

I have an e-mail dated July 10, 2001 that Fred Graves sent a group of guys on doing a "History Book":

Hi Everyone;

I'm back from the dead. I can't be any closer to the truth. But the very first thing I said to my wife when I seen her was I have to write a book. So here's the plan. I'm going to send out a letter to certain individuals. Requesting stories you remember from your tour.

What my plan of action will be is to put all the stories into the book. So what I need from each of you is some of your best remembered flights. Send me as much material as you can remember of sorties. I have probably 50 people I'm sending this request to. If you do want to be a part of this endeavor please let me know asap. This book will be done in good taste. I want this book to a true document of the 18th SOS, and a book that can be placed in a library.

Please let me know your feelings ASAP.

Fred Graves

Most of us said "yes" and we decided to talk about it at the Reunion in October. Fred made it to the Reunion but knew it was his last, and he asked a few of us to promise to do the book.

It took Fletch and Ralph and a whole slew of other volunteers to make it happen, but it's happening.

Ev Sprouds asked if we were including stories etc for the guys we lost in SEA. "Holy crap" was my response. It seems to us that we should include as many of these as we can flesh out. So, here's a starting point. PLEASE add any details or stories you can on any of them. You can send it to someone else if you think they'll have an input. BOTTOM LINE: IF WE DON'T DO THIS, THEY CAN'T, and you can help.

Just send me back whatever you remember and we'll compile drafts for Ralph and Fletch. JP MacIsaac has pictures we can use for most of these guys. Up to you now. BUT< IF IT'S NOT IN BY JANUARY 20th, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE IT WILL MAKE THE BOOK. So, please 1) complete YOUR input on yourself, then add anything you can to this and send it back. Don't worry about grammar or spelling – we'll do some editing assistance on that.

1. Jim Acquaviva, died April 8, 2001, 18th Co-Pilot (Doug, Mike Krauss, daughter)

Died in small aircraft crash, doing what I loved

Singer

2. TSgt Clyde D Alloway, KIA (bailout) June 7, 1970, 18th IO (Pete Chamberlain)

Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on October 18, 1937, Clyde died after bailing out over the China Sea off South Vietnam's coast. He was 32 years old.

Pete Chamberlain was on the mission where Clyde was lost and he told this story of their aircraft's runaway prop and decision to bailout to Clyde's son, Jeff: "It has been said that" Courage is when you are afraid but do it anyway". Your Dad exemplifies that to me. He knew what was going on and he knew what faced him. He wanted to get back home as much as any man and more than most. But he gathered himself together for every mission did what had to be done. My last glimpse of him was of him motioning me out the bailout door as I ran by him. I was told he waited for every other crewmember to get out until the pilot got back there and told him to go.

Taking that step out that doorway into a pitch black night was very hard for me and I thought I hesitated (my mind was going warp speed) - later I was told that I flew past everyone. I was a strong swimmer, had swum that morning in that body of water, knew where I was (fairly close to shore) because I was a navigator and had access to all the nav info at my position. Moreover, I was dumb and thought I was immortal like many immature flyboys. I was still not thinking all that rationally at this time. I was LUCKY. I don't know what your Dad's thoughts were but I don't believe he was a swimmer and it was the blackest night I can ever remember. It took a strong and courageous man to perform as your Dad did under those circumstances.

3. Major Moses "Mo" L Alves, KIA October 11, 1969, 17th Nav (Kevin, son),

Born on November 23, 1934 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, "Mo" was a 12 year Air Force careerist killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

Major Mo's career included Air Force Development Engineer and Minuteman Program Director for Re-Entry Systems. A Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Air Force Institute of Technology graduate, Mo also was a B-47

Navigator/bombardier

4. Major Meredith G "Andy" Anderson, KIA April 28, 1970, 17th ??? (daughter Lee Jordan)

Born on November 1, 1932 in Aledo, Illinois, Andy was an 18 year Air Force careerist killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

5. Larry Barbee, 18th Nav

Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor

Wrote a book about it all – LOTS of stories (Wayne has copy. Craig – use to flesh out something on the An Loc guys?)

6. Allen W "Yogi" Bare, 18th FE

Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor (pre-coordinate with Craig Corbett)

7. Jimmy R. Barkalow, 18th Co-pilot.

Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor **Do not contact (Craig Corbett)**

8. Jerry Brightman, died 1998, 18th FE (**Gus, Ron**)

9. SSgt Kenneth "Ken" R Brown, **KIA** May 2, 1972, 18th IO (**Ev Sprou, Jim Terry, Brother & sisters,**)

Born in Las Cruces, New Mexico on February 14, 1947, Ken was 25 when he died.

Stinger 41 An Loc

10. Craig Corbett, 18th IO

Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor

Retired CMSgt

11. Capt Terrence F "Terry" Courtney, **KIA** May 2, 1972, 18th Aircraft Commander (**Larry Barbee, Craig Corbett**)

Born in Skokie, Illinois on August 15, 1946.

Stinger 41 An Loc

Terry is the only aviator from the 71st, 17th, or 18th SOS to be awarded the Air Force Cross.

Terry, Rod Slagle, and GT Smith played a lot of poker in the NKP Hootch. As Wayne Laessig tells it, they provided multiple lessons on how to (not) play poker. They were good lessons and Wayne claims he is a better poker player today than he would have been without their regular scalping of his wallet.

12. SSgt Robert F Fage Jr, **KIA** April 28, 1970, 17th Gunner (**son**)

Born on March 17, 1936 in Los Angeles, California, Robert was killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

13. Mike Friel died October 1, 18th IO (**Steve Meleen, Doug**)

Mike's longtime fiancée-or "mate" as Mike liked to call her, also known as "Mike" Norma Rogers

Mike's sons, Michael Jr. and Sean Friel (Michael Sean Friel mfriel@dakotacom.net)

Awards and Decs guy – fought for us for years

14. Fred "Farkle" Graves died December 11, 2001, 18th FE (**Gus, Ron, Wayne, Karen**)

One of our Gunship Association's Founding Fathers

AK-47 story

Tell it like it is and kiss my ass if you don't like it

Heart recipient who visited high schools to talk about heart transplants. Almost always someone would ask him whose heart he had and he'd reply "All I know is it was from a young woman who died in an automobile crash." Invariably, someone would ask, "I've heard you can experience 'things' from your donor. Have you ever noticed anything?" Fred's unblinking reply was always, "Not really, but I do notice I get a little grumpy around the end of the month."

Artist - Chef

15. Ray Gravitte August 22, 2008 (**Larry Hunter, Bob LaRosa, & Bill Petrie**)

Ray and Rosie live in Sand Springs, just outside of Tulsa

Ray was the lead gunner the night Bill Petrie was injured and I helped put him on the stretcher to cart him away. Ray dumped my water bottle on Bill's head and said Sawadee Cop.

16. Capt Thomas H "Tommy" Hamman, **killed in DaNang rocket attack** June 15, 1972, 18th Aircraft Commander (**Wayne & Gus's AC, Donnie William's room mate, Jim Terry for Daughter Kirstin Giroux**)

Tommy was born in Hollywood, Florida on August 9, 1945 and he was 26 when he died. He was readying for a new life outside the Air Force. Vietnam was his last tour.

17. Capt John H Hathaway, **KIA** October 11, 1969, 17th

Born on September 2, 1941 in Deland, Florida, John was killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

18. James C. Hogue USAF (Ret.) died June 8, 2008. 18th Pilot

Jim was born Dec. 28, 1936 in Bethel Township, OH, and served in the U.S. Air Force from 1956-1976. After retiring from the Air Force, Jim worked for the Ohio State Water Department for nearly 20 years. Jim was a pilot, and loved to fly his small planes. At age 17 Jim joined the Marine Reserves for two years, then enlisted with the Air Force, where he troubleshooted electronic equipment on bombers, cargo planes and other aircraft. Jim spent five of his 20 years in the Air Force in Southeast Asia, and altogether put his feet down in 74 countries.

A Reporter from the Bellingham (WA) Herald interviewed Jim about his belated effort to receive a Purple Heart for injuries he suffered while serving in Vietnam with the 18th SOS. Jim's story as told to the reporter:

On June 23, 1971, I was enjoying an outdoor barbecue, drinking beers and telling lies during my last scheduled evening in Vietnam, when an explosion knocked me against a Quonset hut. I can remember my chest burning and was dazed. I felt my chest, studied my bloody hand, then passed out. I awoke four days later in a military hospital with a hole in my chest the size of a quarter, a punctured lung, and a piece of shrapnel from a grenade lodged near the base of my heart, where it remains to this day. I was fortunate. I survived the blast and restarted my career in the Air Force three months later. Hours before my eventful barbecue, I had packed my gear and military papers for my flight out the next morning. I'd been assigned to an Air Force base south of Miami. Instead, I found myself recuperating in a hospital near San Antonio. While there, my orders were changed. New assignment: Luke Air Force Base, west of Phoenix. My updated medical records eventually followed me to Luke, but no one there noticed that I hadn't received a Purple Heart for my injuries. When I retired from the Air Force as a Technical Sergeant in 1976, I returned to Ohio and built a second career working for a rural water system, until two strokes convinced me it was time to slow down. I sold the family farm in 1997 and moved with my wife, Centia, to Florida to enjoy the warm weather and to be near our daughter, Carmen, her husband, Carl Roberge, and their three children Ryan; Carly; and André.

A few years later, the Roberges moved to White Rock, B.C., and then to Bellingham. We followed, settling there in 2001. The next year, I underwent two open-heart surgeries and had other medical problems. In time, my doctors decided it would be helpful to have copies of my military medical records. I requested my records, sending letters to Texas, Indianapolis, Cleveland and Tampa, then paying a visit to the VA office in Seattle before I got my paperwork. I was reviewing the stack of papers in February 2006 when it dawned on me I had never received my Purple Heart. I sent a new letter to the Air Force. Ten months later, I received a phone call from an official at Randolph Air Force Base, in Texas, asking when I'd be able to receive my medal.

Such awards aren't delivered through the mail.

Once arrangements were made, me, my wife, and the Roberges drove to McChord Air Force Base near Tacoma on April 20, where two-dozen officials met us for a 30-minute ceremony that morning. I managed a short speech. I teared up too much. Afterward, we were treated to a private tour of a C-17, the Air Force's new cargo plane. The grandkids ate that up. When asked why I pursued my Purple Heart after more than three decades. I guess it was the recognition, I replied. Maybe just the challenge.

Nearly 36 years later, I was lucky to find himself surrounded by family members when the military remedied a bureaucratic oversight and awarded me a Purple Heart.

19. Dale Inman, 18th No data All attempt to contact have been negative.

Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor **Do not contact (Craig Corbett)**

20. MSgt Joseph C Jeszeck, **KIA** April 28, 1970, 17th **(Jim Terry, Dad Leon & brother; Bob Bokern)**

Born on April 4, 1923 in Warwasing, New York, Joe was a 14 year Air Force careerist killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

Enlisted in the Navy right after Pearl Harbor, left the service for a while, and eventually entered the Air Force where he was an FE on B-36s. After 4 years he got out and spent 14 years as a civilian. Then in 1967, he enlisted in the Air Force Reserves, flying C-130s, then in 1969 he enlisted in the Regular Air Force at age 46. His first assignment was AC-119s.

21. Lt Col Bernard R Knapic, **KIA** October 11, 1969, 71st then 17th Aircraft Commander **(son)**

Born on June 2, 1930 in Youngstown, Ohio, Bernie was a 14 year Air Force careerist killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

Bernie went to Northwestern University on a basketball scholarship, then played halfback at Ohio State, and graduated from the Air Force Academy.

22. 1Lt Charles M Knowles, **KIA** April 28, 1970, 17th Aircraft Commander **(Jim Terry, wife Elizabeth; Bob Bokern)**

Born on July 17, 1944 in Denison, Texas, Charles was killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

23. 1Lt Thomas L Lubbers, **KIA** April 28, 1970, 17th Co-Pilot **(Jim Terry, sister Pam Seiferd)**

Born on September 20, 1945 in Ferguson, Missouri, Tom was killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

24. Oliver "Ollie" J. Merrill died June 6, 2001, 18th IO **(Wayne contact Carol, widow)**

Mrs. Oliver J. Merrill

345 Begonia Blvd

Fairfield CA 94533

25. SSgt Abraham L Moore, **KIA** October 11, 1969, 17th **(son)**

Born on February 12, 1937 in Gaines, Pennsylvania, Abe was 14 year Air Force careerist. He died in aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam. He was 32 years old.

26. Colonel James E. "Jim" Pyle died January 18, 2008, 71st SOS AC-119 Gunship Squadron Commander **(Jim Alvis, Wife Ruth; daughter Michele)**

Jim was a very common man who was very proud to have led the 71st. He was VERY helpful providing many documents and information about the 71st that Jim Alvis used to form the website. Like quite a few 71st flight crew members, he flew in WW II, and was a veteran of the Cuban Missile crisis and Vietnam. James continued in the reserves for 30 years after his discharge. Jim was also an employee of Inland Container Corp. for 44 years.

Jim's only reunion was the one at Dayton, OH in 2004.

Jim's daughter Michele told us this story: A favorite patient of the nurses, he was very obliging by leaving them with a story they will tell for years. He is the only patient ever to ring his call bell and when the nurses arrived tell them he was going. Dad then took a couple of breaths and did just that, left this world.

27. William E Reffner, died 2002, 18th Gunner (Bill & Catherine Reffner, Mingo Marsland, Jeff Baker)
"Uncle Bill" to many junior Airmen

28. Major Jerome J Rice, KIA October 11, 1969, 17th

Jerry was born on November 22, 1934 in Calumet, Illinois. A 14 year Air Force careerist, he died in aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam. He was 34 years old.

29. SSgt John Rucker, killed in DaNang rocket attack January 27, 1973, 18th Maintenance (Jim Terry, parents John & Mae Rucker, sisters Marsha Bradford & Margie Manning, Cousin Orvis "Bo" Holland olholland@aol.com - Virtual Wall)
He was born on March 17, 1951 in Kilgore, Texas and dies when he was 21 years old. He was the last American enlisted man to die before the Cease Fire – killed just hours before the fighting stopped.

30. Capt David R. "Rod" Slagle, KIA May 2, 1972, 18th Nav (Larry Barbee, Craig Corbett, wife Barbara Barker)
Born in Rogersville, Missouri on October 26, 1945.
Stinger 41 An Loc

Rod, Terry Courtney, and GT Smith played a lot of poker in the NKP Hootch. As Wayne Laessig tells it, they provided multiple lessons on how to (not) play poker. They were good lessons and Wayne claims he is a better poker player today than he would have been without their regular scalping of his wallet.

31. Francis L "Ski" Sledzinski, 18th
Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor (pre-coordinate with Craig Corbett)

32. James G. "Nit Noi" Smith. July 6, 2002 18th Gunner (Mike Krauss, Ron Hinton, Gus)
Mike Friel, Fred Graves, Mike Krauss, Ron Hinton, Gus, & Wayne tried contacting him at our 2nd reunion since we'd heard I was ill and even got him on the phone. When we reached him on my cell phone, I was actually in a boat, out in the gulf, fishing!
Wayne: Nit Noi was about 5 ft 1 and built like a fire plug. I'll always be chiseled in my memory two ways – watching him with my legs spread wide loading 20mm ammo with the "auto-loader" thing that looked like a machine gun, just a-banging the shells into the drum (I was impressed) and second when I was at my bar in downtown NKP playing with my Country – Western band. I was a classic Gunner and Stinger – worked and played hard.

33. Byron L "Tash" Taschioglou, 18th Nav, died July 6th 2002
Stinger 41 An Loc Crew survivor
Tasch's widow and daughter live in Vacaville (pre-coordinate with Craig Corbett; Wayne make contact?)

34. Sgt Michael J Vangelisti, KIA 4-28-1970, 17th (Jim Terry, Cousin James; Bob Bokern)
Born on June 26, 1947 in Marsilles, Illinois, Michael was killed in an aircraft crash near Gia Dinh, South Vietnam.

35. Rick Ward, SMSgt, died in C-130 crash, 18th IO (Wayne, Gus, Ron, Doug, Daughter Theresa Ward-Cockhill; wife Pun)

36. SMSgt. Milo G Yowell 2 Feb 2006, 18th Gunner (Larry Hunter, brother, Perry was in Nam together for a few days. I was flying Cobra gunships. Milo's brother, Perry T. Yowell CW4 Retired. shark4@pinetel.com)
Larry Hunter: To All, I just received a call from Ray Gravitte, telling me that Milo has taken my last flight. This saddens me greatly I was my NCOIC the year I was there and I has always been my friend, if anyone hears more on this please make sure I get the information.