



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

Although 2019 started out roughly health-wise for both Barb and me, it has turned out to be a really great year. Three elements exceeded all expectations.

First was the planning and execution of the late April reunion in Wichita, which was a very hospitable, enjoyable site for our gathering. Second was honoring those Cessna employees who put everything they had into producing an aircraft that exceeded expectations.

Third was an invitation from Johnny Drury, President of the Rustic Association, to attend the Rustics reunion in Las Vegas, 1-4 October. I saw this as an opportunity to do something special to cement our appreciation for the FAC brotherhood. So I built replicas of the O-2A and OV-10 aircraft, similar in scope and size to the A-37 dioramas auctioned off in Wichita, for presentation to the Rustic Reunion.

I presented the dioramas at the Rustic’s closing banquet on behalf of the A-37 Association, telling those attending that it was an honor to put faces to the voices of those who, over the five years of A-37 combat operations, guided us with professionalism and bravery on over 75,000 sorties. In turn, many praised the outstanding combat record of the A-37 aircraft and crews. The evening cemented relations between our two Associations, and I can see possibly combining our reunions in the future.

Since this will be our last newsletter for 2019, Barb and I will take this opportunity to wish you all a memorable Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Inside:	Page
Member Update/Emails	2
War Story	3
From the Archives	4
Memorabilia	Insert

We publish “The Dragonfly”

to communicate with members and friends of the A-37 Association and to promote the history and legacy of the aircraft.

We received an email from Claude Newland (page 2), one of our Rustic friends, who would like to find the A-37 pilot who got him a great assignment in 1974. So if you served at MPC in 1974 or know an A-37 pilot who did, contact us at a37dragonfly@comcast.net and maybe we can identify the mystery jock.

We promote the aircraft’s legacy in several ways. One is by remembering people who contributed to its combat history. On page 3, we highlight one of the original Combat Dragon pilots, Dick Sommerfelt, who died on 21 September of Alzheimer’s. Dick’s wife, Phyllis, called on 14 October to tell me of Dick’s passing and to offer the Association a 600-foot reel of 16mm film (mostly gun camera film) for our archives. Excerpts from *Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam* reveal some of Dick’s personality.

We also adapt excerpts from A-37 unit histories between 1967 and 1972 (page 4). The year 1970 was a pivotal period as the 8th and 90th became fully operational with A-37Bs, US combat forces went into Cambodia openly, and personnel shuffles between squadrons became a norm.

Since we’re coming upon the holiday season, perhaps you’ll be shopping for some unique gifts. How about A-37 Association memorabilia items? We would need orders by 10 December to ensure delivery before Christmas...Jerry Sailors



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



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

A-37 Association, Inc. Board of Directors

President Lon Holtz
 Vice President Eric Jackson
 Secretary/Treasurer Jerry Sailors
 Lou Gonzalez
 Vic Grahn
 Hank Hill
 John Lamb
 Tom McCallum
 John Serlet

Membership: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
 dragonfly369@charter.net

Newsletter: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
 dragonfly369@charter.net
 Barbara Holtz 702-804-4232
 amscom@embarqmail.com

Website: Tom McCallum
 a37dragonfly@comcast.net

The Dragonfly is a publication of the A-37 Association published quarterly (except when within two months of a reunion, then monthly), as a service to the membership, new contacts, and other interested parties.

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.

Member Update

Gone West:

Dick Sommerfelt - 21 September 2019 (Combat Dragon)

Emails

9/13/2019 from Claude Newland to Lon Holtz

I look forward to meeting you in Vegas. As you know, the Rustics loved the A-37!!

Bien Hoa A-37 driver Cort Durocher was in my pilot training class 70-02 section at Webb AFB. When I first arrived at Bien Hoa in June 1970, one of the first things I did was have Cort finagle me a combat ride in the A-37. I flew with Hank Hoffman down to IV Corps on a fragged mission with a Vietnamese FAC. Nothing too exciting there, but it was a hoot to be in the A-37.

Cort was also in my wedding party when I returned from 'Nam in June 1971. I married a local girl from Destin, Florida, the love of my life! Cort was stationed nearby at Eglin AFB

when I returned stateside.

Four years later in 1974, it was an A-37 pilot who worked at the AF Personnel Center who got me a no-notice job at the Air Force Academy. It was a great job working in Current Plans, DOXC. Unfortunately, to this day I have not been able to recall his name. I wonder if he is a member of your Association?

What made the whole process so unusual, he tried to call me while I was on a 60-1 cross country to Eglin AFB to find me and tell me about the job. He left a message to call him. He told me I was an alternate for the ASTRA program (which I was unaware of) and met the prerequisites for the job (married, SOS completed, and available). He said he recognized my AF photograph in my personnel folder and remembered I was a FAC living next door to his A-37 hooch at Bien Hoa. So he called me first to offer me the job.

I guess those after-mission informal debriefs at each other's bar paid off. I only had about 24 hours to make a decision. I took the job and loved my four years in Colorado Springs. I have been forever grateful for that guy. Wish I could thank him again!

10/9/2019 from Johnny Drury (Rustic 04) to Lon Holtz

I apologize for the late email, but wanted to tell you how much the Rustic FACs and I enjoyed and appreciated your and Barbara's attendance and your significant contributions to our 2019 Las Vegas Reunion. I have been receiving numerous kudos about the Reunion and its concluding Banquet.

I have received exceptional accolades about the two dioramas that you presented. Representatives of our Rustic "Back Seaters" especially liked your representation of their men in the OV-10. As I think I told you, the Rustic Board of Directors have decided the best place for your masterpieces will be at our "Rustic" A-10 Squadron in GA. From what I hear, the displays have been successfully hand-carried to the East Coast for delivery to the Squadron.

Laura and I have talked many times since about the Banquet and our discussions with you and Barbara. I consider you a hero and "tough guy".....But, I appreciate you allowing me during the Banquet to poke jokes and jabs at you during the Banquet. As a "virgin" master of ceremonies, I was "winging it." You helped me very well!!!! Hit my Smoke, Hawk



**Rustic's Reunion
Las Vegas**

**O-2 and OV-10
dioramas**



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

A-37 Association Website

Please take some time to check out the recent updates that have been made to the A-37.org website. We are still looking for additional photos of our time in Vietnam. Any photos (color, black and white, and any format or size) on the flight line, in the barracks, in your uniform, fatigues, flight suit, dress blues, 1505's, etc. A description of what the photo represents and the time frame would be greatly appreciated. If you have any ideas or recommendations to improve the website, let us know. Please email your photos with description to a37dragonfly@comcast.net.

War Story

With the passing of Dick Sommerfelt (see Member Update, page 2), one of the original Combat Dragon cadre of pilots, excerpts from stories in the A-37 Association's book, *Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam*, illustrate Dick's propensity for mischief and plain old common sense.

Bill Lutgen...Before our departure from England for Bien Hoa in July 1967, I had been out on the town for a private encounter. When I returned to the BOQ, the AP called and asked if I was in charge of some officers they had collected. These officers had been trying to run off down the street with a little airplane, apparently confiscated from the children's playground.

I was still in civilian clothes, but rushed down to the AP offices and found Sommerfelt, Murphy, and three or four other officers in custody.

I told the AP I was in charge of them all and demanded they be put in my custody so I might discipline them. Sommerfelt kept calling me "Colonel" and apologized for embarrassing me and having to call me out. The truth was I was just a major at the time, not really in charge of those men, just one of them.

Ollie Maier - During the test phase of Combat Dragon, the syllabus called for testing a variety of armament configurations. One of them was to load all stations with a gun pod, which meant there were nine guns, each firing at 6,000 rounds per minute, thus totaling 54,000 bullets per minute.

At least that's what Dick Sommerfelt thought when he requested that configuration for a night patrol over the Trail. Being in the test group out of Pleiku, we were able to select what we thought worked best on



selected targets. This particular mission was truck-busting, on which we had been using bombs, rockets, or napalm.

But it was rather hard to hit a moving truck at night in the woods over the monstrous area we were operating in with those loads. Nine guns could blanket an area the size of a football field in just a few seconds and would surely knock out any trucks in that area. An ideal weapon.

Or so Dick thought until he opened up on the first truck spotted that night. The muzzle flash from the nine guns lit up his airplane like a neon sign saying "Here I am!" Plus the tracers from all nine guns pointed back exactly to his flight path. Thus every enemy gun on the ground for miles around opened up on him.

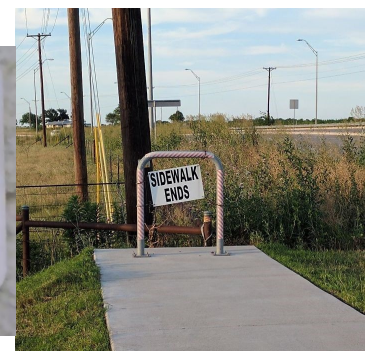
Dick was a fast learner. He quickly safetied the guns, gained some altitude, and went home.

Phil Cox - Billy Lutgen, Dick Sommerfelt, and I had taxied our 3-ship out to the arming area with bombs and CBU's that we were told contained tear gas. The mission was southern IV Corps, where we were supposed to flush the bad guys out of their caves with the CBU's and then come back around with the bombs and 7.62. I had been on these missions before and was not impressed with the effectiveness of the CBU in getting the "Cong" out of caves. This led to further speculation that maybe they couldn't get out at all. Maybe it wasn't really tear gas -- but what?

Suddenly, the arming area erupted with a white cloud of smoke. The armorer had set off one of the canisters! I was immediately engulfed, coughing, crying, shutting down, and getting out of there. Dick had the presence of mind to swing his plane around and blow a clear space for me to stand. Thankfully, it was tear gas!

Laff Corner

Proof society is regressing...





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

From the Archives

(Adapted from the 3rd TFW History, Apr - Jun 1970, covering the 8th AS, 90th AS, and 604 SOS.)

Throughout April, missions consisted primarily of close air support and interdiction in support of allied forces in the Republic of Vietnam. The number of combat sorties in April was reduced by about a third of the previous month. It appeared future combat operations would be even more severely restricted.

However, on 29 April, essential personnel with the "need to know" were briefed on planned operations into Cambodia. On 1 May, the Wing launched its first preplanned airstrikes into Cambodia, directed primarily at Dog's Head, Fish Hook, and Parrot's Beak areas in support of the 25th Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), and 9th Infantry Division. For the next ten days, the Wing nearly doubled its April combat sortie rate, launching an average of 30 combat sorties per day with a high of 44 on 11 May.

Initially, sorties were planned in anticipation of a more hostile environment than encountered in-country. Aircrews were briefed on defensive air-to-air tactics. An out-of-country SAR organization was deployed from Nakom Phnom, Thailand to Bien Hoa. A special Tactical Air Control System (TACS) was put into effect to handle the large volume of tactical aircraft constantly airborne over the battlefield. The aircraft would initially contact super-FAC Head Beagle, an airborne central clearing element, who would then hand them off to a Forward Air Controller who was ready to put them to work.

At first, flights were frequently targeted against rubber plantations, villages, and even sections of large towns that served as sanctuaries and base areas for the VC and NVA. Many flights were diverted to support troops in contact, almost tripling the number of TICs occurring in April.

After the first 15 days, however, it became evident the tactical air environment was essentially the same as found in-country. As the ground forces moved deeper into Cambodia, the Army had large numbers of helicopters in the area so the need for out-of-country SAR diminished. The amount of tactical air also decreased, so TACS procedures returned to normal and flights were controlled exactly as in-country. The Wing

continued to fly close air support missions into Cambodia throughout May and June while at the same time executing missions into II, III, and IV Corps.

Three restrictions were removed from the A-37 which greatly enhanced the combat capabilities of the aircraft. On 21 April, the Wing again authorized the use of Mk-82 high drag bombs, which proved highly successful, allowing delivery of the ordnance under lower ceilings than with low-drag.

In June, however, a series of low blows from bomb fragmentation resulted in doubling the fuze arming time from two to four seconds. This prevented the bomb from arming if dropped too low for safe recovery, but also increased slightly the dud rate on low angle deliveries.

A second restriction removed was prohibition of landing with unexpended ordnance. Previously, flights that could not expend bombs or napalm were required to jettison those stores twelve miles at sea, which required departing flights to have enough fuel to jettison at sea and still recover at Bien Hoa, thus reducing loiter time. This restriction severely limited the A-37's capability for the Cambodia operation due to the great distances from target to the nearest coastline. Initially

suspended for flights operating in Cambodia, the restriction later was rescinded altogether to allow all flights to land with unexpended ordnance in normal conditions.

A third restriction, requiring downloading fuel from the tip tanks whenever a store was loaded on the outboard pylon, was lifted to allow flare pods and CBU to be carried on the outboard pylon without sacrificing range or loiter time. On 21 April, the night load on Hawk 03 aircraft was changed from two napalm cans and two flare pods to four napes and two flare pods, thus doubling the ordnance load.

Most tactics remained essentially unchanged throughout the period. With the re-introduction of high drag bombs, pilots were required to master a low-angle (10-degree) curvilinear delivery pattern, which proved to be effective as no aircraft during this period was hit using this procedure.

During this period, the A-37s flew a third of all tactical air missions in support of the Cambodian operation.

(The next history will cover two special operations undertaken May - June 1970 - Operation Typhoon and deeper incursions into Cambodia.)



Cambodia. On 1 May, the Wing launched its first preplanned airstrikes into Cambodia, directed primarily at Dog's Head, Fish Hook, and Parrot's Beak areas in support of the 25th Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division

(Airmobile), and 9th Infantry Division. For the next ten days, the Wing nearly doubled its April combat sortie rate, launching an average of 30 combat sorties per day with a high of 44 on 11 May.

Initially, sorties were planned in anticipation of a more hostile environment than encountered in-country. Aircrews were briefed on defensive air-to-air tactics. An out-of-country SAR organization was deployed from Nakom Phnom, Thailand to Bien Hoa. A special Tactical Air Control System (TACS) was put into effect to handle the large volume of tactical aircraft constantly airborne over the battlefield. The aircraft would initially contact super-FAC Head Beagle, an airborne central clearing element, who would then hand them off to a Forward Air Controller who was ready to put them to work.

At first, flights were frequently targeted against rubber plantations, villages, and even sections of large towns that served as sanctuaries and base areas for the VC and NVA. Many flights were diverted to support troops in contact, almost tripling the number of TICs occurring in April.

After the first 15 days, however, it became evident the tactical air environment was essentially the same as found in-country. As the ground forces moved deeper into Cambodia, the Army had large numbers of helicopters in the area so the need for out-of-country SAR diminished. The amount of tactical air also decreased, so TACS procedures returned to normal and flights were controlled exactly as in-country. The Wing



A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



50th Anniversary Patch
\$6 (includes shipping)



2.25-inch SEA Decal
\$8 (includes shipping)



Koozie
\$2 (includes shipping)



A-37 Lapel Pin 1" sq
\$4 (includes shipping)



T-shirt (M, L, XL, XXL)
\$20 (includes shipping)

To order, send note listing items desired along with a check for payment to A-37 Association, 142 Arrowhead Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117

or

Send email order to dragonfly369@charter.net and use Paypal to send payment to dragonfly369@charter.net