flooded with seawater. For the Libyans to use the storage system again, they would have to pump the seawater out, flood the system with a detergent and flush it clean. I doubt if they ever did that.

The Libyans also refused to buy a warehouse full of desks, wall lockers, chairs, office furnishings etc. They knew we wouldn't fly that stuff out in a C-141. In front of the Libyans, the colonel asked the base commander if he had a bulldozer school. The base commander wasn't sure, but said yes anyway. The colonel then said he was going to truck the furniture up to the small cliffs overlooking the Mediterranean so they could shove it all into the ocean. The Libyans screamed foul and bought most of it.

The colonel knew the Libyan Air Force wanted our huge cherry picker, so he kept that item aside, waiting for the day when their representative was absent from the proceedings. Depending on what was on the list on a given day, some of the Libyan service reps might be absent. On a day the Libyan Air Force representative did not show, the colonel offered the cherry picker. No one else wanted it so we dismantled it and flew it out. The Libyan Air Force Rep was furious.

We sold the base generators to them. They were built by the Italians in WWII and no spare

parts were available. We kept them running on in-house built spare parts and whatever we could get from the Italians all those years. I doubt if they lasted very long after we left.

Within a few weeks after the coup, Qaddafi expelled the Italians as Jewish sympathizers or corruptors of Muslim lifestyle. Italians who worked on base or lived nearby left the country any way they could. The high school principal, for example, smuggled himself out in a crate of musical instruments sent to Malta for repair, leaving his wife and family in Wheelus. They were put under house arrest until the authorities could sort out what to do. Eventually, they were allowed to leave Libya and join the principal in Europe.

Alcohol was outlawed after the coup. All English signs were replaced with Arabic. Raisins and all types of fruit used to make homemade booze disappeared from the markets. We filled our windshield washer tanks with vodka or gin to take into town for our friends in the oil companies. Every car was stopped and searched before leaving or entering the base. All political prisoners were released from prison and a few were assigned to the front gate, along with our Air Police.

As the countdown to base closure continued, American military personnel began to feel the pressure as well. All our mail was checked coming and going. Household goods were searched before ship-

ping. A sergeant had his goods shoved off the dock into the Mediterranean when a kid's toy gun set, complete with sheriff's badge was discovered. The badge resembled the Jewish Star of David. A VW bug left the gate towards town and a Libyan did not think it had been checked. He pulled out his .45 and put a round through the back window, taking out the rear view mirror. The wing commander, Colonel Daniel "Chappie" James was alerted and came to the front gate. He demanded the .45 and through an interpreter told the shaking Libyan (Chappie was a huge man) that if he ever fired his pistol at an American again he would stick it up his rear end and blow the top of his head off.

The last F-100s to leave Wheelus were part of the tow fleet. Colonel James went down to the flight line to watch two young pilots fly them off to the U.K. It was an historical moment and a sad one too---especially for all the fighter pilots who passed through the gates of Wheelus over the years.

Shortly thereafter, Colonel James wrote a letter for the base newspaper which eloquently summed up the feelings of all of us who were left behind. The article, which I saved all these years, is attached to this story. As for me, it was a hell of an experience---an experience I will never forget.



by Col. Daniel James Jr.

They lined up on the runway, a flight of two F-100s, looking much younger than their years with paint jobs and well scrubbed struts and tires that were a credit to the men standing with me who had nursed them through their last months on Wheelus — the fine crew chiefs of the F-100 tow fleet.

Only a half hour before, I had said a few parting words to the pilots who would fly them out, the things they already knew like: "Safety is paramount", "Don't press it". "If the weather is bad in England, wait it out in Spain." "There is no hurry," "Get them there safe". They listened with the polite patience of fighter pilots who can only take this kind of I-know-it-already advice and keep listening from someone they respect as a fellow fighter pilot (knowing this caused the old personal pride to swell up). Then they slipped into their G-suits and nothing much was said on the ride to the aircraft; it had all been said before, "Keerist! It sort of gets me to think that I won't be hurtling my body at the ground at El Uotia any more ..."

"You remember the old over-the-shoulder maneuvers, the time when Bill Clark in a Voodoo called, 'Off on top, wet' and promptly pitched up and made a miraculous recovery by the Grace of God and a good drag chute and then had the nerve to ask 'Where did my bomb hit?..."

"Did you ever stop to think of the guys who flew out of here — aces like Jabarra, Everest, Olds and Garrison — guys like Robbie Risner and Swede Larson, who are in the Hanoi Hilton now but who honed their Tiger teeth many times over the sands of El Uotia ..."

"There was a day that we were zapping down the run-in line about sand-dune high off the deck, and loping along ahead of us was this Arab on a camel. I call 'Off on top' and looked down -- he was still loping along, he hadn't even looked up and probably had the brass from that blivet before it got cold ..."

"Well, the hell with it! This isn't the end of it all. Just the beginning of a new chapter: Streaking through some other sky, some other time, to do what we have to do to maintain the professionalism required of our business ..."

You're damned right it isn't the end of it all! It's just the beginning of a new era, a new place to do our thing that might be a little more difficult than El Uotia was. The real estate will probably be more limited, the run-in lines will probably be harder to see, the safety section of the briefing will be longer and more detailed because the error potential will be substantially increased. Not to worry! This is when the over-worked word "professional" that precedes the term "fighter pilot" gains true meaning. Those of us who answer the challenge prove that it does have meaning in the way we meet it.

In other skies, on smaller ranges, fighter jocks of the Air Force will still hone their teeth and stand ready at any time to meet the requirements as air policemen for the greatest power on earth.

Mentally I could see the flight lead signal "burner" and "brakes release." I observed two good lights and saw them lift smartly off the runway in tight formation and reach for the sky like homesick angels. One of the crew chiefs said something silly like, "It sorta makes you wanna bawl, doesn't it?" I didn't answer because I wasn't watching anymore. I had something in my eye.


DANIEL JAMES, JR., Colonel, USAF
Commander

His was a life-long romance with a jet fighter's engine intake.

The Artistry of an Intake

By Greg Butler

It's really odd what can catch one's fancy at times: a stately tree, a fast car, a pretty face, a rose, a jet fighter's engine intake. That's right; I said a fighter's intake. My fascination with a particular intake, and the ensuing life-long romance with it, was recently brought to mind by a stranger's remark about a totally unrelated instance. The remark was, "Funny how things come around."

As a teenager in the early '50s I, like most teenagers in this century, had a love affair with cars. And in that era, it was usually with sports cars in particular. That was the post-war age of the new MGs, Austin Healeys, Jaguars, Ferraris, et. al. Since I couldn't afford a real one, I would sometimes make models of my dream cars. I often used clay, a medium I'd used to make my own toys with for as far back as I could remember.

That era was also the "Jet Age," a time when the prop fighters and bombers of WW II were replaced by the F-80s, F-86s, and B-47s of the Korean War era. The sleek "jet" theme was extremely popular, even evident in the design of home appliances, and particularly in cars with aircraft-like grills, fender fins, and exhausts sculptured through rear bumpers.

One day, while thumbing through the most recent edition of Popular Science magazine, I vividly recall being struck by a photo of the unique oval shape of the jet intake of a new fighter just off the drawing board. The oval intake was unusual in that it took up the entire nose of the aircraft. It had a rather sharp edge all around which tapered rakishly backward to the highly sloped windshield above, smooth belly below, and markedly swept wings on either side. With its streamlined tail, the whole airplane looked as if it could effortlessly cut through the air at extreme speed, led by that beautiful, artistically-shaped, oval intake.

"Wow! That's fantastic," I exclaimed. I grabbed a chunk of clay and began fashioning a sports car model with that very same intake. There was just something about its form which struck me. Its symmetrically graceful curve was a shape of beauty. I immediately fell in love with it: with the intake, that is. I really paid only minimum attention to the rest of the airplane.

In retrospect, that was probably because I could immediately begin to use that wonderful intake's shape in my sports car model. But, I never even dreamed I'd ever be able to "use" that whole airplane – for anything. I couldn't know at the time that the exact opposite would be true. The car model with the rakish, oval intake was finished, admired for awhile, and eventually forgotten. Well, the car, that is; but not the intake.



Greg Butler is a charter member of the SSS. He spent 12 years in the Hun at Hahn, Ramstein, Cannon, Luke, Bien Hoa, Phan Rang, and on many deployments. He jumped out once but NEVER had a drag chute failure

That new airplane just off the drawing board, whose artistic intake I had fallen for as a teen in the '50s, was the venerable F-100. The beloved Hun would be my trusty steed for over half my 20 plus year Air Force career and whose intake, by regulation, I would inspect as part of each pre-flight. Indeed, over the twelve years between the spring of '58 and the fall of '70, I chinned myself on that beautiful intake almost daily, often twice a day. By pulling myself up to its lower edge and peering deep into its interior, I compared fond memories of my model car's rakish, oval intake with the real thing.

Long after retirement, I chanced upon an F-100 while touring the March Field Air Museum near Riverside. I couldn't resist! On approaching that stately bird, I didn't stop to admire its striking overall profile or peek into the cockpit. Oh, no! The very first thing I did was to reach up, grab its lower lip; and, once again, chin myself on that lovely, artistically-shaped, oval intake.

"Funny how things come around."



There it was---an SA-2 on a launcher in broad daylight!

Risinger's Raiders

By Jack Doub

PROLOGUE

The whole idea of Misty---arguably one of the most dangerous flying jobs around in the 1960's Vietnam--- was to stop the flow of arms and supplies from North Vietnam to the South. It was as simple as that.

Since there was no one doing any "FACing" in the lower Route Packages (Packs for short), the North Vietnamese were flooding supplies through Packs I, II, and III via railroad, waterways, and highways.

The first attempt at using O-1s in the Packs had met with predictable failure. The little Cessnas just couldn't operate in that environment. "That environment" was the world's most heavily concentrated, strictly AAA, defense at the time: from AK-47s up through the gamut of automatic weapons: 12.7mm, 14.5mm, the dreaded 23mm, to the ubiquitous 37mm, on up to the much-feared radar-guided 57 and 85mm monsters.

Nor had using two F-100s in loose formation worked much better. Flying low, fast, and constantly jinking had become a recipe for disaster. That idea was jettisoned after a flurry of near mid-air.

And so, Major Bud Day, and the rest of the original Mistys decided on a single-ship F-100F, armed with two 2.75 inch rocket pods and 20mm, streaking through the Packs at 4500' and below, looking for anything that moved during daylight hours. Initially, they flew with O-1 FACs in the backseat, although that idea eventually gave way to combat qualified F-100 drivers in both seats.



Jack Doub is a SSS charter member and is on The Intake's Editorial board. He flew 3 tours in Vietnam, including 82 missions with Misty. He is attributed with more combat missions in SEA than any other F-100 pilot.

THE RAIDERS

On the day of this Misty action in 1968, Captain Ed Risinger patrolled over Route Pack I frustrated by the low clouds obscuring the ground. Ed was a quiet, slow-talking Texan with a shock of strawberry-red hair reminiscent of Opie from the old Andy Griffith Show. You would hardly peg this guy to be a fire-breathing fighter pilot, much less a Misty volunteer! Howie Williams toiled away in the rear seat, experiencing the confusion every new Misty felt on the first few frantic flights.

The clouds covered the lower Packs as the Misty toiled along above the undercast searching for a way down. From the coast they headed into Laos, and up to Mu Gia Pass, which was also socked in by the weather.

At the top of the pass the weather suddenly broke -- and there it was-- an SA-2 SAM (Surface-to-Air Missile) on a launcher in broad daylight! Obviously the break in the weather caught the NVA by surprise, just as it had the Misty.

"Get the camera ready!" Ed screamed to Howie as he wheeled around for another pass.

Nudging 500 knots they dropped by at tree-top level and Howie snapped one of the most amazing photographs of the war -- an SA-2 sitting on a Guideline transporter. A startled NVA soldier was attempting to pull the cover over the missile.

With a lot of folks the story would've ended there: a beautiful intel photo of a rare, hard to find target. But -- not for Ed Risinger. The slow-talking Texan hustled back to Phu Cat and attempted to find someone to authorize an immediate air strike. It wasn't to be. He looked for the Misty Commander, but he was airborne. The Wing Commander was also flying and the next in command was in Hawaii on R&R. The DO was in Da Nang for a briefing.

Getting desperate, Ed called the 7th Air Force Command Post.

Listening intently, the duty officer yelled, "YAHOO! Go get the sonsabitches!"

And that's how Ed came to commandeer three single-seat F-100Ds off the Phu Cat alert pad. He was joined by the two most experienced jocks he could find, both Mistys:

Elmer Slavey and Don "Shep" Shepperd.

The troops briefed in the crew van on the way to the flight line---about fifteen minutes worth. They were airborne in thirty.

Their plan was simple: recce the area north of Mu Gia, trolling for guns. They knew if a SAM was there it would be surrounded by 37mm and 57mm guns. They had RHAW (Radar Homing And Warning) gear installed, but it wasn't hooked up yet, and besides, none of the Mistys knew how to operate the new gear anyway. They were used to living in the gun environment down low. They considered packing their speed brake area with chaff, but no one could find any on the base.

As the flight streaked for the high threat area they looked over their load: Ed led with wall-to-wall napalm, Elmer had wall-to-wall high drags, and Shep prepared to deal a blow to the commies with his CBU (Cluster Bomb Unit) -2 outboard and high drags inboard.

The weather was still solid over Laos and NVN, so Ed diverted over the water, dropped beneath the clouds and the 2500' ceiling. Swinging back over the coast, he headed west along the railroad leading to Mu Gia. The three, now in loose trail, were swooping along the tracks when a train suddenly appeared. As Shep, number three, roared past, a 14.5mm opened up from the last car.

"This guy would sure make a lousy duck hunter," Shep thought, as the rounds arced gracefully behind him.

As they approached the IP the weather dropped to 500 ft.

"Arm 'em up. Take spacing." Ed's command broke radio silence.

The aircraft proceeded in-bound

a mile in trail and the weather dropped further.

"The weather's too bad, let's abort -- WHOA! They're shooting! Just drop when the shooting starts!" called Risinger, off to the East.

Elmer dropped next and called off east.

It was Shep's turn. He was at 500' when the gunners opened up with 37mm through the clouds. He felt, and heard, what all Misty pilots experienced -- the sound and "bumps" of 37mm passing close to his aircraft as he zipped through the flak. While the gunners around Mu Gia, among the most aggressive in Laos, couldn't see them, they fired at the sound of the three Super Sabres passing overhead.

Calmly, Shep hit the pickle button ten times as quickly as he could; emptying the CBU canisters and pickling the armed high drags with the Aux Jettison button. He felt the concussion of the high drags as he swung off target to the East, climbed on top, and rejoined Ed and Elmer.

Miraculously, everyone was still flying and the battle damage check went smoothly.

The flight home was silent and uneventful.

The reception at home was, however, anything but silent. A crowd awaited as they taxied in. Among the crowd was the Misty commander, Colonel Donald G. Jones, who was not smiling.

"Stand-by for in-coming. The boss is pissed," Don Shepperd's crew chief informed him.

The boss called for an all-Misty briefing -- "now!" -- and the group repaired to their briefing room. Ed, Elmer, and Don spent a lot of time looking at their boots. All

in all, it was a masterful ass-chewing -- well administered and to the point.

To his credit, Ed could've pointed out that he sought and received permission; that he tried to find commanders at all levels, but none were available; that he actually got permission from Saigon for the mission; and that time was of the essence. But he didn't. He took his ass-chewing like a man. He thought he deserved it.

Colonel Jones was a good commander who cared deeply for his troops. He thought their testosterone level had overcome their good judgment. Few folks knew the dangers over North Vietnam so well as the Mistys.

One could make the point, retrospectively, that the SAM represented such a high-value target, the risk was worth the possible reward. Someday it would surely snake up from the hills around Mu Gia and reach out for a U.S. fighter plane.



Risinger needed approval for an air strike---and he needed it now. But it was not to be.

Had the weather cleared they would've been heroes -- if they'd gotten the SAM. The old "woulda-coulda-shoulda-routine."

That evening, as they walked to the club, Ed looked at Shep and commented wryly, "Shep, every now and then you just gotta say WHAT THE #&*%!"

They downed some gin, ate a steak and went to bed.

Ed, Elmer, and Don were grounded. In three days Colonel Jones put them back on the flying schedule and never mentioned the incident again.

He was a good guy.

Epilogue

Ed Risinger finished his tour, went to medical school and now is a rich doctor in Austin, Texas. Elmer Slavey has lived a tough life, retired in Mexico, and looks as young as he did the day of the Risinger Raid. Don Shepperd retired as a two-star and is now a talking head on CNN, as well as the wealthy and best-selling author of two books on Misty.

With Don Shepperd's blessings, the author borrowed generously from his book: "Misty: First Person Stories of the F-100 Misty Fast FACs in the Vietnam War."



Do you remember?

Firing four 20MM guns all at once?
Chasing high and to the outside so
you didn't eat the brass?

A drag chute guaranteed to fail:

- 1) At night,
- 2) On a wet runway,
- 3) On a short runway / no barrier,
- 4) All of the above?

Don't worry about it, he said, the alert birds haven't turned a wheel in ten days!

Sleepless on the Alert Pad

By Mac Staples

One morning Gary and I were scheduled to be on alert at 0700. Rising about 0600, I found the bunk above me empty. As I was getting dressed, after showering and shaving, Gary walked into the room wearing civilian clothes. The conversation went something like this:

"For God's sake, Gary, we're supposed to be on alert in 30 minutes--where the hell have you been?"

"Been playin' poker."

"Well, dammit, get dressed, we're almost late as it is."

"Don't worry about it, the alert birds haven't turned a wheel in ten days. I'm going to have breakfast and sleep all day."

In the back of the bread truck on the way to the squadron, we flipped to see who would lead. Gary won. We picked up our gear and proceeded directly to our airplanes for preflight. I was moving a little faster than Gary, and arrived at the alert shack before he was finished preflighting.

As I walked in the door, the scramble phone rang. Whoever answered it turned immediately to me and said, "Scramble Blade 1." Of course, I immediately turned and started running toward the airplanes.

Gary, by that time about halfway to the shack, stopped, his heretofore half-closed eyes open wider than I had ever seen them. All he could say was, "You gotta be shittin' me!" When I assured him that I was not, he reversed course and began running toward his own airplane. About halfway there he stopped, turned, and said, "Mac, you got the lead!" Were that the end of the story, it would still be framed in my mind as one of the funniest events in my life, but it was just beginning.

The mission? I forget where we went, but we made a few toothpicks and RTB'd. In the refueling pits as I stop-cocked the throttle, the crew chief asked the condition of my airplane.

"It's O. K." I assured him.



Mac Staples flew faster airplanes in his pre-pilot, pre-F-100 days (as a navigator in the B-58); uglier airplanes as a fighter pilot (the F-4); and more maneuverable airplanes in his post-fighter pilot days (as the commander of an OV-10 squadron). But his favorite remains the Hun.

Continued on pg 25

He learned the hard way. The mission “ain’t” over until it’s over!

The Buck IP and the Hun with Winglets!

By R. Medley Gatewood



R. Medley Gatewood is a SSS Charter Member on The Intake's Editorial Board. His Hun time includes tours at RAF Woodbridge '64/'67, Bien Hoa/Udorn '67/'68, and Luke '68/70.

After three years overseas in Europe, followed by one year in SEA, I returned to the CONUS in August '68. Still a bachelor with a new Regular Commission and an A-7D shipping AFSC, I was headed for the hallowed halls of Luke. I expected to be in the first class of SLUF (Short Little Ugly “Fellow”) drivers — to avoid the F-4 double seat quandary, yet that SLUF upgrade turned out to be a long time away. But, somehow, I avoided the dreaded new head stint as an Instrument School instructor, and entered Jack Ward's F-100 Gun IP School — graduating in late October. I was lucky to become a Gun IP so quickly.

My luck held when my assignment to Gus Guenther's C Flight of the 4510th CCTS came through. My job as scheduling officer helped

me set up a cross-country bird to return to my parents' home near St. Louis for Thanksgiving — my first opportunity to do so in seven years. Naturally, I was looking forward to this particular holiday very much—way too much, as it turned out.

In the scramble over getting off for Thanksgiving, I volunteered to lead an early morning two-ship (dual) BFM (Basic Fighter Maneuvers — first phase after Transition phase) flight before my cross-country departure. I don't recall my student's name (we called them studs), but he was a C-131 co-pilot getting “Fighter Pilot” stamped on his ticket enroute to a FAC assignment in Vietnam, as was the norm in those days.

The mission's air work was normal-normal. My stud had actually flown rather well, including an adverse yaw demo and recovery practice, and as we turned to RTB, my thoughts shifted to the afternoon flight and home (Mom's apple pie and all that) — big mistake for a buck IP.

The traffic pattern was normal-normal too, at least until we crossed the runway threshold and started a gentle flair a little hot ... nose coming up ... nose coming up more ... BIG wind shear/wake turbulence? Right wing dropping ... Holy Smokes! ... the stud is still pulling back on the stick and moving it LEFT with no rudder at

all ... right wing dropping more ... we're gonna crash and die from adverse yaw !!!

At that point, time and motion seemed suspended, and in my mind the famous Sabre Dance film flickered repeatedly through my frozen thoughts as I came back to full attention to our now perilous situation. Instinctively, I grabbed the controls, simultaneously applying a ton of left rudder. I announced that I was taking control of the aircraft, neutralized the stick, and advanced to full MIL (rejecting all thought of AB per the Sabre Dance film lesson). This stopped the right roll, but I overshot wings-level a fair amount when the stud released his death grip on the stick.

As we came back wings-level, we finally touched down in a three point landing, but firmly committed to take off as we were pointed more toward the infield than down the runway and just short of rotation speed. Somehow we avoided the runway lights and got airborne. I sucked up the gear and announced that “Feet One” was on the go, “requesting closed” ... and was shaking like a quaking Aspen tree.

About that time, as he saw my situation developing, Tiny Stroup, the IP in number two, initiated a go-around, caught up with me, and announced that my right rear wing tip was bent upwards almost vertical. I glanced right ... and Tiny was right. Good Grief!

Mobile Control then chimed in with “Better check the left rear wing tip. We think it’s bent near vertical too!” I glanced left ... they were correct too! Double Good Grief!! So, although there didn’t seem to be any flight control binding, I declared an emergency and again requested a closed from present position which was granted.

When we rolled out on downwind with Tiny in chase position, the stud calmly asked if he should take back aircraft control. As you would expect, my reply to this most unexpected inquiry can not be printed in this august journal.

Our second landing was perfect, of course, as my mind cleared and faced the prospect of the coming court martial and the end of my just-started career in the regular Air Force. Well, maybe, it won’t be that bad ... just an accident investigation with Instrument School chores for punishment, and definitely the end of my not-yet-started Thanksgiving cross-country – which certainly and rightfully was a contributing factor in the whole damned adventure.

Gus was not very happy with me, nor was I with the stud. None of us much looked forward to the flight debriefing that would come after the maintenance debriefing. Gus attended and asked Tiny to stay, after we let the studs go, to do a post mortem on what we (meaning me) could learn from this near fatal incident. The first obvious lesson for me was a variation on a famous Yogi-ism: The mission ain’t over till it’s over, especially if you have a student aboard or in the flight!

Then the two wise men introduced me to the theory of “rever-

sion to type.” This involves an unpublished tendency for aviators converting from one aircraft type to another to revert to the former type’s procedures or techniques when confused or under stress in the new type. Hence, a C-131 copilot might very well put in a lot of left aileron and no left rudder when the right wing of an F-100F was dropping rapidly toward the runway in a landing that was going to hell rapidly! The two wise men confided that they had both witnessed things like this many times before, solemnly welcomed me to the “IP is hazardous duty” club, and wished me a safe flight home for Thanksgiving.

Whaaaaat? How about the court martial and/or accident investigation, etc? Well, it turned out that what had bent at the end of the wings were small (18 inches or so) triangular-shaped sheet-metal fairings that attach to the aft wing main structure to form the aft wing tip. That they cost about “a dollar two ninety eight” each (meaning they were dirt cheap). And that therefore it was a Class C accident which required no further official investigation or action. So, Bon Voyage, R. Medley.

And now, fellow SSS members ... you know ... the rest of the story ... about the buck IP and the Hun with, what today, we call “winglets.” I do believe that this was the first and only flight of an F-100 so configured. In any case, a very scary and hairy “war” story.

Sleepless on the Alert Pad cont...

“Well, fill out the forms in the truck on your way to the new airplanes-- they’re already loaded, and you’ve already been scrambled,” he replied.

This time Gary decided that he was awake enough to lead. Our mission was in support of an ambushed convoy in the valley between Pleiku and Kontoum. Of course by the time we got there, Charlie had already done his damage and departed, but we made some more toothpicks.

When we were done, Gary told the FAC he’d like to go “say hello to the army.”

The FAC replied, “You’d better not do that--there are lots of helicopters down there.”

Gary’s reply? “Don’t worry; I’ll be below the helicopters!”

And he was! I was in trail, and a snap-shot moment from that pass is frozen in my memory: There was a guy standing on an M-113 armored personnel carrier. As Gary went by, the guy was looking down into Gary’s cockpit! I swear to God!

End of story? Nope. Guess what the crew chief said when we pulled into the refueling pits?

Yep, you got it! More toothpicks and another 1.7 hours. Gary finally got his chance to hit the sack about three in the afternoon after three missions. I didn’t see him until the next morning. Needless to say, never did I ever again hear him say anything about not rolling a wheel on alert for days, or about catching up on sleep on the alert pad!



He had an uncanny talent for making split second decisions.

General William P McBride: Memories of a Great Hun Driver

By Don Nichols

In 1962 Colonel William P. McBride became Commander of the 50th TAC Fighter Wing at Hahn Air Force Base, Germany. He was well liked and considered “one of the troops” by one and all. At wing parties, he would always come up with some interesting game and challenge all the pilots to beat him at it—none ever did, whatever the game. His long and colorful career included many combat sorties flown in World War II, and he had a wealth of stories to tell.

After Colonel McBride was assigned for flying purposes to my squadron, the 10th TFS, I was privileged to fly with him quite often, and be entertained with many vignettes he had to share. Here’s a couple of favorites concerning WW II he passed on to me while flying the Hun.

During an ORI in July of 1962 we were delivering all sorts of weapons for record scores on the range at Suippes, France. My very lucky dive-bomb bull’s eye earned a certificate, later presented by Colonel McBride, for the “Best Dive-Bomb” in the exercise. A few days later he and I were flying together along the Rhine River. “I only had one dive-bombing bull’s eye in my entire career, and it was right along here,” he began, indicating the river. “During the latter part of WWII, I was flying a search mission (assigned to the 371st Fighter Group) along the Rhine, and being followed and monitored by a friendly radar site. I spotted a bridge over the river that was still standing, and rolled in on it. Just as I released my



Don Nichols' first fighter assignment was in SAC flying F-84Fs, but later flew the F-100 in stateside and European fighter wings. He was also an IP at Luke in the early 1960s.

bombs, the guy at the radar site yelled, ‘Not that one, Sir ... we’re saving it for the Army!’ My one and only bull’s eye!” the Colonel chuckled.

Later, another WW II tale was told down at Wheelus AB, Libya, when we were getting in some weapons practice on the El Ouatia gunnery range there. Colonel McBride and I had just come off the range and were heading back toward Wheelus when the Colonel, referencing a landmark below, said “Right here is where I shot down a Spitfire in World War II, and I’ll tell you about it when we get back to base.” After we landed and returned to squadron ops, he told the full story.

Early in the war, he was assigned to the 33rd Fighter Group

operating in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations and on one mission in Libya, he was flying along west of Tripoli when a Spitfire came screaming down and fired on him. He didn’t know what to think. Either it was a RAF pilot that made a serious mistake or it was a German flying a captured Spitfire (this ploy was a common enemy tactic during the North African campaigns). McBride had just a split-second to make a decision, but he knew that if he did nothing, the guy might come back for a second pass. So he dropped in behind him, gave him a good burst, and shot the Spitfire down.

When he got back to base, he reported the incident to his group headquarters. In turn, they contacted the RAF Spitfire base in the area and relayed McBride’s story. The Brits’ reply: “I say, Yanks, we didn’t lose any bloody Spitfires today!” As usual, Colonel McBride made the right decision—once again.

Colonel McBride had a long, distinguished career of making the right decisions. He retired as a Major General, DCS Operations, at TAC HQ on March 1, 1973, and “slipped the surly bonds of Earth” on June 8, 1996. We’ll miss the stories.



Flying is More Fun Than-----

By Jack Hartmann

A light approach, in plain language, for questions about commercial or military planes, pilots, or aviation. E-Mail: jrhartmann@msn.com

Q: What was the life of a fighter pilot like?

A: Rolled all my former fighter pilot buddies stories into one. Each and every one said they wouldn't trade it for the world!



- 22 years old - Graduate from college. Join the USAF and go to flight school. Become hotshot fighter pilot. Get married. Have first kid.
- 25 years old - Promoted to Captain early! Graduate from Fighter Weapons School. Buy flashy car, house and lots of toys. I'm on a roll. Be a General someday.
- 28 years old - Buzz beach in F-100 in 'burner. Get caught. Sent to Korea as command post duty officer. (But - I'm a pilot!). Can't bring wife. Get divorced. Pay alimony and child support.
- 30 years old - Korea tour over. Assigned to Pentagon desk job. (But - I'm a pilot!) Live at BOQ at nearby Army base. Can't afford D.C. area - sell flashy car.
- 32 years old - Passed over for Major second time. Tired of flying a desk. Sent TDY every other month. Live out of suitcase. Do lots of paperwork. (But - I'm a pilot!)
- 35 years old - War starts in Vietnam. Get back to fighter squadron. Promoted to Major. I'm on a roll. Flying combat missions! Be a General someday.
- 38 years old - Grounded for playing "Dead bug"* while 2 Anti-War Senators were visiting our squadron in Vietnam. Back to Korea. Meet army nurse. Get married. Have twins.

* When anyone yells "DEAD BUG" in the bar, the last person to fall to the slimy, dirty floor on their backs with their feet and hands in the air - like a Dead Bug, has to buy everyone a drink. The senators lost 12 times in a row! (Guess I forgot to tell them the rule about who has the hammer!)

- 40 years old - Wife transferred to hospital at Thule AFB, Greenland. Meets good-looking surgeon who is a Colonel. Leaves me. Alimony and child support. Decide to get vasectomy.
- 42 years old - Back to Pentagon. Do study on "USAF Pilot shortage". (But - I'm a pilot!) Duuhh. Can't get airline job - only have 800 hrs. flying time.
- 45 years old - Back in fighter squadron! My study said to put all pilot desk jockeys back into the cockpit. No more buzzing for me! I'm on a roll. Be a General someday.
- 48 years old - Meet young female Air Force sergeant. Live together. Commander finds out. Reprimands me - second article 15. My career is down the toilet.
- 52 years old - USAF now has excess pilots (thanks to my study) so I have to retire since I didn't get promoted past Major. I'll apply to the airlines - after all, I am a pilot!
- 60 years old - Been flying Co-Pilot doing night cargo in a light airplane for 8 years now. Tell stories of how I almost became a General. No one believes me.
- 62 years old - Flunk medical exam. Lose job as pilot. Get job teaching simulator with 0500 briefs. Supplement income as cook for local bar. Live in one room apartment.
- 65 years old - Play checkers in park with bunch of old geezers. All they want to talk about is Social Security, medical problems and ex-wives. I tell 'em war stories 'till their eyes glaze over.

Wouldn't trade my life for anything - I flew the HUN!



Back Cover: Wally Mason
Enroute Wheelus
- 53rd FDS Landstuhl
AB, Germany - USAF
- 1958. Photo by Mel
Anderson. Courtesy of
the Curtis Burns
collection.

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-seat fighter time, his favorite aircraft remains the F-100.

