



“Cleared Hot”

by Lon Holtz

Barbara and I want to express our deepest thanks for the superb time and effort each one of you spent to make the reunion in Galveston an all-time winner. The last week before the reunion you cannot believe how much we wanted to be with you and enjoy what was planned. But it was the right decision not to come as I did not want to be a burden or have you concerned.

I’ve been getting calls stating it was the best reunion in our history, beating even the Academy with everyone having a great time and every event went as planned, except for the total solar eclipse. Bloke and Rodney did an outstanding job as they always do. I heard that even some of the ladies flew with them. I’d love to hear their comments on that.

And then there was John Blaha, our honored guest, who held the membership on the edge of their seats totally enthralled hearing of his exploits beyond the wild blue yonder and topped that off with more tails around the bar. Thanks, John, for making this reunion so memorable.

Kathie Serlet, with the help of her sister, Barbara Jacobs, did an outstanding job as the Quilts of Valor representative, presenting quilts to her husband, John, and to Eric Jackson and Hank Hill, all well deserved. She even managed to head up the Ladies Tour activity.

And a special attaboy to Jerry Sailors, our Secretary-Treasurer, who shouldered the load for planning and managing the whole three days. He said he had plenty of help before and during the reunion. Tom McCallum and Louie Gonzalez worked on designing the mugs. John Lamb was in charge of getting the caps. Barbara Holtz designed the Galveston Black shirts. A special “Thank You!” goes to

(Continued on p. 3)

So maybe I’m a little late getting the July edition of “The Dragonfly” to you. Sorry about that. We also skipped the April edition. Sorry about that, too. No excuse except the editor was busy otherwise. Nobody complained so I felt safe in waiting until I got my act somewhat together.

Galveston was great! As Lon says in his column, lots of people pitched in to help make it so. I must have looked frazzled as everybody asked what they could do for me. My appreciation to all. (See photos on page 6.)

The Board of Directors is considering when, where, and to what scale we will have another reunion. Our Galveston turnout was good, but some members who wanted to come could not due to health concerns or have cut back on their travel. Age is responsible. Regardless, there is sentiment to have one last hurrah perhaps in the fall of 2025. We’re working on it.

In the meantime, we are blessed to have four comrades keeping the A-37B alive in US aviation history. Charles Largay owns an operational bird currently flying in the US. Mark Peterson, who is currently refurbishing his own A-37B, flies Charles’ aircraft in airshows primarily in the Northwest. (See Mark’s email on page 2.) Mark teams with Jon Huggins to showcase the bird’s history and operational capabilities. Chris Stokes of Lincoln, NE, is continuing to refurbish his own A-37B.

Team Largay displayed Charles’ aircraft at the Oshkosh Airshow in July, joined by Hank Hoffman, who talked about his experience flying combat missions in Vietnam. (See Oshkosh article on page 3.)

John Serlet’s story on page 3 tells about his aversion to the Russian-made S-122 rockets that kept folks hopping at Bien Hoa. And Fred Long has published his autobiography. (See page 4.)...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.”



“Gimme a gin and lettuce.”

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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

Address Change: A-37 Association, 7078 Mid Pines Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117

Calendar of Events

FAC Assn (Final Reunion), FWB, FL, 24-27 Oct 2024
Rustics Fini Reunion, (maybe) Late Oct 2025

Emails

(From Mark Peterson, 18 June 2024)

I flew an airshow in Charlie's A-37B Dragonfly at Moses Lake, Washington, last weekend. On Sunday morning, a gentlemen and his family appeared at the ropes and asked to speak to us. Turns out, he flew Charlie's A-37 (87921) and maybe mine too in Vietnam. We took him out to the

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun
plane in the hot ramp parking area and he climbed right in. Got some great photos. Heard some amazing stories. He is sending us more info soon.



(Mark received this text.)

My name is Khoa Huynh, currently living in West Palm Beach, FL, after being in Seattle since 1995. In RVNAF, I was 1st Lt, the 516th FS, 61st TW, Đà Nẵng AB from 1973. After evacuating from Đà Nẵng on March 28, 1975, I was rejoined to the 520th FS, 74th TW, Binh Thuy AB, Can Tho, until the end of the war.

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(From George Krumenacker, 20 July 2024, to Jack Fry and Rod Tidemann + lots of A-37 buddies.)

Hey Jack & Rod

Today, fifty-five years ago (ugh!!), if you guys recall, we had our Lunar Landing Party in our amazing rental house, off-base at England AB. It was a Saturday night and you and I, Rod, built that bar just for the occasion. That bar still exists in the rec room of my FedEx buddy's house in MEM. (I gave it to him years ago in mid-70s when I was leaving FedEx for American.)

It was a great day for the USA and a great party for us, as I remember. We had that pool in the middle of the house structure and lots of people, wives and girlfriends, from our training squadron.

A couple of things come to mind from that summer. We completed A-37 upgrade training and waited the second half of the summer for Earl and Gus and that gang to get qualified and join us for our Viet Nam vacation in November. I remember taking the bird to the range every morning and honing our skills (lotsa fun) dropping ordnance of all types, then going to the club for lunch. Then Jack and I had a one o'clock tee time almost every day. After the round, meeting everybody at happy hour...a bunch of great days all back to back. Then the party to anchor the summer.

Great history with all you guys and an eventful 1969 and 1970 that is emblazoned in our minds and filled with camaraderie and sweet and sad memories. Thank you all.

This date brings it all back. Love you guys, GAK

(Emails continued on p. 4)

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(Continued from p. 1)

Bloke Maurer who was the point person on much of the preliminary planning in the months ahead of time.

On site, Tom and Louie also kept the hospitality room supplied with all the libations and snacks to keep everybody happy. Bloke and Rodney Horn handled changing weather conditions to get as many flights in as possible. Great job!

I could go on and on about the team/worker approach displayed by everyone in making this reunion a huge success, but in reality, every one of you pitched in just by being there and enjoying the company and planned events. Your efforts reflect your solid commitment after all these years to our Association.

May the Good Lord be willing and the creek don't rise, we'll see you at the next one.

Thank You !!!!!



Charles Largay's A-37B (87921) flown by Mark Peterson
Photo: Courtesy of Nick Imbery Photography

The Dragonfly at Oshkosh

On 20 July at the Warbirds in Review program at EAA in Oshkosh, WI, Team Largay put Charles' A-37B (Tail # 87921) on display. As part of the program, the team (Charles, Mark Peterson, and Jon "Huggy" Huggins) discussed the history of the aircraft, how it got from Vietnam to the United States, and the effort it took to refurbish the bird into flying condition.

A guest presenter was Hank Hoffman, who flew with the 604th ACS and the 8th SOS from June 1970 to Feb 1971, accumulating 205 missions. Hank's role was to talk about the A-37's combat mission, its operating parameters, and some of his own combat experiences.

Click on the link below to view the presentation. (Note: the first 7 minutes of the video features some music that has nothing to do with the A-37. You can forward to about the 7:30 minute mark to begin the program of interest.)

[Livestream! Warbirds in Review Cessna A-37 Dragonfly](#)



VC Rockets Changed My Life

by John Serlet

Nothing during my year in Vietnam had an effect on me more than the VC rocket attacks. The first six months in country were pretty mundane. Then came The TET Offensive (Jan 31, 1968) and the good times ended.

Several days prior to commencement of TET, Col. Weber called us all together in our hangar to brief us that something was about to come down. He stated additional details were lacking, but Intel knew something was about to happen. Prior to TET we could go off base to Bien Hoa City, which I did occasionally to see my Vietnamese girlfriend. She was a sweet innocent kid, we never did anything other than talk. She introduced me to fried rice, which I still like to this day.

Over the next six months the attacks were fairly frequent and messed with my head. About 15 February 1968 when night fell, I could just feel that we were going to get hit. I stayed awake until about 0100, then went to bed. Around 0300 the first incoming rocket struck the barracks next to mine in the same relative location where I was sleeping. Had that rocket been 50 feet shorter in its trajectory, I probably would be a name on the Vietnam Wall in DC. The blast and concussion blew me out of the top bunk bed onto the floor. I have never in my life moved faster to relative safety of the bunker.

After the attack ended, we emerged from the bunker and what I saw still burns in my memory. The affected end of the building was blown apart. One poor soul we dragged out of the wreckage had his chest torn apart and I believe he was dead. We packed a bed sheet into wound, probably to no avail. Other troops had all sorts of injuries from minor to terminal. Since that day that attack changed my life and not for the better.

I suffered in silence for decades. Upon military retirement, the VA diagnosed me with moderate PTSD for a 55% disability.



Building struck by VC rocket in February 1968
Photo: John Sullivan Collection



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Emails (Continued from p. 2)

(From Scott Maier, son of Ollie Maier, 12 Aug 2024, responding to a query for an update on Ollie's status.)

Hello, Jerry. Good to hear from you.

My dad is in good health, save for slow cognitive decline. We recently returned to his home state of Minnesota to visit with his immediate family and some lifelong friends, but the travel definitely wore him out, as can be expected.

I'll let him know you reached out and are including an update on him, along with his article. Sure he'll be delighted to hear that.

(In an earlier email, Scott gave a few more details on Ollie.)

My dad is in an assisted living facility a few miles from our home in northeast San Antonio (Esplanade Gardens), where he's been for more than a year. He's mobile but no longer drives and can take care of himself with limited staff assistance, such as medications and bathing. His long-term memory is intact, but he has difficulties with short-term memory and event details.

We recently got him new hearing aids, and an iPhone number (210-997-2211). He has headphones to take calls but seems to be more comfortable with email and text messages, so feel free to use any of these methods.

(See Ollie's war story on page 5.)

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(From Sharon Danitschek, President and CEO of the Military Reunion Network, 12 Aug 2024, seeking a response to a survey about Veteran mental health.)

I have long felt Military Reunions have a long lasting positive impact on Veteran Mental Health AND as a result reduces the chances of Veterans going down a dark path.

Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense have a Veteran Suicide Prevention Conference every other year. It is my goal to present the positive impact military reunions have on Veteran Mental Health. To present, I have to have data to support and confirm....what we all know. THANK YOU in advance for helping me by completing the simple survey.

(Response to Sharon, 12 Aug 2024)

Sharon, I filled out the survey, but I don't think my replies will be of great help. Coincident to your efforts, however, I am President of the Montgomery Alabama Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA Chapters are organized under state/region Councils. One of the objectives of our Alabama Council of Chapters is to promote the mental health of Veterans of the state in general, but particularly those suffering from opioid addiction. I'm attaching a briefing

of the Alabama Council of Chapters highlighting our efforts. Perhaps there is some data in there, although limited to Alabama certainly, may be of some help. I would bet other states are facing similar scenarios.

Hope this helps in some way and applaud your initiative of promoting reunions as a positive way to address the issue of Veteran mental health.

(Note: Veteran suicide, which is often brought on by addiction to an opioid substance, is a serious problem throughout the country. In Alabama, for example, suicide rates among Veterans are as much as twice those of non-Veterans. Veterans account for a little less than 10% of the state's population, but Veteran suicides account for 18% of the suicides in the state. Tragically, an Alabama Veteran takes his or her own life every 2.4 days.) We need to work on this.

Notes

Medically, Lon Holtz has had a pretty rough year. First, facing a couple of surgeries, followed by a bout of COVID that wiped out all the things he had planned to do, including the '24 reunion. He was bedridden for a good portion of the year, driving Barbara crazy. Now she is getting back at him by trying to renew his physical condition. His recovery is slow going. Hopefully, he will be back to his old ornery self, getting ready for the next reunion.

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Fred Long has completed his autobiography, four chapters of which describe his time in Vietnam with the 604th ACS and Combat Dragon program in 1967-1968. In the author's description of his book found on Amazon, Fred writes:

"I volunteered to serve four years in the Air Force and served a year in Vietnam assigned to the 604th Air Commando Squadron. This unique group of men were assigned with the task of testing a new fighter, the A-37A, under combat conditions. It was the first time that a fighter was tested under combat conditions and it surpassed all expectations and eclipsed all other aircraft in Vietnam flying close air support for ground troops."

Here is the link to Fred's book on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DCV57D99?ref=pe_93986420_774957520



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War Story

The initial cadre of Combat Dragon pilots were ending their tour in July 1968. Ollie and Billy Turner were neck and neck in logged combat missions. They decided to make the number for each be an even 500.

Ollie's 499th mission that he thought was going to be a tree-buster turned out to be TIC with the enemy having pinned down some friendlies along a tree line. Ollie didn't take kindly to some .50 cal being whistled his way. So, to keep this story short, he wiped out the gun position with nape. (Full story is on page 149 of the A-37 Association book, "Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam.")

On return to base, he was surprised to learn that Intelligence had re-counted his missions and the mission he had just completed was actually number 502.

(According to the 604 ACS History, Jul-Sep 1968, Billy Turner also logged 502 missions.)

"Bragging..."

by Ollie Maier

I normally try not to brag (anyway, not too much) about the capabilities of the little fighter and the men who flew her. One of my favorite stories is an incident that happened when I did brag...and felt good about it.

In Vietnam, because we were a test group in the A-37 and we were allowed to fly nearly as much as we wanted. Whereas the fighter pilots in other units were restricted to one mission a day, we could fly several. Thus, I took full advantage of it and flew as many as I could. For example, one day during the surge, I flew five. This was because of my love for flying and my realization that in order to stay at my peak of proficiency (which was probably about equal to what many pilots could do without even trying hard), I had to fly as much as I could. Thus, I ended the one-year tour with 502 missions.

The bragging took place when I was an instructor back in the T-37 after we returned from Vietnam. A navigation training mission had taken a student and me to a base where a squadron of A-37s were stationed.

As we were taxiing in, a flight of four A-37s was taxiing out. The tower asked if we could hold so the flight could pass in front of us. Naturally, I said yes. Any delays in takeoff were just a waste of fuel for them and we were already finished with our flight.



As the A-37s taxied in front of us, someone in the flight broadcast over the radio to us, "Eat your heart out, Tweety Bird drivers!"

This got my sense of pride up. My self-discipline was just not strong enough to allow me to ignore the transmission. So I responded "To the person making that last transmission, be aware that this Tweety Bird driver has 502 combat missions in the A-37, 21 Air Medals, 5 DFCs and a pending Silver Star. How many do you have?"

Complete Silence.

I never received the Silver Star. It was downgraded to a DFC because the FAC got shot down shortly after that mission and could not corroborate what we had done.

(Ollie's story about the "pending Silver Star" mission is on page 56 of "Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam.")

Before publication of the A-37 Association's book, Ollie and Gloria Maier published five individual booklets containing stories by those who either flew or supported the A-37 from its inception. Many of those stories were transferred to the book. Below is one about the 604 ACS mascot, Heathcliff.

Major John J. Sullivan is shown holding the squadron's loveable mascot Heathcliff. Actually, Heathcliff was mischievous, some what of a terror when out of his cage. "He loved to jump on top of people's heads," Sullivan said, and, according to Capt. Pat McAdoo, was jealous of the female hired help. He was "cute" for a while, Pat said, "then he started biting and attacking the hooch mama-san." The squadron obtained the "little darling" from the Ranch Hand guys that lived in the barracks next door. They promptly named him after Col. Heath Bottomly, Combat Dragon Task Force Commander. On the morning of Tet, 1968, a rocket obliterated the Ranch Hand barracks, the explosion sending shrapnel disfiguring the 604th pilots' barracks and injuring Heathcliff. His condition was not serious and he soon recovered. Shortly afterwards Heathcliff was awarded a miniature Purple Heart.



Photo: Ollie Maier Collection

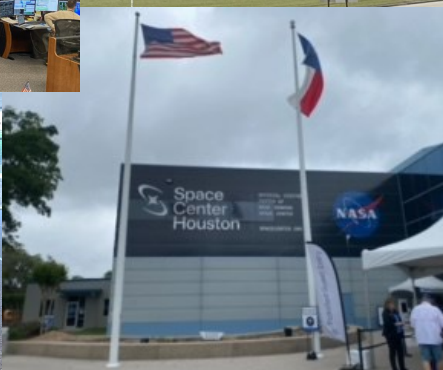
Ollie Maier, 604 ACS, in Vietnam



Photo: John Sullivan Collection

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Galveston 2024



The Dragonfly

Hospitality Room

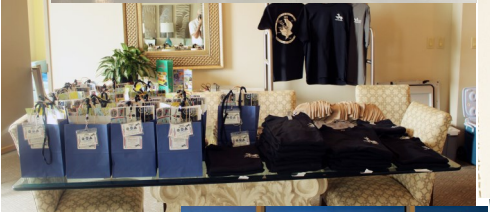


Photo Credit: Rita Acri, Louie Gonzalez, Jerry Sailors, and Anonymous

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



FWB T-shirt \$21
(includes shipping)
M (3), XL (13)

Galveston Black T-shirt
\$21 (includes shipping)
M (2), L (4), XL (3)

DragonT-shirt
\$21 (includes shipping)
XL (1)



Koozie
\$2 (includes shipping)



Galveston Cap
\$15 (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.