

“The Stinger Logo on the Ops Building at Da Nang” as told by (at the time) Sgt Tom Graham

In 1969, I finished my five level in the 42350 electrical career field at Perrin AFB near Sherman TX, which allowed me to work without supervision. When they closed Perrin AFB, I was sent to Luke AFB to the FTD school on the F-100 – enroute to Vietnam. After arriving in Vietnam in May 1970, I was stationed at Phan Rang. I spent my first week in the transit barracks which had been hit by mortars two day before. My first combat was with the mosquitos.

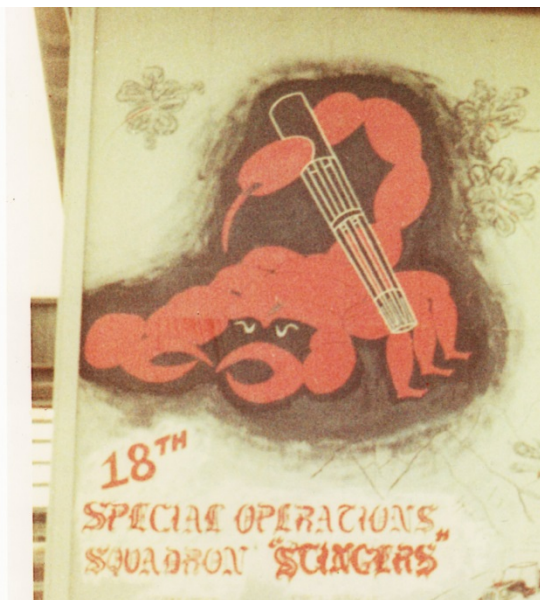
I was assigned to the F-100 electric shop but I guess they had all the electricians they needed, so I was sent to the electric shop that maintained the 119G Shadow and 119K Stinger gunships. After working on T-33, F-102 and T-37 I was glad to get to work on something with room to work. Two months later they moved a number of gunships to Saigon and they volunteered me to go. That was about July 1970.

Saigon was a learning experience. I guess there was a big move by the north and they moved a number of 119s there. There was always TIC missions going on at night, and when they landed it was all hands on board - when the birds came everyone helped out to get quick turn arounds. I learned how to load ammo and support the ground crew wherever needed. At least the nights went by fast. A lot of good memories from the thirty days I spent there.

Another month back at PhanRang and then to Da Nang where I was technically assigned to the electric shop for F-4s. Although I was supposed to work out of the F-4 shop, they didn't know the 119s and I didn't know the F-4, so they put me in with the other AC-119 maintenance personnel across from the flight crew hootch. I was glad to learn that I wouldn't be going to waste my knowledge of the 119K and trying to learn the F-4s. I was placed in the maintenance hootch with the gun plumbers, electronic techs, and other maintenance staff.

It was sometime in late 70 or early 71 when someone wanted a logo painted on the flight line. I don't know if our Maintenance Officer (then Lt and now Ret Maj Gen) Doug Metcalf requested it or the first sergeant. I put in the order for the paint and other supplies, and away I went. The first one looked more like a crab than a scorpion. About a month later a request came from the commander to paint another one on the "Ops" building on Gun Fighter Row. Seems like there were several logos on that building. Between the time I finished the one on the maintenance building at the flight line I was able to see the squadron mascot – a big black scorpion someone had acquired and kept as the 18th SOS “mascot”. I made changes to the Ops building logo which represented the mascot.

As Paul Harvey says, “And now you know the rest of the story.....”



**18TH SPECIAL
OPERATIONS SQUADRON**



“STINGERS”