



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

It’s SCARY out there!!!!

First of all, and most important during this COVID-19 pandemic, I hope all of you are safe and healthy. To stay that way, please take all the precautions necessary. It has hit all of us in ways I never could have imagined. Stores with empty shelves, hoarding to the NTH degree, lines of people hundreds of yards long, and pretty much all of them masked. All nonessential stores are closed. I’ve seen a lot of life in my time, but never anything like this.

Vegas is usually very busy down on the Strip, crowding the sidewalks and eight lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic (four each way) are absolutely vacant with not a single person, or car, from south of Tropicana to north of Desert Inn. And now you can drive from the mountains on the west side of town all the way to Lake Mead in thirty minutes at the proper speed limit. And finally, Nellis AFB is closed to all except active duty and reserve personnel. It is truly a ghost town.

I hope it all will end soon.

The Board’s one-year vacation between reunions is over, and regardless of the world situation, our super-duper event planner (with mask on) has been back at it, running around the Gulf Coast trying to find a place that meets our high standards. After due deliberation, the winner is Ft Walton Beach Holiday Inn, which provides lots of amenities for guests and a panoramic view of the blue

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Mark your calendar for April 2021

when the A-37 Association reunion will be held at the Holiday Inn Fort Walton Beach on the beautiful Gulf of Mexico. Specifically, planned arrival date is Sunday, 18 April, with departure on Wednesday, 22 April. (See article on page 5.)

In response to my plea in January for some material, anecdotes, anything to put into this newsletter, I received several emails of interest, which appear starting on page 2, but I could use a lot more. I’m sure there are juicy tidbits just lurking in your fertile mind ready to be told to your most favorite buddies you don’t see every day. The inputs don’t have to be long stories, something along the line of the one Jim Spittler sent in. (See page 3. Thanks, Jim.)

What else? Yeah, this coronavirus thing. I know everybody is following the rules, but, if you have an interesting experience associated with our current “unpleasantness,” send it to me. Hopefully, by the time the July edition of this publication rolls around, things will be tending to return to some kind of normalcy. As for me, it’ll never be normal until, while having just returned from some kind of outside activity (golf?), I can watch a little football, baseball, golf, or even a good women’s beach volleyball game on the tube -- live!

...Jerry Sailors



We can fight this thing together!!
Praise the Lord! Pass the bandanas
and we’ll all be free...Vic Grahn

“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 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:

Darrell D. Whitaker - 13 March 2016 (Combat Dragon Evaluation Team in 1967 and 604th SOS in 1970.) (See email from son Mark Whitaker.)

New members:

Mark Peterson - Boise, Idaho, owner of an A-37 he's preparing for display at airshows. (See article on page 3.)

Col (USAF) Scott Hoffman - Honolulu, HI, son-in-law of Ed De Jong. (See Scott's letter on page 5.)

Emails

(From Alisa LeSeuer, 26 Jan 2020)

I'm so pleased I found your website. My father was a test pilot for Cessna and was killed flying the A-37 over

Hutchinson, Kansas, on September 28, 1974. His name was James LeSueur.

I am grateful for your service.

(Reply from Jerry Sailors, 30 Jan 2020)

Alisa, thank you for contacting us. As a test pilot, your dad was no doubt a gifted aviator and played a role in the successful development of the A-37. You must be proud of him.

.....
(From Marv Slater, 6 Feb 2020)

Memories!

.....
(From Claude Newland, Rustic 19, 6 Feb 2020)

Thanks for keeping the Rustics informed of your association's activities. I have a request...any chance you can send me the article about the A-37 Typhoon operation as a word document? I'd like to share it with the Rustics in our next newsletter.

Last October the Rustics had a great time visiting with Lon at our Las Vegas reunion. He enlivened every event and presented the Rustics with two great FAC aircraft dioramas that he built. Keep up the good work.

Yes, we are all becoming artifacts, but we're hanging in there!

.....
(From Everett Tate, 7 Feb 2020)

I was a crew chief with 604th SOS from 1969-1970. I distinctly remember when 1st Lt Russell E. Voris was shot down in June of 1970. He was an AF Academy grad and had only been in country for a few months.

I retired from USAIR as an aircraft maintenance supervisor after 23 plus years in commercial aviation, however, I will never forget my tour of duty in Vietnam and the professional pilots and maintenance people I had the opportunity to serve with.

.....
(From Mark Whitaker, 12 Apr 2020)

I apologize if I have the wrong email. I am looking for a copy of the "Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam" book published by the A-37 Association, if you have any left-I know it's a long shot. My father was Darrell D. Whitaker, one of the original Combat Dragon eval pilots. He had an additional tour in 1969-70. I have some of his papers and a copy of the original evaluation, but am looking for more info. Thanks for your time and apologies again if this is the wrong contact.

(Reply from Jerry Sailors, 12 Apr 2020)

Mark, we're all sold out of the book. You might try Amazon or Ebay. Can you give me an update on your dad? I was in VN in the 604th ACS when he was part of the Combat Dragon Task Force in 1967.

(Ed. Note: A book was found and made available to Scott.)

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(Continued from p. 1)

of the Gulf behind white sand broad beaches, all favorites of the resort trade. When the final selection is made and the contract signed, I'm sure you will be pleased with the selection.

On the memorabilia venue, you might want to take a look at an item being offered for the first time after a long delay: license plate holders for both the pilots and ground forces showing your service and dedication to the job at hand. The design for the pilot frame is a near repeat of one that we had some time ago. But the enlisted design is the brilliant work of Louie, John, Eric and Tom and speaks volumes about our enlisted force. The frames are priced at \$10 each with a flat shipping rate of only \$6, regardless of the size of the order. An order form is enclosed in this newsletter.

A side note on this, from personal experience, is that since a large number of highway patrol and local police are ex-military, you may get a free pass if you are just that wee bit over the speed limit.

In closing, again, I urge you to be very careful to avoid this plague. Me, as soon as I finish this, I'm going to pour about five inches of scotch, pick a good DVD and fall into the recliner for the rest of the day.

Emails (Continued from p. 2)

(From Mark Whitaker, 14 April 2020)

Thanks for writing back. I will check Amazon or Ebay and see if I can find it.

My dad died 4 years ago on March 13, 2016, from complications of myasthenia gravis, an autoimmune disease. I enjoyed looking at his papers/photos with him when he was alive and hearing some of the stories. He had a great career, retiring in 1978 as an O-6 with a final assignment at the Pentagon as Chief-Foreign Military Sales-Middle East branch with tours in the UK and Germany beforehand. After a couple of years at Northrup, he started his own Beltway Bandit firm, SPF Inc., which he ran until the early 2000s then retired for good.

I am starting to look at some of your newsletter archive - well done to you all. What a great little airplane! One of my favorite pictures is of him pouring champagne/wine over a bullet hole after returning from a mission! He had tons of slides. I had intended on trying to digitize them, but just haven't got to it. He was the best of men and I miss him terribly. Thanks so much for the note.



War Story

Once a Politician, Always a Politician

by Jim Spittler

Back in the mid to late 80's, the Orange County chapter of the AOG was formed. As AOG president I was invited to the formation banquet, which was held at the Balboa Bay Club. Eric Thorson '67 was hosting the event and had a pre-party on his 98 ft wooden yacht.

Among the guests were Gen LeMay and VP/General Nguyen Cao Ky. When Gen Ky came on board, it wasn't with the same flourish and trailing white scarf as when he'd come to the 604th to fly. I struck up a conversation with him, told him I was in the 604th and saw him come to the squadron to fly several times. Politician that he was, he looked me square in the eye and said, "I thought you looked familiar." I'm sure as a Lt or young Capt I made an indelible impression on him. Once a politician, always a politician.

War Story 2 (Email from Mark Peterson and Gary Criddle)

According to the website "Vintage Fighter Restorations," in the late 1980s a vintage aircraft restorer in Australia imported 10 A-37s from Vietnam, primarily from Bien Hoa, aircraft retired due to a lack of spare parts. Some of the aircraft were moved on to the new owners unrestored. Others were restored at Scone Airport in New South Wales and then moved on to new owners.



68-10807 ready for shipment

One of the aircraft restored at Scone was 68-10807. The aircraft went through several owners, including Gary Criddle, who recently informed us he had sold the aircraft to Mark Peterson of Boise, Idaho. Gary sent a photo showing 807 prepared for transport on a Ro-Ro container ship. The wings, engines, horizontal stabilizer, fin, rudder and pylon tanks were containerized. He also said the aircraft had probably the lowest total time of its type flying anywhere in the world - 534 hours total time since new in 1969.

(Continued on p. 5)



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From the Archives

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

Operations in the 3rd TFW slowed significantly during this reporting period and terminated on 30 September with the shutdown of the wing. The 8th Attack Squadron ceased combat operations on 31 August and by 30 September its assets had been turned over to VNAF's 526th Attack Squadron at Binh Thuy. The 90th Attack Squadron completed its last combat mission on 30 September and is to complete transfer of its assets to the VNAF's 528th AS at Da Nang by 31 October. The 604th SOS was renamed the 8th SOS on 30 September and thereafter operated under the operational control of the 35th TFW based at Phan Rang.



The emphasis during this reporting period was placed on the transfer of operational facilities and responsibilities to the 8th SOS and the 6251st Combat Support Group (CSG). The 6251st replaces the 3rd TFW on 31 October. The plan to eventually transfer all base facilities to the VNAF continued with the Vietnamese Improvement and Modernization Program making substantial progress.

In addition to the 8th AS and the 90 AS, the 3rd TFW also deactivated 531st TFW and by 31 July had removed all its assets from Bien Hoa. On 30 September, the formal ceremony symbolizing the transfer of A-37 assets and equipment to the VNAF took place. General Lucius Clay, Commander, 7AF; General Minh, Commander, VNAF; and General Minh, Commander, Military Region III, Army of the Republic of Vietnam attended the ceremony. Each spoke on the spirit of cooperation between the United States and Vietnamese forces and expressed their hopes that Vietnamization of the military effort in Vietnam would be successful.

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A "champagne" flight of 16 A-37s marked the close out of the 8th AS on 30 Aug 1970. A similar flight from the 90th AS took place the next day.

As the flying squadrons took on deactivation plans, changes in leadership included Lt Col George Simpson assuming command of the 90th AS from Lt Col James Neale, who had been in command when the squadron was activated in November 1969. Also from the 90th, Lt Col Coy Austin, Operations Officer, was assigned as Commander of the 604th SOS. Lt Col Whitney Tomlin remained as Commander of the 8th AS until its deactivation on 1 September.



The 3rd TFW flew 4,593 sorties during this quarter, a drop of almost 2,000 from the last quarter. Interesting to note, however, is the number of scrambled sorties increased from the previous quarter despite the reduction

in overall operations. The number of training sorties also increased due to the Wing's participation in the Radar Intercept Training Program set up to train VNAF intercept radar operators in III and IV Corps as well as to provide upgrade to VNAF forward air controllers. Additionally, the deactivation of the 8th and 90th accelerated the checkout program for flight leads and instructor pilots in the 8th SOS.

The 3rd TFW Commander had requested a project in January 1970 to determine the accuracy of weapons delivery by computing the Circular Error Average (CEA) based on information provided by FACs. Below is a comparison of the Wing CEA for July, August, and September plus quarterly comparison with the first three quarters of the FY:



3rd TFW Circular Error Average FY 1970			
	Jul	Aug	Sep
A-37 CEA	11.9 m (39 ft)	10.3 m (34.5 ft)	10.3m (34.5 ft)
MK 82 LD	12.8 m (42 ft)	11.0 m (36 ft)	14.5 m (47.5 ft)
MK 82 HD	12.4 m (41.5 ft)	11.0 m (36 ft)	8.3 m (27.3 ft)
	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr
Wing CEA	17.1 m (52 ft)	11.7 m (38.4 ft)	10.8 m (35.4 ft)
F-100 CEA	18.8 m (57 ft)	12.9 m (42.3 ft)	N/A
A-37 CEA	16.6 m (51 ft)	11.8 m (38.8 ft)	10.5 m (34.8 ft)
Mk 82 LD	17.3 m (53 ft)	13.3 m (43.6 ft)	12.8 m (42 ft)
MK82 HD	21.0 m (64 ft)	11.5 m (37.8 ft)	10.3 m (34.5 ft)

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War Story 2 (Continued from p. 3)

In an email, Mark Peterson said he intends to reassemble the aircraft with some upgrades to avionics, electrical, oxygen, fuel and other systems. "I hope to be flying the aircraft later this spring and will then begin the test flight program so we can begin exhibiting the aircraft at airshows this year. I will be flying a fully aerobatic demo in the aircraft with smoke."

Mark says he has visited our website before and enjoyed reading about the history of the A-37 in combat. "The A-37 Association appears to be doing a great job of preserving this history of the A-37 and men who flew and supported it."

A Different War Story *(Ltr from Colonel Scott Hoffman)*

Proud Son-in-Law and Warthog Pilot

Dear Mr. Sailors,

As a brief introduction, I am the proud son-in-law of Mr. Edward De Jong. He is a member of the A-37 Association, a Vietnam veteran, and former weapons Airman on the venerable A-37 Dragonfly.

At my father-in-law's request, my wife and I attended the A-37 plaque ceremony at the USAF Academy. We were honored to witness the ceremony, meet the A-37 veterans, and have dinner with their families. This was my father-in-law's first reunion, and he has not missed one since. He has thoroughly enjoyed reconnecting with the A-37 Dragonfly community, his wartime friends, and their families.

Despite having neither flown nor been a member of an A-37 maintenance/weapons crew, I respectfully request membership in the A-37 Association. While not directly associated with the Dragonfly and its 'fastest gun', I am a pilot with over 2700 flying hours and more than 160 combat sorties in the A-10 Thunderbolt II (a.k.a. the 'Warthog') --the fighter with the largest gun. The aircraft are significantly different, but share an inseparable connection as historic close air support aircraft with an unyielding dedication to protecting the soldiers on the ground.

My family and I strongly believe it is important to honor our veterans, remember their service and sacrifice, and ensure their stories and heroism are dutifully passed to the next generation. By joining the A-37 Association, we seek to honor my father-in-law and ensure all those who served are never forgotten.

Scott A. Hoffman, Col, USAF
Chief, PACAF Strategy and Plans Division



2021 Reunion Set

The 2021 reunion of the A-37 Association is set for the Holiday Inn Resort at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, with arrival on 18 April and departure on 22 April. The last time we got together on the Gulf Coast was in October 2001, a month after 9-11. Still we enjoyed the white sandy beaches and all the Panhandle had to offer then and no doubt we'll enjoy it this time, too. Let's just hope we don't have to deal with the coronavirus issue next year!

Tentatively, plans for next year include a visit to the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, plus there's a whole host of other aviation-related sites to see and things to do. We'll be sending out all the pertinent registration materials in due time, but for the moment, just put it on your calendar.

Here's where we've been since we started organizing these events:

- 1970 - Wichita, KS
- 1992 - Wright-Patterson, OH
- 1995 - San Antonio, TX
- 1997 - Las Vegas, NV
- 1999 - San Antonio, TX
- 2001 - Ft Walton Beach, FL
- 2003 - Tucson, AZ
- 2005 - Dallas/Irving, TX
- 2007 - Washington, DC
- 2009 - Branson, MO
- 2011 - Colorado Springs, CO
- 2013 - Charleston, SC
- 2015 - Nashville, TN
- 2017 - Rapid City, SD
- 2019 - Wichita, KS

We've also had mini-reunions to dedicate A-37 plaques in 2014 at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH and in 2016 at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs, CO.



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All proceeds go to the A-37 Association.

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



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\$6 (includes shipping)



2.25-inch SEA Decal
\$5 (includes shipping)



Koozie
\$2 (includes shipping)



A-37 Lapel Pin 1" sq
\$8 (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

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