



“Cleared Hot”

By Lon Holtz

Well, here it is, time for the old sage to offer more words of wisdom. I’m not going to thrill you with wonderful events from “Fabulous Las Vegas.” Besides that, it’s time to get back to Association business. So here goes.

Now and then, Jerry has received requests from both newcomers to the Association and some of our old hands for one of our books. Jerry has told them that we have sold out long ago, but will let them know if we ever order more.

Well, that day has come and we are presently reviewing several on-demand publishers to have another printing. With the help of John McAlister, we have found one that can produce a hardcover book that we feel you would be satisfied with at near the price we had in the past. Several drafts are presently being reviewed for quality of product. The book still needs an in-depth review before we give the final go ahead, but so far looks promising.

The follow-on question that needs to be addressed is the quantity we would want to order. We have a starting figure in mind, but also want you to know of its availability in case you would like to order another book. Perhaps you’d like to give one as a gift this holiday season. In this regard, it is essential that you please let Jerry know your desires. The rationale here is we want to fill all requests, but not have a huge inventory after all orders are filled. We’d like to place an order by late October or early November, so please don’t wait to pre-order.

After exhaustive research, we are nearing completion in finding a home for our memorabilia to stand the test of time for us after we are long gone. We find that the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins in Georgia has one of our aircraft on display and is eager to build onto their

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Three topics to talk about

First, Lon says in his column that we are considering printing some additional copies of “Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam.” I have indeed received some inquiries about whether we have any left, and unless some of you want to let go of your well-worn personal copy, then we want to seriously consider a new printing of the second edition. However, it would be helpful if you let me know by email or phone (contact information on page 2 of this newsletter) whether you would be interested in purchasing a copy or two or three. If you want a first edition, then you need to contact Fred Long at hinton1946@aol.com or (304) 466-2784.

Second, the A-37 on display at the Robins Museum of Aviation is A-37A tail number 14525, which was one of the original “baby blues” flown during the Combat Dragon test program by the 604th ACS. It’s now all decked out in camo. The Museum of Aviation is well worth the stop should you be in the area of Macon, GA.

Finally, we had a great response to the plea in the July newsletter for help in identifying the pilots in the group photo submitted by Ron Furtak. Kudos to George Krumenacker for spearheading the effort as virtually all the pilots in the two photos from Ron, now recorded in the history of the A-37, primarily on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter and maybe even in the future on the A-37 website. Are other group photos out there that need to be added to our repository?

Another finally, we’re sold out of medium size T-shirts. But there are a few of large, x-large, and even an xx-large for those who might want one or maybe even need one....Jerry Sailors



“I’ll give you something for gas.”

“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:

Phil Cox - 22 Aug 2021, Louisville, KY. [Obituary](#)

Dick Price - 31 Jul 2021, Williamsburg, VA. [Obituary](#)

Buddies:

Dee Friesen - recovering from a stroke 30 July in Albuquerque and now in rehab. Updates on [Caring Bridge](#).

Change of address:

Pat O'Brien - Sopro720@comcast.net

A-37 Association email: dragonfly67.72@gmail.com.

Reunions:

Rustics: 20-24 Oct 2021, Tucson, AZ, - **Canceled**

Emails

In the July newsletter, an article by Ron Furtak was accompanied by photographs of his first A-37 training classes while an instructor at England AFB in 1969. Ron had only a few names of the USAF pilots in the two photographs, which have been placed on the Association's website (www.a-37.org). He also provided a photo of his first class of VNAF pilots, also placed on the website.

In a series of emails, George Krumenacker and some of his A-37 buddies have identified everybody in the first class and 20 of the 25 in the second class. Also learned from George the following A-37 drivers had passed:

Lee "Bear" Berry - date unknown

Vilas Bielefeldt - 14 November 2020

Don McPhail - 16 November 2011

Mike Reinhart - date unknown

Whitney Tomlin - circa 1990

Morris Warner - 11 October 2010, Staunton, VA

John Wise - date unknown (8th AS/CC)

Many thanks to George for his "stick-to-itiveness" for collecting those names and also allowing us to update the ever-growing list of memorials to those "Gone West."

(From Pat Utley, 4 Oct 2021)

In September, a St. Louis area high school football rivalry hosted the Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum and honored Mike Blassie and his family before the game started. Among other things the Hillsboro football team gave the family a helmet with Mike's call sign, Hawk 02, and other POW-MIA and patriotic emblems.

(Editor: Here's more of the story, an excerpt from [The Heartlander](http://TheHeartlander.com) (heartlandernews.com), 9/28/2021):

Additionally, the school got connected with someone who has an antique World War II dog tag maker, so special teams' players for Hillsboro sported dog tags which also read Blassie's call sign.

A stage hosted the town's mayor, school superintendent, the President of POW-MIA Board, bugler for the Jefferson Barracks and Michael Blassie's four siblings. The announcers spoke about Hillsboro High School's first ever POW/MIA designation, the POW/MIA museum and recognized different individuals who have been POW/MIAs. The event concluded by honoring Blassie and his family and awarding them a helmet and dog tags of their own.

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exhibit of the A-37 and its history and people. In the last telephone conference, I asked what they would like to display to enhance their presentation. The short answer was flying suits, helmets, patches, and pictures of significant events. My reply to that was: I will ask our membership to email me pictures of what they would like to donate and represent them and the Association. I in turn will review their input, put a list together, and forward it to our point of contact at the museum for their consideration. So, unlock the old footlockers that are filled with memories of long ago and see if there is anything there that you'd like to offer.

One final issue to address as this will be the last newsletter this year. The pandemic we've been facing for over a year continues to go up and down without any real positive relief. We are beginning to watch it closely and how it could affect our May 2022 reunion. I'm sure you will watch that damn thing as much as we will, but wanted to let you know we've already started.

In closing, both Barb and I wish you and yours the best Holiday Season ever with a happy and healthy New Year. Hoping to see you all next year.

War Story

Musings of a Chronologically High Scoring Aviator

By John Lamb (Lambo), 2014

Having had the good fortune and blessings of surviving in the aviation world as long as Yours Truly has, one begins to think they have heard every cliché, every pick-up line, every fighter pilot and blonde joke, played every dice or crud game for drinks, rung every bar bell, you name it.

But, at my age maybe we begin to rethink and resize the vast amount of wisdom and acumen that we may or may not have fully grasped while slipping the surly bonds supersonic, upside down with our hair on fire.

While looking for something else, I ran across this quote of Neale Donald Walsch: “Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.”

Immediately the nose came up and I decided to barrel roll around that thought cloud one more time: "Life begins at the End of Your Comfort Zone."

If you've never had the klaxon eject you out of your cot on the alert pad or “ready room” for a troops-in-contact mission in the middle of the night, or an "Alpha" scramble off the air-to-air alert pad, you have missed something!

The quote made me realize that during all my lucky years with so many hours in the sky and all the wonderful hangar flying with squadron mates; all the



times of going over and over how I might have done something better during a flight; the “o shit” near misses and close calls; the occasionally rare Exceptionally Qualified grade on a check ride; winning the money on the scorable range ride, etc., were the wonderful real life experiences Walsch was talking about.

We were living because we were often forced to operate beyond the end of a comfort zone on practically every flight. This was especially true for me because I was trying to compete and be accepted in that hallowed group known as fighter pilots. Most days I couldn't hold a candle to their skills, intelligence, humor and daring do. We have all known a poor soul who believed himself invincible, who wouldn't realize he even needed to recognize limits, who is no longer with us.

When I was really beyond my comfort zone, there were those few occasions where my performance “met the grade.” Exhilarating moments when no one needed to say a word because silence with a smile was confirmation.

If you have ever joined the choir singing the raunchy crude fighter pilot songs at the O'Club bar, climbed the airbase water tower and ridden the rotating beacon like a mechanical bull at 1 a.m., or come home with bullet holes in your jet, you have experienced events that the vast majority of people could never begin to understand, moments we have tucked away in our hearts and minds for those times when we fortunate stick actuators can be thankful we're still alive and can reflect on how much our friends, and how much our wings, have meant to us and the doors of life they have opened for us. And yes, we do it with a big smile!

War Story 2

Whew...never arrested by the Feds!

By George Krumenacker

When we were at England AFB training in the fall of 1969, John Brandt and I picked up a brand new A-37 (as I recall, about four hours on the log) at the factory in Wichita with orders to ferry it to Mather AFB in Sacramento for delivery to Vietnam. Over the Rockies, we lost a fuel pump and diverted to Peterson Field in Colorado Springs where we spent a week in a motel waiting for parts.

We were in our green flying bags, so we had to buy clothes and toiletries, etc. At the motel, we became shuffleboard pros playing the old men retirees every day.

We got a new fuel pump and flew the bird to Sacramento, where we boarded an airliner to San Francisco in our green nomexes and carrying our parachutes. The gate agent let us on anyway.

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John's wife, Sue, picked us up at the airport and took us to their house east of SF Bay for dinner and an overnight. I can still remember sitting at the table and hearing a faint sound from the living room where we had stowed our chutes. We discovered an ELT beeper had been activated.

Unbeknownst to us, somewhere in the bustle to get seated on the airliner, we had activated the beeper, and our pilots, we found out later, were reporting a downed aircraft all the way into SFO. Whew...never arrested by the Feds!

After returning from Vietnam, John, a good friend, a gentleman, and a survivor of hundreds of combat missions, tragically died on the operating table during a knee operation. He was about 27 years old.

Never saw Sue again. She was a nice lady.

War Story 3

The photo below and the one on the next page were provided by Ron Furtak. The pilots in both photos deployed to Vietnam as the 310th Attack Squadron and the 311th Attack Squadron. Upon arrival at Bien Hoa, they were absorbed into the 8th Attack Squadron and the 90th Attack Squadron.

We asked for help in July to identify the pilots in the photo below as well as the one on the previous page. Thanks to George Krumenacker, who, with the great assistance of his training class buddies, was able to provide names of almost all the pilots in both photos.

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Lt Tom Harrington, Cpt Ray Walbridge, LtCol Clifford Houy, Lt L.A. Bienvenue, Cpt Bob Lawrence, LtCol Coy Austin, LtCol Marcus Oliphant, LtCol George Simpson, Maj Bert Yetman, Cpt Dan Konopatzke, Lt Dee Friesen, Lt Dwight Kelly

Standing/Back Row (L-R):

Lt John Brandt, Maj Alvinus P Johnson, Lt John Cerak, Lt Rod Tidemann, Lt Jeff Schofield, Lt George Krumenacker, Lt Jack Fry, Cpt William Moseley, Maj Ron McMillan, Col Paul Bell, Cpt Gerald Vanderwaal, LtCol Morris "Pop" Warner, Maj Donald "Bing" Ankley, and LtCol Ralph Dresser

Absent Photo: LtCol John Wise (8th AS/CC), Maj Floyd Brown, Maj Elmer "Bud" Wasserott, Lt Jack "Black Jack" Bartlett, Lt Jack Murphy, Lt Gerard "Gus" Wolke, and Maj George Henry

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War Story 3 (Continued on p. 4)

The first training class had to wait around until the second class completed training so they could deploy to Vietnam as a unit. Here's a side story to George's account of how that summer went for the first class:

It was a great second half to that summer. Jack Fry, Rod Tidemann, and myself had rented a very nice lawyer's home outside of town, Baton Rouge, and I can recall the great "Lunar Landing Party" that we threw on 20 July 69. We built a bar for that party and a friend of mine still has it in his rec room years later.

We were already qualified in the bird and flew morning missions to the range most every day to keep up our skill levels. Then lunch at the O'Club and a one o'clock tee time at the base golf course.

Happy hour and dinner at the Club completed our day more often than not that second half of the year. Quite the tour of duty that Summer of 69.



Kneeling (L-R):

Lt Ted Beck, unknown, Lt John McGregor, Lt Steve Mish, Lt Alan "Bear" Berry, LtCol Whit Tomlin, Lt Calvin A Griffin, Lt Ed Jessup, unknown, Lt Don McPhail, Lt David "Crazy Earl" Plewes

Back Row (L-R):

LtCol Dick Gruber (604 SOS/CC), LtCol Vilas Bielefeldt, Cpt Don Christy, unknown, Lt Bill Evans, unknown, Lt Ron Vivion, Lt Henry Potts, Lt Jerry Carroll, unknown, Lt Ron Shoulars, Maj Ed Ellis, Lt Dick Innes, LtCol Frank Keller

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



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



License Plate Frames
\$10 ea plus \$6 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.