

A few weeks back I had received my next base assignment. I was assigned as an instructor pilot in the German Air Force pilot training program at Sheppard AFB Wichita Falls, Texas.

Wouldn't you know it; my last combat mission was an 0-dark thirty get up for a 0415 takeoff. This was a good three hour thirty five minute combat mission number 100! I landed at 07 something after a low high speed fly by and a pitch up to a tight fighter pilot landing pattern. I kissed the wheels on the runway so soft I had to call Korat Tower and ask "Korat Tower are my wheels on the ground?" I extended my refuel probe while taxiing in to give them all a last, Take That! The guys met me with a bottle of champagne at the plane, loaded me on a decorated up pick up truck, and had a parade around the base ending at KABOOM (Korat Air Base Officers Open Mess). I got thrown in the pool, boots and all and got the works! Can you believe it? A 100 Mission Party tonight for me! I wore my party suit to the party. Along with the SAM Flight Examiner patch and others, was that best of all a 100 Mission Patch!

HOME!

On 3 December the movers came to pack up and ship a few things home. The next day I left for Bangkok and Tuesday the 5th I got on the big bird for home! On that 5 December page in my diary I just wrote "Home Ward HO". I was wearing my 1505s (khaki short sleeve summer uniform) when I left Bangkok. So when I got to California (San Francisco) I planned to change to something warmer, but there was a plane leaving in 20 minutes for Atlanta, so I just got on it. It was after midnight so I was not surprised it was called the Red Eye flight. When I arrived in Atlanta it was cold and everyone looked at me like I was crazy in short sleeves. I had a long lay over so I went into the basement of that huge air terminal and found my B-4 bag with my winter blues in it, changed and made my flight to good old Golden Triangle Airport, Columbus Mississippi. Nobel and the children met me at GTR and that was the best hugs I ever had! While at Korat, On the 25 December page of my Diary I had written: "I hope I'm at home with my wonderful family when I read this again. I love them with all my heart. Right now I'm at

Korat AB, Thailand & every day could be my last day on earth. Things are tough! I'm loosing my friends awfully fast, sure makes me feel bad".

Praise the Lord; I was home when I read it!

Keep your Smash Up and Check 6

Jim Wright, AKA GRANDPA

PS: After I got to Sheppard AFB I checked my flight records and discovered that I / we had miscounted my combat missions! I had actually flown 101!

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

TO

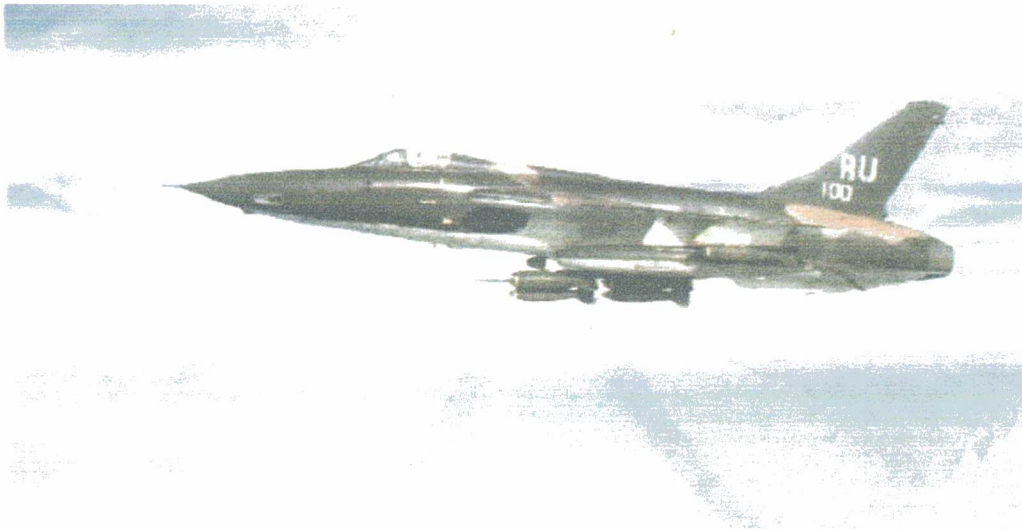
JAMES H. WRIGHT, JR.

Captain James H. Wright, Jr. distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot at Kep Airfield, North Vietnam on 30 October 1967. On that date, Captain Wright courageously assumed command of a flight of F-105's after the flight leader and deputy lead had returned to base with inflight emergencies. He then led the flight through intense defensive fire in a devastating attack on Kep Airfield. The outstanding heroism and selfless 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
(SEVENTH THROUGH TWELFTH 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-105D Tactical Fighter Pilot with the 44th Tactical Fighter Squadron from 10 September 1967 to 2 December 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.



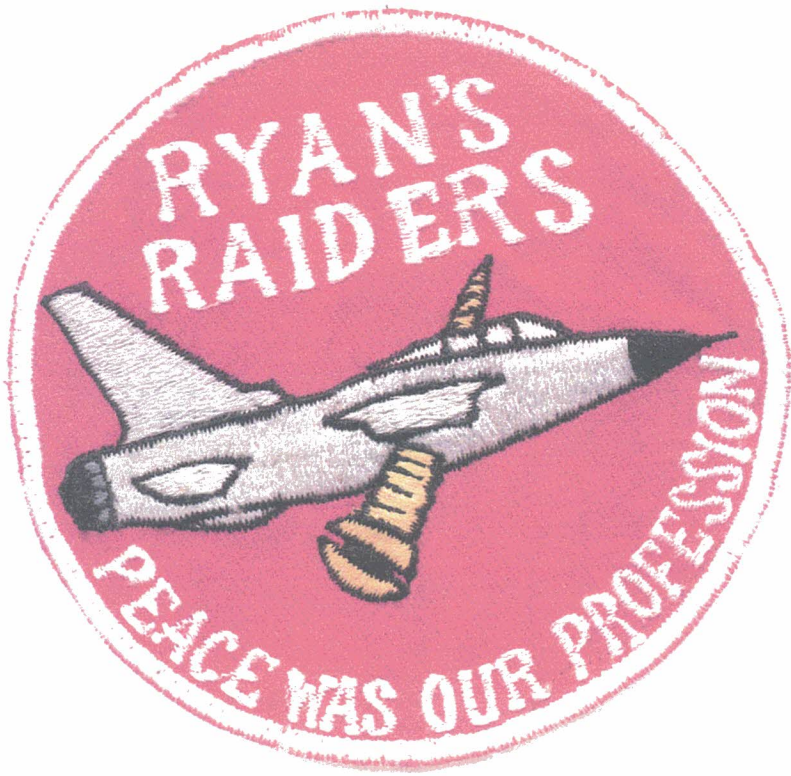
F-105D RU 61-0100 aka "Hot Stuff" of the 357th TFS. What a beauty.
The three feet long poles sticking out of some of the bombs are fuse extenders or "daisy cutters" which ensured detonation above the ground.



Air Refueling for "Downtown"







Outstanding Homefront Award

388th Tactical Fighter Wing

APO San Francisco 96288

This award is presented to

Mrs. Nobel F. Wright

In recognition of the outstanding Homefront Support furnished while her husband performed remote duty in Southeast Asia. Her willful acceptance and outstanding accomplishment of the many and varied problems that developed during this tour contributed greatly to her husband's morale and effectiveness and thereby to the accomplishment of this organization's mission.

Presented with grateful appreciation

On the 28th day of November, 19



R. Kelly
R. KELLY, JR., Colonel,
Vice Commander

Red River
 Valley
 Fighter
 Pilots
 Association

Certificate of Membership



For successfully striking targets located in the Red River Valley of North Vietnam, the most highly defended areas in the history of aerial warfare. For gallantry in facing MIG'S, SAM'S, and GUNS defending those targets.

JAMES H. BRIGHT, JR. is hereby honored by membership in the 'River Rats' Association.

Philip M. Wen
 Head Rat

Philip M. Wen
 Secretary





"ROSCOE"

Roscoe was a dog. He resembled the dog that played "Ole Yeller" in the Walt Disney movie. The way I heard it, Roscoe's original master was an F-105 fighter pilot, stationed in Japan and Okinawa. When his squadron was sent to Korat AFB, Thailand, they loaded a C-130 aircraft with bicycles and lots of other equipment which belonged to the squadron. Roscoe's master loved Roscoe, and couldn't leave him behind; so, he got Roscoe a ride on the C-130 to Korat. At Korat, he took Roscoe to the mission briefings and every time the mission was an easy one (milk run) Roscoe would lay down and snooze through the briefing; but, if it was going to be a tough one, Roscoe sat up alert and his ears twitched through the whole briefing. Roscoe waited with the F-105 aircraft maintenance men near the runway when his master flew a combat mission. He watched for his master's plane to return. One day his master's plane did not return. I was there flying F-105's (Thuds) in 1967, and that dog still went out and watched the planes when they returned from a mission! All the Thud pilots adopted Roscoe. He would jump in our squadron truck and ride from the Officer's Club or our "hooch" area to the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) where he attended the mass briefings. All the pilots watched Roscoe when the briefing began to see if he looked nervous and alert, or if he went to sleep.

A few years later I went for a second tour to Korat as an F-105-G Wild Weasel pilot. Roscoe was still there, but getting old. He passed away and was buried in his favorite spot in front of KABOOM (Korat Air Base Officer's Open Mess) or (Officer's Club). I won't ever forget old Roscoe. He was a good dog!

✓ Six

Grandpa - 1997

Grandpa's War Stories

"Konnie"

Konrad W. Trautman (Konnie) was assigned to the 13th TFS, Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand in May 1967. Captain Trautman was a really nice guy and we all liked him. In May I was flying Ryan's Raider missions from the 13th TFS. Later in August through September I flew in several flights with him in the single seat F-105D. Konrad was 10 years older than I and was a little behind the Thud when he flew it. He went through pilot training in 1949 and his first assignment was flying the P-47 Thunderbolt in the 86th Fighter Bomber Wing in Germany. Because he was a little behind when flying the Thud, he was only scheduled to fly wing position (#2 and 4) not lead. This was normal for new guys but Konnie was past being a new guy! Since Konnie had flown 61 missions, including Pak 6 missions as a wing man, our Operations Officer finally scheduled Konnie to lead a four ship flight in the strike force (Gaggle, 16 105Ds plus a Weasel flight) going to Pak 6. We were happy that Konnie was promoted to Flight Lead. That day we had two targets so we split the force with 8 hitting each target. I would lead the force to the split up point then lead 8 Thuds south to our target and the other 8 would go northeast to their target. Konrad was leading a flight in the 8 Thuds going to the Northeast target. We went the land route to our tankers south of Channel 97 Tacan navigation station in far north Laos. Refueling went normal and we went north from 97 to the mountains in North Vietnam, then turned east to cross the Red River north of Yen Bai. We went to the Northwest end of Thud Ridge, turned southeast flying along the north side of the Ridge to the south end of the Ridge. Here we

split up with me taking a force of 8 south to a target not far from Phuc Yen Air Field while the other 8 went northeast to their target. I identified the target (my memory is fuzzy but I think it was a bridge) and set us up for a right roll in on the target. We rolled in and blasted the target. During or right after we dropped our bombs I heard a beeper (a loud beeper on Guard channel, 243.0 Mhz) go off. When someone bails out it activates their survival / locater beacon radio. My flight members were all OK, so I knew the other force had lost one. I heard them say one bailed out, had a good chute and was captured. We egressed back across the Red then south to our tankers and RTB (return to base). Back at Korat we got the story. Konnie's plane had been hit by ground fire (AAA) and he had punched out near the target. On the ground he was alright and spoke to his flight overhead on his survival radio. He said "here they come after me, I'm breaking the antenna and I'm gonna run! They saw people capture him as they left. We all felt sad for we really liked Konnie and being shot down on his first lead in Pak 6 was a shock. Konnie (Capt. Trautman) was officially listed MIA 5 October 1967 until his capture was confirmed on 20 January 1970. He was released and came home in March 1973. He retired with the rank of Colonel on 1 December 1981. You can read his detailed Biography in the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots History Book Volume 1, Page 142. He is married and has a Son and Daughter. Hope you are well and enjoying retirement Konnie. Keep it moving and check six old friend.

Jim Wright AKA Grandpa

THE HOMEFRONT

By Grandma A/K/A Nobel

After three and one half wonderful years at Moody AFB, Georgia, it was reassignment time for Jim. There was no hope for anything other than Vietnam. I hinted that he might get out of the Air Force and fly with the airlines like so many of our friends were doing; but his sense of loyalty to his “country” seemed to overpower my desire. I could not understand this at that time. I now do. I even prayed the selfish prayer that I always did in times of difficulty, “Lord, don’t let this happen to me”. But, it did happen. Not only was the assignment to Vietnam; his was an F-105 fighter assignment flying missions over North Vietnam—the worst one that I knew of. I was bitter at Jim for not getting out of the Air Force and also at God for not answering my “selfish” prayer. I cried day after day as I separated our household goods into three shipments—one to Vernon, Alabama where Jennifer, Kirk and I would spend that dreadful year; one to Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, Nevada where we would go TDY for six months F-105 training and the other was for storage for the year he would be gone.

We sadly left Valdosta, Georgia for Las Vegas. What a place to escape the reality of what was ahead for us. This is what we did. Jim loved the ‘105 and was so happy in his training. In fact, I thought he was greatly anticipating the adventure that lay ahead. Twice on the town every week and to church on Sunday (even after late hours attending the dinner shows at the casinos). This was the way we lived the six months there.

Now, as had been the pattern of my life since I was 15 and had accepted Jesus as my saviour at a summer revival, I did one of the things that fulfilled my image of what a “good” Christian should do—I went to church, regardless. This is the best way I know to explain my “religion”—a Sunday at 11:00 religion. Bible reading was a chore and I did little of it. After all, how could anyone understand it, except for preachers?

Time came only too fast for the ‘105 training to be over. The black cloud hanging over my head grew thicker and blacker; and tears flowed every time I thought of “poor Nobel” and what was ahead.

Especially dark were the days when the telephone would ring and the voice on the other end would say. "Did you hear that 'so-and-so' was shot down and was killed or captured?"

The time to leave Las Vegas and Christmas 1966 came at the same time. The time when most Christians were rejoicing over the hope that Jesus brought for our people was just a time of desperation and sadness for me this year.

We sold the station wagon and flew to Columbus Airport to be with our folks for Christmas and get me and the children settled in Theresa's apartment before Jim's final departure on January 17, 1967.

The night before Jim left (after he had packed all his bags) we sat on the sofa and he showed me my "Power of Attorney" and he went over his will. Wow! That was one tear-filled night. The next day his Mom, Dad and Joe went with us to the airport. This was the blackest day of my life. I just knew when I kissed him goodbye and watched the plane soar into the air that I would probably never see him alive again. How could I bear the "waiting" days ahead?

Every day I wrote letters to him and everyday the children and I would drive to the post office in Vernon to see if we had a letter from him. Finally the first letter came saying that he had arrived at Takhli AFB, Thailand with his best friend, Gordon B. Blackwood known to us as "Buzz". He flew only one combat mission before the lunar New Year (TET) truce. Orders came for him to go to Okinawa since there were too many pilots there at that time. For him, it was awful waiting; but it was quite a relief for me since I felt that he would be safe for a while. Orders came for him to go from there to Japan for further training in a 2-seater model of the F-105. The mission, known as Ryan's Raiders, was so secret that he could tell me very little about it. I wished that I hadn't known what he told me; but he fulfilled a promise to keep me informed as much as he could. After this training and upon returning to combat, he would be flying night missions using only radar (on airplanes that were so old and outdated) for guidance at low level altitudes just above the terrain. Now, not only were MIGS, SAMS and ground fire coming at him; but he was also in danger of running into the mountainside if the radar did not work perfectly. He also told me this was a small group—6 planes and 12

pilots to start with for General Ryan was trying it out to see how effective it would be before using it on a larger scale.

This was too much!! How could God do this to me when I was crying out to him for help? I just knew that my prayers had gone no further than the ceiling.

So, in April—the weekend of April 28th—Jim departed Japan and went to Korat AFB, Thailand to begin this horrible phase of his tour of duty, defending our freedom and serving the country that he loved so much from the horrors of Communism.

That same week-end, some twenty or more laymen and women from all over Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama came to the Methodist Church in Vernon (where we were married in 1958, and the children and I were attending this year) to hold a Lay Witness Revival. What a coincidence, I thought. I did not want to attend for I could just imagine that the type persons that would go around witnessing about God's love would be old gray-haired men and women who really had nothing else to do. I probably would not have gone at all, but I could not say "no" to my friend Rose Marie Smith when she asked me if I would keep a lady in my home the two nights they were there. I therefore, felt obligated to go since she was my guest.

What an excited, vivacious and "alive" group of people! There were mostly young couples and a few middle-aged people who were from various walks of life—people with whom I could identify. They spoke a message so real and so stirring that I knew I wanted what they had. Probably, I had heard preachers say the same things, but wasn't that what they were supposed to do?

My guest was a young, single girl who was a dental hygienist from Ft. Rucker, Alabama. What a delight having her in my home and sharing all the glorious things that were happening in her life since she begun to "let go and let God".

On Sunday, the coordinator, a very prominent businessman from Columbus, Georgia by the name of Tap Hansen brought the morning message. By now, I could hardly keep still wanting to find out how to experience this new faith. He spoke of his life as always "being good" and doing all he could in the church and civic organizations. One day he realized that he was just like the little boy who had gone to the circus and had been to see all the side shows and was about to go home when someone said "little fellow", have you seen the big tent?—You're about to miss the "big event". I thought

how true this was of my life. I was about to miss the “big event”. So the invitation at the end of the service was something like “commit as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of God”. This I did, along with countless others. This day was the day I began to discover what being a Christian was all about. I found I didn’t know very much about myself and still less about God, but He spoke to me so clearly the next few days helping me to see the things in my life that separated me from Him. What a feeling—sometimes crazy—sometimes scary—sometimes not knowing what. I was so thankful for Rose Marie, my Sunday School teacher whom I knew I could go and talk with and she would understand. For three years now, she had been living this new adventure in faith.

I shared with her and grew so fast that it was incredible. I started out having faith in God for the little things in my life, and as I believed and He fulfilled His promises that I found in the Bible, I was able to commit more of my life to him—my children, my mother and father, my money, my interests, my mind (that I had been wasting for years). The thirst for knowledge seemed unending.

The hardest thing for me to commit to Him was my husband, the dearest thing on earth to me, for I was afraid of what His will might be. Finally in October, late at night—it seemed that the Lord was in the room saying to me—“Jim’s mine first, then yours. I realized this was true and was then able to commit Jim to Him, fully trusting His plan for his life. Even though the missions were tougher and the aircraft losses heavier now than at any time in the war, I KNEW for the first time that Jim would be coming home.

I realized, in essence, what the Christian life is for me—a day by day commitment of all that I know of myself to all that I know of God. The more I know Him, the more I love and trust Him!

One of the hardest times during this year was the night the telephone rang in the middle of the night. It was my friend Pat, Buzz’s wife. She was crying so hard that I could hardly understand her. In the middle of Craig’s (her son) birthday party, that dreaded entourage of military officers rang her doorbell and told her that Buzz had been shot down and was missing. You know from Jim’s story that his remains were later returned.

On December 5, 1967, after Jim's flying 101 combat missions, we met him at Columbus Airport. He had never looked better to me! I was so very proud of him! What a grand and glorious homecoming! How we praised God for His mercy and goodness to our family.

High Flight

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth.

And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.

Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth

Of sun-split clouds and done a hundred things

You've not dreamed of

Wheeled and soared and swung.

High in the sunlit silence.

Hov'ring there, I've chased the shouting wind along,

And flung my eager craft through footless halls of air.

Up, up, along delirious burning blue,

I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,

Where never lark or even eagle flew.

And while with silent, lifting mind I've trod

The high untrespassed sanctity of space,

Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Addition to Grandpa's War Stories "1967 Diary"

1- My Granddaughter, Christine Daniel Adams, went on her Covenant Christian School trip to Washington DC in 2005. She went to the Vietnam Memorial Wall and made a rubbing of my special friend Buzz's (Gordon B. Blackwood's) name. She made a beautiful Shadow box plaque with the Rubbing, pictures, and information about Buzz for my 2005 Christmas present. She also found on the internet dates and details that I once knew, but had forgotten. On 27 May 67, Buzz flew an F-105D from the 355th TFW, 333rd Squadron, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand when he was shot down by a direct hit from a SAM. His target was a rail yard near Bac Giang, North East of Hanoi in Ha Bac Province, North Vietnam. There was no chute, radio transmission, or anything, just a crash. Buzz was 28 years old (one year younger than I) when he was shot down and killed. He left his wife Pat and son Craig. He was initially declared missing in action (MIA), then on 11- 29- 76, his status was changed to died while missing. His remains were returned on 17 November 89, and positively identified as Buzz on 20 November 89.

2- In the Ryan's Raider section, page 7, I mentioned that we were initially attached to a Squadron but could not remember which one. Well, in June 2006 when I read W. Howard Plunkett's Radar Bombing article in the Spring 2006 issue of Air Power History I discovered we were in the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) at Korat from 4 May 67 till we were assigned to the 13 TFS on 1 June 67.

3- On page 7, the last name listed as arriving 4 May was not Maj. Oliver. It should read Capt. Al Esser. All the others are correct.

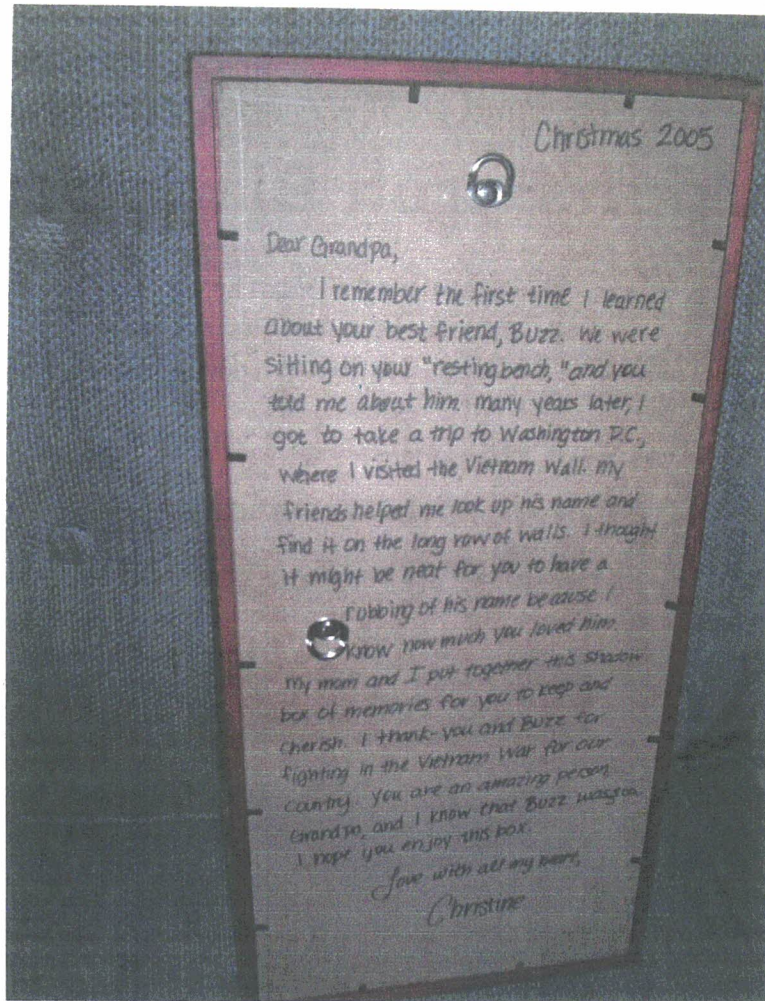
4- On page 13, all 60 officers of the 13 TFS were transferred to the 44th TFS along with their F-105F Ryan's Raider (Commando Nail) and Wild Weasel aircraft and missions. The change over was completed on 18 October 67. This left the 34th, 44th, and 469th Thud squadrons at Korat. The draw down to three squadrons was due to combat losses (a whole squadron!). 388th TFW Commander Col. Edward B. Burdette conducted the change of command ceremony. He had taken Command from General Chairsell on 1 August 67. I had flown lead and instructed Col. Burdette on his check out flights in the 13 TFS. I taught him right, but he was shot down and captured 18 November 67, on his 37th mission, doing something I had warned him not to do! Due to bad weather, he led a 16 ship Gaggle plus 4 ship Weasel flight to radar bomb (Combat Skyspot, guided by the TSQ-81 radar at the Lima 85 site in Laos) Phuc Yen Airfield (in Pac 6A)! This mission was called a Commando Club mission. Weather was overcast and the Weasels were first in, as usual. Migs hit the Weasel flight shooting down two, then when the Gaggle closed up from the more spread Pod formation (to drop bombs closer together) 13 SAMs were fired hitting Garage 1 (Col. Burdette) and

Vegas 3 (Leslie John Hauer, 469TFS). Col. Burdette was captured and later died in captivity, Maj. Hauer was killed. The Pod formation spread each aircraft a specific distance both vertical and lateral to jam the SAM radar. I have forgotten the exact spacing, but it was something like 1500 feet spread and 400 feet below for the wingmen. But closed up tight they only high lighted themselves with the jamming pods! The Weasel crew killed, Waco Lead, was Dardeau and Tiny Lehnhoff from my Squadron flying F-105F 63-8295. Waco 4 was Lt. Col. Reed from the 469th TFS flying F-105D 60-0497. He was hit but got back to Laos, bailed out and was rescued. The rest of the strike force never made it to the target; they jettisoned their bombs and went home. Flying straight and level not even in pod formation in Pac 6 was like an accident waiting to happen! Approaching the target the whole force tried to fly tight and level following small heading changes from the radar to get good bomb hits!

5- On page 31, 4th line from the bottom, Col. Dye should read Col. Burdette.



Shadow Box Christine & Jennifer made.



Back of the Shadow box

34th TFS patch.

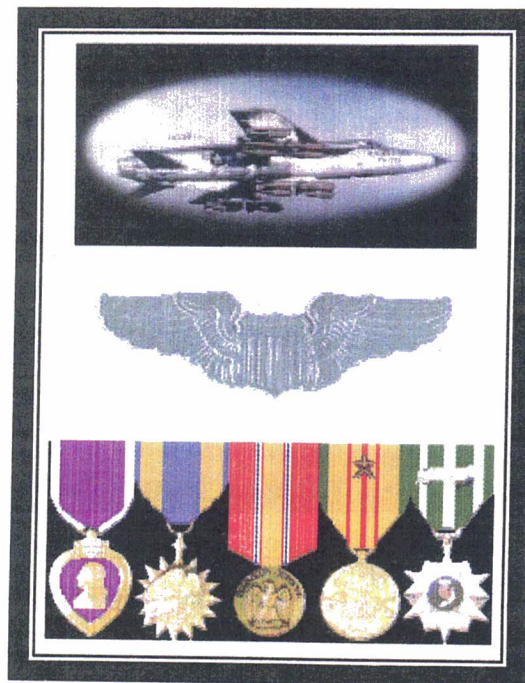


Additions/corrections completed 21 July 2006 by Jim Wright.



Gordon Byron Blackwood

Lieutenant Colonel
United States Air Force
18 July 1938 - 29 November 1976
Palo Verde, CA
Panel 20E Line 128



[The database page for Gordon Byron Blackwood](#)

Then-Captain Gordon B. Blackwood was the pilot of an F-105D *Thunderchief* assigned a mission over North Vietnam on 27 May 1967. During the mission, near the city of Bac Giang in Ha Bac Province, North Vietnam, Blackwood's aircraft was shot down and he was classified Missing in Action. Intelligence sources later reported that Captain Blackwood was killed in the incident.

Gordon Byron Blackwood

**Lieutenant Colonel (See Note below)
United States Air Force**

PERSONAL DATA

Home: Palo Verde, California
DOB: Monday, 07/18/1938
Sex: Male
Race: Caucasian
Married?: Yes
Religion: Presbyterian

MILITARY DATA

Service: United States Air Force
Comp: Regular
Grade: O4
Rank: Lieutenant Colonel (See Note below)
ID No: 557487833
MOS: 1355C - Flight Training Instructor (Pilot)
LenSvc: Not recorded
Unit: 7TH AF
Note: Posthumous Promotion As Indicated

CASUALTY DATA

Start Tour: Monday, 01/30/1967
Cas Date: Saturday, 05/27/1967 (MIA)
Change Status: Monday, 11/29/1976 - MIA to Died While Missing
Age at Loss: 38
Remains: Returned 17 Nov 89; identified 20 Nov 89
Location: Ha Bac Province, North Vietnam
Type: Hostile, Died While Missing
Reason: Air Loss, Crash - Land - Fixed Wing - Pilot
Last Update: February 1991
Comment: BODY 11/17/89 - MIA 05/27/67

