



“Cleared Hot”

By Lon Holtz

While my last offering might have been the longest in the Association’s history, this one is going to be much shorter, as it has been a very quiet summer without any fires to put out. Besides that, Barb has taken possession of our computer to put together, and eventually publish, her post-FWB reunion Shutterfly photo booklet. And in my opinion, it is the best one yet. No date has been set as to when it will be finished.

In my allowed review of her efforts, my mind went back to 1970 when we sat around the Willy bar and developed and formed the creation and first reunion of the A-37 Association that is still going strong after 52 years. I can still feel the great memories of yesterday and people, along with events that have occurred since then. It’s you, our dedicated membership, that has kept us alive even though our numbers are dwindling. A number of you have heard me compare us to Jimmy Doolittle, who took an unproven aircraft into combat, and accomplished the unexpected, just like we did with a little converted and revamped training aircraft. Our results could only have been realized through the true dedication of all of you. And your attendance at the past reunions still shows that your feelings and dedication are still there. Thanks!!!

Changing gears here, I can’t believe the weather that everyone of us has faced these last couple of weeks, either you’re being flooded to death or facing dry temperatures of 110 plus. Here in Vegas, we’ve finally had some really strong thunder bumpers and high winds, which are the first in 20 years. And Lake Mead that lost 184 feet in 20 years, gained 4 feet during the last two weeks. Now we are back in the 110 plus days again with a lot of us just

(Continued on p. 3)

Here what’s going on

The Board still hasn’t decided where the 2024 reunion will be, but the leading candidate is Houston. Key criteria are time of year (spring or fall), ease of getting there by air, hotel costs, and interesting things to do. Houston meets the criteria, but our evaluators are “hard at work?” or “working hard” to put together a proposal. Given lead times required to pin down dates, we’d like to set plans by early 2023, but we’ll see.

The A-37 Association exists to promote the history of the aircraft and to provide a forum for those who have “a high admiration for the great little fighter.” Two key elements to that purpose are the people who established its combat record in Vietnam and those who today keep that heritage alive through airshow demonstrations and operational flying in Latin America. The bird has worldwide appeal as demonstrated by enthusiasts from Australia/New Zealand to France.

An article on page 4 in this newsletter traces the **journey of a VNAF A-37B from the US to Vietnam to Australia to Canada and back to the US.** New Association member Chris Stokes purchased SN 71-826 in February of this year and is currently refurbishing the aircraft into flying condition.

On page 2, a new feature, **“Remembering ...”**, results from a plea from a family friend of Don Ellis to learn more about him. We’d like more of this type story. While you’re at it, note the article on page 3 highlighting the Association’s efforts to establish a permanent home for A-37 history and archival material...Jerry Sailors



“Any twit can win a hole with 22 lucky shots.”

“The A-37 Association is for those who flew, worked on/with, were saved by, or have high admiration for the great little fighter.”

Inside:	Page
Member Update/Emails	2-3
War Stories/Articles	3-4
Memorabilia Page/Order Form	Insert



**A-37 Association, Inc.
Board of Directors**

President	Lon Holtz
Vice President	Eric Jackson
Secretary/Treasurer	Jerry Sailors
	Lou Gonzalez
	Vic Grahn
	Hank Hill
	John Lamb
	Tom McCallum
	John Serlet
President Emeritus	Ollie Maier

Membership: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
Dragonfly67.72@gmail.com

Newsletter: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
dragonfly67.72@gmail.com
Barbara Holtz 702-804-4232
amscom@embarqmail.com

Website: Tom McCallum 717-331-2757
a37dragonfly@comcast.net

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:

Chris Stokes, Lincoln, NE, cbstokes1@gmail.com (See article on page 4.)

Emails

(From Mark Browning, 13 July 2022)

I came across your website today. I'm the son of a retired USAF officer (OSI Special Agent), and am interested in all things Air Force, and military in general. I was hoping to find something on your website pertaining to Colonel Don Ellis, who was an A-37 pilot in Vietnam. He and my parents were from the same small town in southwest Louisiana. Our families were close for many years, before, during, and after the Air Force.

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

Does anyone have a recollection of Colonel Ellis? At one point in his career, he commanded the unit responsible for training and re-certifying returning POW pilots. After retirement he went on to work for USAA in San Antonio. He died just a few years ago.

I would appreciate any information and/or photos you might share.

(There were several responses to Mark Browning's email. See articles below from John Blaha and Frank Marano.)

(From Herve Bianzani, 27 Aug 2022)

I'm an aviation enthusiast and a French Air Force veteran. I'm interested by your book A-37s over Vietnam - 2nd Edition. Is it still available? If yes, could you please provide information to order it? Thank you in advance for your reply.

(From Jerry Sailors, 29 Aug 2022)

Mr. Bianzani,

The book is available. To order, go to the A-37 Association website (www.a-37.org) and click on "The Store" for an order form: one you can fill out by computer and one you can print out to be filled out by hand. Once the form is completed, follow the instructions, and submit payment as requested. If you need more information, please let me know.

(After a series of emails, Herve received a copy of "Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam.")

(From Herve Bianzani, 9 Sep 2022)

Dear Mr. Sailors,

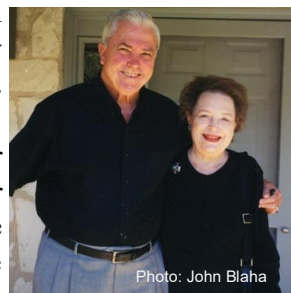
The book is arrived. It's really brilliant. Thank you again for your support. Best regards.

Remembering...Don Ellis

(by John Blaha)

Don Ellis was a great friend, a tremendous leader, and an inspiration for all that worked for him. An All-American quarterback at Texas A&M in the mid 1950s, he was a great offensive football coach at the Air Force Academy when I was there from 1962-1965. Cadets thought he was great.

Don was my flight commander at Bien Hoa in the 3rd Tac Fighter Wing. As a major, he was the silent Wing Commander. I have many war stories about him - a tremendous man with very natural leadership qualities.



Don and Renee Ellis

(Continued on p. 3)

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

“Cleared Hot”

(Continued from p. 1)

staying in the house. Which gives us a golden opportunity to start looking for places for our next reunion in 2024.

A final note if I may. It has been Association policy in the past not to attempt to address individual, personal opinions on political matters. I'm going to bend that rule slightly as I'm, and maybe you, are fed up and worried about the direction our country is heading. So, no matter what your leanings may be, I urge you to get out and vote to try to make a difference. End of sermon.

Since this will be the last newsletter of the year, Barb and I want to take this occasion to wish all of you a Very Merry Christmas with loved ones. And a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Remembering...Don Ellis (Continued from p. 2)

I knew Don for the rest of his life, visited him, and stayed at his home several times. We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner together often. We played golf together a lot. A lefty, he talked about Phil Mickelson. He and his wife Renee, a wonderful human being, had four great kids. Three live here in San Antonio.

Don did a tremendous job as the commander of the squadron retraining POWs to fly at Randolph Field. He flew with me in my Cessna. Don Ellis was the No.1 leader I worked for in the Air Force. I have attached a few photos.

(From Frank Marano)

I knew Col Ellis but not from Vietnam. I knew him a few years later in 1976 & 1977 at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas. He was my immediate boss as the head of the Operations Division of the Inspector General (IG) Team for Air Training Command (ATC). The Operations Team had about 20 people, and we spent a lot of time on the road inspecting various training bases spread around the country. Col Ellis went with us on most of these inspections.

I remember him as a nice guy who had a great personality. He seemed to be happy most of the time with a smile on his face (except when we screwed up) and he was always joking around. For example, the Ops Team, while at a given base, had only one vehicle assigned for 10 or more people, and Col Ellis controlled it. So when one of us needed to use the car we would ask his permission. In giving permission he would tell us the keys were in “Secret Hiding Place one, two, or three.” We soon learned secret place one was behind the visor, two was in the ash tray, and if all else failed, we looked in secret place three, which was under the floor mat.

His great sense of humor showed through even when



flying. I remember one evening when I was with him in a T-38 flying out and back from Randolph to Little Rock AFB. There were a lot of thunder storms enroute, and we climbed higher to get over and around the storms. It was a bumpy ride and, at the higher altitude, we were having difficulty holding an exact altitude. Houston Center radioed to remind us that their radar was showing us a few hundred feet off assigned altitude. Col Ellis replied, “Well I'm trying really hard.”

Col Ellis was a good athlete. He told us that he played football in college at Texas A&M and on our longer two week inspection trips to Training Centers, we played sports on weekends like basketball, volleyball, softball, etc. He was always very competitive and better at these activities than we were. And he always seemed to have a lot of fun participating.

Col Ellis also had a serious side. I attended an Aggie Muster with him in Enid, Oklahoma, where he was the guest speaker. The Aggie Muster is an annual event and a formal affair where those Aggies who died during the past year, particularly those who died in service to the country, were honored. Col Ellis did a great job speaking at a very patriotic and moving event.

War Story

A-37 Association Donates Memorabilia to the Museum of Aviation in Georgia

After several years of searching for a site to preserve the legacy of the A-37 aircraft, on 24 August, 2022, the A-37 Association signed an Archival Deed of Gift transferring A-37 memorabilia and artifacts to the Museum of Aviation located near Robins AFB, Georgia. The Museum is the second largest aviation museum in the US Air Force, housing a large array of exhibits, including more than 85 aircraft, one of which is an A-37A (67-525).

The Museum's curator, Arthur Sullivan, attended the Fort Walton Beach reunion in May and accepted several boxes of memorabilia and artifacts collected from Association members, including photos, squadron flags, patches, and cassette tapes of flight missions. In addition, Lon Holtz constructed and presented two dioramas depicting flightline activities on the ramp at Bien Hoa and a 30-in diameter carving of the Combat Dragon patch. Both dioramas are displayed in front of the A-37A. The plaque will be prominently viewed as well.



(Photo: Museum of Aviation)



(Photo: Rita Acri)



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

War Story 2

The Story of Cessna A-37B Dragonfly, SN 71-826

by Chris Stokes

The Paris Peace Accords ending US direct military participation in the Vietnam War were signed on January 27, 1973. The US agreed to ban sending additional war materiel (except on a replacement basis) into South Vietnam and to withdraw all US and allied forces within 60 days. In the urgent preparation to leave Vietnam, the US scrambled to transfer military assets to the Vietnamese, including A-37B aircraft and support equipment.

At the time, VNAF had pilots in A-37 training at England AFB as well as in UPT at Sheppard and Williams. Cessna had supplied several new A-37Bs, including 71-826, over the previous few months as replacement aircraft for the 4410th Combat Crew Training Wing at England. With the Paris Accords, USAF shut down the 4410th and made plans



71-826 after arrival in Lincoln, NE

to ship the aircraft to Vietnam. The Wing recalled its pilots to fly the birds to March AFB in California for crating and shipment via boat. Crating had already begun when DoD realized the assets needed to move more quickly and decided to fly the aircraft back to Kelly AFB for movement by air. Some planes had already been torn down (wings, tail removed, etc.), so they were quickly reassembled, flight tested, and flown to Kelly only to be dismantled again and loaded up in C-5s headed for Bien Hoa Air Base. After arriving at Bien Hoa, the aircraft were never reassembled and remained in a covered facility on the base until the North Vietnamese took over the base in April 1975. Many and perhaps all of the A-37Bs were never uncrated.

In the late 1980s, an Australian businessman, Col Pay, purchased ten of the aircraft, including 71-826. Two in Australia and one in New Zealand are still flying today. Four were sent to Canada for shipment to Latin American countries as a source of spare parts for operational A-37s in the region. Of these four aircraft, two were seized by US Customs and Border Patrol at Niagara Falls labelled as “farm equipment.” The CBP notified the US Air Force of the seizure, but USAF refused to accept them as they were no longer Air Force property.

The aircraft remained stored in a Customs warehouse from 1989 to 1996 and finally accepted by a museum in Geneseo, NY, where they were uncrated and discovered to have a full can of 7.62 ammo. Years later, the aircraft moved to a museum in Elmira, NY, where one (71-826) remained in a controlled environment hangar. The other was placed on static display outside and eventually sold to an unknown buyer.

In the late 1990s, a member of the Elmira museum's board, USAFR Colonel Ron Gertsen, purchased 71-826 for \$150,000. Evidence showed the aircraft had low flying hours, so Gertsen put together a team of McGuire AFB volunteer mechanics, including airframe, powerplant, avionics, electronics, and hydraulic specialists, to help with the restoration. The crew would drive 3.5 hours from northern New Jersey to upstate New York on weekends to

“My goal is to have 71-826 flying by 2023.”

work on the aircraft. The team had applied for a certificate of airworthiness in 2006 and were preparing for its first flight when the financially struggling museum closed, leaving Gertsen with no hangar to continue work.

Sikorsky Aircraft, the next tenant of the large climate-controlled hangar, fortunately allowed the A-37 project to continue in place. However, a few years later, Sikorsky did not renew its lease and the A-37 was forced out of its home, leaving Gertsen no choice but to place it into a local T-hangar. The aircraft languished in a dirt-floored hangar with open walls for another 10 years until Gertsen decided to sell the airplane as his team had long since retired and moved on.



Chris Stokes - hard at work

I purchased the aircraft for \$100,000 from Gertsen in February 2022. On May 15, the aircraft was packed up and travelled by flatbed from Elmira, NY, to its new home in Lincoln, NE. My goal is to have 71-826 flying by the summer of 2023. Updates on the restoration can be found on the A-37 Facebook page.

(Chris Stokes is a recently retired USAFR colonel and an F-16/A-10 pilot. He is also a United Airlines 787 pilot. See additional photos of the restoration project on the A-37 website: www.a-37.org.)

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



(New)
2022 T-shirt
\$21 (includes shipping
(S, M, L, XL, XXL)



Dragon T-shirt
\$21 (includes shipping)
(XL)



Koozie
\$2 (includes shipping)



License Plate Frame \$10 ea
plus \$6 shipping



50th Anniversary Patch \$6
(includes shipping)



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



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

Go to www.a-37.org for order form.