



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

WELCOME TO 2024 AND ALL IT HAS TO OFFER!!!!!!!

I hope it will be better than the last one.

April is rapidly approaching and we've got an event planned that will rank right up at the top of our reunion scale. And that, of course, is our visit to the Space Center in Houston, which will feature one of our own, John Blaha, who, after logging 361 missions in Vietnam in 1968, had a very successful military career. He went on to become a NASA astronaut and slipped the surly bonds five times.

I'll let Jerry fill you in on hotel arrangements that are first class and address the proposed agenda. The whole reunion is structured to look like one of those events that will produce a memory that could last a lifetime. But for that to happen, you've got to be there.

I know that we are all locked in the aging grey matter, with health issues, mobility, or financial matters that may add to limiting factors. But if you're able, you'd not want to miss out on this one because it will never happen again. And, as the years are taking their toll on our membership, in the coming years, you may see our Association fade into the past. The old guard will fight to keep that from happening, but time is not on our side. Your attendance is the key, so why not give it one more shot to relive our experiences and exaggerate a little bit.

With all that said, I am very concerned with COVID and transportation issues. COVID is still as active as yesterday, along with other variations. I know since I just spent a couple of weeks in the hospital and another two weeks in a nursing facility. I am now in recovery at home. So, while your area might have minimum cautionary warnings, remember you will be transiting several areas that might have a high volume of cases.

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Three months from now, we'll be gathering once again to be with that special group of people who love the A-37. The registration form was sent out in November, but just in case you threw it away, saved it in a file you can't find, or otherwise said "I'll get to it after the holidays," go to www.a-37.org and click on "2024 Galveston, TX Reunion" for the registration form.

Now it's time to make hotel reservations per instructions on the form and to make travel arrangements. **If you're coming by air**, suggest you make Houston Hobby Airport (HOU) your destination. Hobby is about 40 miles from Galveston. Car rentals and shuttles between the two are available, but you had best make reservations. On page 3 are some travel tips for getting to Galveston.

Your registration should be sent to me by 7 March so we can give accurate counts to the hotel; otherwise, we have to guess, and given our age we may not remember the right numbers.

The cutoff date for a guaranteed room under our hotel reservations block is 17 March. After that date, you'll have to get in line for room availability.

Speaking of reunions, on page 3 is an article about the plans of the FAC Association to hold a final reunion in October 2024, Also the Rustic FAC Association has announced their final gathering will be in the autumn of 2025. We in the A-37 Association have been thinking along those same lines. Perhaps some of you would wish to take the reins from those of us who have been doing this for the past 30 years...maybe?

Growing old is hard work... The mind says "yes" but, the body says "what the hell are you thinking"

Check out the A-37 [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page for updates on Galveston and other news, and remember, we still have some memorabilia items for sale (See the last page.) ...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."



...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

Arley Fisher, 25 Mar 2023, Cairo, GA (No obituary)

Bob Barton, 28 Oct 2023, Mims, FL (No obituary)

Where are they? (Rejected emails. Anybody know?)

Dwight Crow

Wendell Harkleroad

Roger Moseley

Calendar of Events

FAC Association (Final Reunion), 24-27 Oct 2024 (See article on page 3.)

Rustics Fini Reunion, (maybe) Oct 2025 (See article on page 3.)

Emails

(From Tom O'Beirne, 23 Oct 23)

Jerry, we just want to say thank you so much for printing the Mike Blassie article(s) in your Newsletter. We believe it has important information for the A-37 community to recall and be aware of and we hope you receive positive feedback.

Best Regards, TomOB/Bomber

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(Email from Paul Dillon, President of the Jefferson Barracks POW/MIA Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, to Dr. Jon Issacson, Superintendent of the Hillsboro School District, 23 Oct 23)

I am attaching the October edition of the A-37 Association's newsletter, *The Dragonfly*.

The A-37 Association is made up of former pilots, ground crew, and their families who flew and maintained the A-37 Dragonfly... sometimes called the "Super Tweet"... the same aircraft that our Lt. Mike Blassie, *Hawk Zero Two*, flew in Vietnam.

On page 4 of the newsletter they recognize and salute the Hillsboro R-3 School District for this year's and past years' POW-MIA Remembrance Events, and all that you do to Remember and Honor the service and sacrifice of our servicemen and servicewomen.

You all deserve this Recognition and much more. Please let the students, faculty, staff, coaches, parents, and Mayor there in Hillsboro know how very much you all are appreciated! As always, kindest regards - Paul

(Reply from Dr. Issacson to Paul Dillon, 28 Oct 2023)

I was touched to read your email and learn that the A-37 Association has recognized the Hillsboro R-III School District in the October edition of "The Dragonfly" newsletter. It is an incredible honor to be acknowledged by such a distinguished group, especially one that has connections to Lt. Mike Blassie.

Your words of appreciation for our POW-MIA Remembrance Events are truly uplifting. They serve as a powerful affirmation that our collective efforts to Remember and Honor the sacrifices made by our servicemen and servicewomen resonate far beyond our community.

Please extend our sincerest thanks to all the members of the A-37 Association for this gracious recognition. We are committed to continuing our Remembrance Events and educating our students on the values of character, dedication, and service.

Thank you once again for taking the time to acknowledge the efforts of our staff and community. It means a great deal to everyone here in the Hillsboro community.

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

Cleared Hot

(Continued from p. 1)

Transportation is another concern as the airlines seem to be testing their customers with packed terminals and small seat leg room. To minimize these obstacles, we have made reservations early, and I'd suggest you do the same. You should also consider reservations for rental car services at Houston Hobby Airport. Don't wait until the last minute.

A final note: Remember, Texas is Steak Country. I hope to see you in April in Galveston.

FAC Association to hold final reunion

The FAC Association is planning to hold its final reunion 24-27 October 2024 in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. FWB is significant as so many of the FACs trained there to carry out one of the most dangerous of combat operations in the Southeast Asia conflict.

If you ever wondered exactly what the FAC's job was in the Vietnam war, go to ([Legacy Page \(fac-assoc.org\)](#) link to understand the scope of their mission.

According to the FAC's website ([www.fac-assoc.org](#)), the Association's Board of Directors has been busy developing plans to properly handle the intricacies of closing the Association and the transfer of assets and memorabilia to the FAC Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. One of the provisions being considered is to turn the FAC website over to the Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive no later than second quarter of 2025. The FAC Museum at the Fort Worth Air Museum will be the repository for the vast majority of the Association's hard assets, such as books and photos.

The Rustics are also planning a finale

(Adapted from the Rustic website.)

As the FAC Association has announced its final reunion in October this year, the Rustic FAC Association is also planning to hold its final gathering in the autumn of 2025 at Fort Walton Beach, the site of its first reunion in 1997. The Rustic FACs were an integral part of the A-37 history in SEA and were admired by all Dragonfly pilots who flew under their control.

The Rustics' Top-Secret mission was formed in June



O-2A Skymaster
Photo: Rustic Website

1970 when combat in Cambodia required an intense, quick response to help Cambodian troops who were under siege by North Vietnamese and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Flying O2-A and OV-10 aircraft initially out of Tan Son Nhut and then Bien Hoa, the

Rustics found that a language barrier with the Cambodian forces affected their ability to communicate effectively as



the Cambodians spoke little English, but were more conversant in French. To resolve that issue, French-speaking interpreters, many of them enlisted, were added "literally overnight" to the Rustic crew structure.

The mission required 24-hour coverage so the 'Sleepytime' O-2 FACs were recruited to fly the 'Night' Rustic mission. Operations continued from Bien Hoa AB until October 1971, when consolidation of US forces and "Vietnamization" resulted in the OV-10 Rustics being reassigned to Ubon, Thailand. The Rustic O-2 mission was



OV-10 Bronco
Photo: Rustic Website

canceled and personnel and aircraft were reassigned. The Ubon Rustics continued to fly combat missions in Cambodia and Vietnam until 15 August 1973 when all US air operations ceased.

Given the "Top Secret" nature of their mission in Cambodia, no official records of the Rustics' achievements were kept. At that first gathering at FWB in 1997, attendees were told about the lack of records and realized that many Rustics, including the interpreters, had never received the decorations they had earned. To remedy that situation, the attendees joined forces to document their combat records, resulting in publication of two books: "Call Sign Rustic" by Richard Wood (Rustic 11) and the Association's book "The Rustics: the Top Secret Air War in Cambodia."

Some travel tips to get to Galveston:

By air: Schedule your flight into Houston Hobby Airport, not Houston International. Hobby is on the southeast side of Houston, 38 miles from Galveston.

- Download the Houston Airport app on your mobile device.
- Visit the Hobby Airport [website](#) for these services:
 - **Airlines:** Allegiant, American, Delta, Frontier, Southwest.
 - **Rental car agencies:** The major ones are available. Recommend reservations ahead of time.
 - **Shuttles/bus service:** Can be expensive, prearrange with a reservation booked at least two days in advance. Go to [galvestonlimo.com](#) or call 409-744-5466 or go to for more information.
 - **Ride Share:** Get Me, Greenlight, Lyft, Uber, and Wingz. Go to their websites to determine the cost.

By automobile: If possible, don't drive through Houston between 3 and 6 PM. Coming from the east via I-10, consider exiting at Winnie, TX (about 60 miles east of Houston) to Port Bolivar, TX and take the ferry from Port Bolivar to Galveston. Coming from the north and west of Houston: Use the Waze app to search for routes, but I-45S may be the best.

War Story 2

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

USAF Photo

**People say love
feeling. But I think
toilet when you
diarrhea is k**

