

Grandpa's War Stories
1967 Diary



Jim Wright AKA Grandpa at Korat June 1967



Jim AKA Grandpa at Korat 1967

1967 Diary

My friend Buzz and I finished the F-105 check out at Nellis AFB in early December 1966. I sold the used tan Ford station wagon that I bought just to drive out for 105 school, and flew home with Nobel and the children on American Airlines to the Columbus Mississippi airport. PePa and MeMa (the kid's names for my Dad and Mom) met us at the airport, and drove us home to Vernon, Alabama. Nobel and the children later got settled in her sister Theresa's duplex apartment in Vernon while I went to Thailand in South East Asia to fight the Vietnam War. I took leave and had a wonderful Christmas and New Year at home. Nobel gave me a 1967 Diary book with instructions for me to keep notes for when I came home. Well I did, and that is the basis for what I am writing. I will go through my Diary which has a page for each day of 1967 and write my recollections. It is now 2005 so if I make a mistake please forgive me. This will be from notes I wrote in my Diary while there, notes I made on a calendar I kept in my room, what I remember, my Form 5 flight record, and my Air Force Personnel record. I have also included a copy of five of the actual target maps which I carried on the missions. The maps were too big for my scanner to include the whole map, so I copied the part that shows the target. The line drawn with a black felt tip pen is our route. The target has a triangle around it from a red pen. I have included some pictures, copies of award citations, patches I wore on my flight suit, an award Nobel received, a map of Vietnam, and other things from 1967. Note most pictures were black and white back then. Nobel said I should write this for my Grandchildren or it would be forgotten. Without her encouragement I never would have written this.

On January 17th 1967, I departed on Southern Airways flight #185 at 0800 to Memphis from Columbus airport. Nobel was brave and tried not to cry but it was a very sad day! From Memphis I flew to Los Angeles LAX, where Buzz Blackwood and Larry Nelson met me at the terminal. I went to Buzz & Pats then to George Messics (Pat's parents) in LA where I spent the night.

Buzz, his wife Pat, and son Craig lived in an apartment across the court from ours in Las Vegas during our 105 check out. Buzz and I were Instructor Pilots at Moody AFB Georgia before we went to 105 school and we were close friends. He was my fishing buddy and spent many good times with me on Grassy Pond near Valdosta Georgia.

On Wednesday the 18th Buzz & I departed LAX for Sacramento on Western Airlines, where we met his friend who was a professor at the University of California. We ate dinner on campus with his friend and then went to Travis AFB to board a flight for the Philippine Islands where we would attend Jungle Survival School. We had to wait till Saturday (slept in the terminal since we were on stand by for a flight out) and flew out at 0530 on the 21st, stopped at Yakota AFB, Japan then on to Clark AFB, Philippines.

Jungle Survival School

We arrived at Clark Air Base at 1330 Sunday the 22nd and were put up in the Marisol Manor off base in town with a shuttle to the base each day. On Monday we began our Jungle Survival School classes. On Tuesday we went into the jungle to survive. The Negreto natives who were little Pigmy (used to be Head Hunters) people living in the jungle came to our camp in the Jungle and were friendly. They all carried bows and arrows and could shoot real good. Even the children with them could hit a pack of cigarettes from 25 feet away! We were given chits and put out in the jungle to see if we could avoid being found by the Negretos before Friday morning. If they found us we had to give them a chit which they turned in for a bag of rice! I hid so far back in some thick tall reeds that the only trouble I had was every time I dozed off the big ole rats got on me! Friday morning the 27th we were picked up by jungle penetrator into a helicopter and flown back to Clark about 0900. The Jungle penetrator is a two or three foot tall metal thing on the end of a cable let down from the helicopter. It has fold out arms for you to sit on while they hoist you up to the chopper hovering overhead. The next day was off to rest and I called Nobel on the phone. Boy it was good to hear her sweet voice! Then I bought Nobel a big wooden fork and spoon at the Philippine market on Clark AFB. Sunday we departed Clark, stopped in Saigon, then landed at Bangkok International and spent the night in the Royal Hotel.



TAKHLI

We departed Bangkok at 0730 Monday, January 30 on the Clong flight (a C-130).

We went around the horn (so to speak) to Korat, Ubon, Nakomphanon, Udorn, then arrived at Takhli at 1430, where I signed in at the 357th TFS (Tactical Fighter Squadron). Buzz was put in the 333rd TFS. Tuesday we in processed at the personnel building (one building housed personnel & most all staff functions). I forecast for AFSC Flight Test and AFLC Flight Test on my Request assignments form (dream sheet).

Buzz, Al Esser and I were living in an open bay hooch that had about 20 bunks and screen wire half way down the top of the sides. There was no water or air conditioning, just a fan; the shower and latrines were about 20 yards down a board walk which ran all the way to the Stag Bar (back) door to the Officers Club. There were several of these big open bay barracks in a row. They were probably the primary quarters back in 1965 but since then new better quarters were built so they were only used now as temporary quarters.

We ate all our meals at the Club. The juke box in the Stag Bar usually was playing Nancy Sinatra singing "Boots", except when a Hanoi mission was on; then it was playing Nancy singing "Down Town"! The next few days were filled with briefings, teaching us the ROE (Rules of Engagement), traffic pattern, divert airfields, and all local area rules. Then on Monday 6 February I flew an orientation flight. I flew #4, Buzz flew #2, Colonel MacDonald (who was later the 333rd Squadron Commander) #3, and Captain Brez (may be misspelled) was flight lead. On Tuesday February the 7th, 1967 I flew my first Combat mission! We dropped 6 x 750# bombs each from a Combat Proof RPI, then did a Recon of the Dong Hoi area and shot up two trucks on a road with the 20 MM gattling gun. Buzz moved out of the open bay Hooch into the 333rd Squadron quarters. Later, on February 10th I moved to the 357th quarters called the Ponderosa (building # 1022 or 1222, I can't read my writing). I was very pleased because it was two to a room, air-conditioned and the fellows were real nice! I think I took Jim Shively's bunk as he had just been shot down. I remember Sam Dees was in that Hooch. I was scheduled to fly Monday, but got cancelled, and then Tuesday I got word I was going TDY (Temporary Duty)! It seems we had over loaded the available pilots and would fly at Kadena waiting till we were needed to come back. I out processed Thursday to go TDY to Kadena AFB on the Island of Okinawa on Friday, February 17th.

KADENA AFB

That was the last time I saw Buzz. I found a 333rd TFS picture in the book "And Kill MIGS" page 80, taken in March '67 before he was shot down and killed. That is probably the last picture of Buzz. While TDY, I heard that Buzz was shot down and missing in action (MIA). After the war, 1980s or so, I read in my RRVA MIG Sweep (Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association Magazine) where his remains were shipped back to the USA from North Vietnam.

Kadena had an F-105 Wing so we flew just enough range missions and other requirements to stay combat ready in the Thud (nick name for the F-105 Thunderchief). Al Esser and I roomed next door in the VOQ (visiting officer's quarters) and Al was big into tape recording music. Well, I got started taping, bought an Akai X-355 reel to reel super duper recorder (a copy of the Roberts, best there was at the time) and bought stuff dirt cheap at the Kadena Base Exchange (BX). I joked that I was going broke saving money! The Base Library had a large selection of music for copying so we spent hours recording. On March 13th the Wing got a TWX (message) that I was assigned to 7th AF HQ in Saigon with a 1435 AFSC. The TWX also went to Takhli and they had the assignment cancelled on the 14th because they wanted me back!

Ryan's Raiders

General Ryan decided to bomb North Vietnam at night to put pressure on them round the clock! He would use the two-seat F-105F with a tweaked up terrain avoidance radar for low altitude radar bombing targets at night. There were no F-105 radar bombardiers so guess who was available to sit in the back seat to run the radar mission? Me and the other guys TDY at Kadena and some guys that were just on their way over! On March 27th at 0100 hours we (Me, Al Esser, Cal Markwood, and others I can't remember) departed Kadena on Southern Airways for Yakota AFB Japan for training to conduct an operation called "Commando Nail". Remember that big recorder I bought? Yes, I took it on the airline plane. I think Al even recorded some music at Yakota the day after we arrived. We formed our Group at Yakota where General Ryan himself came and told us about the mission and how important it was. I was teamed with Lt. Don Henry

who was an Instructor Pilot (IP) in the F105 stationed at Kadena and had previously flown 63 combat missions TDY at Korat from Kadena. We flew low level training missions over Japan, around Mt. Fuji and other mountains, and needless to say I did not like flying in the back seat! We named our outfit "Ryan's Raiders", had patches made and got ready to fly single ship low altitude bombing missions into the heart of North Vietnam in the middle of the night! On April 30, Don Henry & I departed Yakota for Kadena in our modified F model 105 # 8353. The terrain avoidance radar was tweaked up and supposedly usable, but Don and I did not trust it (one reason we are alive today). I planned all our combat flight plan routes 1000 feet above ground level, and then when we were fired at by a surface to air missile (SAM) we descended as low as we could stand it! Don & I departed Kadena on Wednesday, May the 3rd in 8353 (The book Roll Call Thud list F-105-F #63-8353 shot down over RP-1 on 15 July 68) on a high flight (air refueling) all the way to Korat Thailand. We arrived at Korat and signed in at the 388th TFW (Tactical Fighter Wing). My form 5 flight record logs this flight on 4 May 1967. I have noticed that the date in my diary and the date on some occasions in other records is one day different. The date line you cross in the Pacific changes the day to the next day going West, I think, so maybe that is why it is off a day. I can't remember what squadron we were in at first, seems we were attached to a squadron (469th?) because we were the first; never been done before, outfit so they did not know where to put us! My permanent record list me assigned to the 13th TFS. Anyhow, my TDY from Takhli ended when I was assigned to the 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand.

Don Henry did some research in July 2005 and this is the list of names he came up with for the Original Cadre of Ryan's Raiders. He was not positive Oliver was crewed with Koelm. Also, he does not mention Al Esser or Dave Wilson, who I remember being with me at Korat. He list arriving at Korat 24 April 1967 (all front seaters were IPs from Yakota): Capt. Donald Heiliger / Maj. Ben Pollard, Capt. Nicholas J. Donnelson / Capt. David W. Forgan, Capt. Peter P. Pitman / Capt. Robert A. Stewart, Capt. Dave Burney / Capt. Aquilla F. Britt. He lists arriving at Korat on 4 May 1967 (all front seaters were IPs from Kadena): Capt. John F. Rehm / Capt. Calvin H. Markwood, Lt. Donald D. Henry / Capt. James H. Wright, Capt. George A. Bogart / Maj. Donald S. Aunapu, Lt. William W. Koelm / Maj. Kenneth D. Oliver.

Don & I got settled in a hooch (building we lived in) briefed up, and then flew our first combat mission together on the 8th of May (my Form 5 logs this mission on the 7th of May). The target

was Ron Ferry, a river crossing choke point on the main road along the East coast of North Vietnam. I planned our route through a saddle back (a low valley) through a high mountain ridge. When we got to the location there was no saddle back! We had to climb like crazy to miss the top of those mountains. The only map we had was an old French map that proved unreliable! We just happened to be in a break in the clouds with a little moonlight so we saw the mountain. Thank the Lord! The weather was terrible but we pressed on and hit the target that night! After the mission we warned everyone that would listen about the maps. Our next target was Quang Kee Ferry on Wednesday night May 10th. Tuesday, May the 11th I was duty officer / SOF (Supervisor of Flying) for raider missions and got to go to bed at 0330. Don & I took off at 0200 Friday May 12th and hit Huu Hung Ferry (South of Dong Hoi). Then on the same date, at 1935 we took off again and nailed Quang Kee Ferry with direct hits (6 x 750# bombs)! We lost (KIA) Pitman and Stewart the same night on Ron Ferry. I've always wondered if they hit that mountain? Since we were waking the Gomers up at night we had a Raider Bird named "Bed Check Charlie" for Don and me. BED CHECK CHARLIE was painted on the left bottom fuselage just forward of the gear well. See a picture of it in the book "F-105 Thunderchief In Action", page 20. The book "Roll Call Thud" page 135 lists: Bed Check Charlie tail number 63-8337, shot down 15 April 68, over RP-1, Colonel David Winn ejected and was rescued. My Diary is blank from May the 13th to the 7th of August after I was flying day single seat F105D models again. But I remember Heiliger and Pollard were shot down near the Northeast railroad North of Hanoi. Then another crew was lost near Yen Bai and times got real hard as our little outfit lost several people!

I was SOF the night after Heiliger and Pollard were shot down and watched as Rehm and Markwood lined up on the run way for takeoff to a Pak 6 target on the railroad northeast of Hanoi. Headquarters called and cancelled their mission just before they rolled! After that date, we hit targets in RP-5 or lower only, because RP-6 was too deadly for a single ship raid! I was Summary Court Officer for Ben Pollard gathering and shipping all his belongings to his wife, etc. My form 5 flight record logs 37 Ryan's Raider combat missions from 8 May to 18 July 1967.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR MEDAL
TO

JAMES H. WRIGHT JR.

Captain James H. Wright Jr. distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in sustained aerial flight as a combat crew member in Southeast Asia from 7 February 1967 to 19 May 1967. During this period, outstanding airmanship and courage were exhibited in the successful accomplishment of important missions under extremely hazardous conditions including the continuous possibility of hostile ground fire. His highly professional efforts contributed materially to the mission of the United States Air Force in Southeast Asia. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishments of Captain Wright

reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE AIR MEDAL
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

TO

JAMES H. WRIGHT

Captain James H. Wright distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight over North Vietnam on 25 June 1967. On that date, Captain Wright was the rear seat pilot of a specially equipped F-105F Thunderchief assigned to strike a vital railroad yard. Flying in total darkness at low altitude over the most mountainous terrain in North Vietnam the crew encountered extreme weather conditions. Captain Wright used expert judgement in guiding the aircraft through the perilous mountain passes. Flying at low level Captain Wright expertly directed the aircraft to a successful release on the target. The professional skill airmanship displayed by Captain Wright reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.





Capt. J. H. Wright, 13th TFS, is congratulated by General Ingelido after being awarded the Air Medal on July 27, 1967.

Though my Diary is blank I do remember some of those missions. On a mission to Route Pack 5 to hit an ammo dump out in the flat land, all our lights in the cockpit shorted out! AAA had been light and we were too low for the SAM radars, but just after bomb release we lost all our instrument lights so Don lit the afterburner and started a climbing left turn. All the gunners shot at our big afterburner flame till we got our flash lights on the instruments, started breathing again, and came out of afterburner. On another mission our target was across the Red River East of Yen Bai. We had hit the target, egressed through our favorite pass through the mountains West of the Red river, then turned South toward channel 97 (a tacan navigation station high atop a mountain in far north Laos) when we saw a truck with its lights on! Don circled; the truck heard us, turned off its lights and stopped. Don rolled in to strafe it but fired a bit too soon and hit short. Strafing at night is tough; in fact I was so proud of Don for even trying it! The truck driver made a fatal mistake when he stopped, because he was beside a pond of water which reflected the moonlight so we could see where to line up the 20 MM cannon. The second pass we nailed him and left the truck in flames. As we climbed out heading south again you could see the truck burning from miles away! When we looked up in front of us a few miles ahead we saw an afterburner light and turn east for Hanoi! The Commie ground radar had vectored a Mig 21 in behind us on egress but when we rolled in on the truck we got so low they lost us and the Mig flew over us and got out front. When we climbed south they reacquired us and realized we would soon be in position to shoot the Mig so they had him do a panic go home move! God was sure Taking care of us that night! On egress from another mission north east of Yen Bai, we had engine vibration and started loosing power as we approached the KC-135 tanker south of channel 97. It got worse and worse so we turned west toward Udorn Air Base (UDN Ch 86) to make an emergency landing there. The plane was shaking real bad and we had to use full afterburner and delay putting the landing gear down till short final just to make it to the run way! After we stopped on the runway a fire truck stopped beside our cockpit so we jumped on to the top of the fire truck cab and they drove us clear of the plane. God saved us again! Don finished his 100 combat missions and rotated home.

A Single Seat Jock Again

I was put back in the F105D single seat day strike part of the 13th Fighter Squadron. Out of the frying pan into the fire, I was just in time for the JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) targets in and around Hanoi, Route Package VI A (RP-6A, or Pak 6). North Vietnam was divided into 6 areas called Route Packages, numbered from 1 at the DMZ to 4 going north. Then the wide north portion of Vietnam was split into 5 to the west and 6 to the east. 6A was the western part of 6 including Hanoi; 6B was the Navy's domain east to the coast including Haiphong. Pak 6 was the most heavily defended area in the history of air warfare. I marked my little calendar that I kept in my Hooch noting I flew 26 missions to Pak 6! Around the 20th of October, me, Cal Markwood, and several others were transferred to the 44th TFS at Korat. The 13th TFS moved to Udorn (to fly F-4s) so we all were transferred to other Thud squadrons at Korat. I remember Dave Wilson, Maj. Aunapu, Cal Markwood, and others were with me in the 44th.

I started making entries in my diary again on Monday 7 August, when I got a double counter! Two F-4s were shot down and my flight flew rescap (rescue combat air patrol) for their rescue. After we flew our scheduled mission we air refueled and went back into North Vietnam to fly cover for the rescue mission. We cycled out to refuel twice, two men were rescued and two were captured. One front seater was captured near Dong Hoi. His last words over his survival radio were "well they are about to capture me so I'm breaking the antenna" (his radio antenna so they could not use it to lure us into a trap).

By the way, Maj. Pollard came home with the POWs from Hanoi and now (July 2005) lives in Poway California about an hour away from Don Henry. His health is not good with complications from his ejection and treatment in Hanoi, shoulder replacement and a lot of other things. In my summer 2005 MIG Sweep magazine (Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association Magazine) I noticed Donald C. (Windy) Windrath Col (Ret) died 2-17-05, Richard W. Simons L/C (Ret), died 5-11-05. Also Dalton (Lefty) Leftwich L/C Ret and Donald (Ana) Aunapu L/C Ret were welcomed back into the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association.

On the 8th of August I was 388th wing Supervisor of Flying (SOF). On the 9th I flew an easy mission as #4 into RP5 to radar bomb (Combat Sky Spot) a rail yard up the rail road north along the Red River from Yen Bai. The weather was overcast below us which forced us to radar bomb only. On 10 August I took off at 0525 with the Gaggle (16 F-105Ds and a 4 ship Weasel flight).

going the water route to the railroad yard Northeast of Hanoi. After I crossed South Vietnam and turned North over the Gulf of Tonkin, my ATM (air turbine motor) and AC generator blew out. I had to turn back and make an emergency landing at Da Nang South Vietnam (DAG- channel 37). I spent some time in their O-Club then rode the Scat Back Alpha (a Lear Jet) back to Korat late that evening. That mission symbol was 01A, a non-counter! On the 11th the afternoon Gaggle target was the big Hanoi Bridge. Jim Basset got hit, but made it home and they got the bridge. I had the Wing SOF duty again all day. Saturday the 12th, I flew a three hour RP 6A counter to the Hanoi railroad bridge. When we got to Hanoi the target was covered with clouds so we turned around over Hanoi and left the area. I saw four SAMs close to our flight, one went between lead and three (Earl Krug and Don Aunapu). We should have aborted the mission a lot sooner! On the 13th Tom Norris was shot down, and I was not scheduled to fly. On the 14th I flew another white knuckle mission into RP 6A. We bombed the Lang Son railroad yard way up the Northeast railroad near the China border. I flew sweet 16 in the Gaggle (#4 in the last strike flight) which meant the gunners were all awake and pointing at me when I rolled into the dive bomb run. There was a big thunderstorm near the target so we had to do a near split S for roll in (God positioned that thunderstorm just right to save me from getting hit!). Anna (Major Donald Aunapu) was my flight lead, Conrad Trautman #2, Windy Windrath #3, and I was #4. The 85 MM guns got close to me all the way in and out to the Northeast coast. We went the water route which was from Korat East across South Vietnam then North in the Gulf of Tonkin to our refuel tankers, then North to the Northeast coast of North Vietnam (a jut of land on the coast line we called the Wart) then West to the target and back East to get out of Dodge, South to our refuel tankers (KC-135s) over the Gulf of Tonkin, then West across RP-1 North Vietnam to Korat. It took 3 and one half hours and was my 43rd counter. I was awarded a DFC (dated 13 August) for this mission. On Tuesday I flew my first Iron Hand (Wild Weasel) mission. The special F-105F two seat planes with electronic gear in the back for the Electronic Warfare Officer, EWO, were in short supply so we flew single seat F-105Ds (which I flew) as #2 and 4 (wingmen) while lead and #3 were F model Weasel birds, in the 4 ship Weasel flight. The Ds carried Shrike (AGM-45) missiles on the outboard pylons and would line up with the F model lead then fire a Shrike missile on his signal. We also carried six 500 lb. bombs or cluster bomb units (CBUs, a bunch of little bombs about the size of your fist carried in a canister that opened at a certain altitude scattering the bombs like a shotgun) on the centerline multiple ejector rack (MER), and 450

gallon fuel tanks on the inboard pylons. They only let the better flyers fly these F-105D Iron Hand missions since they were real hairy when we started swapping missiles with the SAM sites and required flying an exceptional aggressive wing position! On this mission we went into Pak-6, found the weather bad (the Weasels were always first in and called the weather aborts) so we called the Gaggle and aborted them then went to RP1 and bombed a supply area South East of a lake near Dong Hoi.

We had RAW (radar warning) gear in the D models. A CRT scope with a set of lights by it (APR-25, I think) was mounted on the edge of the glare shield at the top right of the instrument panel. When turned on the little 3" scope displayed enemy radar as a strobe emanating from the center out toward the outer edge of the round scope. The scope had three rings spaced out around the center to measure signal strength of the radar being displayed. If the strobe only went out to the first ring it was weak, but if it went to the third ring, look out! If you heard "I got a three ringer at six" you better check six quick! You could tell the type radar by the strobe or the lights. If the strobe was solid it was a Fan Song radar (SAM radar). India band was dashes (MIGs) and Golf band was little golf balls (maybe Fire Can radar, AAA radar). Among the lights was a red one that lit when a SAM radar was guiding a Missile. Each radar gave a particular tone in our ear phones. I remember the SAM was like a rattle snake sound. The RAW gear was useless in Pak 6 because there were so many radars it just made a big blob on the scope and racket in the ear phones, so we turned it off. The Wild Weasel bird had several scopes and refining gear in the back seat so the EWO could refine and pin point a signal even in Pak 6.

Wednesday 16 August I was ground spare for a two ship milk run to RP-1 and of course was not needed. Thursday I flew as #2 with Donald Aunapu as lead, Windy Windrath and Earl Krug as 3 & 4. I flew aircraft #221, and we dropped on bunkers Southeast of Bat Lake, logging two hours and twenty minutes in flight. Friday I flew #4 on another two hour RP-1 mission to hit a storage area. Shakey flew my #3 so it was rough trying to fly his wing. Saturday 19 August, I flew a one hour fifty minute Pak-1 mission. I hit a bridge and knocked it in the water on this one! Sunday I flew a three hour five minute flight into RP-6A. I got a bulls eye with 5 cluster bomb units on a 57 MM flack site! Monday I pulled Runway Supervisory Unit (RSU, or mobile) duty all day. Tuesday was back to RP-6A. Also I was informed on my return that I was to write the 13th Squadron history for strike for the month of August.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

JAMES H. WRIGHT, JR.

Captain James H. Wright Jr, distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight over North Vietnam on 13 August 1967. On that date, while flying an F-105 Thunderchief Captain Wright was directed to attack a vital unfriendly railroad yard in the Republic of North Vietnam. Although he was burdened by severe weather, he courageously pressed the attack through clouds and accurate hostile antiaircraft fire, subsequently destroying the target. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Wright reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.





Target Bridge on NE Railroad - 13 Oct. MSN - Water Route.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
(SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

TO

JAMES H. WRIGHT JR.

Captain James H. Wright Jr. distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Thunderchief Pilot over North Vietnam on 23 August 1967. Braving MIG interceptor attacks, surface-to-air missiles, and intense antiaircraft fire, Captain Wright successfully struck this vital railroad yard. Then, on departure from the target area he was instrumental in forcing a hostile aircraft to break off its attack on a friendly aircraft. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Wright reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR MEDAL
(SECOND THROUGH SIXTH OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
TO
JAMES H. WRIGHT, JR.

Captain James H. Wright, Jr. distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot with the 44th Tactical Fighter Squadron from 20 May 1967 to 9 September 1967. During this period, Captain Wright exhibited outstanding airmanship and courage in the successful accomplishment of important missions under extremely hazardous conditions. The highly professional efforts of Captain Wright contributed materially to the mission of the United States Air Force in Southeast Asia.

Wednesday 23 August, I flew #4 in the last Thud flight (#16 again, but there were two F-4 strike flights behind me this time) to the Hanoi Northeast Railroad Yard (we clobbered it!). Flack was impossible to unbelievable. MIGs jumped us on the way in and our F-4 MIG cap took off after them. It was strange how I knew those MIGs were at our 5 o'clock before I looked and saw them. It was like a sixth sense from God! They were supersonic trying to turn in behind us but could not make the turn. I saw them first and called them out to the rest of the force as no threat. They over shot badly to the North as we headed 128 degrees down Thud Ridge, 5 minutes to target. Four F-4s were shot down that day, two by flack and two by MIGs. On egress I spotted another MIG-21 on an F-4s tail about to shoot him. I called the MIG to our flight and we turned toward him, he saw us and dove Southeast away from us and the F-4. In the Officers Club that night the F-4 driver called from Ubon to thank us for saving him! I was in the Club when some one yelled my flight had a call from Ubon! I was awarded the DFC for this mission. Lt. Dave Waldrop shot down two MIGs on this mission. We viewed Dave Waldrop's gun camera film at the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) that evening after the photo lab got it developed. When he first debriefed he thought he had shot only one MIG. What a surprise, his film showed he shot a 450 gallon drop tank off a 105's wing and TWO MIGs! It was hectic around Hanoi! You can read a detailed account of this mission by Lt. Waldrop in the book..."And Kill MIGS", page 85. Dave was in a four ship 44th Squadron flight in front of my flight. I was in the 13th Squadron flight and the two F-4 strike flights were next behind us. 24 August I pulled RSU duty and 25 August I was ground spare for the RP-6A Gaggle and was not launched. 26 August I led a flight into RP-1. The weather was so bad we were forced to do a Combat Sky Spot (ground directed radar bomb). After an instrument approach to Korat, we could not see the runway, so we diverted to Takhli. I saw Colonels Klaubasa and MacDonald (they were in my 105 class at Nellis) both had over 90 missions and would finish and go home soon. Klau explained that no one really saw Buzz get hit. Klau was in the 333rd Squadron with Buzz but was not in the flight when Buzz was shot down. Buzz was there when they rolled in on the RP-6A target and was gone after that. We flew back to Korat at 2300 hours. I got up at 0200 the next morning (Sunday 27 August) and briefed to go hit Thi Nughen in RP-6A. The weather forced us to hit our second alternate target in RP-1. I worked with a FAC (forward air controller, I don't remember but probably he was in an F-100, his call sign was Misty 11) and I destroyed a fire can radar site. Monday I got up and briefed for the early RP-6A Gaggle which was weather

cancelled. Our normal routine for the early Gaggle was get up around 0200 (O-dark thirty), shave, shower put on a clean flight suit get in the squadron truck, jeep, or van, and go to the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) to check out the mission and do the flight planning for two or three targets (primary, first and second alternate). The Intelligence Section gave each flight a package with information on the target, route and refueling. Each 4 ship flight was made up of people from the same squadron, except when a squadron was short of bodies; then you might volunteer to fill in for them if you were not scheduled for that mission. After planning the mission we got in our Squadron truck and went to the O-Club for breakfast. Each squadron had its own large table in the dining room so we ate together as a squadron or flight. The mission Commander sat by a red, secure telephone. About half way or more through breakfast the red phone would ring and the TOC would give the word to the Mission Commander. The words were like Weather Cancel, Go Primary, Go 1st Alternate, Go Second Alternate, etc. My favorite breakfast was cream beef on toast (SOS, in Fighter Pilot slang). After breakfast we loaded in our trucks and went back to the TOC for the Mass Briefing in the auditorium where Roscoe our mascot dog sat in a front row seat by the Wing Commander, Mission Commander and other VIPs. If Roscoe slept it was going to be a milk run, but if he sat up with his ears twitching, look out, it was going to be rough! For more details on Roscoe see Grandpa's story, same name. The weather man, Intelligence Officer, Mission Commander and others briefed us on the route up and back and the target. Next we split into flights and went to our Squadron briefing rooms to brief the necessary things for our individual flight of four aircraft. We went from there to our Squadron PE (personal equipment, parachute, G-Suit, helmet, survival vest with many pockets of stuff, water wings, .38 pistol, survival radio, knives, etc). From there we loaded in the Squadron truck and rode to our planes. In our flight brief we gave a start engine time so all 4 planes fired the black powder start cartridge at the same time. The ramp almost went IFR from the smoke! We checked in on the radio and taxied to the runway arming area in order. The weapons technicians armed the gun, bombs, jettison cartridges, pulled the landing gear safety pins and gave the bird a last (thus the name "Last Chance" for the arming area) look over. The Chaplains waved, and prayed for us, Catholics even sprinkled Holy Water on the airplane. We lined up the 4-ship on the runway together but took off one at a time then joined up in the air. This was all done before sunrise on the early launch! The water route took over three hours while the land route to RP-6A took about two and a half to just under three. The land route was turn Northeast after takeoff to

join with our refuel tankers (KC-135s), Refuel, drop off, then North to Channel 97 Tacan station. North or Northeast from there turning East to get to the western edge of Thud Ridge, then about 128 degrees along Thud. From there to the target, which was South if it was Hanoi. Then back to Thud Ridge or about 240 degrees toward Channel 97 to get out of Dodge. Thud Ridge was so high and rough they could not get guns and supply ammo up there. We did see what was called a rest camp with pools of water and cabins we thought was a resort, but that is all. Late in 1967 I heard they took some guns up there using big helicopters. Tuesday, I flew the RP-6A gaggle in the Wild Weasel flight again, firing my Shrike missiles at SAM site #46. That was my 56th counter combat mission, so I now had a big reputation with the Weasels and as a flight lead in the strike flights. My bombs had been direct hits on many targets reported by FACs who sent messages to Korat about bombing results; they did not know my name, just my call sign on the mission, and then our Intelligence section routed the message through my Squadron to me. On Wednesday, 30 August, I flew #4 in Splendid Flight, the last flight in a 24 ship gaggle to Hoa Lac Airfield in RP-6A. Thursday, I flew #4 in the RP-6A Iron Hand Flight (Wild Weasels). This one was hairy. We swapped missiles with the SAM sites North and West of Hanoi till we ran out of missiles then we bluffed them twice before we got the strike flights out of Dodge. We had to point our plane at the SAM site to shoot a missile at it. When we ran out of missiles we would turn and point at the sight and fake a launch at him. The site radar operator saw this and often would shut down their radar for a while so our missile could not home in on their radar signal. As soon as we turned away the Gomer would turn on the radar and launch his SAMs at us or the Strike Force. Two SAMs came real close to me (500 feet or less), and one of these arced over and finally exploded in a village on the ground. Jane Fonda probably claimed it was me that did it! One was so close the shock wave shook my plane as it went by. After we returned to Korat, I was awarded a SAM Flight Examiner Patch for my flight suit. You got one if you had a SAM come that close and lived to tell about it! Friday through Tuesday I went R&R (rest and recuperation) to Bangkok. I think this time I went to James' Jewelers and bought Nobel her princess ring and real opals. Popi was my cab driver and he showed me the floating market some WATS (that's a Thai temple Buddha) and other sights. I think Al Esser was with me and we went out to a Thai restaurant where he introduced me to Kobe beef that was so tender and good I was surprised. The day after my R&R, Wednesday September 6, I was scheduled for the RP-6A Iron Hand mission again, but we were weather cancelled.

Thursday, I Took off at 1500 for RP-1 and hit some trucks. Friday 8 September, I was scheduled to fly the RP-6 Gaggle, but (as usual after we did all the planning) we got a weather cancel, so I went over to check my Form 5 (Official flight record) and found I had 58 counters as of 31 August. That meant yesterdays (7 September) counter was # 59! I had my diary and calendar and marks on my hat (Australian Jungle hat) wrong. We all put a mark on our hat with a felt tip marker for each counter. Saturday, I was ground spare for a RP-1 1300 take off. Dave Wilson's plane broke & he aborted, so I filled in for a two hour twenty minute counter. The spare had to be able to fly any position in the flight so he could fill in. This meant only the experienced good flyers got picked as spare. The bad part for the ground spare was sometimes you did all the preparation and then did not get to fly. He planned, and briefed with the flight / flights he was sparing. So if no one aborted the ground spare did a lot of work and then did not get to fly, but if some one dropped out he had to be ready! For the gaggles and big missions we had airborne spares that took off and flew along side the gaggle till at some point, if not needed they turned back to hit a lower RP spare target. Sunday 10 September, My take off was 1500 for a two hour twenty minute lower RP counter. The afternoon takeoff allowed me to go to Church services about 1100. The Chaplains conducted services each Sunday morning in an old large one room wood frame building with a row of windows down the two sides. There was no air conditioning so the windows were all open and you could hear the men singing hymns for quite a distance away. The only girls were a few nurses and maybe an Intel Officer or two. I remember that old building being completely full! The next day I was spare and did not get to launch. Tuesday, I flew counter # 62. I hit revetments on Black Route, 1656; Dave Wilson hit a POL can and may have gotten a secondary explosion. On Wednesday September 13th, I flew an F-105F night Iron Hand (Wild Weasel) mission. The 13th Squadron was short a Wild Weasel pilot for this mission so they ask me and I volunteered. This was my first time to fly a Wild Weasel aircraft. It was a B-52 Arc Light (Monkey Bombers) support mission in RP-1 and my EWO in the back seat was Tiny Lenhoff. Now, Tiny was a real big fellow, thus the nickname Tiny. We teased the BUFF (Big Ugly Fat Fellows) drivers about killing a bunch of monkeys when they bombed the jungle, because they dropped from way high without seeing a target and they really did tear up a significant amount of jungle. There were no SAMs in RP-1 but the Gomers wanted to bag a B-52 so bad that they might sneak a SAM site down into RP-1, so our job was to warn and protect the BUFFs. We took off at 0350 for a two hour thirty five minute flight.

I was scheduled to fly twice the next day but both were weather cancelled. Friday, I flew the B-52 support Wild Weasel mission in RP-1 again. This time it was a three hour five minute flight in bad weather supporting two cells of B-52s with different TOTs (time on target) requiring me to go out of RP-1 air refuel and go back in to support the last cell. We refueled on Black Anchor with Black Anchor 14 PaPa (PaPa means this was a probe and drogue tanker). We were in rough weather in and out of clouds (mostly in) bouncing around at 18000 feet with the weasel bird fully loaded carrying three bags (3 external fuel tanks plus ordnance) and this was my first probe and drogue refueling since training at Nellis AFB. All our other refueling was boom refueling, where the tanker boom operator had a movable boom he stuck into the refuel receptacle on the 105s nose while you held it steady for him. For probe and drogue refueling the tanker (KC-135) has a flexible hose hanging out the back end with a basket on the end and you have a probe sticking out the left top (after you pull a handle causing the covering panel to open and the probe to swing out) of the 105s nose. The trick is to drive the probe forward into the center of the basket where they latch together and pump you full of JP-4. On my first try I caught the edge of the basket and missed the connection causing my EWO in the back seat (John Gibbons) to yell "OLEY", like a bull fighter. Next try, between lightning flashes, I connected and started filling up and ask for a toboggan (go into a shallow descent). We were so heavy that at refueling speed of 315 knots we were on the edge of stall speed, so the slight descent gave me just enough power to stay locked on till I got all my tanks full. I was working so hard my flight suit was wet with sweat, and I didn't have time to laugh at John's bull fighting joke. The next morning I flew Element lead in the early RP-6A Gaggle (takeoff 0635). Sunday I was off. Then Monday 18 September, I flew Element lead to a lower RP for counter # 66. Tuesday I took off at 1350 and flew an armed reconnaissance mission into RP-5. Wednesday I was Spare for a flight and not needed. Thursday 21 September, we hit four 57mm and four 37mm AAA (anti aircraft artillery) and radar warning sites near Sam Nue. They shot at us, but my CBU's blew up their ammo dump and we destroyed several gun sites. Tom Walker got a direct hit on a 57mm site, on this two hour twenty minute 1425 takeoff counter #68. Friday I was not scheduled to fly because we had 6 easy sorties to fly so the new guys got them to start checking out. Tuesday 26 September, I led Waco Flight in the Gaggle to hit a target on the Northeast railroad in RP-6A. I took Neil Blake and Doug Glime as my #2 and 4 for their first RP-6A mission. We went the water route (3 hours) refueling with Blue Anchor Tanker. We splattered the RR target!

The next day I led a two ship flight to the Barrel Roll area to bomb targets spotted and called out to us by a Fire Fly FAC. I was checking out Major Walsh (Frenchy) on this mission. We normally would take new guys on about 10 lower RP targets to train them before taking them into RP-6A. Since I was an old head now, I got to teach many of them including new Wing Commanders. Thursday, Korat got a call that Gomer Artillery just north of the DMZ (demilitarized zone) was shelling our Marines. We had a four ship loaded with 750 lb. bombs so we took off at 1350 and dropped all 24 on that artillery. A FAC talked us in on the target, and said all bombs were within 50 meters of dead on target. These FACs loved to call in Thuds because we usually obliterated the target! There was no more shelling of our Marines! Sept.29, I was scheduled on Green Apples and cancelled. Sept 30, I led a flight in the RP-6A Gaggle, but due to bad weather we diverted to our second alternate in RP-1. The whole flight had good bomb hits about 6 clicks north of Fingers Lake. Yesterday I didn't fly and got to feeling sorry for myself, writing in my diary how grim my chances of living through this war looked. I noted in my diary today that I had not gotten a letter from Nobel for 3 days now. Nobel was so faithful to write me every day but sometimes the mail got hung up in the Pacific somewhere. Those letters from home kept me going when everything else looked bad! My-O-my, how I love that woman!

1 October, I hit Kep Airfield with the RP-6A Sunday afternoon Gaggle (took off at 1410, for a three hour forty minute flight). My flight had the job of cratering the runway and boy did we ever have bull's eye bombs today! The AAA was fierce hitting 5 aircraft in the Gaggle! I was awarded a DFC for this mission. See Kep target map on next page. Monday morning I spared the 0510 takeoff RP-6A Gaggle. I filled in for someone and though the weather was bad we hit the target logging a three hour twenty five minute counter. Wednesday, I was airborne spare. I was not needed to fill in so I and the other spare went to the Spare Target in the Barrel Roll area for Armed Reconnaissance along route 7, an easy mission. Friday, RP6A Gaggle cancelled.



Target Hanoi Rail Yard - 23 Aug. 67 Mission



Target Kep Airfield - 1 Oct. 67 - Water Route

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

TO

JAMES H. WRIGHT, JR.

Captain James H. Wright, Jr. distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Thunderchief Pilot at Kep Airfield, North Vietnam on 1 October 1967. On that date, Captain Wright braved intense antiaircraft fire to deliver his ordnance accurately on the runway of this airfield. Then with utter disregard for his own safety, he changed his flight path into a high threat area to escort damaged aircraft away from their target. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Wright reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

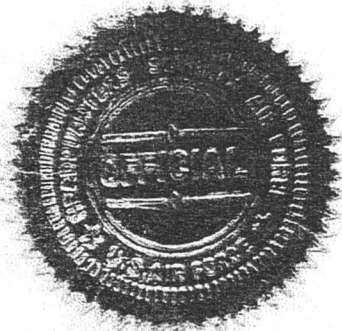


CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
(THIRD OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

TO

JAMES H WRIGHT JR

Captain James H Wright Jr distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Thunderchief pilot over North Vietnam on 7 October 1967. On that date, he participated in successful air support on a vital railroad yard. By courageously and skillfully attacking active flak sites, Captain Wright provided the needed support to enable the remainder of the strike force to complete their mission successfully and safely. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Wright reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Saturday 7 October, I flew the RP-6A Gaggle going the water route to hit the Kep Rail Yard. After feet dry on ingress, MIGs jumped the Iron Hand flight up ahead of us, hitting three of them and shooting one down. Joe (J. C. Howard & EWO G. L. Shamblee) punched out after they made feet wet (got back over the Gulf of Tonkin). The ejection broke all 4 of their legs, but they were rescued and went home. The ejection seats were then modified to stop breaking legs! The Mission Commander, leading Pistol Flight was hit by AAA after he rolled in on his dive bomb run, ejecting just east of the target and was captured. Several others took hits but made it back for an emergency landing at Da Nang South Vietnam (DAG, Ch 37). The flack ate us up today. It was the most accurate 85mm I have ever seen! It won't take many more like this one to wipe us all out! October 8th through 12th I went R and R to Bangkok. Whew! I needed a break. On this R&R I think I bought Nobel's brass / bronze dinnerware and another opal ring at James' Jewelers, had Popi drive me around again and saw the sights, ate Kobe beef and enjoyed a rest. On Friday October 13th (my lucky day because my Jennifer was born on Friday the 13th) I was welcomed back; scheduled for Super Spare on the afternoon RP-6A Gaggle. Super Spare was the airborne spare for two or more flights of four. The bulletin board in the hall by Intell had a cartoon on it of Snoopy. All you could see were his front paws nose and eyes hanging over the top of the page that read "Kep on Friday the 13th YGBKM"! We took off at 1410 going the water route to Hanoi's north east rail road bridge. I filled into Hatchet Flight which was the flack suppression flight (we hit the AAA sites near the bridge) on the mission. After feet dry at the Wart we went west (268 degrees) along Little Thud Ridge to the bridge target. Going in, I saw three SAM launches, one in an unexpected location. I rolled in on flack sites that were just east (about 50 yards) of the bridge on the north side of the river, think I got at least two 57 mm sites. This 3 hour 55 minute flight was my 77th counter. The next day I flew the early (0610 takeoff) RP-6A Gaggle. I flew the element lead and was loaded with a Sidewinder AA (air to air) missile on my outboard wing station. When you select the air to air missile (the Sidewinder is a heat seeker) you get a growling tone in the headset and when pointed at a heat source (a MIGs tailpipe) the tone gets louder and distinct. We hit a boat yard near Viet Tri, and we trolled along Thud Ridge looking for MIGs (MIG Sweep) but no luck. Sunday and Monday I was scheduled on the RP-6A gaggle but weather cancelled. 17 October I led a two ship flight on a Royal Laotian Air Force target working with a FAC (Nail 77). He said I got a bulls eye on the target (two road cuts and a rock slide). Then we did armed reconnaissance along Black Route to the

coast, but found no movers. The early Pac 6 gaggle got 3 shot down that morning, all in the same flight! 18 October, I took off with the RP-6A gaggle at 1445 to hit a rail yard. This was Colonel Dye's first Pac 6 mission (he flew the #4 position). He put his speed brakes out in the dive bomb run and forgot to put them back in! He got so slow he fell way behind and lost his flight, but the Iron Hand Flight (last out) found him and led him out. We thought he might be hit till we heard Weasel lead over the radio say "single Thud heading West put your speed brakes in". At Nellis AFB many put their speed brakes out in the dive (bad move) to better manage the air speed. He was not the first that forgot to put them back in. They surprised us today with flack we didn't expect near Mo Trang. 37mm and 57 mm AAA was heavy, 85mm light to moderate and I got good hits on the rail yard! Thursday 19 October was another 0-dark-thirty get up for the RP-6A 0550 Gaggle. I flew #3 and Major Jim Basset was lead, but he was late due to a problem so I took the flight to the tanker over the Gulf of Tonkin and he joined us there. We got past the Wart (water route) and the weather got grim As we went into Pac 6 we went IFR and had to turn around, come back out, refuel again, then hit a combat sky spot target in RP-1. The flight took 4 hours and five minutes. A note in my Diary reads: this was my RP-6A mission # 20. That makes my DEROS (go home date) 13 December with 11 months even if I don't get 100 missions! There must have been a rule about how many RP-6A missions you flew, I don't remember it. The next day I was scheduled for the 6A gaggle but it was weather canceled. Nobel's Birthday, 21 October, I took off at 1400 to work with ole Nail 77 FAC in RP-1. I hit a storage cave, Nail said good bombs! Sunday, I missed Church because I flew the 0530 RP-6A Gaggle. The weather was bad but we found a hole and dived through it to hit the target. Monday and Tuesday, my Birthday, I had a day off! Wednesday 25 October, I went the land route back to RP-6A to hit the Paul Doumer Bridge (the big bridge across the Red River in Northern Hanoi). Major Jim Bassett was lead and I was #3, our Wing Commander Colonel Burdett flew #2 and Tom Walker flew as my wingman, #4. We were the last flight in the Gaggle (4th of 4) which was called Purple Heart flight. The 85mm AAA shot real hard at us all the way from Thud Ridge to town and I saw 6 SAMs fired at us. We did a right roll in so I crossed to the left of Jim and down the chute in perfect formation we came with Colonel Dye on Jim's right and Tom on my left. We were nearly lined up straight with the bridge with Jim on the right edge and me on the left edge of the bridge We had instructed #2 and 4, since they had less Pak 6 missions, to pickle (drop their bombs) when Jim and I did. They did, and oh boy did we nail that

bridge. Jim must have got a right pylon and I got the opposite one, because that span dropped in the water! We came out across the Delta (240 degrees) at the speed of heat. A SAM exploded at our 6 o'clock (behind us) but we escaped with no damage! Thursday, 26 October I was flight lead on the RP-6A Gaggle to hit the Northeast Railroad but the weather was bad so the force turned around and hit route 18. I got some trucks. Friday I flew a two ship mission into the Barrel Roll area and I destroyed a flack site. The main force went downtown and lost Colonel Flin to a SAM. Saturday October 28, I volunteered to fly for the 469th squadron since they were short a pilot to fill their schedule. The mission was going downtown in the RP-6A Gaggle. Thus, they were short a qualified pilot. I was super spare again, so when Lt. Waldrop bailed out on the way to the tankers, I filled in for him as Hatchet 2. Then Hatchet 4 was leaking fuel so he went home leaving me and Major Dalton (Lefty) Leftwich, so we took Vegas 4 to make Hatchet a 3 ship leaving Vegas a 3 ship. You couldn't go in Pac 6 with less than 3 in a flight. We were flack suppression for Takhli to hit the Canal Des Rapids Bridge north of Hanoi. We came in from the south, which was unusual because it exposed us to a zillion SAM sites, to hit the flack sites around the bridge while Takhli came from north down Thud Ridge to roll in on the bridge after us. They fired so many SAMs at us on the way in I quit counting at 8 (15 to 20 fired). One exploded about 1000 feet in front and one about 200 feet behind. Twice a Sam was guiding on my flight so we took it down to evade it. Everyone from Korat was carrying CBUs (cluster bomb units) except me as spare. I had 6 x 500 pound bombs which was a standard spare load. Lefty and I rolled in on the guns near the bridge on the south side of the river; pulled out of our dive and went hard right down the river staying low for a piece, then climbing to the right, South, then West across South Hanoi to get out of Dodge. Low over the river the gunners shot too high so as not to hit their buddies on the opposite bank! Also, Lefty had us at Warp 9+. Takhli's Shark lead got hit and punched out over the bridge. It was a miracle Hatchet flight took no hits!

Sunday, 29 October, I was off so I got to go to Church and thank God I was still alive! Then Monday I led the RP-6A Gaggle to Kep Airfield! Cal Markwood and Dave Wilson aborted so I took two spares and pressed on. I let Doug Glime fly as my #3 (his first element lead). I got a shack (bulls eye) on the runway and the other 3 did to! Our job that day was to cut the runway. My squadron put me in for a Silver Star for that mission but it was downgraded to a DFC. Tuesday I flew an easy barrel roll mission and an armed recon of RP-3 route 7.

My next mission 2 November, I was lead to Phuc Yen in RP-6A but we had to weather abort and hit a target in Laos with a Firefly FAC instead. 3 November I had to abort when after takeoff my nose gear would not retract. 4 November I led a mission into RP-5.

Sunday off, I am getting spoiled. My next mission was on 9 November into RP-1 checking out new guys. My engine was a real sick one but I made it home OK. I flew missions 93 and 94 on 14 and 15 November. I could see the light at the end of the tunnel! WOW, just a few months ago it looked impossible, but with God all things are possible! I know Nobel, Kirk, and Jennifer prayed me through.

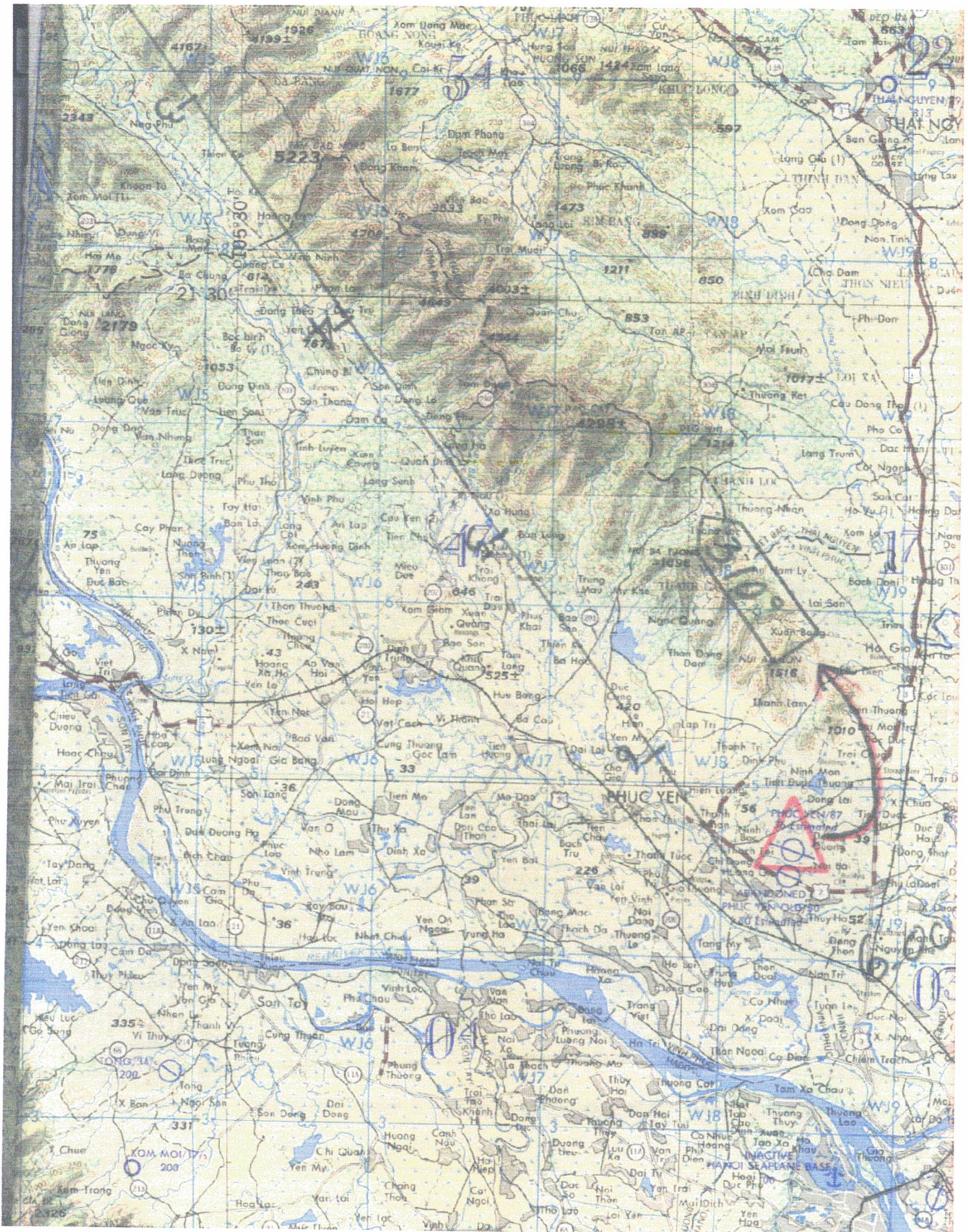
The squadron had me leading missions in the lower Route Pacs to teach new guys. One more and I would be what was called "Golden". Which meant, I would only be scheduled on lower Route Pac missions to finish 100. Good by RP-6A! The next day I took off at 0655 and got combat mission counter number 95. I had to wait till 23 November to get number 96. In my diary at the end of that day I wrote: Thanks GOD! I flew 97 the next day, and then flew 98 on 29 November. I took off at 1415 on 1 December and flew number 99. Cal Markwood got his number 100 this day.



Target Doumer Bridge - 25 Oct. 67 - Jim Wright



Intell Photo of Doumer Bridge - Hanoi



Target Phuc Yen Airfield - 2 Nov. 67 - Weather Abort