



**“Cleared Hot”**

by Lon Holtz

Every three months for this newsletter, our editors dictate that I have to scribble out some pearls of wisdom. About what? I’ve talked about delays in our reunion, COVID travel restrictions, and everything else, and I didn’t think you would want to hear any more on those subjects. What’s more, they won’t let me talk politics.

So, seeking direction, I picked up our book, “Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam,” and after reading several chapters, it hit me. Why not write about the one thing that allowed us to produce results that other organizations could only dream about: OUR PEOPLE. We were unique from the very start.

When our pilots and enlisted force members received orders that said “You have been selected to take a T-37 trainer, which has been modified into a counterinsurgency fighter, to Vietnam to support allied ground operations.” Like me, you probably looked around to see who was pulling your leg. Followed by, “I don’t know a darn thing about that bird,” but it wasn’t a joke. I was halfway through F-4 training, getting ready to go to Vietnam.

So, biting the bullet, I signed in at England AFB, LA, and was pleasantly surprised to see what was once a silver training aircraft with just enough power to train pilots, had now become a camouflaged warfighting version of the same aircraft with tip tanks, drop tanks, a gun, and eight pylons to put goodies on. On the first flight, all doubts disappeared, and aircrew and aircraft quickly melded together.

Gathered around another bird were our assigned ground and weapons crews, learning all they could before heading west. I’m told by some that our bird was easy to maintain, void of the weapons system now popular in the 1960’s era.

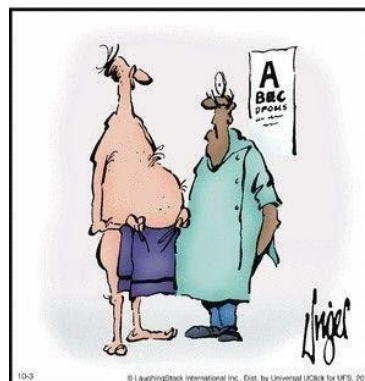
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**Now that the pandemic is no longer with us,**

wait a minute!! That was wishful thinking. Let me rephrase: now that COVID-19’s fourth iteration (appropriately named Delta) is ravaging the country, it looks more and more like it was a good decision to postpone our original April 2021 gathering to May of 2022. Let us hope and pray (or maybe pray first and then hope) that things will be under control by decision time after the first of the year. Regardless, keep **22 - 26 May 2022** on the calendar so we can tip a few at the Holiday Inn Resort in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. It’ll be a good time to lie on white beaches and dip your toes in the beautiful waters of the Gulf of Mexico. As usual, more to come later.

Speaking of later, this newsletter is out a little later than scheduled (i.e., should have been in July) simply because its priority got put behind some other events in my life, which, thanks to the One who oversees such things, were just scheduling problems.

So to expedite things, Barb and I let Lon write a much longer “Cleared Hot” column than we would normally allow, and I tried to stuff a large photo onto page 3 to take up space, plus allow you to identify the members of a class at A-37 school at England AFB in 1969.



“Is this the first time you’ve had your eyes tested?”

An “After the War” article on one of the A-37 Association board members, John Serlet, is the type of article I’d like to see from any of you. So tell me your “what I did after the war, Daddy” story, unless, of course, you don’t want anybody to know...Jerry Sailors

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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.”*



## ...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

#### Gone West:

**Stan Day** - 14 April 2021, Oklahoma City, OK (See email from Eric Day.) [Obituary](#)

**Cort Durocher** - Interment USAF Academy Cemetery on 7 October 2021. (Attendees please RSVP: [bethdurocher@earthlink.net](mailto:bethdurocher@earthlink.net).)

#### New Members:

**Terry A. Cassity** - Paris, KY, [leadfortress@gmail.com](mailto:leadfortress@gmail.com)

**Dwight Kelly** - Niceville, FL, [dwight61@cox.net](mailto:dwight61@cox.net)

**Alisa LeSueur** - Las Vegas, NV, (daughter of Jim LeSueur, a Cessna test pilot killed in an A-37 in 1974). [alisa@dryerventlady.com](mailto:alisa@dryerventlady.com)

### Reunions:

**Bien Hoa Air Base Veterans Association:** 29 Sep-2 Oct 2021 - Branston, MO, [www.bienhoaabreunion.com](http://www.bienhoaabreunion.com)

**Rustics:** 20-24 Oct 2021, Tucson, AZ, [www.rustic.org](http://www.rustic.org)

### Emails

**(From Ron Furtak, 4/17/2021)** (Re article in April newsletter about a photo hanging in a men's room at the Sedona, AZ, airport.)

That pic from the Sedona airport may have been placed there by Ed Maxson, an early Ops Officer in the 4406th at Alex. Ed ran an FBO for a number of years at Sedona. Long deceased!

I flew in that early YAT when I was bagging time while assigned to test operations at Eglin. Little did I know that I would eventually fly the bird! Systems Command had some lax rules at the time of flying in birds not current in. Also allowed multiple currencies--- at the time, I flew four models of the F-104 and two models of the T-33. ....

**(Letter from Paul Dillon, 5/14/21)**

Dear Mr. Holtz,

On behalf of the Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum please extend our most sincere Thanks and Appreciation to The A-37 Association for their most kind and generous donation of \$500 to the Museum on behalf of the Thirteen A-37 pilots who along with Mike Blassie, lost their lives in combat in the cause of Liberty and Freedom.

Your thoughtful gift provides much needed support to the Museum in its Mission to put names, faces and stories to that silhouette on the POW-MIA flag.

Again, our most heartfelt Thanks and Appreciation!

Paul Dillon

President, Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum



MISSING DRAGON FORMATION

In Tribute to the Thirteen A-37 Pilots who lost their lives in combat

**(From Eric Day, 5/17/2021)**

I'm writing to inform you of the passing of my father, Lt. Col. Stanley N. Day. Dad succumbed to heart failure on April 14, 2021. He was 95.

(continued on p.3)

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

### “Cleared Hot”

(Continued from p. 1)

Once we deplaned in ‘Nam, we faced ridicule from the established F-100 cadre, who called us the 6,000-pound dog whistle or Mattel Marauder or a number of other insulting names. Instead of responding, we just went about our business and proved them wrong. Our pilots were professional and met all challenges, and, if necessary, making up ways to get the job done.

But the real heroes that held us together were our crew chiefs and ground troops. That cadre had to dodge typhoons, sappers, rockets, lack of equipment and supplies to keep our fleet flying. As problems surfaced, they didn’t say, “We can’t do that,” but instead, “How can we do it?” During the five years we were there, we were a very close-knit family. And, over the last fifty-four years we still are and our reunions get better and better along with continually improving war stories. Let’s keep them going.

All the comments you found here are contained within the pages of our book. It was a real kick going back and rereading and picturing the events in the stories. For me it was a lifetime event that is still enjoyable. Some of you know that I have served in a number of fighter squadrons in my career, but none of them can hold a candle to the men I served with in the A-37. Thanks for the privilege.

Hope to see you all at our next reunion in May of 2022.

### Emails (continued)

I know that he was proud to be a member of the A-37 Association and greatly enjoyed the reunions. I’m sure he would’ve liked to attend the next one, but the Lord had other plans.

Please feel free to pass this information to your members.

## War Story

### Remembering an OreANG Vietnam Vet

*(Excerpt from “Remembering the OreANG’s Vietnam Veterans,” written by Lt Col Terrence G. Popravak, Jr. (USAF, Ret) and published in November 2015 on the website of the 142nd Wing of the Oregon National Guard.)*

CMSgt John Serlet was a young airman and a jet engine mechanic in the A-37A Dragonfly-equipped 604th Air Commando Squadron at Bien Hoa Air Base, South Vietnam. He was in country 1967-68. His unit brought the new A-37 into combat service where it performed in an exemplary manner and commenced combat operations in August 1967 only three months after receiving the new aircraft. Under project Combat Dragon, the test was to determine if the A-37 could replace the famed A-1 Skyraider in the Air Commando attack role, as the A-1, long out of production, was dwindling in numbers. Chief



Serlet and his squadron successfully passed the test and proved the A-37 a suitable combat aircraft for Close Air Support and Forward Air Control work in SE Asia.

Serlet was at Bien Hoa during the epic Tet Offensive which began in late January 1968, when the base was attacked by a Viet Cong regiment, with two infantry battalions and a reinforced infantry company (60% of the attackers were North Vietnamese), as well as being mortared and rocketed. The battle went on for several days but defenders repulsed enemy attacks and retained control of the base.

Chief Serlet reflected on his Vietnam experience: "There were a few of us in (OreANG) maintenance that had served in Nam or Thailand. I always felt a special bond to those guys. Sort of that ‘Band of Brothers’ thing." He continued: "I’m very proud for having served over there. I still carry the mental scars and images of the war. It is never far from my thoughts. ...for many of us vets the war goes on each day." John Serlet joined the OreANG in March 1971, as an E-4 J-57 jet engine mechanic on the F-101 fighter-interceptor and served a total of 34 years in uniform by the time he retired in 2001.

## War Story 2

### Checked out in May, an IP in June

*(Ed. Note: Ron Furtak sent the photo below to add to the A-37 Association’s archives. Also shown are Ron’s notations on the back of the photo with names he could remember.)*

Ron Furtak arrived at England AFB in Louisiana in May 1969 to check out in the A-37. In June he was an IP charged with instructing USAF and VNAF pilots ticketed for Vietnam.

England was the home of the 4410th Special Operations Training Group and the 4406th Combat Crew Training Squadron (later designated the 427th Special Operations Training Squadron), one of two squadrons training both USAF and VNAF pilots.

“I got there in May and immediately started getting checked out in the A-37, then right into training with the IP check ride in June.” Only a couple of the instructors had A-37 time with the rest of us out of F-100s, F-105s and A-1s following SEA.

“It was too long ago to remember the exact dates, but I think the first USAF class I instructed started in June of ‘69 and was made up of mostly FAIP’s from ATC. The first VNAF class started sometime in the fall of ‘69 and consisted of ex-A-1 Skyraider pilots.” His second VNAF class were recent UPT grads. A second A-37 training squadron at England started before the 4406th and was already training both USAF and VNAF.

(Continued on p. 4)



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

War Story 2 (continued from p. 3)



*FIRST USAF CLASS*

*Studs: Ray Wolbridge  
Bob Lawrence*

*Top Gun: John Corak*

*AFLT STUDS: Lt/Col "Pop" Warner  
Capt. Bing Ankley  
Capt. Ray Wolbridge  
Capt. Bob Lawrence  
Lt. John Corak  
Lt. Pat Murphy  
Lt.*

The photo above is from Ron Furtak's files and will be included in the A-37 Association's archives. Notations are names of those people he can remember.

Can anybody give names to any of the individuals in the photo? Looks like a lot of old heads in the group, so it may include instructors, who, as Ron said, were fighter types who had already served in Vietnam.

Ron actually sent two other photos in addition to this one. One was of his second class of USAF pilots he trained and the other of his first VNAF training class. All three can be viewed on the A-37 Association website ([www.a37.org](http://www.a37.org)). We would like to identify as many people in those photos as possible, so, if you can help us out, take a look at those photos online to see if you recognize anybody and respond to [dragonfly369@charter.net](mailto:dragonfly369@charter.net).

## 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 enclosed.

# Memorabilia Order Form

(Please fill out completely)

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

50 <sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:dragonfly369@charter.net).
3. Go to [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) and send payment to [dragonfly369@charter.net](mailto:dragonfly369@charter.net).

Once payment is received, order will be processed.

Questions? Email [dragonfly369@charter.net](mailto:dragonfly369@charter.net) or call (334) 328-7575.

All proceeds go to the A-37 Association.