



“Cleared Hot”
by Lon Holtz

Those of you who attended the Galveston reunion heard that we were invited to a warbird fly-in at a local airport in St. George, Utah, where an A-37 may perform at that time.

With this invitation in mind, we researched to see if the St. George area would be a good place to hold a reunion. I want to say upfront that St. George is a great little town in Utah, just across the Arizona border, and 120 miles northeast of Las Vegas. The town has several hotels and gift shops with an emphasis on Western gear, and exploring the hills and trails of Zion National Park. It is definitely a place that is geared for the outdoorsman.

Other factors considered were the convenience and amenities of hotels in the area. Most have limited capacity and would be below our normal taking, e.g., no banquet room or in-house restaurant. Ten other hotels could meet our requirements, but are spread away from the downtown activities and require transportation to and from the activities to the airport.

Given this assessment of St. George, we started looking for a nearby alternative that would make the attendance at the fly-in possible. And someone (ME!) offered “VIVA LAS VEGAS!” Not only as a counter to St. George, but because Nellis AFB was the birthplace of the Combat Dragon Task Force and home of the fighter pilot!

Las Vegas also has direct and multiple nonstop flights to and from Vegas, great hotels with shows, gambling, shopping, great and varied restaurants all within walking distance or by taxi/UBER/LYFT. And St George can easily be reached by chartered bus service to attend the fly-in.

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Final reunion for the A-37 Association planned for October 2025 in Las Vegas

We have a contract with the Tuscany Suites and Casino as our base of operations from 23-26 October 2025 with checkout on the 27th. A tentative schedule of events, registration materials, and general information of interest will be disseminated after the first of the year.

We wanted to pin the Tuscany down now as there will be a lot of activity at our requested time, which was predicated on a visit to the Western Sky Aviation Warbird Museum at St. George, Utah, where an operational A-37, owned by Charles Largay and flown by Mark Peterson, will be featured. Plans for that visit are evolving.

Why Vegas? Lon went over the reasoning in his column (left), but the central attraction on the schedule will be the visit to St. George.

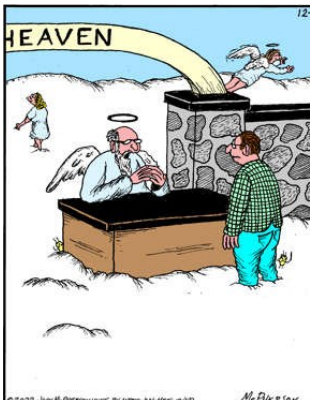
Hank Hoffman says on page 5 that he needs help coordinating thoughts and schedule. I identify with that, which is why this “October” newsletter is getting out near Thanksgiving.

Don Loosley, 8th SOS commander when A-37 operations closed down in Vietnam in 1972, went west earlier this year. On page 2 is an article he wrote for our book, “Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam” about his

introduction to the Strela missile.

On page 3, John Serlet writes about witnessing an F-100 crash at Bien Hoa. And on page 4, Ollie Maier relates a story about the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

It’s Thanksgiving. Eat well. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Be safe and enjoy these wonderful “golden” years....Jerry Sailors



“Let’s just say that what you DID in Vegas didn’t STAY in Vegas.”

“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

Leonard Barnett, 25 Mar 2024, Glendale, AZ - **Obituary**

Don Loosley, 10 May 2024, Salisbury, NC - **Obituary**

Frank Johnson, 11 Oct 2024, Front Royal, VA - **Obituary**

Frank Marano, 6 Nov 2024, Montgomery, AL - **Obituary**

Change of Mailing Address

Fred Long, 818 Summers Street, Hinton, WV 25951

Hank Hoffman, 177 Josie Drive, Benson, NC 27504

Calendar of Events

A-37 Association Reunion, Las Vegas, NV, 23-26 Oct 2025

Rustics Fini Reunion, Early November 2025

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

Emails

(From Hank Hoffman, 2 Sep 2024)
The A-37 strikes again! *(See following headline and link.)*

Air Force Delivers First EA-37 Electronic Attack Aircraft to Base

<https://www.airandspaceforces.com/first-ea-37-electronic-attack-aircraft-davis-monthan/>

.....

(From Hank Hoffman, 23 Oct 2024)
(Hank had visited Mark Peterson in Boise, ID.)

I got to fly 3 different airplanes I had not flown before! Mark Peterson does not own 5 aircraft, he has 7! My total is now 129 different! P-51!!!

I had just the most amazing day! Totally loved it! You see that shit-eating grin? It is getting harder to get into those aircraft...



Mark Peterson's P-51

Hank Hoffman's SEG

War Story

What Was That!

by Don Loosley

Close air support in A-37s at Bien Hoa AB in the 8th SOS in mid-1972 was a real change of pace from the high altitude air defense missions I had been flying in F-102s and F-106s. The A-37 was like a little sports car compared to the larger, more complicated interceptors.

During my first orientation flight in the right seat of the A-37 over some rubber plantations northeast of Bien Hoa, I asked the pilot what the little flashes of light were in the jungle below.

He replied calmly, "Those are people shooting at us." I avoided looking down after that.

The A-37 was so simple and reliable that pilots could fly two or three missions a day. The standard flight briefing would always include a caution about the SA-7 "Strela,"

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

Cleared Hot

(Continued from p. 1)

The only drawback for Vegas in late October is a large active sports arena with thousands of people from all over the U.S. coming to support their teams. Barb and I started the search to find a hotel that would be comfortable, cost effective, have a good restaurant and bar, and either located on the Strip or close to it.

All of these items were put before the Board in October, which, after long discussion, approved VEGAS as the home for a 2025 Reunion. I'll let Jerry take it from here as he is in touch with the owner of the A-37 who extended the invitation with our decision, and he'll update you with any changes or additions.

Quick change of subject. There has been some talk about "2025" being the final A-37 reunion for us. And while we have been seeing a reduction in the attendee levels at these events, we are still showing 40 to 60 attendees; along with some newcomers, too. But I'd still like to see some of the old cadre show up.

As we're closing in on the holiday season, Barb and I wish you a safe Thanksgiving, a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!!

War Story (Continued from p. 2)

which was a shoulder-fired heat-seeking missile. We became so accustomed to the briefing that we didn't really think much about it.

But one afternoon when I was in a flight of two aircraft committed against a TIC engagement south of An Loc, on my left outboard station was a CBU-25 dispenser which was designed for use against a straight-line target like a



8th SOS Commander Don Loosley hands VNAF Lt. Col. Hung a model of an A-37B symbolizing the transfer of the aircraft to the Vietnamese Air Force. Don Loosley collection

trench. It took some windage to dispense the cluster bomblets accurately. I must have been lucky because the enemy really got stirred up!

As I pulled off the target, a white object went flying under my airplane from below and up past its nose in front of me.

My first reaction was, "What the hell was that?" Then it sunk in—after all those memorized briefings. It was an SA-7 that failed to guide. It was my lucky day!

I had a stiff drink at the club that night and thought about the poor gook who had carried that thing for weeks down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.



War Story 2

Witness to a Crash

by John Serlet

I was in the the original Combat Dragon group that deployed with our A-37s in July 1967 to Bien Hoa AB, RVN. Upon arrival at Bien Hoa, I purchased a new Minolta SRT 101 camera with lenses, filters, all the goodies.

Being in a combat zone there always seemed to be something going on, as in aircraft incidents, battle damage, and accidents. One of the most spectacular was the fatal crash I witnessed of an F-100D in September 1967 as I remember it from 57 years ago. Fortunately I have the article from the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper and the photographs I took that day.

I was working day shift in the jet engine shop where we maintained the GE J-85-17A turbo jet engines. I had just got off work and headed back to the barracks. As I was walking toward the far end where the bar was located, I heard a jet engine struggling to get air. In other words "Compressor Stalling" as it passed over our barracks area. Being an engine mechanic I knew the sound of an engine stalling. I immediately sprinted to the bar and looked out the back door. What I saw is still vividly etched in my mind to this day.

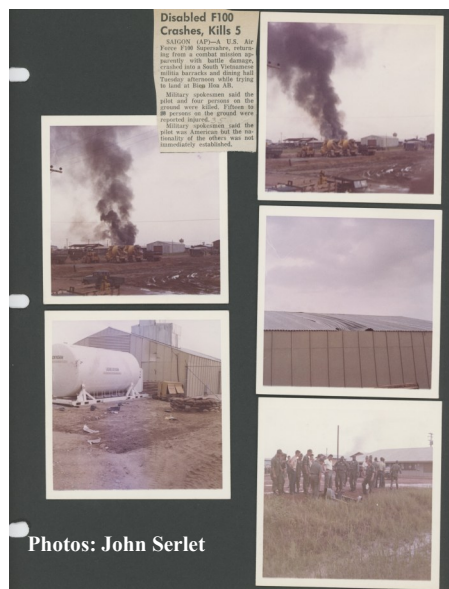
I saw an F-100 minus one wing plummeting earthward. Seconds later it was a fireball and a plume of smoke just off base. Always packing my new camera, I was able to

photograph the aftermath of this disaster.

In those days in the 3rd TFW it was customary on your last mission to come across the field in full burner, snap the stick back, go vertical, and do a "Victory Roll" prior to landing and then get hosed down by the fire department.

The pilot came across low and fast

from the 101st Airborne area, 90 degrees to the parallel runways when things went terribly wrong. Unknown to the pilot, he had sustained battle damage. The G forces of



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War Story 2 (Continued from p. 3)

the "Victory Roll" tore off one wing, sending his disabled F-100 tumbling in a death spiral into a South Vietnamese dining hall and barracks outside the base perimeter. The entire event lasted only a few seconds.

As is the case in life when something goes wrong everyone gets punished, so too in war. Thus the 3rd TFW/CC ordered the end of the "Victory Roll" for pilots on their final flight in country.

War Story 3

(Here's another of Ollie Maier's stories. He has 28 of them in "Dragonfly: A-37s Over Vietnam.")

Working a FAC Role

by Ollie Maier

One of the roles higher headquarters tried with us (during Project Combat Dragon) was that of being a FAC. The little bird could get to a target area quickly, stay for hours in a target area if necessary, had the necessary radios, and could carry any type of armament necessary to mark a target.

And one of the first pilots selected to play the role of FAC in the A-37 was Major Frank McAllister. (Although it had nothing to do with this selection, he had been a gunnery instructor for a number of years and he was good on a target.)

Mac decided rather than using rockets or smoke bombs to mark a target (like the FAC in the light aircraft did), he would use 500-pound HE bombs. They should make quite an easy mark to see for the other fighters he would be directing.

Mac was on station when a flight of four F-4s came to the target area. Mac advised them via radio of his position relative to them.

"You mean that little Tweety Bird down there?" the F-4 lead said. "What will headquarters think of next?"

Mac ignored the transmission and described the target to them. It was a traffic bridge partially hidden by the jungle on a road Charlie had been using to haul supplies over. "I'll mark it for you with a 500-pound bomb," advised Mac.

"A what?" The F-4 lead responded.

"A 500-pound bomb," was Mac's calm response.

"Well, whatever turns you on," chuckled the F-4 driver.

Mac marked that target. As he circled the area to advise the F-4s where they should put their bombs relative to his mark, he transmitted to the F-4s, "Your next target is

another similar bridge up the road a few miles." (Seems Mac's bomb had completely taken out the first bridge.) The F-4 drivers weren't chuckling so much anymore.

Mac marked the second bridge, checked where the bomb had gone, and advised the F-4s, "Your final target is a stretch of vulnerable road on the side of a hill. We should be able to cut it." (He had also taken out the second bridge.)

Mac marked the target. He had cut half of the road out. He advised the F-4s to cut the other half.

The four F-4s, with their sixteen 750-pound bombs each, went to work. They tore up the hills on both sides of the road and the valley below. But after they had delivered their last bomb, the other half of the road still stood.

The F-4 lead started to apologize (this was no laughing matter) when Mac cut in and said, "I still have one bomb left, I'll get it for you." And he did.

He then gave the F-4 flight their report on the damage they had done to the enemy. "Two bridges destroyed and one road cut." Not a bad day's work. (The FACs couldn't take any credit for damage they might have done to keep them from competing with the fighters.)

An Air Force reconnaissance photo from within North Vietnam shows a convoy of loaded trucks heading south to the rugged Mu Gia Pass and the Laotian border. U.S. Air Force photo, Fred Long collection



An A-37 truck-bombing mission on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in November 1967.

U.S. Air Force photo, Fred Long collection

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

Musings

The Aging Warrior

by Hank Hoffman

Once I was asked to describe myself in three words. This is an interesting exercise that you might like to try yourself. I came up with “warrior, pilot, teacher.” “Warrior” is a central part of my identity and will remain so. My courage is as strong as it ever was, but my arthritis will not permit me to hold a sword. I am no longer the fastest on the field and maidens do not swoon when we meet.

But “warrior” is an attitude that remains. There is no quit in me in spite of having to take a nap after lunch.

I'd rather talk about that young maiden. When I met my wife, I was wearing a flight suit. She later compared a man in a flight suit to a woman in red stiletto heels. Full of interesting potential, dare I say “appetizing.” If I can completely avoid the subject of modern sexuality since I don't understand much about it, I can make some valid comments about the partnership between a man and a woman.

I was older than she was, and that was and still is typical of modern heterosexual relationships. Since I was a fighter pilot, she was more mature than I was, but that's another story. Let's talk about the warrior going to war and the wife staying home to raise the children. I'm not espousing it, it was just the way it was. She worried every day - every day - that a staff car would pull into her driveway containing a bird Colonel and the Chaplin in full dress uniforms. She knew that would mean that her husband had been shot down and no one knew when or if he would return.

To this day I would rather watch tracers pass my cockpit than have to deal with that kind of stress. That means that our wives were heroes too, but they did not get any medals.

Whether we chose our roles or they were chosen for us, we are judged by how we perform in them. I protected and supported my younger, presumably weaker, partner when I was young and strong. And now she is caring for her aging warrior, and it is nearly as full-time a job as raising those children. Unlike children, the job gets worse instead of better. She must open those sticky jars for me and pick up the heavier things. Worst of all, she must help my failing mind. I judge her performance to be superior and mine adequate. There is no path to exit this downward spiral. Depressing is too kind a word for it, but I must deal with it like a hero and never surrender. It is far too late to complain about my chosen role now.



I have been called a hero too many times to count and always denied it. My dead buddies are the heroes. But here is a hero right by my side! How can I honor her properly? She will probably survive for many years after I fly west and my money will be cold comfort for her. This treatise is perhaps the best that I can do to honor her, my very own hero in person. I love you forever.



Capt. Henry “Hank” Hoffman III, ready for another mission as he climbs into his A-37B, 69-6371. Assigned to the 604th SOS, he began flying combat missions in July 1970. His tour ended on February 2, 1971.
Hank Hoffman collection

Quotes of Note

On April 15, 2015, the Council on Foreign Relations posted a blog by James N Lindsey containing 40 quotes by national leaders that tell the story about Vietnam. Here are a select few:

“All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”—The first lines of the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, issued on September 2, 1945, quoting the American Declaration of Independence.

“We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves.” — President Lyndon Johnson in a speech at Akron University on October 21, 1964, two weeks before the presidential election.

“Hey, Hey LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?” — A protest chant that first became popular in late 1967.

“It became necessary to destroy the town to save it.” —AP correspondent Peter Arnett quoting a U.S. major on the decision to bomb and shell Ben Tre on February 7, 1968 after Viet Cong forces overran the city in the Mekong Delta forty-five miles south of Saigon during the Tet Offensive.

“Let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.”—President Richard Nixon in his address to the nation on the war in Vietnam on November 3, 1969.

A-37 Association Memorabilia Items



FWB T-shirt
\$21 (includes shipping)
M (3), XL (11)

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



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.