

**“Cleared Hot”**

by Lon Holtz

The weather here in Las Vegas is HOT! with the temperature hanging at the 110-slot for about a week now and slowing down my desire to do anything of value. But for you, I will try to make sense.

Well! It's about 100 days before we once again gather. I missed the last one in Gaveston, but I will attend this one. The strong comradeship we have shared over the years of our A-37 Association has never changed. I have never felt that feeling in any other fighter squadron I have had the honor to be in. So, let's make this reunion the best one in our history. One more time for a lasting memory. I will never forget all of you and what we have accomplished.

With that preamble, the schedule is set. I swear that Jerry and Barb have a hidden hotline somewhere, 'cause there are times I can't use the phone or computer for hours, and in some cases days, to get it all done. Hotels, transportation, dinners, additional/special events, etc., etc., etc., are only part of making sure the event will be remembered. To give you an idea of all they go through, they are trying to get “Frank, Deano, and Sammy” to join us for a few songs. And while this may sound like I am totally OTL, I will make a bet that they will probably be successful. I'm not completely out of the planning and once in a while they let me get in my two cents worth.

An important point is air travel to Vegas. The weekend of our reunion there may be two major events in the city, so if you are planning on air travel to get here, I strongly, **repeat strongly**, recommend you make your reservations now, both coming and going.

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Less than 100 days until the A-37 Association's final planned reunion in Las Vegas, and it's time to finalize hotel and travel plans. The registration form can be found at www.a-37.org.

Southwest Airlines is offering discounted fares for attendees flying in between 21-29 October. Details and a link are on the registration form and on page 4.

Our schedule allows for plenty of time to enjoy the attractions in the Las Vegas area. To allow attendees as much flexibility as possible, we are providing a link that lists all of the shows, concerts and events in the area. We are promoting only one show, **the “Rat Pack is Back”** at the Tuscany Suites, for which we're getting a special rate that includes a dinner before the show. Check out the flyer for that show on page 6. The key here is you must make your own reservation following the instructions on the flyer. For any other events, you can use the Vegas show link to make your own reservations that fit your personal schedule. See the checklist on page 4.

We're looking forward to St. George, Utah, and the fly-in at the **Western Sky Aviation Warbird Museum** on Saturday, 25 October. Expect to see vintage aircraft from World War II and Vietnam, as well as classic business jets.

Of course, the highlight for us will be the A-37 as two operational birds will participate.

Two other articles of note are my visit with Ollie Maier on page 3 and Erik Goldstein's description of the patches worn by the initial cadre in 1967 on page 4...Jerry Sailors



**“He's not the man I married
forty-five years ago.”**

“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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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 Calendar of Events

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

Rustics Fini Reunion, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 6-9 Nov 2025

Emails

Albert Richard is an Army veteran who served in Vietnam at Bien Hoa from August 1969 to August 1970. In May 1970 he happened to meet an A-37 pilot, L.A. Bienvenu, a fellow graduate of Jesuit High School in New Orleans. He plans to write an article for Jesuit's newsletter on how two Louisiana boys met on a road at Bien Hoa. (L.A. went west on 18 January 2025.)

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

(From Albert Richard, 16 June 2025)

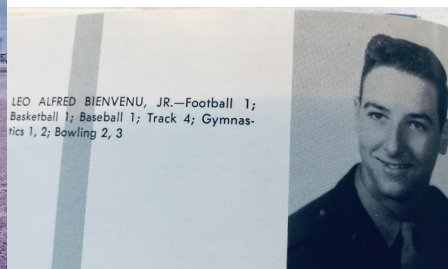
Following up on my earlier email, I'm trying to get 1-2 photos of L.A. taken when he was flying out of Bien Hoa. In addition I'd like any details you can provide on his DFC award.

I plan to write a short story about accidentally meeting another Jesuit HS Bluejay while stationed at Bien Hoa Army Base in May 1970. Jesuit has a quarterly news letter that I think will want to publish it on Alumni's.

Editor's note: Albert Richard sent a photo of L.A. Bienvenu's high school yearbook.



Albert Richard
E-5 US Army



1962 Jesuit HS Yearbook

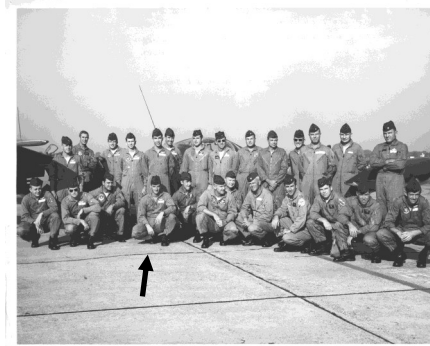
Received these photos of L.A. from Jeff Schofield through George Krumenacker.



L.A. and Dee Friesen

L.A. second from left. Is that Babe Ruth he's talking to?

First class of new A-37 pilots at England AFB, Alexandria, LA, in 1969. (Arrow to L.A. Bienvenu.)



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(Continued from p. 1)

Things can get real crazy at the airport as sports fans and tourists will be coming and going.

Another thought: If you are interested in what the hotel and its amenities are like, enter tuscanly.com in your browser for a look see. Additionally, I think that if you want to go to any of the shows on the Strip, start thinking about making your reservations NOW. Remember, the only two events planned as a group are the St George Fly-In and the closing banquet dinner on Sunday.

The one thing I am asking of our membership for our trip to St George is that we wear one of our shirts to show off the aircraft that brought us together, the one that supported our ground troops in Vietnam for five years and continues to this day flying operationally in Latin America. We will never forget, but others might like to know.

Well, that's it. ***So Get Ready to Standby to be prepared.***

More to follow later.

War Story

A Visit with Ollie Maier

by Jerry Sailors

In 1991-1992, Ollie Maier spearheaded a reunion of the 604th Air Commando Squadron and Combat Dragon at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. When the reunion group met again three years later in San Antonio, they decided to incorporate as the A-37 Association and elected Ollie as president. He served faithfully in that role organizing great reunions from Washington, DC to Las Vegas. He stepped down in 2011 due to health reasons, but continued attending as many reunions thereafter as he could, the last being 2019 in Wichita. We learned his health dictated a less strenuous travel schedule, including continuous care.

Ollie has left his print on everything about the A-37 Association, including the set of five pamphlets that led to the publication of our book "Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam." As early as the 1992 reunion, he was gathering "War Stories" and "What Happened to Me after Vietnam." He printed the first group newsletter, then called "The Rap Reunion Report."

Turning 90 in October, Ollie resides in an assisted living facility in Converse, Texas, a suburb of San Antonio near his son Scott. Dale and I visited him at the Esplanade Gardens a few weeks ago and found he was in good spirits and loved to talk about his A-37 experiences. The entrance to his door tells you where his heart is and the sign on the door asked visitors to be aware of certain conditions which we found to be true.



When we entered the room, he was watching "Bridge Over the River Kwai." I felt good that he immediately recognized me. As I brought up names from our time together, he remembered some, but not others. I told him about our plans to hold a final gathering in Las Vegas this October, and he responded that he probably wouldn't be able to make it.





War Story 2

“Combat Dragon” Patches of the 604th ACS, Part I

by Erik Goldstein

Not having “been there” or “done that,” I’m really hoping not to foul this up royally. But I thought I’d try to put something useful down on paper about the REAL patches worn by men of the 604th ACS in 1967 and 1968. Please, let the corrections and additions to the story fly.

In militaria collecting circles, it’s common knowledge that the very popular field of Vietnam War unit patches is extremely treacherous. As I type there are 23 patches of the 604th ACS & SOS for sale on eBay, ranging from \$5 to \$975 – and ALL of them are fake (most are about \$10).

The best type of information comes from “primary sources,” if you’ll excuse the museum-speak. Photos of 604th ACS men wearing their patches at England AFB and Bien Hoa, coupled with a study of patches still owned by those who got them back in ’67 and ’68, set the gold standard for identifying the genuine stuff. And adding the memories of Vets seals the deal.

The origins of the *Combat Dragon* patch are traceable to the time when the Squadron was being formed and trained at England AFB. Fred Long recalls that he received two patches, probably at HQ, sometime in the spring of 1967. Photos of 604th men, from Col. Bottomly down, are shown wearing these in photos taken at the base, as plated throughout *Dragonfly*; see pp. 33, 44, and 65 to cite a few.

Fred sewed one patch to a shirt and sent the other home to his parents. He still has that second patch, preserved in mint condition, which is a perfect benchmark piece for this article.

From studying Fred’s patch and good images of 5 or 6 identical examples, there are a number of traits which serve to identify the authentic ones:

- The patches are 3 7/8” in diameter.
- The white portion of the background has a diagonal “twill” pattern.
- The border edging is white, and MERROWED.

Merrowed is important because it was a relatively new feature on military patches in 1967. Common today, merrowed edges are **fully and tightly bound with interlocked stitches**, preventing any chance of unraveling. Merrowed patches weren’t being made in Vietnam in the 1960s, and NONE of the fake 604th patches (to date) have merrowed edges. More on fakes later in this series.

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Original *Combat Dragon* patch, 1967. Courtesy
of Fred Long

Part II will cover what I believe was a succeeding generation of patches, also made in the US. **If there is anyone who has a 604th patch from the era, I’d love to hear from you!**

Erik Goldstein
Box 1774
Williamsburg, VA 23187
rwfcaplt@aol.com

Senior Curator of Mechanical Arts, Metals, & Nuismatics
The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

A Checklist for Vegas

Hotel: 877-887-2261. Cite A-37 Association code 1025A37.
[Tuscany Suites and Casino](#)

Air Travel: [Book a Flight](#) Southwest Airlines is granting the A-37 Association a discount on airfares between 21 and 29 October.

While in Vegas, check the reunion Schedule of Events to determine when you may be able to fit in any of the many options available. You must make arrangements for the following on your own.

“Rat Pack is Back” Dinner and show at the hotel. See flyer on page 6. This show has gotten good reviews.

Other Vegas Shows and Venues

[Make reservations now!](#) These tickets go fast.
A list of shows, tours, concerts, etc. available on this website.
[Las Vegas Shows 2025 with Showtimes, Deals & Reviews](#)
[Vegas.com](#)

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Schedule of Events

The A-37 Association Reunion
Tuscany Suites and Casino
Las Vegas, NV
23-26 October 2025

23 October (Thur)	(PDT) ¹ 1500 - ?	Arrival Hospitality Room open
24 October (Fri)	0700 - ? 0900 - 1000 0900 - 1400	Hospitality Room open Board of Directors Meeting Ladies Event? Lunch & Dinner on your own
25 October (Sat)	0700 (PDT) 1000 (MDT) 1500 (MDT) 1600 (PDT) 1630 - ?	Bus departs for St. George, Utah Arrive St. George ² Depart St. George Arrive Tuscany Suites Hospitality Room open Dinner on your own
26 October (Sun)	0700 - 1730 0900 - 1000 1000 - 1700 1800 - 1900 1900 - 2100 2100 - ?	Hospitality Room open Membership Meeting Free time Reception/Photos (Dress: Smart Casual) Dinner (Tuscany Room) Hospitality Room open
27 October (Mon)	0800 - 1100	Pack up and leave.

Notes:

1. Event times may be altered as we get closer to October.
2. A separate schedule will be published for St. George.

To download the Vegas registration page, go to www.a-37.org and click on "Vegas Registration Form." Then follow the instructions.

USAF Photo

THE RAT PACK IS BACK!

Special Group Offer: A37 Association

October 23, 24, & 25, 2025

Show & Dinner

General Admission & Marilyn's Cafe Dinner

\$60.00 (Non-refundable)

To book your reservation contact Gilbert at (702) 947-5981

(Between the hours of 1:30PM - 7PM PST)

Mention Code : A37 Association



DINNER MENU



ENTREE (Choice of One)

1. 14" Pizza with 2 toppings
2. Angus Cheeseburger w/Fries
3. Chicken Caesar Salad
4. Spaghetti & Meatballs
5. Orange Chicken