

“The Dragonfly”

A newsletter of the A-37 Association, Inc.

May 2016



“Cleared Hot”

By Lon Holtz

“Your old friends—seize every opportunity to be with them, such opportunities will become rare as time goes by.” Author Unknown.

A little over a month before we get together in Colorado for another great time. The logistics are coming together for dedication of the A-37 plaque, and June 7 is shaping up to be an exciting day, concluding with an evening buffet.

Attending the dedication ceremony will be the AOG’s Gift Committee and event planners as well as some FACs from the local area. The day promises to be one of our most memorable events ever.

Attendance by members and their guests is growing. We’ve already reached our room block, so if you’re planning to attend, but have not made a reservation, I suggest you don’t wait any longer because our guaranteed room rate ends on May 6 and rooms are then on an as-available basis.

I have a favor to ask. If any of you are skilled at video recording, we really could use your talents to record our dedication and possibly some of the tour. There are several

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In the backstretch, passing the three-quarter pole, finish line coming up really fast

So now it’s time to get your act together to attend the A-37 Association’s dedication of the plaque commemorating the aircraft’s combat role in Southeast Asia at the USAF Academy on June 7.

May 6 is the last day we are guaranteed the conference room rate for the room block at the Radisson Airport in Colorado Springs. And it would help us planners immensely to know by May 13 who’s attending so we can get a head count.

Several of us will be arriving at the Radisson on June 5 to check things out at both the hotel and the ceremony site. That means a hospitality room will be set up by the afternoon of June 6 and open for business. We are tentatively planning a Board of Directors meeting that afternoon as well.

The real deadline is, of course, June 7. Virtually everybody attending the ceremony (see list of registrations on p. 2) will be riding the bus, which is scheduled to leave the Radisson at 8:45 AM (MST) for a scheduled 10 AM start of the dedication ceremony. That’s a change from the original schedule put out.

As stated previously, out of respect for the occasion and the honor of being allowed to commemorate the A-37 at such a hallowed site as the Southeast Asia Memorial Pavilion on the Academy grounds, we suggest you dress business casual, at least a blazer or suit. No jeans. Ties are optional. Ladies accordingly.

By the time we finish business at the Memorial, it will be close to lunch, so we plan to stop at the Cadet Area for approximately two hours. The only scheduled tour is the impressive Polaris Hall (Center for Character and Leadership Development). Afterwards, you will have the option to tour the chapel or to get lunch at the Food Court in Arnold Hall, which features a Subway, Godfather’s Pizza, Wing Zone, and Starbucks. What else could you ask for?

Then it’s 30-45 minutes at the Academy’s Visitor Center Gift Shop and back to the hotel by 2:15 PM or so, time to relax before the buffet that evening.

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“The A-37 Association is for those who flew, worked on/with, were saved by, or have high admiration for the great little fighter.”



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The views expressed herein are those of the editors/authors and do not necessarily reflect any official position of the A-37 Association. The editors reserve the right to print any article/letter/email/photo deemed to be of interest to members.

We also reserve the right to edit any article to fit space available and to reject any material considered inappropriate. We invite and encourage members/contacts to submit articles/letters/emails/photos.

Visit our website: **www.A-37.org**

and a supplement to it:

<https://thea37association.shutterfly.com/>

A group of fighter types, all in their forties, decided that, since they weren't getting any younger, they would meet every ten years at a place where they could just let loose and enjoy themselves. Hooters was a natural choice since the food was decent and the servers were known to have great assets. Ten years later, in their fifties, since the food had been good at Hooters last time, it was unanimous to go there again. In their sixties, they again decided on Hooters as the parking was really good. In their seventies, Hooters won out because it had a wheelchair ramp. In their eighties, it was Hooters because they had never been there before.

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

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List of registrations to date:

Joe and Rita Acri
Dick and Kathy Covey
Louie and Madi Gonzalez
Vic and Judy Grahm
Jeff Heal
Hank and Jimmie Hill
Hank and Nancy Hoffman, son, Hank IV,
Lon and Barbara Holtz
Eric Jackson
Richard Jones
Hank Keese
John and Carol Lamb
Ollie Maier
John McAlister and Lori Neer
Tom and Debbie McCallum
Tony Neidhard
Terry and Ann Peterson
Jerry and Dale Sailors
Fred Salmon
John and Kathie Serlet
Del and Betty Tally

In this newsletter, look for excerpts from the 8th SOS History, Oct-Dec 1971 describing the squadron's involvement in Steel Tiger and Al Moore's bailout and rescue. On page 3 is another article that didn't make it into "Dragonfly" about flying inverted at 300 feet in an uncontrollable airplane.

A couple of emails of note this time, and we continue Fred Long's "And So It Began."

As always, waiting to hear from you.....Jerry Sailors

Emails

From Claude Newland, 2/14/16 forwarding a note from a Raven FAC:

Rustics,

Take a look at the link below to get a preview of the new Raven FAC book. Select the "Read More" link once the page comes up.

I'm glad to see the Ravens finally put out their own book --as told by themselves. As you know, the Rustics were the first to do this.

"The Raven Chronicles: In Our Own Words" has been published and is now available in a Kindle edition. \$8.95. 781 pages long. (Look for it on www.amazon.com.)

(Emails continued on p.3)

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(continued from p. 1)

reasons to do this, with the most important being it would become part of our archival history. Another is a lot of our members from the early cadres have sent their deepest regrets, primarily due to medical reasons, or their inability to travel any great distance, and they really would have liked to join us. I thought that if we videotaped our event, we could make copies to send to them so they would still be an active part of this historic event. People like Bo Bottomly, the Project Combat Dragon leader, and Lou Weber's family, along with a number of the original Combat Dragon cadre of pilots and support personnel. I can't think of a better way to make them feel a part of this celebration, brighten their day, ease their load, and walk down memory lane with us once again.

A note of caution: Both Jerry Sailors and I will be arriving at the Radisson on Sunday, June 5, ensuring everything is in place and ready for our reunion. If you have any problems with last minute changes to your plans, or run into difficulty, please contact us. My cell phone number is 702-370-0005 and Jerry's is 334-328-7575.

As always, we are hoping for perfect weather, but, in case of inclement weather, please have an umbrella available. In the meantime take care and be safe out there.

Emails (continued)

From: DON BROOKS 4/4/16

I've contributed a few items for your newsletter over the years. I was a Rash, Pretzel, and Rustic FAC during my year in SEA and worked many strikes with you guys. Since I live in Colorado Springs, I, along with a few other of the local FACs, plan to attend the plaque dedication ceremony at the AOG.

If you have no objections, some of us might even drop by the hotel to help you wet your whistles. Looking forward to your big event.

Don Brooks

War Story

Not all stories printed in the five booklets produced more than ten years ago by Ollie and Gloria Maier were selected for the book "Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam." Here's one by Frank Hense.

And There I Was...

at 300 feet flat on my back.

I was scrambled in a flight of two A-37Bs against an active VC base camp with several large bunkers, a mess hall, and trenches. The FAC requested we drop our bombs in singles followed by napes also in singles to cover the area we had just opened up.

Lead dropped the first nape and I rolled in from a left downwind abeam the target at 4,000 feet. About halfway around my descending turn, I extended the speed brakes to keep the airspeed within limits. Final was slightly straighter than I liked, so I pulled through our run-in heading slightly, rolled back to the right, raised the speed brakes, leveled the wings, and pickled the right nape. Dive angle was about 10 degrees, altitude 250-300 feet, and airspeed 285 knots.

As the right nape came off, the left wing started to drop so I applied right aileron to pick it up and back pressure to raise the nose. The throttles were in idle and I had not started to advance them yet since the nose was still down.

The roll to the left continued at an increasingly rapid rate so I put both hands on the stick and applied full right aileron. By this time, I had about 30 degrees of bank and the aircraft was still rolling to the left uncontrollably. Full right rudder had no effect.

As the aircraft rolled slight past inverted, I hit the jettison button to clean the wings, intending to eject immediately thereafter since the aircraft was in a tight, rolling button-hook maneuver with the nose dropping. The jettison action was immediately effective and the aircraft became controllable again.

I can't recall which way I rolled the aircraft upright! The G-meter registered 4.7 positive and none negative. Had the stores not jettisoned, it is extremely doubtful ejection would have been effective due to the attitude and altitude. The rate of roll was so rapid I never considered applying controls to go with the roll instead of against it.

I questioned myself on how I got into that situation. Ham fisted? Fuel imbalance? Jetwash from Lead? The A-37B had sufficient aileron control to handle asymmetric deliveries and pulloffs up to 5Gs at 300 knots. No fuel imbalance was noted during the subsequent controllability check.

Lead and I had both used restricted roll-in headings. Winds were light at 5 knots and I was flying slightly downwind from his approach to place the nape to the right and parallel to his. He dropped at 250 feet and pulled 4 Gs. Approximately a minute later, I did the same thing. My conclusion: wake turbulence is everywhere on final approach behind Lead in the target area.

I know one thing: if you are asymmetric and out of control, clean the wings (jettison all external stores). It works!

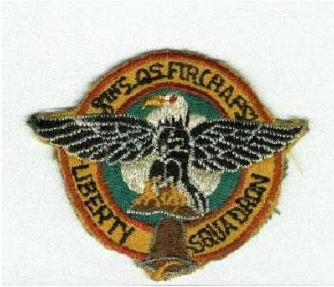




...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

From the Archives

(From 8 SOS History, Oct-Dec 1971)



(The following is taken from the narrative written by Lt Col Gordie Weed prefacing the 8 SOS history.)

During the period 1 October 1971 to 31 December 1971, the 8th Special Operations Squadron flew some of the most dangerous missions in its history; between Skon and Kampong Thom on Route 6 in central Cambodia, and along Route 22 north of Tay Ninh to Krek in western Military Region III, Republic of Vietnam. Unlike the previous three months, when no battle damage was received, fourteen aircraft sustained more or less minor damage, and one aircraft was lost, due to ground fire sustained during the quarter. We are including a narrative of a proposed Presidential Unit Citation for the squadron to shed light on some of the action encountered in Cambodia. Not covered in that resume is the considerable support we gave to the South Vietnamese Army during October. At that time, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units attempted to move, in force, from Kreg along Route 22. We flew more than four hundred sorties in support of the forces that repulsed that attempt.

In late November and early December, we sent a contingent of eight aircraft to Ubon RTAFB to fly interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Steel Tiger. We raised the Mk-82 LD and CBU-24 and 49 release altitudes from the usual 2500-3000 feet to 5500 or 9000. Accuracy suffered little, and in the 248 missions flown there, no hits were taken.

We discontinued the use of napalm on 15 December. It was felt that too much battle damage was being sustained to warrant its continued use. At that time, the alert aircraft began carrying four Mark-82's and either two pods of HE rockets or two CBU-25 canisters. Fragged sorties carried four Mark-82's, sometimes with two rocket pods. Several sorties carried two Mark-2's and two CBU-55's.

Supply shortages began to hamper operations severely by mid-December. For the first time since acquiring the A-37, the squadron maintenance rating fell to less than C-1. For several days in late December, a C-4 operational

status was reached. Throughout the period we maintained our alert force commitment, although for a few days, six aircraft instead of the usual eight were on status during daylight hours.

Lieutenant Colonel Gordon H. Weed became Operations Officer in November and Lieutenant Colonel Ledbetter resumed duty as Executive Officer. Only four pilots DEROSed during the quarter as ten others arrived. Captain Alvia Moore gained celebrity status after his bailout near Kampong Thma, Cambodia. It was the 8th Squadron's first successful ejection from the A-37

Lt Col Gordon H. Weed, Commander

(Excerpt from 8 SOS history describing Alvia Moore's ejection and recovery.)

On 29 November 1971, a flight of three A-37's was aiding the defenders of Kampong Thma when the lead aircraft, flown by Captain Alvia W. Moore, was hit by approximately 5 rounds of 12.7mm AA fire. His aircraft immediately burst into flames. Captain Moore turned his burning aircraft towards Kampon Thma, but before he reached the town, flames enveloped his cockpit and he was forced to eject over enemy-held territory. The pilot landed safely in a rice paddy and immediately established radio contact with his wingmen and the Forward Air Controller (FAC) who were orbiting overhead. As long as the two remaining A-37's circled overhead, the enemy held their fire. The two wingmen orbited until they reached an emergency fuel state, and then left station. It was then the enemy opened up with small arms and machine gun fire. The downed pilot started crawling away from the area and at the same time directed the FAC's attention toward the enemy fire. Meanwhile, several flights of F-4's had arrived on station. Captain Moore directed the fighters from the ground and succeeded in silencing some of the fire. At this time, the Search and Rescue aircraft, consisting of two propeller-driven A1 "Sandys" and two HH-53 "Jolly Green Giant" helicopters, arrived on station. The downed pilot directed Sandy lead to the ground fire and talked the fighters toward his position. After Sandy lead had flown once over the area, he decided to commit a Jolly Green Giant to attempt the pickup. In the meantime, the Cambodians at Kampong Thma had pushed their way down the road in the face of heavy enemy fire to aid the down crewmember. Just after the first pickup attempt was aborted, the Khmer soldiers reached Captain Moore. They took him to the relative safety of Thma, where he boarded one of the rescue helicopters. Two weeks later, having recovered from burns sustained during his bailout, Captain Moore returned to combat.

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

Footlocker photos

The photos on this page are from Louie Gonzalez, who crew-chiefed with the 8 AS in 1971. He dug them out of shoeboxes and a footlocker, but can't remember all the names. Help him out and, while you're at it, look for your own prints, slides, or even documents you'd like to show off and email the whole shebang to us at dragonfly369@charter.net. Memories can be good for the soul. These were for Louie. Let's see who else might enjoy yours.



What a group

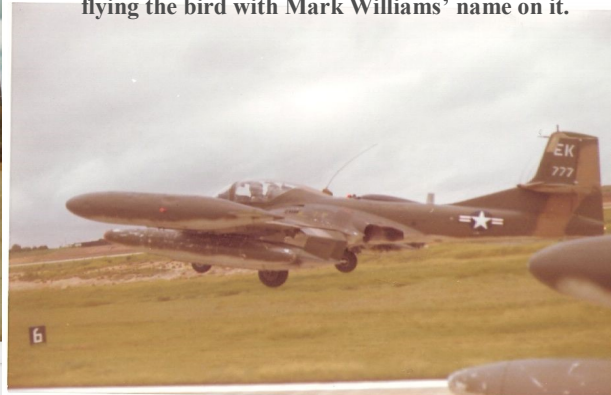
Who are the intrepid aviators in this photo from 1971? Can you name them? And what would be an appropriate call sign for this group as a whole?



That's Louie giving thumbs up to John Bradley flying the bird with Mark Williams' name on it.



Scramble Hawk 1



Louie getting a ride in the right seat with Captain Julian Shattuck - 1971.



Yours truly in front of our squadron logo



Anxiously waiting for that "freedom bird"



...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

...AND SO IT BEGAN

(Continuation of Chapter 7 of an unpublished book by Fred Long)

Actually it went rather smooth until we tried to hook the ammo guide arm from the drum to its like component on the gun. The minigun sat on top of the drum and the guide arms had to be lined up perfectly. Once lined up, a quick-release pin was inserted in holes drilled into an extension off to one side where the connection was made with each piece. The problem was getting it lined up. If it was off just a hair the quick-release pin could not be inserted. This was the most difficult part of the installation. The filming continued throughout this struggle that presumably ended up on the cutting room floor. After the gun was fully installed they took film of me facing the camera, looking serious and working my hands as if I was working on the gun—pictures they could not get because when the aircraft covering over the gun was opened it would not permit footage from that direction. I never saw the movie, much to my regret, although, later that month when I saw the film crew again, they said the movie turned out real good and would be used.

This problem with the ammo guide arm alignment would be solved several months later when Leonard Barnett came up with the idea of slightly countersinking the rear hole. This made it much easier to get the guide arms lined up for the quick-release pin. After testing his idea, and finding that it worked without any impairment in precision, he was rewarded with a \$25.00 check. Had his idea gone to the manufacturer he might have received a substantially greater sum.

We had been in the war fourteen days, but we had not joined in the war. The next day that changed when we went on two shifts, twelve hours each. We had nineteen warplanes. Six more would arrive any day now, bringing us to full strength. We had the shop ready. A supply of gun pods had been removed from their crates, inspected, and moved to a strategic location for use when needed. The gunroom had been completed with installation of a huge vat filled with dry-cleaning fluid used for cleaning the gun. The worktable I made was placed under one of the windows, and a homemade stool was placed at the table to sit on. Everything in the main shop area was catalogued, stored in its proper place, and organized. We were as ready as ready can be.

We would have another barracks inspection that night. We had failed the first one, mainly because we didn't have lockers and things were scattered around in various places

giving the cubicles an unsightly appearance. We would pass this one, but we were told we would have to get rid of the footlockers. This was upsetting because it was the only thing we had to store our clothes securely.

After the inspection, I dropped into my bed with all the grace of a sack of potatoes. I was so upset and frustrated. What a way to begin a war! I lay there with my hands behind my head staring at the ceiling wondering if it was really worth it. Would our being here make any difference at all to anything? I knew how long the war had been going on. And we couldn't even get lockers for our clothes. But we were expected to fight the war effort, and maybe sacrifice our lives and, if we do, what will be the end? History tells us that civilizations rise and fall. How much lesser are we that walk the ground? We that live for a moment, and will sleep for a thousand years, or tens of thousands of years. Our life is just a blink of the eye when compared to all that have gone before us. Those that have gone to the forgetfulness that hides the grave so that no memory of them remains. And I find myself here. I find myself seeking an answer for my being here.

Why would I, or anyone, risk shortening an already short existence? Life is indeed a web of circumstance: good and evil, love and hate, sweet and bitter, victory and defeat—all these things are necessary, one to the other, and who knows the end of each? Maybe there is no end. Maybe, as night becomes morning and night again, so it may be that what has been may be. Who knows what has been on earth, or what shall be? There is no new thing under the sun, as the wise Hebrew wrote long ago. Yet were not these people utterly destroyed, and they that remained scattered to other countries? Did they not return two thousand years hence? Thoughts such as these disturbed my mind until thankfully I went to sleep.

I woke up to what would be the routine for the next few months. I was assigned to the shop's gunroom, but until we had a gun jam, or a routine cleaning, I was assigned to other tasks in the main shop area, taking work orders as they came in.

It was August 15. That night Colonel Heath Bottomly, 48, head of the Combat Dragon evaluation team, announced the start of combat missions. Held outdoors, the Commander's Call was inspiring with Colonel Bottomly stressing the importance of our mission. He stood like Apollo, his muscular body outlined against the black sky. The soft glow from a flicker of light somewhere nearby

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...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun



gave him an awesome, bigger-than-life appearance. Shadows from the dim glow seemed to convey a betrayal of time. It was as if we had gone to another age. As if mighty Caesar was standing before us commanding his troops. He talked not thirty minutes, but his speech was riveting, each word stimulating his listeners as he unfolded the responsibilities we were entrusted to perform. We were “the machinery,” he told us, held together by bands of steel, locked intricately together, each with a function neither greater nor lesser than the essential whole. Our exploits, just before leaving England Air Force Base, which he seems proud of us for doing, “proved that though we were many, we are now one, one organic machine, oiled and primed, already granted the proud distinction of proving under combat conditions the power and effectiveness of the A-37.” Not a sound but his voice could be heard as he briefly outlined our mission to prove the combat usefulness of the A-37A Dragonfly, and our high regard for his leadership was demonstrated by the occasional, spontaneous cries of enthusiasm that flooded the air.

Colonel Bottomly was held with the highest admiration by his men; he generated an aura about him that commanded respect. He seemed to know everyone under his command and made everyone feel they were vital to him. Nicknamed “The Rock,” the men looked up to him with that affection only achieved by the highest of mortal men. With his clean-shaven head, he resembled “Mr. Clean,” in that his likeness could have been used by the artist to create the famous icon for Procter & Gamble. He would come to the barracks unannounced, just for a walk-through, and maybe stop a moment to chat quietly with one of the men. On one occasion I was sitting at the foot of my bed reading a book when he entered. I did not realize he was anywhere near until he was right on top of me. I started to stand, but he put his hand on the top of my head to keep me from rising. I looked up and watched, filled with wonderment, as he walked away.

Probably the most remarkable occurrence involving Colonel Bottomly was when we were at Pleiku Air Base completing the last phase of Combat Dragon. It had become my habit between missions to walk to the grassy area on the other side of the runway, where I would recline with my back against the slightly banked slope and read. I would remain in that position, my head not two feet from the pavement, until one of the aircraft started taxiing down

the runway. When the aircraft approached, I would get up and walk down the slope a few feet until it passed, then return to where I had been and commence reading again. Colonel Bottomly, as well as other pilots, no doubt had seen me do this many times.

One afternoon as I was engaged in this leisure enjoyment, to my surprise I saw Colonel Bottomly walking slowly along the low ground past where I was lying. He stopped about five yards beyond me, taking a position on the ground similar to what I had been doing. I watched as he folded his hands behind his head and fixed his eyes on the sky.

I went back to reading. A few minutes later one of the A-37s started taxiing down the runway. I stood up as I had in the past, and walked a safe distance, watching the A-37 continue down the runway where Colonel Bottomly was reclined. He didn't move, and remained motionless as the



Col Heath Bottomly,
Commander, Combat
Dragon Task Force.
(Fred Long Collection)

far end of the wing crossed over him. I went back to where I was reclined when a second A-37 started towards us. This time I didn't move, and neither did Colonel Bottomly, until the jet went past him. When the aircraft had gone down the runway several yards he stood up and silently walked back to where he came from. It was an extremely special moment for me because Colonel Bottomly had taken

time out of his extremely busy day just to show me I didn't have to move when the aircraft taxied down the runway. It is easy to see why we all thought so highly of Colonel Bottomly.



A1C Fred Long posing
with one of the “Baby
Blues” at Bien Hoa.
(Fred Long Collection)

(to be continued in next newsletter)

-mailing label-

Or if you prefer to receive newsletter by email, go to www.A-37.org and email Jerry Sailors.

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Inside is the May 2016 newsletter of the A-37 Association. You have indicated a preference to receive this publication by postal mail. If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter by post, you don't have to do anything. If you wish to change your preference, please circle option a or b below and send this page to the return address above.

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On the inside...

Update on the June 7 plaque dedication at USAF Academy

A War Story: Flying inverted at 300 feet in an uncontrollable aircraft!!

Out of the Archives of the 8th SOS

Footlocker Photos

And So It Began....