

MAIL CALL



2010 Mail bag

"Mail Call" Has replaced our guest book

To post a MAIL CALL entry please email the webmaster at retcmsgtatatt.net

Put Gunship Mail Call in the subject line or it may look like spam to me. If you want your e-mail address posted so members can contact you please put it after your name & location.

Your message will be reviewed & posted as soon as possible.

** Important Notice:

To help cut down on harvesting of email addresses I will use *at* instead of the @ sign in e-mail addresses. Remember to change the *at* to @ when sending an email to someone you want to correspond with.

2010 Mail Call

Reunion 2010 KUDOS - I want to thank everyone involved in the 2010 reunion. It was my first one & I have to say it was spiritual & magical. My heart was filled with joy & happiness, I never ever thought it could be so moving. The friends I saw there after forty years was unbielevable it was the love & friendship we had forty years ago it had not changed one bit.

The friends you made while you were there can never be equaled. I got to see Bob Hamorsky, Joe Alvarez, Larry Mersek, Mike Davis & Bruce Byrd. They will be friends forever & beyond. I had hoped to have seen other people there like Ben Collins & Terry Bott & Bill Pettrie. I hope to see all of you again in the future. Thank all of you for all you do for our gunship reunions & our web site. I look at it every day.

Dan Jensen 18th SOS 70-71

Dan Jensen

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Dear Webmaster,

This is Jim Drever (ret'd - Aussie Air Force) & a big fan of the AC-119's. I was based at Phan Rang & often visited one of your 'patios,' with a box of Aussie beer on my shoulder. I was in regular touch with Jim Alvis, Dan McDuffie, Bill Petrie & some of your other members for quite some time. I'm still in touch with Lt. Col Bill Brown & was lucky enough to catch up with he & his wife at the 2008 (?) Air Commando Reunion, Fort Walton Beach FL. The AC-119 Members were also holding a (separate) Reunion at about the same time, so I attended that also. It was held at an area near Eglin or Hurlbert Air Bases; I can't remember which one. When you folks have a Reunion - **"YOU HAVE A REUNION!"**

I sort of recall your email address, but I can't be sure - my 'rememberer is broken!' At any rate Sir, I am attempting to assist a retired Aussie Army Major (Major at retirement) by the name of Bernie (Bernard) McGurgan. He was a Captain in Vietnam & he & his Troops found themselves in a desperate situation - literally, "Life or death," but the AC-119's came to the rescue.

If there is anything you can do, so as to allow an Aussie to thank some Yanks for saving the lives of many of your allies, I know for a fact that Bernie would be forever grateful !

Bernie has 'searched' for years for the Stinger Crews & I reckon that those whom "Saved their asses" would appreciate hearing from him & indeed, it may also put some of those 'ghosts' to rest!

Cheers & Thanks,

Jim.

In two messages to me, Bernie furnished the following information:

In mid 1970, late MAY early JUN "Stingers" from Phan Rang saved our arses in/round a place called Thuong Duc, middle area of Quang Nam Province & near where your RAAF Bomber crew disappeared in NOV 70!

Anyhow my Bn (Battalion) got surrounded by at least two NVA Bn which turned out to be a NVA Regt reinforced & they attacked on all fronts our dug-in Bn positions for three days & nights before we had to withdraw in CH-53s

& still in heavy contact =shits were trumps!

B-52 Arc Light went next day & when we returned shortly after found two large NVA graves of around 60 & 80 or so blasted apart NVA soldier's bodies, we had to dig up & count in those bloody days!

Anyhow the "Stingers" from Nha Trang, I think it may have been C/S Stinger 62 saved our bacon (lives) on three consecutive nights before we withdrew! See the write up attached by my Senior Advisor Col Bacon of the 51st ARVN Regt when he returned Stateside.

They have impressive firepower & glad they were on our side!

I tried to follow up on pilots & crew of the particular Stingers but had little luck unfortunately!

Persevere

Bernie.

More info from Jim! The period we are talking about was 29 MAY 70 - 11 JUN 70 & my Bn (Three Advisors (Moi plus 2 US Army) & 700 or so ARVN) was located to the north of Thuong Duc, which was a SF outpost in those days!

The main feature we were on was the Tho Thenon ridge lines with two peaks, one 4000 feet (1235) & other 3900 feet (1210) = bloody high! Higher peaks even to the north & north west!

My Bn was the 1/51st ARVN Bn from Hill 55 SW of Danang AFB & where the Regt HQ (51st ARVN Regt Separate) was located! We choppered in whilst the NVA were doing "A Relief in Place" & upset them somewhat, by landing right on top, on the early morning of the first days insertion! The Gunships "Alley Cats" Cobras & Hueys had prepped two/three LZ sites & that was what probably upset them initially?

As I said, the contact was intense with some 2/3 NVA Bn around us & giving us heaps! We sent out a Rifle Coy "patrol" & only around 20 or so Binh Si got back after they walked into a large V shape ambush! We were assaulted on all flanks for three days & nights & that was when the Stingers came in very handy! We had Bn HQ & two Rifle Coy plus POW Coy on one feature & two rifle Coys on another! The main LZ was on our location thank goodness!

We were extracted by CH-53s & the day after a large Arc Light went in etc! Body count of NVA in two holes was around 120/140, hard to tell from so many mangled NVA soldiers?

Map attached shows the area to north of Thuong Duc I am talking about!

My FAC was C/S LOPAZ 17, Frank Ramsay (USAF) in a "Push Me Pull Me" O-2, an excellent FAC & good friend in 1970 = another story on Hill 55 & Operations elsewhere!

My C/S was Sierra 11, Stinger was C/S Stinger 20 or 62?(memory may be out here?), Regt HQ (Lt Col Bacon US Army) was OSCAR 1 on retrans back to Hill 55!

Hostage 6 was a USMC FAC we used occasionally when Frank was elsewhere flying a Bronco! All our FAC support came from Danang AFB &/or USMC base at Freedom Hill etc!

Stingers were definitely from Nha Trang! First night Stinger Capt identified seven strobes marking our positions when we only had put five up = two northern were NVA positions etc.

Thanks & Persevere

Bernie

If any of you Stingers have information on this mission/contact please contact Jim Drever at angryantvatbigpond.com (don't forget to replace the word "at" with @ in the email address) 11/12/10

Recent Letter to Wayne Laessig about 2010 Reunion:

Hi Wayne: I've been back home for a few weeks & I am back in the grind of work again. I just wanted to say, one more time in writing *"a very sincere & special Thank You - to you, your wife & all involved in the planning - for making the California Reunion - Totally First Class."* I even got to meet a gunner & good friend - Jerry Greene, whom I had not seen in 40 years - who now lives in Hawaii & this was his very 1st reunion!

What a wonderful event & the tours were especially well planned & well done - & our guides were exceptionally professional, laid back & knowledgeable!! Congratulations to all involved in all phases - For making this an Outstanding & very affordable event.

I even found time to visit the amazing Giant Redwoods in Muir Woods!. One more irony, Sat. night, I sat next to George Hardy, the former Tuskegee Airman, P-51 Pilot, & Sq Commander of 2 AC-119K Stinger SQ's in Vietnam. Turns out we are practically neighbors! He only lives about 20 miles from me in Sarasota. Who knew by going cross-country to a Gunship Reunion in Calif I would meet a fellow night air warrior from our Gunship days (40 years ago) living so close to me - right here in Florida!

Best wishes, *Jim Cooper (AKA - Shadow Coop)* 10/25/10

Commando's lose another — It is with great sadness I pass along the news that ACA president Charles 'Chuck' Keeler died at approximately 0115 this morning, June 11th, in Fort Walton Beach.

Details as to funeral arrangements & burial will be forwarded as they become available.

R. V. Secord, Vice President ACA Maj Gen, USAF (ret)

Air Commando Association www.aircommando.org Email: acaheadquarters@gmail.com

P.O. Box 7 Mary Esther, FL 32569

850-581-0099 Mon-Fri 9:00am-12:00 Noon 6/11/10

Brig. Gen. Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt (1920 - 2010)

5/25/10 - Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt passed away May 20, 2010, at his home, surrounded by family, loyal friends & his devoted caregiver, Jamie Newman.

He was born on Jan. 6, 1920, in Birmingham, Ala., to Forest Aderholt & Katie Banholzer & was preceded in death by his loving wife of 56 years, Jessie; brothers, Roy Aderholt & Robert Aderholt; & sister, Cornelia Akin.

He is survived by his wife, Anne; daughter, Janet Lynn Elliott & husband Chaplin Col. (Ret.) Richard G. Elliott Jr. of Panama City, Fla.; son, George Aderholt & wife Pat of Navarre, Fla.; one sister, Katherine McDaniel of Trussville, Ala.; two brothers, Warren Aderholt & his wife Bunny of Marietta, Ga., & Louis Aderholt of Huntsville, Ala.; grandchildren, Kevin Richard Elliott & wife Kathy Anderson Elliott, Stacie Lynn Elliott, Kellie Marie Elliott & Mark Randall Elliott; great-granddaughter, Annie Lynn Elliott; & several nieces & nephews.

Heinie was one of seven children raised by his widowed mother (his father died, as a result of an accident, when Heinie was just a boy of nine), & he learned very early in life many lessons that would shape his future.

Undoubtedly, his mother's influence from her strength, courage, love & strict discipline, provided him with the solid foundation that helped him to grow & develop into the remarkable man he became.

Heinie's love of people was obvious & his sincerity & straight forward, up-front approach encouraged the development of many life-long friendships. None more enduring than the bond of love, loyalty & mutual respect that he shared with Maj. Gen. Richard Secord.

We wish to thank his faithful friend, Joseph Caruth, who enabled him to continue his early morning ritual of working out at Aderholt Fitness Center.

Until his final days he remained close to his brothers & sister & their families. As recently as late January, he made a trip to Birmingham, on to Huntsville, then to Atlanta, assuring all he would be back soon.

Gen. Aderholt's 30-plus year military career is legendary. His status as a leader, his many accomplishments, awards & citations will be recorded in the annals of military history.

His innumerable friends will remember him as a man of integrity with a loving heart who inspired & touched so many lives.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in memory of Gen. Aderholt be made to the McCoskrie Threshold Foundation, P.O. Box 67, Mary Esther, FL 32569, to support projects in Thailand & Laos.

A special thank you to the staff at Davis-Watkins Funeral Home.

A memorial service will be held at Hurlburt Air Park on July 2 at 9 a.m.

Published in Northwest Florida Daily News on May 22, 2010

Air Commandos say farewell to Air Commando One - All Air Commandos are saddened to learn of the passing of Brigadier General Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt Thursday morning, 20 May 2010 in his home after a long illness. As we expected, he fought to the very end with the same fighting spirit that he displayed throughout his incredible career. We will always miss him. Memorial service details will be provided as soon as possible.

Brigadier General Harry C. (Heinie) Aderholt was commander, U. S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand, & chief, Joint U. S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand, with headquarters at Bangkok.

General Aderholt was born in Birmingham, Ala., in 1920. He entered active military duty through the aviation cadet program in April 1942 & graduated from pilot training with a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps in May 1943.

During World War II, from October 1943 to August 1945, General Aderholt served in North Africa & Italy as a B-17 & C-47 pilot.

In September 1945 General Aderholt went to Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., assigned as a staff pilot with the Army Air Forces Eastern Flying Training Command. After completion of Air Tactical School at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., in December 1948, General Aderholt returned to Maxwell & served as a flight instructor & flying safety officer with the 3800th Air Base Wing.

During the Korean War, from July 1950 to September 1951, General Aderholt commanded a Special Air Warfare Detachment of the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron. He next was assigned as an operations staff officer with the

1007th Air Intelligence Service Group in Washington, D.C. In June 1953 he was transferred to Donaldson Air Force Base, S.C., where he served with Headquarters Eighteenth Air Force as tactical & operations staff officer in the Directorate of Operations & Training.

In October 1954, General Aderholt was assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Wiesbaden Air Base, Germany, & served in the Directorate of Plans as an unconventional warfare planning staff officer.

In September 1957 General Aderholt returned to Washington, D.C., assigned to the 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group as a special warfare staff officer, & in September 1959 joined the 1040th U.S. Air Force Field Activity Squadron in the same capacity.

General Aderholt left for Okinawa in January 1960 where he became commander of the 1095th Operational Evaluation Training Group. During this assignment, he contributed to the pioneering of special air warfare techniques, & was instrumental in developing the Laos airfield complex known as Lima sites. These fields were used throughout Southeast Asia as support sites for special warfare operations & as "Jolly Green" helicopter forward staging bases for rescue & recovery operations in Laos & North Vietnam.

From August 1962 to February 1964, General Aderholt served as special advisor to the commander of the U.S. Air Force Special Air Warfare Center at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. During this period, he contributed to & participated in RAND Corp. studies which resulted in the publication of the Single Integrated Attack Team Study. He then was transferred to Hurlburt Field, Fla., where he served as vice commander & commander of the famed 1st Air Commando Wing.

General Aderholt left for the Republic of the Philippines in August 1965 where he was assigned as deputy commander for plans & operations with the 6200th Materiel Wing at Clark Air Base. While in this assignment, he joined the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, where he conceived & activated the Joint Personnel Recovery Center in Saigon, & served as chief from July to December 1966. He then was selected by Headquarters Pacific Air Forces to activate the 56th Air Commando Wing at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. This wing, which he organized & commanded from December 1966 to December 1967, conducted low-level night interdiction missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos & North Vietnam, using prop-driven aircraft. The efforts of this wing were so successful in slowing infiltration that the enemy reacted by greatly increasing anti-aircraft defenses & committing a large amount of his total assets to keep the trail open.

In January 1968 General Aderholt was reassigned to the U.S. Air Force Special Air Warfare Center, later redesignated U.S. Air Force Special Operations Force, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., to serve as deputy chief of staff for operations.

General Aderholt returned to Thailand in June 1970 for a two-year tour of duty as chief of the Air Force Advisory Group, Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, in Bangkok. He retired from active military duty in December 1972 at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

He was recalled to active duty in October 1973 & assigned as deputy commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Thailand, & deputy chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand, with headquarters at Bangkok.

General Aderholt became commander, USMACTHAI, & chief, JUSMAG, Thailand, in May 1975.

His military decorations & awards include the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation Emblem, & the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon with oak leaf cluster. He is a command pilot & wears the Parachutist Badge.

He was promoted to the grade of brigadier general effective May 31, 1974, with date of rank May 25, 1974.

Any Time, Any Place

To the AC-119 Group, I was curious-- During Vietnam my father, Charles Lee Wesen, was stationed in Thailand & flew with the triple nickel squadron. I was wondering if he also flew on the AC-119? He was a navigator — so I wasn't sure if he would have done both — & there is a Charles L Wesen listed on your website under Last Flight 18th SOS. He passed on in 1987 so I was curious.



Charles Lee Wesen

I am interested in finding out more about my father — I was 15 years old when he died — so my children & husband never had the opportunity to get to meet him. He was in the triple nickle 69-70--stationed in thailand. It was during the time that the airship crashed in to the mess hall. He was 6'4 & originally from bow washington, he was stationed in California before & after his tour in Thailand.

I unfortunately live in virginia so I probably would not be able to come to the reunion — however I would be interested in more information on membership.

Thank you, Ann-Marie Wesen Jaques

Note: If you remember Charlie Wesson, or have information on him, please contact Wayne Laessig at qadvocate"at"sbcglobal.net. Wayne will put you in touch with Ann-Marie. 5/7/10

Air Commando One needs your thoughts & prayers - April 30, 2010 – *Gen. Heinie Aderholt, Air Commando One*, has been in failing health in recent weeks. For those of you that may have missed Gene Rossel's message of last Friday, here it is again.

“The ACA HQ told me this morning that Heinie is in the hospital but couldn't get any data on him. It didn't sound good & I am asking you all to pray for his swift recovery. If you are Catholic have a mass said for this good Baptist or simply put up the prayer rugs, because we need him around. As soon as I get more information I will send it out.”

There are many gunship guys who served under Him. The AC-119 Gunship Association will keep Gen. Aderholt in our thoughts & prayers. 5/3/10

Robert Hartley Spencer May 15, 1935 - March 30, 2010 17th SOS Flight Engineer 1969-1970 Bob, as he was known to everyone, died peacefully on March 30 with his daughter Cheryl at his side. He was diagnosed with cancer in early February.

Bob was born in Boston, Mass., & grew up there. He enlisted in the Air Force at an early age & retired in 1975 after 22 years as a flight engineer who accumulated more than 5,000 hours of flying time including 140 combat missions over Vietnam in the AC-119G Shadow. He flew with the 17th Special Operations while in Vietnam from 1969-1970, & was awarded 10 air medals as well as the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After retirement from the Air Force, Bob worked in real estate with the Hoffman Company & the National Real Estate Franchise. Bob became very involved in the local community as a parent & as a member of the Fairfield Rotary, Kiwanis Club, where he was president of the Suisun Chapter & Fairfield Chamber of Commerce. He was a longtime member of the Solano Yacht Club. He was a huge supporter of the Fairfield Sea Horses Swim Club & the Solano Swim Club as his daughters swam competitively. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus at Holy Spirit where his daughters attended school.

Bob is survived by his daughter, Cheryl Spencer Burke of Berkeley, CA, & her mother Patricia Spencer of Davis, CA; brothers, Richard Spencer of East Freetown, MA, Bruce Spencer of New Salem, MA, & Hartley Spencer of Fairfield, IA. There will be a memorial celebration of Bob's life at the Solano Yacht Club on May 16, from noon to 3 pm at 703 Civic Center Blvd, Suisun City, CA 94585 www.solanoyachtclub.org Phone: 707-429-0284 or e-mail SYCwebster@gmail.com In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the American Cancer Society , P.O. Box 22718, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-1718

“Our extended AC-119 family continues to grow” with the birth of LeRoy & Rose Frahm's grand-daughter, Liev on February 16th, 2010.



"Baby Liev"

Mom Rose had a tough time after delivery but is doing well now. Ellery & grandpa LeRoy took Liev to a recent appointment across town & he is healthy. He claims it's the first 3 generation Frahm men appointment!

Best wishes to all & welcome to the the 71st & AC-119 family, Liev!"

Your AC-119 Gunship Association family 3/16/10

C-119 folks from the 60th Troop Carrier Group, 1950-61, Rhein Mein & Dreux, 10th, 11th, 12th Squadron & honored guests are invited to the 2010 Reunion at Music City USA.

Arrive at Fiddler's Inn, Nashville, TN, Wednesday September 8th with banquet Thursday evening. You will need to make your own hotel reservations in advance. Please tell them you are with the 60th Troop Carrier Group.

Phone number is 877-223-7621. Rooms are \$69 plus local tax.

You will need to fund Paul &/or Darlene Baldwin (personal check is OK) by August 15th for dinner & shows. *Thursday banquet* is \$27, *Friday's dinner show* is \$33, & the *Grand Ole Opry* is \$38 per person. *\$98 per person for all three*. Please help spread the word that all our 10th, 11th, 12th, base flight & 60th group (& Wing) folks are invited as well as the 317th or other Troop Carrier Vets of our era. For more more information contact Paul & Darlene Baldwin, 113 Par Drive, Whitney, TX 76692, PH: 254-694-2267. E-mail: dbaldwin@hillsboro.net 3/14/10

When God closes a door he often opens a window of hope—Welcome to our newest 4th generation AC-119er, Samantha (Reffner) McFarland, weighing in at 7 pounds 7 ounces, & 20* inches; great-granddaughter of our own 18th SOS Gunner, Bill Reffner; grand-daughter of Bill Reffner Jr, & daughter of Catherine (Reffner) & Anthony McFarland. Some of you may remember our Albuquerque Reunion Banquet where Anthony got down on his knee & asked Catherine "*Will you marry me*" to the tune of many "a-h-h-hs" & "o-h-h-hs" from the folks there (causing a few glistening eyes). Catherine said "Yes".

Samantha, welcome to the AC-119 family & congratulations to all the Reffners & McFarlands.

Your AC-119 Gunship family. 3/3/10

Thank You AC-119 Gunship Association from Frank Hill's Family: Thank you from Frank Hill's Family for the Newsletter & Web mention, We have forgotten to mention dad's other son Frankie Jr. I just wanted everyone to know that he has a son to carry on his name.

Thank you all for all that you have done....I will now & forever keep all of you in my prayers.

Sincerely Debra.

Association Note: Both Jr. & Debra wish to continue getting Newsletters & hearing from Frank's friends & those who were stationed with him. If you wish to contact Frank's family please contact Wayne Laessig at [qadvocateatsbcglobal.net] as the POC & he will forward any contacts to Debra Betterton & the family. 3/1/10

We lose another brother - Frankie D. Hill Sr died last weekend from lung cancer. He was a Stinger Gunner in 1969-1970. He's survived by his daughter Debra Betterton & two sons.

There will be a Memorial Service Tuesday (Feb 16th) at 10:00 AM in Sunrise Funeral Home at 8167 East Highway 69, Prescott Valley AZ 86314 Phone (928) 772-7475. Following the Memorial Service, they will transport Frankie to the VA National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona at 23029 North Cave Creek Road, Phoenix, AZ 85024 (602) 379-4615, where he will receive Honor Guard services & burial at 1:30 PM. Frankie's family welcomes any AC-119 folks to the Memorial Service & Burial.

The family prefers any donations go to Lung Cancer Research or Treatment (your choice of organization).
2/11/10

Urgent! Gunship Brother Needs Assistance – One of the benefits of being an AC-119 Gunship Association member is being able to get assistance with Awards & Decorations that are due our members based on their combat service. Sometimes those who could help us are no longer with us & we hit a wall. In those cases, we turn to you, our members & associates, with requests like the following one. If you know anything about this event, please send an e-mail with your information to our Awards & Decorations Manager Mac Maclsaac at: colmacmacatmac.com. Here's the event we need help with:

During a mission on August 11, 1972, about 10 clicks South of DaNang AB, a Stinger gunship began firing at a known enemy position. In doing so it received heavy ground fire from enemy ground troops. The aircraft commander ordered all mini guns on-line, but the #3 gun jammed. Gunner Frank Bartlett informed the aircraft commander of the malfunction & electronically removed the jammed gun to off-line status. While attempting to clear the jam a round, that had not fully chambered, exploded resulting in powder burns to his left eye. Dan McDuffie (Deceased) came to his immediate aid. The aircraft commander declared an emergency & returned to DaNang. The 18th SOS, Det 1 commander, Lt Col Teal, met the aircraft at the end of the runway & escorted Bartlett to the emergency room for treatment.

If you were on that crew, or know someone who was on the crew, or if can in any way corroborate the events described above, you are asked to contact Colonel Mac Maclsaac at: colmacmacatmac.com. Helpful information can include such things as, "I was there; I saw him; I saw the event happen; or the other crew members were _____ & _____." or anything else you may remember about the incident. If you have any information please send it to Colonel Macisaac right away. Sending information that assists any of our members lives up to what our membership & Association are all about....helping us help our gunship brothers.

The AC-119 Gunship Association Board 2/10/10

Looking for an information source such as after action or mission reports or crew contact on a pair of AC-47's, Spooky 73 & Spooky 74, which provided fire support for me & a small force of Vietnamese popular & regional force troops during the nights of February 14 & 15, 1969.

The aircraft were out of Bien Hoa & both Spooky 73 & 74 were on station over my small team providing flares & mini gun support for more than four hours on the night & into the pre-dawn of Feb. 14-15 1969. It just happened to be the eve of the anniversary of the '68 Tet Offensive. My former call sign was Linwood Stumper Two Zero Delta, & the action took place in III Corps over Tanh Linh subsector.

Any info or contact would very much be appreciated.

Jack Gallant

Navy617ataol.com 2/5/10

Another Brother Leaves Us

Stingers, I thought you should know that my dad, Shelby Lucky (18th SOS), left us on October 7, 2009. I'm his son, also a proud USAF veteran, & I think the other Stinger crewmen would be glad to know he went out as he lived, with honor & dignity befitting an Air Force NCO & combat aircrewman.

Dad's buried at Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery, & he's in good & honorable company there.

Yours,

Shannon Lucky, USAF (ret.)

Web Kudos – Hey, great job on the website. I was just doing some searches & found it easily. Very refreshing to read everything & viewed all the pictures. I swear I smelled food being prepared on the streets of NKP while reading & viewing the pictures.

As I recall, I arrived at Phan Rang October-ish of 1971 & was reassigned to the 18th S.O.S. in NKP, the AC-119s had moved.

I was a Sgt & crewchief on the line in NKP, but did a few short stints to Da Nang & Ben Hoi out of NKP.

I only recall a few of the full names of guys I worked with; Ben Diepenbrock (from Ohio) & John Waters (from Seattle). The rest of what I remember were nic-names.

I remember those take-offs after sunset & the late nights, on the line, waiting for all of our planes to get back home.

Great web-site!

Leland Thurman, Sgt. USAF (1970-74)
18 S.O.S, NKP (8/71-8/72)

Anyone hear of the "Shadow Shooters Society"

During a clean up of old papers I came across a certificate from the "Shadow Shooters Society" signed by the "Master of Saigon tea" to Mr. T.A .Keary as an honorary shadow & member of the triple's. for operational missions on 17th July 1969.

At that time I was the Warrant Officer in Charge of the Air Intel section 1st Australian Task Force & had the task of planning the Shadow mission in our AO. My memories of a professional team & "Bloody great support team" still stay with me.

May I wish you & you members happy reunions.

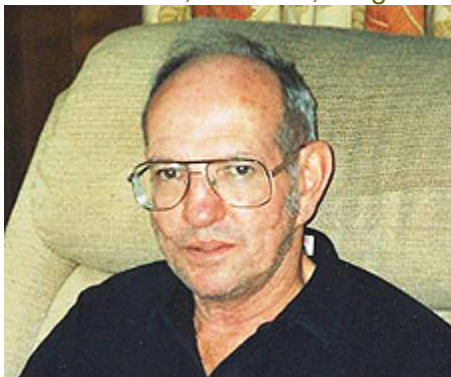
Trent Keary

takearyathomemail.com.au <<http://homemail.com.au>/ 1/29/10

Sad news of another brother's Last Flight

MSgt Charles March, Chief Fred March's son, passed us the sad news that his father passed away & asked that we post his father's name on our Last Flight list. We do so with deep respect & prayers, as we join his family & friends who mourn his loss but celebrate his life.

Fredrick David March, 69, of Fort Walton Beach passed away Friday, January 8, 2010 at his home. Fred was born July 12, 1940 in Oneida, New York. He is survived by his wife of 42 years; Brenda Snow March of Fort Walton Beach, & 2 sons; MSgt Charles March of Fort Walton Beach, & Frederick March, II of Orlando.



Fredrick David March

Fred retired from the United States Air Force as a Chief Master Sergeant where he served a bomb loader specialist, as well as serving two tours in Vietnam. MSgt Charles March remembers his Dad's pride as a Flight Mechanic/Engineer on AC-119Ks in the 18th SOS, as well as tours in AC-47s & AC-130s. After a proud & full career, Chief March purchased & ran two Laundromats, & his family remembers him as a loving husband, father, grandfather, & brother. A funeral service was held January 14, 2010 in the chapel of Emerald Coast Funeral Home, Fort Walton Beach. Chief March received military honors by the Hurlburt Honor Guard & local Chiefs paid their respects.

His family requests memorial donations to the charity of your choice, & expressions of sympathy may be viewed or submitted online at www.emeraldcoastfuneralhome.com <http://www.emeraldcoastfuneralhome.com>

The loss of another brother & reflections from his son

We sadly received the following from Rick Romandetta about the passing of his Dad & our brother Dominick, AC-119 Flight Engineer & Life member #254. Rick's words are far better than anything we can add.

With respect & prayers, AC-119 Gunship Association

Dominick Romandetta, died at home on 10/20/09, with his wife, Louise, & son Rick at his side. After being diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic cancer by doctors at Cedars-Sinai on 10/8, his family brought him home 10/9. He passed 11 days later without significant pain, in Hospice care. He was 78, & mom & he were married for 54 of those years. Dominick was laid to rest at Riverside National Cemetery, with the release of 9 doves (having raised doves for years), & full military honors. Rick told us that Dominick was an avid bowler & enjoyed being involved with his grandchildren in a junior bowling league. The family requests any donations go to help fund scholarships for involved youths through a bowling program set up for juniors that they support, at JST of America, 2993 Jane St,

Riverside, Ca. 92506;

Directors: Butch & Lenni Hesketh; Phone: 951-684-7941. Please send any donations in Dominick's memory.

Rick also sent this eulogy, & our permission to use it. He eloquently describes the man & father whose passing we mourn & whose life we celebrate:

"My father was an honest, hardworking man, who you could always depend on, & I'd like to share a few noteworthy details in honor & celebration of his 78+ years of life.



Dominick Romandetta

Born April 1st 1931 in N.Y., N.Y. he was 1 of 4 children raised by Catherine & Frank Romandetta, who is survived by his 2 sisters, Teresa Deleo & Angi Ferrar, & his brother Frank Romandetta. Meeting my mother, Louise, in 1954, they were married a year later in Boise, Idaho, & in the 54½ yrs that followed, their family grew from 2 children(my sister Rusty & I), to include: 4 grandchildren - Stacy, Lindsay, Kyle & Stephanie & 3 great-granddaughters - Allyssa, Lily & Adrian.

My father served in the United States Air Force for 24+ years, which he had joined in 1951, at the age of 20. He worked as a Flight Line Mechanic & Maintenance Supervisor on B-52's & KC-135's, with a significant portion of his career also spent as an Instructor & Flight Engineer on the AC-119 Gunship. It was in that capacity, during the Vietnam War, my dad faithfully answered his 'country's call to duty' on 3 different occasions... during which he completed more than 220 combat missions & was twice awarded the 'Distinguished Flying Cross' for acts of valor or exceptional achievement, as well as 19 'Air Medals' for meritorious achievements above & beyond that expected of professional airmen. Acts of heroism, worthy of commendation that most of those who knew him never knew of, until this day, because my dad was truly a man of humility.

If I'm able to accomplish even half of what my father did... it will have been a life well lived. We will miss him.

A New Life Brightens Our Fold

Add one more to our AC-119 extended family – "Uncle Bill" Reffner's Great-Grand-daughter!

Catherine (Reffner) & Anthony McFarland are (finally) the proud parents of Samantha – weighing in at 7 pounds 7 ounces, & 20 inches. Mom & Samantha are fine & both deserve a rousing ATTA-GIRL! In a time where we continue to lose our brothers we thought everyone would want to know & help celebrate the wonder of a new person born into our world! Congrats to Grandpa Bill, Grandma Tammy, & new Dad Anthony too!

Congratulations from your AC-119 Gunship extended family

Another Brother Lost

We sadly inform you that Jeffrey A. Winter, of West Bend, Wisconsin & formerly of Cedarburg, passed away on Christmas Day, December 25, 2009. He is survived by his wife Lynn, daughters Amy DiCristo & Tammy Ellison. Born April 1, 1949; Jeff was 60 years young when he departed on his final flight. His family appreciates memorials of your choice, & for those desiring to give to his church in his name, the address is: Pastor Rohrback, Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, W76 N607 Wauwatosa Rd, Cedarburg, WI 53012.



Jeffrey A. "Donkey" Winter

Jeffrey was one of our Stinger Gunners who often flew with "Mingo" Marsland & "Uncle Bill" Reffner, & proudly earned his Stinger nickname "Donkey". Catherine Reffner (McFarland), Uncle Bill's Granddaughter, tells us, "We can not let what he did in his life pass with him. He will be greatly missed by all of us. Please keep his family in your thoughts & prayers during this difficult time. Thank you to everyone for all that you have done over the years to keep us free." For anyone desiring to send messages to Jeff's family, please contact Catherine or Bill Reffner at cbscruffyatcomcast.net.

Another Gunship Brother Passes On

Ron Morrison recently notified us that *Major Newell Riley Lee, Jr.*, 62, of Auburn Washington passed away December 20, 2009. In Ron's words, "His friend & ours managed his last & very graceful lift-off & flight without any observable source of power on Dec 20th after nearly a six-year battle with leukemia in the Seattle V.A."



Major Newell Riley Lee, Jr.

Newell had told Ron about his experience as a 17th SOS Shadow pilot flying into Laos one night to support a Royal Lao Army outpost being overrun by a new unit from North Vietnam; how he & his crew were able to lay down a devastating field of fire with their A/C 119 in support of the Laotians. Ron contacted Larry Fletcher for an appropriate Memorial Service Poem, & Larry sent Ron "The Shadow Men" written by Sgt. John Murdock, a Shadow gunner after the loss of a Shadow gunship. Ron offered the poem to the family as handout at the memorial service, to describe the missions of Newell & what he was about.

Newell Riley was born in Puyallup WA, May 23, 1947 to Newell R. Lee, Sr. & Stella (Mikus) Lee. He was an alumnus of Enumclaw High School ('64) & Central Washington University ('68) where he obtained his Bachelor's degree in education. Newell was an officer & pilot for the United States Air Force serving two tours in the Vietnam War. During this time he flew AC-119s (earning the Distinguished Flying Cross) & C-130s. He completed his service to our country achieving the rank of Major. Upon leaving active duty in '77 he moved his family from Hampton VA back to the Enumclaw Plateau. He retired from the state of Washington DOT/Aviation Division ('09) where he & colleagues were charged with coordinating searches for pilots of downed aircrafts across the state. He was a Royal Arch Mason with the Crescent Lodge #109 for 41 years, a volunteer firefighter with K.C.F.D. #46, where he also served as Medical Officer, & Valley Regional Fire & Rescue Dist. #44 for 30 years, a member of the VFW #1949, Eagles #1387, the Gold Prospector's Association of America/Lost Dutchman Mining Association, & WA Prospector's Association. His was a life of service, family, & community. He was preceded in death by his parents, wife Sandra, & mother-in-law Amy Roché. He is survived by his wife Alice of Auburn, daughters Alicia Woods (& husband Michael) of Auburn & Danielle Lee (& husband Scott) of Bonney Lake, granddaughter Alyssa Lee, step-daughter Melinda Holder, fathers-in-law Charles Roché of Yakima & Bill Wesley of Auburn, & brother-in-law Chuck Roché of San Luis Obispo, CA as well as a multitude of cousins throughout WA, TN, & VA.

Donations can be made to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society & the VFW #1949. Newell's ashes will be interred with his wife Sandra's at Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, WA. A memorial service will be held at Crescent Lodge #109 in Enumclaw, at 11 am on Saturday, January 23, 2010. All are welcome. The family thanks Week's Funeral Home in Enumclaw for their services &

guidance. <http://obit.weeksfuneralhomes.com/obitdisplay.html?id=739601&listing=Current> Webmaster note: our AC-119 Gunship Association sent a contribution to the Leukemia Society in Newell Lee's name

THANK YOU VIETNAM VETS 1/7/2010

A Thank You to all Vietnam Vets from a Marine in Iraq

A guy gets time to think over here & I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes & boxes of toiletries & snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it all came down to one thing: Vietnam Veterans. I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us. However, we learned from our mistake. Somewhere during the late 1970's & on into the 80's, we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So ... starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up & support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends & family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treat our troops of today like the heroes they were, & are, acknowledge & celebrate their sacrifice, & rejoice at their homecoming ... instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq. Our country knows that it must support us & it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam & we are all better because of it.

Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have gone before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq. They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom. But when I get back home, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for THEIR sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a country learned from our mistake & now we treat our warriors as heroes, as we should have all along. I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines & I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

Semper Fidelis,

Major Brian P. Bresnahan

United States Marine Corps