



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

WELCOME TO 2020!!

The dawn of a new decade, and a farewell to 2019. All in all, 2019 was a pretty good year to say good bye to. We finally honored the folks at Cessna for giving us a great little aircraft, filling another square in cementing our name written into their history, and a long overdue milestone in our tasks to be done. We now have plaques and static displays in major museums that tell our history, recognition in major publications, and our book that sold over 450 issues.

With all of this said and done, we still have one more critical objective to accomplish before fading into history. And that is the placement of our artifacts in the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB, Georgia. Facing a new contact at the museum, we are told that we are still a front-runner to get that done once the expansion of the Vietnam-era facility is completed. We plan to keep that position by developing a close personal contact and dialogue with the new curator.

Some basic planning is underway for the '21 reunion somewhere in the Florida Panhandle. Since it is Judy's stamping grounds, she is already searching for the best accommodations and events that would peak our interest and promote attendance. Should be plenty of spare time for individual exploration, golfing, fishing, going to interesting attractions, or just basking in the sun. Sounds good to me.

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I'm sure there's lots going on with folks

in the A-37 community, but as the cartoon on page 2 suggests, I'm not aware of most of it (actually any of it) unless I hear from you. That presumes, of course, one would like to have such information put into this newsletter. At the risk of turning part of this publication into a social exchange, if you have things you want to share, drop me a message at dragonfly369@charter.net.

You can also send digital photos and documents suitable for the A-37 Association's website to Tom McCallum at a37dragonfly@comcast.net. We need material to post a comprehensive story about the aircraft and the people who flew and supported it.

Vic Grahn had a knee replacement (common amongst the aging) just after New Year's. Judy reports he's doing extremely well and expects to be playing some golf by March. Good for him and especially good for Judy.

Lon Holtz continually harrasses me about all sorts of things, not the least of which is having my photo made sitting in "his" airplane, which is on display at the Robins AFB Museum of Aviation. Barb helps me out by fixing him a scotch.

Other than those tidbits, in his column Lon talks about what has been accomplished over the past decade to establish the A-37's legacy in USAF history. Remaining is the goal of finding a suitable facility to display A-37 artifacts and provide a file of historical documents. I suggest as a start that we put Lon on display as an example of an artifact.

Included in this newsletter on page 4 is the continuing history of A-37 squadrons in Vietnam, this time covering the Typhoon mission in May and June of 1970 during operations in Cambodia...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.”

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

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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

Emails

The email notice on 1 November 2019 of Colonel Gordie Weed going west resulted in a number of replies expressing sadness and memories of one of the last commanders of the 8th AS in Vietnam. Here are a couple:

(From Jim Westbrook)

Thanks for the notification about Col Weed. I was the maintenance officer during the time you mentioned. He was the best commander I ever had. The 8th was the best.

Good bye, boss. I'll miss you.

Thank you, Bill Stevens. Like to hear from you again.

(From Fred Long)

I am indeed saddened by this e-mail. Gordon was of tremendous help to me when I was working on the book and we talked numerous times throughout the formative stages of the project. His assistance was invaluable. I am sorry that he is no longer with us.

(From Ben McKenzie, 1 Nov 2019)

Thank you for the newsletter. I've appreciated each one for years. I was an Aerodynamicist on the A-37 at Cessna's old Military-Twin Division at the ICT Muni Airport and a bit as a Flight Test Engineer.

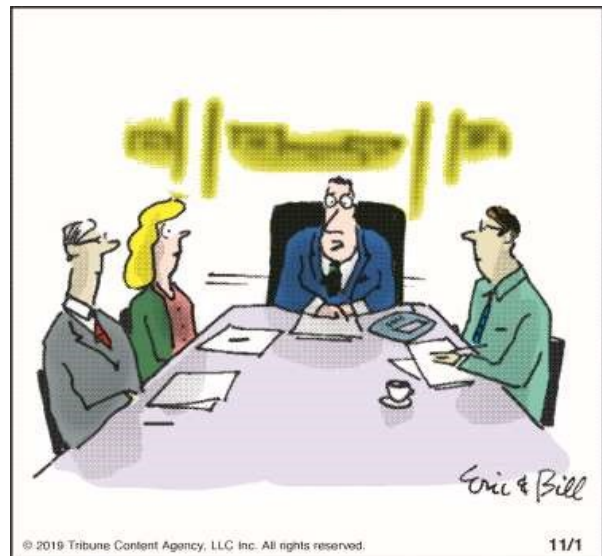
I remember at or near the end of the Combat Dragon evaluation in Vietnam Colonel Bottomly came to Cessna's Engineering Department and went to a central area of engineering on the second floor, and all of us gathered around to hear him talk about Combat Dragon and giving details about how well the group did. I wish it could have been tape recorded, but that technology didn't exist yet.

I now live at St. George, UT. I believe there is an A-37 at the Western Sky Warbird Museum at the airport on the SE side of town here. There was a flight demo a couple of weekends by some of the fighters there and I saw a segment of a video clip of the A-37 taxiing.

Thank you and everyone who was involved with the A-37 program. I appreciate each of you a lot.

Laff Corner

I always wanted to lie naked on a bearskin rug in front of a fireplace. Evidently, Cracker Barrel has a policy against this.



"We need an awareness campaign — are any of you aware of anything?"

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

(Continued from p. 1)

Change of subject, I want to take this time to thank two members who are pretty much responsible for almost everything we do. Jerry has always been the hub of getting things done for us handling the money, writing the newsletter, editorial assistant or authoring items for publication, manning the country store, legal advice, sergeant at arms at our reunions, and our records of membership. All of these things are critical to our operations and longevity. While Judy's contributions are directed towards our highly successful reunions, they are just as demanding. Imagine trying to find and secure accommodations, plan and secure attractions that could be interesting to our members, get transportation to events, all at reasonable prices for a multitude of people, and then develop the reunion agenda in the time allotted. They are the main reason for many of our successes, and I thank them for their dedicated service.

There is also the concern of the age of some of our leaders on the board. Three of us have passed the big "Eight O" and while we still want to serve, circumstances or events may preclude that. With that in mind, we could use new ideas or directions from those who would like to serve. So, if you have an interest, please step forward and you would be welcomed.

Finally, while our ranks are thinning, we are still in there enjoying the camaraderie, new experiences and places to go, and hearing the old war stories, which get better and better with each telling. This, along with the dedications, all renew what we did and how we did it that makes you feel good about your contributions. We were, and still are, a one-of-a-kind organization with a unique aircraft that did the improbable, bordering on the impossible. So, if you can, come join us in Florida ----- we miss you.

War Story

(The following is adapted from a story submitted for, but not published in *Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam*.)

VNAF Officially Accepts the A-37

by Jack Cremin

I was a FAIP (First Assignment Instructor Pilot) at Laredo when I received orders to fly the A-37. There were only four in my checkout class at England so sometimes we flew with the class just ahead of us or with the one just behind. Both of those classes were Vietnamese pilots retraining from A-1s.

Although I had never been to gunnery school, I found the A-37 simple to fly and, with good gunnery instructors, qualifying on the scoreable range was reasonably easy. My best rocket score for four rockets was a 7-foot CEP.



Rocket scores depended on two major variables: aim point and rocket accuracy, i.e., fins with no bends. I had three shacks and one 30 feet. The VNAF pilots did not score very well on the scoreable range, but that changed when we went to the practical range.

This was my first time to work with a forward air controller, but not theirs. Trying to find a truck coming out of a forest or a hidden tank was vastly different from the scoreable range. The VNAF routinely placed their 25-pound spotting bombs directly on target while I was consistently long/short or too far right or left. I was amazed at the difference in attitude and ability of the Vietnamese (who usually average 3,000 combat hours) at the "real" range.

I reported to the 604th ACS at Bien Hoa in October 1968 and in January 1969, after about 100 missions, was assigned to the 7th AF Headquarters. I went to Nha Trang to observe the official acceptance of the A-37 into the VNAF. In Nha Trang harbor were four 10-ft x 10-ft wooden floats. The ceremony began with a flight of two F-5s making bombing runs on one of the floats. Four bombs got that float "wet" and they departed. Next came a flight of A-1s. The first A-1 got his float wet, but the wingman showed up Lead by blowing up the float, and they departed.

Then came the main attraction, two flights of A-37s. Lead of the first flight rolled in and blew up his target. His wingman rolled in and, since his float had been blown up, blew up the F-5 float! The second flight appeared and, with one float remaining, Lead blew it up with his first bomb. With no targets left, his wingman caught up with Lead and departed the area. It was truly a very impressive display of airmanship.

The dignitaries and other attendees headed for a buffet lunch. While I was in line, several reporters in line asked me if I flew the A-37. I answered, "Yes," and one turned on a tape recorder and another one started filming the discussion. The first (and only) question was "How long will it take for the Vietnamese pilots to be as good as the American pilots?" I told them "I was first in my gunnery class and had set the record for rocket delivery, and, if I could fly every day for the next several years, I might be as good as the Vietnamese pilots were today."

That was obviously the wrong answer because they stopped filming and walked away from me. After the buffet line, as luck would have it, the only seat I could find was at the press table. Nobody talked to me, completely ignored me, confirming my suspicion of an "unbiased" press corps. If they don't like what you say, no story. Not much has changed, I'm sure.



...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.)

The A-37 squadrons flew two types of special operations missions during May and June: Typhoon and deep strikes into Cambodia in support of Cambodian ground forces. This column covers the Typhoon operation.

The official area of operation for Typhoon was 100NM from Bien Hoa in an area bounded on the west by the Mekong River, north by the 13th parallel, and on the south and east by a line 30 km inside the Cambodian border. The area was essentially an extension of II Corps to the west and had not previously been subject to US airstrikes.



The basic concept was to employ the A-37 in a similar role to that of the "fast moving FACs," such as Misty, Stormy, etc. Timing was

critical as the first Typhoon mission was to be flown within two days of the initial briefing by 7 AF. The 90 AS under the command of Lt Col James M Neale was assigned command and control of Typhoon in addition to its normal mission schedule.

Typhoon called for single-ship aircraft in an armed FAC role for low level visual and photographic reconnaissance over NVA infiltration routes in northeast Cambodia. Armed with four pylon fuel tanks and four LAU-59/A rocket pods (two with smoke rockets and two with high explosive rockets), the aircraft carried two pilots with one serving as an observer. Photo reconnaissance was accomplished with a KB-18 strike camera in the belly of the aircraft and a hand-held 35mm camera with a 200mm lens operated by the observer.



The Mekong River - site of many A-37 attacks .

To become familiar with the techniques and procedures involved in using a fighter aircraft in a VR/FAC role, 90th personnel visited the F-4 Stormy operation at DaNang AB. Information from that visit became the basis for developing the A-37 Typhoon mission plans.

Fifteen pilots formed the nucleus of the Typhoon force. All aircraft were to be flown dual with at least one of the pilots certified as a flight lead. Time over target was set at one hour. Throughout the program, close coordination was maintained between the 3rd TFW Intelligence and

pilots, a necessity with the new and changing rules of engagement, requirement for accurate mapping, briefing and debriefing, film study and analysis, and review of other intelligence reports pertinent to the operation.

Major emphasis was on possible enemy lines of communication, centers of population, and suspected areas of enemy activity. The majority of guidance, objectives, and courses of actions were developed by the 3rd TFW Intelligence Officer and the pilots themselves.



3rd TFW Intelligence Officer and the pilots themselves.

Typhoon missions began flying on May 29. Of the 88 missions flown, 69 were solely visual reconnaissance. A minimum of three VR missions were scheduled daily, yielding a fairly

consistent surveillance of the area of operation. Information on targets and possible enemy activity was used to evaluate the situation as well as future requirements.

On 4 June, Typhoon pilots began operating in a limited FAC role in addition to visual reconnaissance. A total of 19 FAC missions were flown. Initially, all targets were preplanned and fighters used were from the 3rd TFW, which allowed Typhoon pilots to prebrief face-to-face with the fighters. Later, when fighters from other bases were used, briefings were in the target area.

The Typhoon mission proved moderately successful, but with several deficiencies, notably the poor visibility caused by the side-by-side seating and the difficulty in acquiring objects at the relatively high speed of the aircraft. The limited range and endurance of the A-37 without air refueling was a deciding factor as endurance was adequate for VR, but limited in the FAC role.



Other deficiencies in the program proved problematic. The KB-18 strike camera, at least as installed on the A-37B, was unacceptable. Communication gaps between Typhoon Operations and 7AF were a persistent issue. Several times, lines of communication targets had been struck without the knowledge of Typhoon pilots. Wrong coordinates and poor coordination for authority and times over target were continuing problems.

The Typhoon mission for the A-37B was terminated at the end of June with the OV-10 assuming the FAC operation.

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