



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

To say this has been one of the most unbelievable years I have ever experienced would be an understatement. First, here in Vegas it rained like crazy through the first two months, followed by 110-plus-degree temperatures with no rain at all. Then, in early spring the virus hit all of us and we all began looking like a band of thieves, probably able to rob anyplace and get away with it. And then the political campaigning began, plaguing us with fact and fiction from some unknown candidates. Hopefully, things will get better in the remaining couple of months.

The one saving grace of this sequester is that I’ve spent the last seven months working on a couple of projects for presentation at the reunion. So almost every day, heat permitting and the temperature staying below 112, I have spent about 3 or 4 hours in the shop.

The planned reunion for April 2021 is still very iffy, but we are monitoring the situation closely to ensure we have a great, safe reunion. So, keep your hopes up and we’ll update you as soon as we can.

I’ve been asked not to get too long-winded here as Jerry has crowded the newsletter with other more interesting material: some good and a sad note that deserves our attention.

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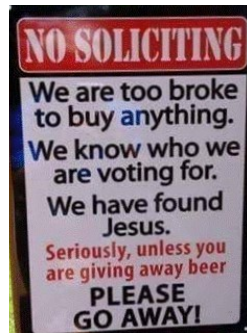
Raise your hand if you knew

that an A-37 pilot became a resident of the Hanoi Hilton? If you did know that bit of trivia, then you're way ahead of most of the A-37 community. That lead-in sentence is a little misleading, but you can enhance your knowledge by reading the article on page 6.

Now that we’re playing the trivia game, does anyone from the Combat Dragon days remember who was the original Intelligence Officer for the 604th ACS upon deployment to Bien Hoa in July 1967? Again, you can be in-the-know and feel like you belong by reading the emails and then the article by Erik Goldstein on page 3.

See how easy that is? Another bit of trivia: an OA-37 participated in the program that developed the Shuttle Crew Escape mechanism mandated after the Challenger accident in 1986. Again, educate yourself by reading the article by Bloke Maurer beginning on page 3.

The articles cited above are the kind we would like to see more of, i.e., interesting accounts of things A-37-related. One article in this newsletter we would rather not have, but



know is inevitable, is about the passing of A-37 people. In this issue, we include remembrances by some members of the original cadre of the 604th ACS in 1967 of Colonel Bo Bottomly, the commander of Project Combat Dragon, who Went West in 2016. Colonel Bottomly had a vision of what he wanted in life and sought to realize that vision.

If you are in the market for an A-37-related memorabilia item, the insert shows those items available along with an order form...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 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

New Members:

Will Beacht - Alamogordo, NM, pilot, 604 SOS, 1968-69, rbeacht@aol.com.

Steve Bliss - Fruitland, ID, crew chief, 1969-70, blisters@reagan.com.

Erik Goldstein - Williamsburg, VA, rwfcaptlt@aol.com (see email).

Phillip Grisotti - Chino Hills, CA, weapons mechanic, 1972, phillipgrisotti@verizon.net.

Chris "Bloke" Maurer - Seabrook, TX, USAF Flight Test Center, Edwards AFB, 1985-89, bloke727@aol.com (see email).

Gone West

Colonel Heath "Bo" Bottomly, 24 October 2016, (Commander, Combat Dragon Task Force that evaluated the A-37A in combat in Vietnam). Obituary: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/greatfallsribune/obituary.aspx?n=heath-bottomly&pid=182619414>

Emails

(From "Bloke" Maurer, 7/26/2020)

I hope you are keeping safe as this is a very weird time we are going through. I am a Captain at United Airlines and, instead of being worked to death in a busy summer, I have only flown a few trips during the past few months. I doubt I will fly a 'normal' month before I retire. Your decision to delay the reunion is sad but certainly the best thing to do. I intend to be there when you call the roll! *(Editor's note: See article on page 3.)*

.....
(From Michael Wright, 7/31/2020)

My father was Casey Wright. I was wondering if anyone in the A-37 community had heard of him. Additionally, please let me know if there are any operating A-37s in the US. I would like to travel to it and hopefully be able to fly in it (willing to pay expenses). I also have complete A-37 manuals, like a Dash-1 Operating Procedures and checklist.

.....
(From Erik Goldstein, 8/10/2020)

My name is Erik Goldstein, and I'm writing to you from Williamsburg, Virginia. I am the nephew of Lt. Ivan H. Bernstein, who flew with the 604th ACS from its beginnings at England AFB until he returned to the US in late July of 1968. As a USAF pilot and my mother's closest brother, he was my hero growing up. Sadly he died of cancer at the age of 35 in 1977.

Other than the picture of him attached (in front of A-37A #67-14513) and a few letters he wrote to my mother, I know very little about his tour in Vietnam. Now that I'm in my mid-50s and a military history professional, it is time for me to find out what I can about my uncle and record it for the family, both present and future.

So, I was wondering - would it be possible for me to join your association, and perhaps contact your membership in hopes of finding some folks who knew my uncle and might be willing to share their memories with me? Thank you for your help.

(Reply from Jerry Sailors, 8/10/2020)

Erik, I remember Bernie from my time in Vietnam with the original cadre of pilots who took the A-37 into combat in August 1967. He was our intelligence officer whose duty was to brief the the details of mission targets and expected enemy weaponry. He was not a rated pilot, but often flew on missions to better understand the type of information required for a successful operation. I didn't know him very well, but I do remember he was friendly and professional in his job. I hope this helps with your project.

(Continued on p. 3)

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“Cleared Hot”

(Continued from p. 1)

In closing, our 2020 General Election on November 3rd is only weeks away, and in my opinion, it is critical that everyone votes. The results will dictate the direction our government takes the next four years. I'm sure you are aware of the candidates, along with their issues and platforms, so I ask you to get out and vote. It's very important.

Emails (Continued from p. 2)

(From Erik Goldstein, 8/12/2020)

While I did know he was the Intelligence Officer from one of his letters, I was a bit confused about his flying for a number of reasons and your information clears it all up. In his letter of 6 Nov 67 he mentions that he'd flown 14 combat missions and was aiming for 20 to qualify for the Air Medal. (*Editor's note: See article below.*)

War Story

Captain “Bernie” Bernstein

by Erik Goldstein

My uncle, Capt. Ivan Bernstein, served in Vietnam with the 604th ACS in 1967-68 as the squadron's Intelligence Officer. “Uncle Ivan” always was and still is my hero. Being in the military history business and in my 50s, I've decided that it's high time to learn and record what I can about his time in the USAF.

Ivan went to pilot training at Moody AFB as part of Class 65-E (3553rd PTS), and earned his wings on 8 February 1965. His first assignment was MacDill AFB where he checked out as an F-4C pilot.

Just as his life-long dream of flight had become reality, a cancerous mole was discovered on his back in the early Spring of '65. After some drastic emergency surgery, Ivan found himself grounded and frustrated. When I was a little boy, he explained the massive scar between his shoulders as a “bear scratch,” being a perfect example of his particular brand of humor. He was a very funny guy!

His next two years were spent recovering and fighting to regain active flight status. With no luck, Ivan volunteered to head for Vietnam with the newly established 604th ACS. In short order he said goodbye to the family in Brooklyn, married my aunt, and headed for Bien Hoa.

While I'm sure he was slightly miffed at having to occupy the A-37A's right seat, he was still in the air from time to time and doing something of great importance.



From his few surviving letters, I know he enjoyed his work. Though I don't yet know how many missions he flew, he did earn the Air Medal.

Once Ivan's tour ended in the Summer of '68, I'm not sure what he did. By the early 1970s he'd been declared cancer-free, activated, and was flying C-141s out of Norton AFB, CA. He participated in *Operation Nickel Grass*, earned the Bronze Star, and purportedly flew Nixon's limo around, but I haven't checked out that family story yet. Around 1974, he was promoted to major.

Right after my 11th birthday and shortly before his 36th, Ivan died of cancer on 25 September 1977. He was laid to rest in Section 59 of Arlington Cemetery five days later. It was a devastating milestone in my life.

But I'm not writing to share a sad story. I'm looking for help in learning all I can about my uncle and am extremely keen on contacting those who served with him in the 604th ACS.

This is my open request to the membership of the A-37 Association for anything that anyone would be willing to share about “Bernie.” Photographs, movies, memories jotted down...everything, no matter how small, would be most welcome and greatly appreciated. You can contact me at rwfcaplt@aol.com or (973) 906-0989.

Thank you all so much for your help and consideration.

War Story 2

The OA-37, the Tiger, and Young Eagles

by Bloke Maurer

I flew the Dragonfly at Edwards AFB in 1985-89 and proudly went up against anyone who challenged. And won! Well, except for the time I tried to out-turn a Huey. Bad idea.

I loved my time in the OA-37. I felt very comfortable in it, and pilots of other aircraft were very impressed at what it could do. I had the chance to fly many different types at Edwards (the F-4 and Huey were two of my favorites), but I always came back to the Dragonfly.

(Continued on P. 5.)



Capt. Ivan Bernstein, 604th ACS Intelligence Officer, Bien Hoa, 1967-68



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From the Archives

(Compiled from the book *Prodigal Fathers* by Colonel Heath Bottomly and interviews with members of the 604th ACS who participated in Project Combat Dragon.)

Colonel Heath “Bo” Bottomly, Went West on 24 October 2016. As commander of the Project Combat Dragon Task Force that evaluated the A-37A in Vietnam in 1967, he played a significant role in the development of the A-37 as a combat support aircraft.

Those of us who were part of Combat Dragon remember Colonel Bo as one of those people you could identify immediately among any gathering, whether in a room or across the ramp. You could not mistake that shaved head or his sometimes menacing glare, which declared, “I’m in charge here.”

Eric Jackson, a member of the initial Combat Dragon planning staff at Nellis in late 1966, remembers that Colonel Bo “seemed to know everybody. He would pick up the phone and say to the operator, ‘Get me the Pentagon,’ and when the Pentagon answered, he would say ‘This is Bo’ and have a conversation with whoever answered the phone.”

Colonel Bo endeared himself to the enlisted troops. When asked how he would describe Colonel Bo’s character, Eric said, “He was straight up and knew how to treat people...I would have done anything for him.”

Fred Long remembers a Commander’s Call in August 1967 when Bottomly stood “like Apollo...as a mighty Caesar...standing before his troops...he generated an aura about him that commanded respect.”

Ollie Maier, a Combat Dragon pilot, remembers that Commander’s Call as well. Bottomly stood in the cockpit of an A-37 and told the assembled officers and enlisted how “overjoyed he was to be leading all of us in the test of a fighter that would change the course of the war.” That prediction perhaps may have been overstated, but the aircraft certainly played a significant role in support of allied ground forces in South Vietnam.

During operations at Pleiku in November 1967, he organized baseball games and other recreational activities for the support troops. One activity was water skiing on a nearby lake, which, according to legend, was shared: Americans on one side, VC on the other.

These comments track with the vision Colonel Bo set for himself as described in his writings and speeches. Born in

1919 in Chinook, Montana, and raised in the Montana frontier, he was the second son in a family of seven boys. He viewed himself as ascending “the stairway of success” in life driven by the “frontier philosophy” drilled into him by his father: independence and self-reliance, persistence and determination, will power, and enthusiasm.

He took that philosophy with him to West Point, graduating with the class of 1944. After pilot training, he was assigned to the Pacific theater flying P-38s.

He wanted to be “the first 6-star general.”

In the A-37 Association’s book, *“Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam,”* Colonel Bo depicted his independence and determination. General John P. McConnell, USAF Chief of Staff, on a visit to Pleiku in November 1967, asked “How far could you ferry an A-37 on a one-way flight?” Colonel Bo didn’t know the answer, but said, “I’ll sure find out.”

So on December 1, flying tail number 520 (one of the “baby blues”) loaded with six external fuel tanks, he flew out of Pleiku on an out-and-back, northwestward over Laos, Thailand, and as far north as Dien Bien Phu, just across the border of North Vietnam, and back to Pleiku. During the flight, he topped out at 30,000 feet altitude (5,000 feet above max authorized in an unpressurized aircraft), and logged 1,414 nautical miles in 3 hours and 45 minutes, landing with 15 minutes of reserve fuel. He had his answer.

After Combat Dragon, Bottomly served as a planner and programmer at 7th Air Force and, in June 1969, took command of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing at Takhli Air Base, Thailand, where he was known as the “Bald Eagle.”

In October 1969, an incident occurred that changed his life. President Nixon had issued a directive not to conduct operations in North Vietnam while peace negotiations were underway. Colonel Bottomly was leading an F-105 flight on a mission to close the Mu Gia Pass in Laos when a North Vietnamese AAA site just across the border fired on the flight and hit his wingman. Despite the order, Bottomly retaliated by attacking and wiping out the AAA site.

He was relieved of his duties as wing commander and threatened with a court-martial. In the immediate aftermath, thinking his career was over and seeking counsel, he talked with his son, who convinced him to become a re-born Christian. He got a reprieve from the court-martial when an amended order allowing retaliation was issued.

After retirement from the Air Force, Colonel Bottomly and his wife, Penny, directed a program working with troubled teens in northern California. He also became a Christian speaker and authored several books detailing his life’s adventures. Interment was in Riverside National Cemetery near his home in Winchester, CA.



Colonel Heath “Bo” Bottomly
USAF Photo

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War Story 2

(Continued from p. 3)

The late 1980s was a wonderful time to be in aerospace and Flight Test. One of the programs we (the A-37 and I) supported was the Shuttle Crew Escape project after the Challenger accident. It was challenging flying: test parachutists, high speed filming with a cameraman, a C-141A modified to look like a Shuttle, and some precise flying - something the Dragonfly excelled at.

Another fun project was testing the T-46A. The A-37 was a good match - if I kept it slow. Real slow. I was determined not to 'bingo out' before the T-46A, but that thing could fly forever. I was conserving fuel every way I could. Then when they finished one of their test points, they accelerated away, I pushed the throttles up - and nothing happened!



T-18 Tigers

The test engineer beside me who was monitoring asked, "What's up?" I didn't say a lot as I gently nursed both engines out of a core lock/min RPM stall and finally got going again. But I didn't bingo before the test aircraft! (That and \$10 will get a beer.)

After WW2, the Army realized it needed a "close air support" aircraft. A designer named John Thorp also worked on the Lockheed Electra and the Piper Cherokee. The Army liked the Defender, but a political limitation meant they could only operate helicopters. Since the Air Force only wanted jets, the design didn't sell. It was produced in small numbers overseas and performed quite well. Meanwhile Thorp adapted the design into a homebuilt sport aircraft. It was his eighteenth design, hence the T-18 "Tiger." It is the first true all metal amateur-built kit aircraft. There are newer designs that are a bit more refined, (the Vans series is a good example), but the T-18 is still very popular.

The Army quickly realized that an F-4 could hurtle down and scatter bombs over a large area. Not the best for close air support. The A-37 evolved out of a need for an aircraft that could get up close and provide accuracy the same as the FD-25 had demonstrated. The Air Force had to have a jet, but it is interesting that the new choice for an attack aircraft has a propeller (but of course they could bring back the A-37 if they want a REAL aircraft...!!). When I was looking for a two-place sport aircraft and came across the Tiger, I realized I had found an aircraft that could trace its ancestry back to the FD-25 and A-37 and would keep the story alive.

My aircraft was built in 1997 and had several owners, some took good care of her. Some didn't. By the time I



bought her, she needed a complete re-build. In the process I made several upgrades: a modern navigation system coupled to an autopilot that allows her to fly an approach to minimums; a second radio, which helps a lot in formation flying; and a smoke system, an easy upgrade that has a very dramatic effect.

I overhauled the instrument panel, but kept the 'round dial' display. Most people have switched to modern computer displays, but I like the 60's era charm (and feel more connected to the aircraft physically and mentally). A couple of inexpensive gunsights, properly aligned, allow observers to see what a bomb run or air-to-air looks like. Overall, she has a similar look and feel to the OA-37 (not as much power, but far less weight). We wear parachutes, but I really miss the ejection seat.

As a tribute to the men who took the Dragonfly into harm's way and did not return, her left gear leg displays an honor roll of names. I hope you approve.

My wingman and I have a flying exhibit that keeps the Dragonfly very much alive and in front of the public. We are getting ready to support an aviation-themed summer school at the local flight museum. After a brief airshow, we will put the aircraft on display while giving a talk about pilots, flying careers, the A-37, etc. Hopefully, it will happen. So far, several events have cancelled (for good reasons, of course.)

The mission of Tiger Flight is to encourage young people to take an interest in aviation. We need them to start careers as flight attendants, mechanics, airport staff and countless other jobs. I remember going to airshows with my father and how much it meant to me to see aircraft up close and meet the pilots (real down to Earth Gods!) (Wow!) I had the pleasure to take the OA-37 to several airshows over the years and it was heartwarming to see the wonder in children's faces just like I experienced.



HobbyFest 2019. Note memorial to the 13 A-37 fatalities in Vietnam on the left wheel strut.

We take children (even the grown-up ones) on incentive flights including Young Eagles. They get a Tiger Patch and a certificate just like a military flight. We also perform for museums and at airshows. We support the 1940 Air Terminal Museum in Houston as well as participating in the annual HobbyFest (Hobby International Airport, Houston). When the Tiger is on show, there is a display in front that shows pictures and details of the Dragonfly.



War Story 3

“It was sort of a messed-up day.”

(Compiled from two telephone interviews with John Cerak and the archives of the Oral History project of the USAF Academy Association of Graduates.)

John Cerak is the only A-37 combat pilot who, in a second tour with the 308 TFS flying F-4Es out of Udorn AB, Thailand, spent time at the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

June 27, 1972 was “sort of a messed-up day” for John. Taking off on his 43rd F-4E combat mission out of Udorn, Cerak and his backseater, Dave Dingee, were number four in a flight of four on a MiG sweep west of Hanoi’s Bac Mai airfield. With the flight holding at the orbit point, Red Crown (a C-121 providing radar surveillance) called out some bogeys to the east

and bandits (MiGs) 60 - 70 miles further north toward China. The F-4s turned toward the bogeys only to be advised shortly thereafter they were SAMs. Flight Lead asked for updates on the bandits while turning back toward the orbiting point. No updates were heard. Cerak as number four was trailing behind when suddenly there was a “big bang.” The aircraft immediately went into what felt like a stall and flipped into an inverted spin.

“Dave and I lost communications with each other, but I could see he was not behind me.” Dingee had ejected. Cerak reasoned he ought to get out, too, so he pulled the ejection handles (he thinks at about five to six thousand feet altitude), and “Poof!, I’m hanging in the chute.” He had ejected upside down so as soon as the parachute had opened, here comes the F-4. “It just missed me, and I thought this really isn’t my day!”

Descending, Cerak steered toward the densest jungle terrain he could see. With hope nobody on the ground had spotted him, his “stomach sort of turned” when he saw people below “yelling and hollering.” He landed in the jungle on the side of a slight hill and heard voices below him. Throwing off his harness and helmet, he moved quickly over the top of the hill opposite the voices. Getting to the other side, he could hear voices there, too. He moved parallel to the ridgeline. Soon, however, voices were all around him, so he crawled under some debris of decayed vegetation and covered up as best he could.

The Vietnamese searched back and forth over the area, even stepping on him three times, which raised his hope



John flew 211 A-37 missions with the 90th AS at Bien Hoa AB, SVN, Dec 69-Oct 70.

(Photo: John Cerak Collection)

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they would leave. But back they came with sticks and hoes lifting leaves and underbrush, and then “some little kid lifted up the stuff I was under” and let out a blood-curdling scream. Everybody came running.

Not sure what to do, Cerak lay still until someone started shooting. He decided to stand with his hands up. “They hadn’t seen me until I stood up. I’m sure they were scared.”

Then the crowd pounced on him until somebody yelled and they fell back. A guy in a pith helmet appeared who seemed to be in charge.

His captors removed Cerak’s flight suit and boots, tied his arms behind his back, and put a leash around his neck. Then they marched him in his underwear and bare feet from village to village. “I thought I was just on parade.”

Somewhere along the way, he was joined by Dave Dingee, who after ejecting had descended into a circle of a couple hundred people waiting for him. For Dingee, it had been the second time he had ejected within the month.

Finally, that night, after an exhausting day, Cerak and Dingee were placed in what looked like the front of a house, open to the villagers, and slept. The next day, they were blindfolded and put into a jeep for the journey to Hanoi. Cerak guesses he was shot down about 50 miles west of the city, but it took two days to make the trip along trails and across streams and rivers to downtown Hanoi and the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

Upon arrival, he was put in an interrogation room with his arms bound behind his back with ropes. In initial questioning, he stuck to giving only the Code of Conduct information (name, rank, serial number, and date of birth), after which he was placed in an isolation cell in Heartbreak Hotel for 35 days.

He was then moved to another room where he joined about 30 other prisoners. There he learned from one of the new prisoners that his aircraft had been shot down by an R-3S missile from a MiG-21, not a SAM. “When I learned that, I was depressed. I thought I was a failure as a fighter pilot. It wasn’t a feather in my cap.”

Later in his captivity, he and other prisoners were taken to a television interview held for the foreign press, but again he stuck to the Code of Conduct. Not pleased with his answers, Later in his captivity, he and others were taken to a television interview held for the foreign press, but again he stuck to the Code of Conduct. Not pleased with his answer, they put him in the ropes, a particularly painful



McDonnell-Douglas F4E (USAF Photo)

(Continued on P. 7)

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War Story 3 (Continued from P. 6.)

torture where the prisoner's feet and arms are bound behind his back, and then his body, bent in half, is lifted off the floor by his bound arms with a meat hook.

"Your chest tightens up and you're trying to breathe, but your body won't let you breathe because all your muscles are cramping up across your chest...you pass out and as soon as you come to, you can feel your muscles starting to cramp up again. You think you're going to die. Then they brought in a guy with an AK-47 and threatened to shoot me if I didn't cooperate. That scared me, but I still stuck to the Code."



MiG-21 Fishbed (USAF Photo)

During captivity, Cerak lost weight and got boils because the "food wasn't good and neither was the medical attention, just enough to get by on." As an FNG, he feels lucky compared to the health issues the FOGs had. "Their teeth were soft due to the lack of minerals in their diet plus the physical and mental torture they had undergone for in some cases seven to eight years."

Important to the POWs were communication and an established chain of command. "Other than staying alive, communication was "probably the most important thing" for everybody. Whoever was the senior ranking officer at the time of capture became the POW Senior Ranking Officer (SRO). John had a couple of SROs, but the one he remembered most vividly was Colonel Joe Kittinger, who had achieved aviation fame for the highest skydive on record of over 19 miles (104,000 feet). "He was a dynamic guy, so he certainly took charge."

"We thought the FOGs were gods...what they endured made me feel proud to be an American."

Also important was anything to keep hope, including religion and faith, that the US government was making every effort to bring all POWs home. Antiwar activism in the US definitely affected morale, but the continued hope and faith that the country was doing whatever it could to get them released kept up POW spirits.

The Hanoi Hilton was not a "center of information" so the primary source of knowing what was happening outside was any new "shootdowns." In the last few months of 1972, however, the Vietnamese put up on a bulletin board articles from the *Stars and Stripes*, one of



which cited Henry Kissinger saying there was "a light at the end of the tunnel."

"We were buoyed by that (quote)...and the B-52s in December kind of signaled things were coming to an end...the FOGs told us it was all over."

Both Cerak and Dingee were released on March 28, 1973, flying out of Gia Lam Airport on a C-141 to Clark AB, Philippines. Once they were airborne, "emotions just went berserk!" After medical debriefs at Clark, John was flown to Maxwell AFB, Alabama, where he underwent a complete physical examination and reunited with his family: wife, Susan, son John Boyd, daughter Rebecca Lynn (born while John was a POW), and his mother and father. Susan and the children had remained at Homestead AFB, Florida, during the ordeal.

Back home at Homestead during his convalescent leave, John learned that Delta Airlines was hiring, so he applied, was accepted, and left the Air Force to fly the right seat of a DC-8 and eventually the L-1011. After 30 years with Delta, he retired as a captain of an MD-11 and established a home in Peachtree City, a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia.

Today, 47 years after his release, John maintains contact with other US POWs from Vietnam primarily through annual reunions or some celebration or dedication ceremony. "It's still a thrill to talk with the FOGs. They are impressive people."

In 2017 at a special gathering arranged by Delta Airlines in San Diego, John, along with 10 other US Vietnam POWs, met with 11 North Vietnamese MiG pilots, one of whom was the pilot who had shot him down: Nguyen Duc Soat. Nguyen, who had six kills before becoming Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese Air Force, later founded Mekong Air, which became Vietnam Air Lines.



John Cerak met North Vietnamese General Nguyen Duc Soat in San Diego in 2017. (Photo: John Cerak Collection)

Meeting Nguyen closed the loop for John about that "one messed-up day," a day now just a memory for the only A-37 combat jock who later became a "guest" at the Hanoi Hilton.

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



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



License Plate Frames
\$10 ea plus \$8 shipping



Koozie
\$2 (includes shipping)



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



50th Anniversary Patch \$6
(includes shipping)



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

The memorabilia order form is on the next page.

Memorabilia Order Form

(Please fill out completely)

(Except for plate holders, all prices include shipping.)

50 th Anniversary Patch	How many? ____ @ \$6	
SEA Decal	How many? ____ @ \$5	
Koozie	How many? ____ @ \$2	
Lapel Pin	How many? ____ @ \$8	
T-shirt	How many? M ____ L ____ XL ____ XXL ____ @ \$20 ea	
Total		= \$ _____

License Plate Holder

"Combat Pilot"	How many? ____ @ \$10	
"Combat Veteran"	How many? ____ @ \$10	
Total for License Plate Holders		=\$ _____
\$6 shipping (regardless of number ordered)		=\$ _____

Total Amount Due:

= \$ _____

[Clear Form](#)

Shipping Address:

Name: _____

Street or PO Box: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone: _____ Email _____

Method of Payment:

Check:

1. Make payable to "The A-37 Association."
2. Write "Memorabilia" in the Memo space.
3. Mail check and completed form to: The A-37 Association
142 Arrowhead Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

Paypal:

1. Complete form and "Save As" to hard drive, renaming file: "(your name)_Memorabilia_Order."
2. Send saved form by email to dragonfly369@charter.net.
3. Go to www.paypal.com and send payment to dragonfly369@charter.net.

Once payment is received, order will be processed.

Questions? Email dragonfly369@charter.net or call (334) 328-7575.
All proceeds go to the A-37 Association.