



“Cleared Hot”

By Lon Holtz

With the holidays over, the grandkids back in school, and the list of “Honey Do’s” growing, it’s time to get back to work putting all the pieces in the proper order for our April reunion in Wichita.

Our reunion hotel is the Drury Broadview in downtown Wichita. Suggest you make reservations now. Textron Aviation (which absorbed Cessna) has agreed to a private tour along with a viewing of the new Scorpion aircraft if it’s in town during our stay. We are getting great support from local folks advertising our reunion to the local community and former employees of Cessna who had a hand in building the A-37. As we get closer to our arrival date, we’ll update you on attractions and events in the local area .

There is a very compelling reason for going to Wichita. While we operational types have garnered all the credit for the aircraft’s history and accomplishments, I don’t believe the people at Cessna have had the proper recognition. They took old T-37s out of the Davis-Monthan graveyard and molded them into a frontline close-air-support asset that set new records in that role and served as the prototype design for the next generation A-10 CAS asset.

Imagine the effort to modify the production line, install new engines, beef up the wings, install pylons and tip tanks, put in a nose gun, and develop the ordnance and armament package, all in a few short months before turning the modified

(continued on p. 3)

Plans for Wichita are shaping up

and you’ll find the schedule and registration materials attached to the email with this newsletter. Highly recommend you make hotel reservations as soon as possible. Based on feedback from the small survey taken in October, we expect 20-25 guys and another 15 to 20 or so spouses and guests. A pretty good crowd for our age group.

As Lon says in his column, our goal is to thank the people at Cessna who modified mothballed T-37s into the highly effective A-37 in a very short period of time in early 1967. There are still a few of those folks around and we’re inviting as many as can be found to join us in Wichita. In addition, Textron Aviation has agreed to give us a tour of their facility and hopefully a chance to see the Scorpion, their light attack and reconnaissance aircraft currently being marketed worldwide. However, **Textron has requested a list of people who will be on the tour by April 1** (it’s a security thing). That means, if you want to go on the tour, you must put your full name and country of origin (spouses and guests, too) at the appropriate place on the registration form.

On page 2 of this newsletter is an article describing the Witness to War (WTW) program. Martin Madert from WTW will be at our reunion hotel in Wichita on Tuesday (April 30) and Wednesday (May 1) to conduct those interviews. **If you want to participate, you should schedule the appointment yourself well ahead of time, i.e., before the reunion,** by contacting Mr. Madert at the numbers provided in the article. Recommend not waiting until the last minute to make this appointment as it helps him plan his schedule.

“From the Archives” covers the 604th SOS Unit History September-October 1969 during which plans for four A-37B squadrons to replace three F-100 squadrons were taking shape. Hank Keese’s story about a challenging mission in the Delta region south of Saigon continues as well as the final installment of Fred Long’s book about his experiences in 1967-68.

We’re down to one first edition remaining of the A-37 Association’s book, “Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam,” for sale, but other memorabilia items are still available. See the memorabilia page enclosed. ...Jerry Sailors

“The A-37 Association is for those who flew, worked on/with, were saved by, or have high admiration for the great little fighter.”

Inside:	Page
Member Update/Emails	2
Article on Witness to War	2
“Throw a Nickel on the Grass”	3
From the Archives	4
War Story	5
“And So It Began”	6



A-37 Association, Inc. Board of Directors

President Lon Holtz
Vice President Eric Jackson
Secretary/Treasurer Jerry Sailors
Lou Gonzalez
Vic Grahn
Hank Hill
Hank Hoffman
Tom McCallum
John Serlet

Membership: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
dragonfly369@charter.net

Newsletter: Jerry Sailors 334-328-7575
dragonfly369@charter.net
Barbara Holtz 702-804-4232
amscom@embarqmail.com

The Dragonfly is a publication of the A-37 Association published quarterly (except when within two months of a reunion, then monthly), as a service to the membership, new contacts, and other interested parties.

The views expressed herein are those of the editors/authors and do not necessarily reflect any official position of the A-37 Association. The editors reserve the right to print any article/letter/email/photo deemed to be of interest to members.

We also reserve the right to edit any article to fit space available and to reject any material considered inappropriate. We invite and encourage members/contacts to submit articles/letters/emails/photos.

Visit our website: www.a-37.org

Member Update

Gone West

Dennis Hermerding - 17 November 2018

Emails

10/20/2018 from Larry Dennison

My name is Larry Dennison, I worked on the Flight Line at Cessna in Wichita, on all the A37A'S and most of the A37B'S. I was there when they brought the Old T37'S in from the desert to reconfigure them into the A37A'S, and that was a big job. I could go on and on so I'll quit bending your leg. It feels good talking about this old bird and what the people went through to change a trainer into a Fighter bomber.

10/20/2018 from Jim Simpson, 23 TASS, '81-'85

The Newsletter "Footlocker" photo of Al Moore brought back some great memories. While in college I replaced Al as a lifeguard at the Hickam AFB Officer's Club swimming pool in

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

'68 or '69. Next time I saw him was in the early '80's when we flew (O-2/OA-37) support for his A-10 Fighter Weapons School at Nellis. So tragic about his civilian accident. Always looked up to him...a really great guy.

1/04/2019 from Gordon Weed

I am sorry to inform you that my sweetheart Patricia passed away on Nov. 20th. Her health had been declining and she was in much discomfort, but passed away peacefully. I am doing fairly well, but it has been a tough season. I pray that all is going well for you and your family, as well as the members of the association. Give them all my best.

1/04/2019 From Jerry Sailors to Gordon Weed

Gordo, please accept my condolences for your loss. No doubt Pat now rests comfortably after her ordeal. She was blessed with you beside her as I know you were that she was your life partner. I am in the process of putting together the Association's January newsletter and will include your note for the membership.

10/20/2018 from Roger Moseley (Re Witness to War Interviews)

I interviewed with them early last year....I thought the interview was professional and the interviewer helpful in getting a full story. The atmosphere encouraged a more serious focus on relating the "story," but wasn't so formal that you felt you couldn't depart into side stories that revealed the humorous or even angry personal observations. I think it was worth doing. My opinion of the A-37 units in combat was that we were an unexpectedly successful side show. I take a lot of pride in the fact that we had pilots from across the spectrum, yet we came together and did a first class and important job.

Witness to War

At our 2019 reunion in Wichita we have an opportunity to visually record our personal combat experiences for posterity and our own family history.

The Witness to War Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization from Atlanta, GA that is dedicated to preserving the oral histories of combat veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the Global War on Terror by conducting free video interviews that honor your service, preserve your stories, and promote the education of military history for future generations.

Martin Madert, the lead interviewer, is planning on attending this year's reunion to conduct interviews with anyone looking to share their stories. The interview takes about an hour and covers your life before, during and after your service. You will receive 3 DVD copies of your unedited interview in the mail in addition to having a copy donated to the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. This service is offered absolutely free of cost!

If you're interested in participating or have other questions, please contact Martin Madert at Martin@WitnessToWar.org, or 770-628-0024 to schedule an interview appointment in Wichita. You can learn more about the Witness to War Foundation on their website, www.WitnessToWar.org.



Steve Brandt, "Sweet Stu" Frazer,
Mark Williams at Wright-Patt Plaque
Dedication 2014

(Jerry Sailors Photo)

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

"Cleared Hot"

(continued from p. 1)

package over to the Air Force. It must have been crazy trying to solve all the issues that arose. The time spent, however, was worth it as the aircraft passed every operational and maintenance in-country test laid out in Project Combat Dragon and quickly became the favorite of FACs and ground forces during its five years of service in Vietnam.

The folks at Cessna gave us what we needed. Many of us are getting long in the tooth and going into the twilight of our years, and while it's been a half-century, it's time we at least say thanks to the professionals at Cessna for all they did. Like us, their numbers are dwindling, and they should be recognized for the part they played in the success of the A-37.



"Throw A Nickel On The Grass, Save A Fighter Pilot's Ass!"

I was cruising down the Mekong
doing six and twenty per
When a call came from my wingman,
Oh, won't you save me, sir?
Got three flak holes in my wing tips,
and my tanks ain't got no gas
Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!
I got six MIGS on my ass!

Chorus

O Hallelujah! O Hallelujah!
Throw a nickel on the grass.
Save a fighter pilot's ass.
O Hallelujah! O Hallelujah!
Throw a nickel on the grass
And you'll be saved.

I shot my traffic pattern,
And to me it looked all right,
The airspeed read one-thirty,
I really racked it tight!
Then the airframe gave a shudder,
The engine gave a wheeze.
Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!
Spin instructions, please!

Chorus

(There are beaucoup stanzas. Google "Throw a Nickel on the Grass" for others.)

For those who have wondered what the phrase "throw a nickel on the grass" means, well, here's the answer (*as forwarded by email from Lon Holtz from an unnamed old fighter pilot and Delta captain*) or at least one version.

Greek mythology states that Charon, ferryman of Hades, required payment of one coin to ferry a soul across the River Styx, which separates the worlds of the living and the dead. Coins were typically placed in the mouths of loved ones before burial to ensure safe passage to the underworld. Over time this practice has been adapted in various forms across societies.

Today, a coin left on a headstone signifies respects paid by someone. Various coin denominations are used (a penny if you knew the person, quarter if you were present when they passed, etc.), but to the airman only one coin matters: the nickel. Of all the fighter pilot traditions and heritage, the phrase "nickel on the grass" is easily held in the highest regard. A chorus from an old fighter pilot song, the phrase evolved from an unlikely beginning to become synonymous with remembering a fallen aviator.

In early twentieth century London, the Salvation Army, while working the streets to collect donations, was sometimes confronted by unruly crowds. Musicians helped distract the crowds during collections by playing music. By 1915, the Salvation Army bands had migrated to the United States and grown in popularity outside bars on college campuses. After playing, the band would then go through the bars and pass around an upside-down tambourine while repeating, "Throw a nickel on the drum and you'll be saved."

Inevitably, the drunken students came up with the parody, "Throw a nickel on the drum, save another drunken bum," which inspired several colorful limerick spin-offs in the 1920's. Years later, F-86 pilot William Starr in Korea modified the lyrics to those familiar to today's pilots.

The title of the song serves as the chorus to verses relating various precarious flying situations that inevitably end with the ultimate sacrifice, reminding us of the daily risk aviators take. The chorus embodies a mark of mutual respect and remembrance for a downed flyer. This message, combined with the melody of the Salvation Army band tune, made it an instant classic.

During the Vietnam War, the lyrics were changed by units to reflect their aircraft and mission of the time. In an F-4 squadron, for example, "The Yalu" was modified to "The Mekong," "Major" was replaced by "My Wingman." "Pyongyang" was replaced with "Saigon," and "Sabre" replaced by "Phantom."

Sometime after the war, the chorus phrase made the leap from song to toast, immortalized by an unknown author's closing words in his tribute to the fighter pilot:

"So here's a nickel on the grass to you, my friend, and your spirit, enthusiasm, sacrifice and courage -- but most of all to your friendship. Yours is a dying breed and when you are gone, the world will be a lesser place."



From the Archives

(The following is adapted from the 604th SOS History, Jul - Sep 1969, with an excerpt from the 3rd TFW History from the same period.)



During this period the 604th Special Operations Squadron continued flying the A-37 on close air support and interdiction from Bien Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam. Living up to its motto of the "Closest Air Support," the squadron flew 2,888 combat sorties during the period without the loss of a single aircraft.

The one-year tour policy results in every squadron facing constant change in personnel, and this quarter was no exception for the 604th, which lost 16 pilots while gaining 15. One of the departing pilots was the Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. David H. Auld, Jr. Lt. Col. Harold E. Hanson (former Operations Officer) took over the reins of the 604th. One of the newcomers, Lt. Col. James J. King, assumed duties as Operations Officer. Another newcomer, Lt. Col. James Neale, is head of Current Operations in the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing. Lt. Col. Tommy Box is assigned as Assistant to Wing Plans. Lt. Col. Frank Hense, Jr. had the dubious honor of being the first Lt. Col. flight commander in the 604th, replacing Major Marvin E. Foreman, Jr., who was assigned to the Wing Safety Office. All new pilots were checked out by the departing pilots and are now combat ready, flying regular missions with the squadron.

During the quarter the 604th was checking out flight leads and instructor pilots at an increased rate to fulfill the needs of the upcoming quarter when two additional squadrons of A-37Bs and crews will arrive at Bien Hoa to replace the F-100 squadrons going home.

With the programmed loss of two F-100 squadrons, the 604th tested dropping the Mk-82 High Drag bomb, which proved successful, and the entire squadron was certified in the tactics and delivery of the weapon.

During this quarter, the maintenance sections lost 23 personnel while gaining 13 through reassignments.

The 604th now possesses 27 of the 28 A-37As in the USAF. When aircraft 64504 returns from analytical teardown and inspection at SAAMA, the 604th will possess all A-37As in the USAF inventory.

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

One of the major problems was the gear doors failing to give a safe uplock indication, which caused several aborted bombing missions and numerous "ops checks." The problem was not identified specifically and a trial and error method was used to fly the aircraft.

Another continuing problem has been failure of the bolts in the nose gear. A temporary fix has reduced failures somewhat, but a permanent fix is needed.

Another significant change was a reduction in the sortie rate from 1.5 to 1.4, during which time the squadron has six aircraft on alert from 0700L to 1900L versus two.

Winners of the "Top Gun" award for July, August, and September were Lt. Vic Grahn, Captain Frank Hale, and Major Marvin Freeman, Jr. Captain Hale also took top honors for the wing.

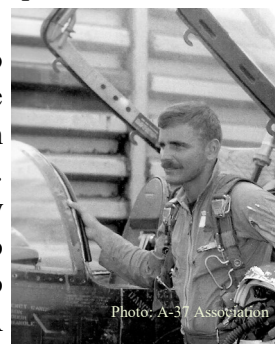
The weapons shop, though no longer an integral part of the squadron, continues to do an outstanding job for the 604th. Weapons crews, though many times undermanned, were able to support the combat sorties with no sign of letdown. The GAU-2B/A mini-gun continued to be a problem with failure in the clearing mechanism and jamming. These problems caused a significant reduction in the number of rounds fired during the quarter after the Commander set operational restrictions for the weapon.

(From the 3rd TFW History:)

Plans continued for conversion of the 3rd TFW from a mixed wing of one A-37A squadron and three F-100D/F squadrons to one with four A-37B squadrons. The changeover, according to 3TFW Operations Plan 303-69, would be completed by the end of June 1970. Each of the new squadrons would have 18 A-37B's and would come overseas combat ready and fully manned.

By the end of September, the movement directive was received with the first two A-37B squadrons, the 310th Attack Squadron (AS) and the 311th AS, to arrive on 26 November and 10 December 1969 respectively.

The operations plan shows units deploying from the CONUS to Bien Hoa as the 310 AS, 311 AS, 511 AS, and 512 AS, all from England AFB, Louisiana.



Lt. Vic Grahn.

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

War Story

(The following is adapted from an article submitted for, but not published in *Dragonfly: A-37s over Vietnam*, and is continued from the Oct newsletter.)

Good Times, Bad Times

by Hank Keese

The FAC called, "Hawk 3, you're taking heavy ground fire.

I released my last canister of napalm and pulled up and to the right to avoid even more small arms fire now coming up from the left. We found out later that we had been bombing near, but not on, a fairly large concentration of VC. Our Army patrol had run into a company-size enemy force moving under cover of darkness.

As I tried to avoid the bursts of small arms fire crossing in front of me, I pulled harder to the right. By habit, I looked as I turned in order to make sure I was clear in the direction of the turn. This time I wasn't and what I saw made my heart stop for a second.

Ugly, fat tracers from a .51 cal. machine gun were reaching straight for me from off to the right side of my plane. With a sick feeling, I knew I had flown into a trap that, by all rights, should end up with the .51 cal. gunner getting another notch on his rice can.

Due to the urgency of the situation, I had attacked a target without knowing exactly what it was and now I seriously thought I would pay for that error with my life. Actually, I should have been dead already, but the VC gunner was not leading my airplane enough. I was still low because my sharp turn had reduced my ability to climb and although I had full power on both engines, I was not accelerating because I was pulling so many G's. It wouldn't take the gunner long to figure out what he had to do to hit me, and I wasn't any further from him.

Instead, I was arcing closer to him to stay out of the hail of bullets coming from the troops in front of me. I heard my airplane take another hit, but, thankfully, the engines kept running just fine and, in spite of the shudder I felt on the controls, the aircraft responded to all the commands I gave it and I climbed as much as I could while keeping up with the tight turn.

If the time had been available, I'm sure I would have been terrified at what was happening to me. Instead I just thought, "I've had enough of this shit," and kept the hard turn heading directly toward the .51 cal. in a shallow dive giving the Gomer on the gun as small a target as possible. I went by the gun pit so fast and so low he couldn't bring his gun around in time to take a good parting shot, which was what I was hoping for. As the tracers finally started tracking me, I jinked as best I could at that low altitude and stayed low until I was out of range.



I wasn't sure how badly my aircraft was hit, but my pilot's instinct told me that my engines were running normally for the moment even though I couldn't take time to look at the instruments. I reasoned that as long as I hadn't taken a hit that damaged my ability to control the aircraft, I should be okay now that I was heading away from the bulk of ground fire. Time to climb, check Two, check on the FAC, watch your heading, clear, clear, and look for Two.

All this passed through my thought process without me being aware of it, but it helped to make decisions necessary to get through the mess I was in. Sometimes instinct is the only thing keeping us safe. Knowing what to do without thinking about it. All of the hundreds of inputs per second that were being fed into my senses and processed without my realizing it were resulting in my moving my hands, feet, and eyes in the manner necessary to stay alive.

It's instinct.

It's situational awareness.

It's called "Making Your Own Luck!"

During my escape from the .51 cal., I ended up flying directly over where the Army patrol was hiding. Several weeks later, one of the grunts who had been pinned down in the mud came by our bar. He told me I was so low as I blew by his position he could see me in the cockpit.

Once I quit pulling Gs, the little fighter accelerated as advertised and shot above the flare into the friendly darkness. The aircraft seemed to be flying okay, but I was worried about putting any

stress on it. Under normal circumstances, it was time to pack it in and go home. I told the FAC I had taken some hits and asked him if there were going to be any backup on this target.

"Hawk, you guys are it. I've been begging for help, but the bad guys seem to be pushing us around all over the Delta. We can't count on more help for at least an hour.

"Lead, this is Two. Are you alright?" my wingman asked.

"No, not really, but it seems we don't have a choice. Let's get on with it before my good sense takes over and I go home."

That .51 cal. gun was going to be a big problem if we were to get the Army guys out of the bomb craters. We had to silence it or this whole mission was going to be useless. Time was running out for the guys on the ground. Two had one bomb left, which would do the trick if he could find the target.





...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

....And So It Began

(continued, Chapter 8 of an unpublished book by Fred Long)

"Two, do you have a good fix on that .51 cal. near the friendlies? The one that just about cooked my goose?"

"Negative, Lead. I saw the small arms and some tracers, but I don't think I can find the exact spot."

"Two, we have to silence that gun one way or another. I'll try strafing the bugger and when you see where he is, roll in behind him and take him out."

"Copy, Lead. Where are you now?"

"North of the flare at 3,000 feet. I'll be in hot from the west."

The good thing about flying a mission like this was that you didn't have time to be scared. If I had had the time to think about what I was about to do, I might not have been so hasty to punch that Tar Baby again.

"Roger, Lead. I'm south at 2,500 feet. You come off to the south and I'll be in from the east."

"Good copy, Two. Tilly, Lead's in hot to strafe."

I was just a little bit madder at that .51 cal. than I was scared of him. I rolled the aircraft over on its back and pulled the nose down into a steep 45-degree dive. As I rolled right side up and flipped the Master Arm switch on, the dimly lit gunsight mounted on the glare shield in front of me lined up on the gun pit. I had already selected the mini-gun and so I tightened my index finger on the red trigger switch on the front of the control stick, feeling the switch click to the first detent and then the second. The nose gun burped 100 rounds per second into the target with an audible rrrrruuuuuhhhh.

In the dark, the tracers, which were every fifth round, looked like a steady stream of fire pouring out of a hose. As my bullets sprayed the gun pit, the Gomers started firing back. For a few moments, everything froze in time except the guy on the .51. Our tracers crossed in the black space between us.

Now that I was committed, I realized I couldn't pull off the target before silencing it. To stop shooting and pull up would expose the belly of the aircraft and I wasn't anxious to give him a second chance. I kept my finger on the trigger.

The FAC was jubilant, yelling over the radio, "You're all over him, Lead. Pour it on!"

The gunfire exchange lasted only a few seconds, but all that time I was diving with ever increasing speed. Pulling the throttles and lowering the speed brake, I kept firing into the gun pit. Finally, the .51 went silent and I pulled back on the stick and eased the throttles up. I glanced at the altimeter and, just as I feared, I was down in the dirt, maybe too low!

(continued in next newsletter)

Monday morning, July 22, I got my boarding pass, gave it a big kiss, and shoved it inside my shirt so nothing would happen to it. Wednesday was payday. I would cash my check that day, pick up my pay and medical records, and outside of closing my post office box, I would be ready to leave. I felt good. Only four days to go. Dexter and I walked over to the Airman's Club for a cheeseburger. I asked him if he had decided to go to Hinton with me. We were both scheduled for the same flight out. He said he would. That was the icing on the cake.

Wednesday morning, July 24, I walked to the Post Office and got my check and a letter from Mother. I picked up my pay records from finance and walked next door to the Bank of America so I could cash my check. After that, I walked over to the Dispensary and picked up my medical records. Only one more thing to do. I had asked Mother not to send any letters after July 20. She had sent me a letter every single day and I think I got every one of them, although some days I would get two or three at a time. I was really looking forward to seeing her again, and just walking in the door so I could say "I'm home."

Only two more days. Not really two days, only forty-five hours. I was counting the hours now. But it was still two more nights. Two more nights to worry about whether an attack would come or not. It seems like we were way overdue and I could taste acrid rocket fumes on my tongue. And although my sleep was restless, we were spared, awarded with two more glorious nights of silence.

As remarkable as it may seem, I have but a vague memory of my July 26 departure from Vietnam. I woke up that morning as jubilant as ever. My bag had been packed the night before and I needed only to dress in my 1505s. Dexter and I had arranged to meet for breakfast. I took a photograph of my locker, just so I could take with me a memory of how hard it was to get. The towel I had used when taking my shower was hanging on the door. My 1505s were hanging on the left along with the shirt I wore the day before. It would remain, as did the stack of books I had beneath them and a guitar that was resting vertically against the inside frame. It was an inexpensive acoustic guitar that a Vietnamese friend in the F-5 section had bought in Saigon. It only cost seventeen piastres, about \$15, and I thought I would try to learn to play it, but being left-handed, no one was able to help me. I did learn to play a few bars of Duane Eddy's "Rebel-rouser." But I soon learned I had no talent and gave up. The guitar would stay for the next guy.

...the smallest fighter... the fastest gun

The photograph shows a few odds and ends scattered about: a flashlight, an empty, partially-folded brown paper bag, a can of shaving cream, and a bar of soap. On the bottom shelf is the small bag I would take with me. Everything else, except for the 1505s, would stay behind.

I dressed, picked up my bag, and walked to the chow hall. Dexter, as usual, was already there. After eating a large, healthy breakfast, we walked to the Aerial Port. I believe the plane, a World Airways Boeing 707, was scheduled to leave around twelve noon. Dexter was also traveling light, and like me, had his camera hanging from his neck. We had been told to arrive about four hours early, but it was close to nine when we walked inside and gave them our boarding pass. Dexter checked his bag. Our timing had been good because we didn't have a long line to contend with. Several people would be leaving on our flight, but I have no memory of any of them, or what I did while waiting to board the plane. It was more of an anticlimax than anything I can describe. I might have been in a daze, lost in thought, even perhaps in disbelief that I found myself at this place.

When the time came, Dexter and I crossed the tarmac, climbed the airstairs, and I took a window seat. I guess Dexter took the seat next to me, but I don't know that for sure. When the plane got into the air I took my last photograph of Vietnam. It's a nice panoramic view of the landscape with Bien Hoa in the distance. I suppose some expression of happiness was exhibited upon takeoff, but I have no memory of anything of that nature. I think it was nothing more than a sigh of relief. I believe, if anything exceptional occurred, I would remember that.

Our first stop was at Okinawa. We had about a two-hour layover. I ended up buying a gold-plated wristwatch at the airport gift shop. Our next stop was in Hawaii. I bought a new watch band to go with my new watch. The next stop would be San Francisco. The entire flight from Vietnam to San Francisco was about sixteen hours and because we crossed the International Date Line, we arrived in the U.S. the same day we left Vietnam.

Our next stop would be at Nellis Air Force Base, where a friend of mine, Tony Scaramosino, worked at the base Post Office. I got to know him when he was manager of the Fremont Theatre in downtown Las Vegas. I thought he would be able to help us get a hop East. (A hop was free, space-available U.S. military aircraft flight.) We took a



A memory for Fred

bus to Las Vegas to the train depot facing Fremont Street.

We had several hours to kill before the bus to the base would arrive so we decided to visit some of the downtown casinos. Goldies casino was closed. That was a disappointment. The entire place was boarded up. I was now twenty-one and wanted to play the slot machines. I wanted to play until someone asked to see my identification. I was thinking about when I was thrown out of the Pioneer because I wasn't old enough to be there.

We went across the street to the Pioneer and I started playing the quarter slot machines. I had a roll of quarters and was dropping them one by one in the slot until finally someone asked to see my ID. I showed it to him. He looked at it carefully and gave it back to me. I had a quarter in the machine and pulled the handle. Twenty quarters dropped out. When it was time for us to leave to catch the bus, I was ahead seven dollars.

When we arrived at the base, we went straight to the Post Office and talked to Tony. It was a nice reunion. He told us who we had to talk with and even made a phone call so we would be expected. We went to the Air Mobility Command Center and were able to obtain a flight that would take us to either Alabama or Georgia, non-stop. I really have no memory of where we landed, but I'm sure it was one of these two states. From that point, we took a commercial flight to Charleston, West Virginia. I had called my parents before getting on the flight and they were in Charleston to pick us up. It was July 27. Dexter stayed with me two days and caught the train to his home in Lisbon, New Hampshire. My father and I stood on the platform until the train pulled out. When the train started to move, Dexter waved at me; I waved back. I would not see him again for two years.

(This is the last installment of two chapters of Fred Long's unpublished book "...And So It Began.")



Bien Hoa AB, RVN



A-37 Association Memorabilia



50th Anniversary Wine Stopper
\$10 (includes shipping)
4 remaining



A-37 Cap
\$15 (plus \$5 shipping)
4 remaining



A-37 Polo Shirt
\$24,
(plus \$5 shipping)
2 L, 2 XL remaining



50th Anniversary Patch
\$6 (includes shipping)



Lapel Pin
1" sq
\$8 (includes shipping)



2 1/4-inch Decal
\$4 (includes shipping)



50th Anniversary Commemorative Mug
\$6 (plus \$5 shipping)
5 remaining



Commemorative (Challenge) Coin
\$10 plus \$3 shipping (\$4 if ordering 2 or more)

To order, send a note saying what you want along with a check for payment to A-37 Association,
142 Arrowhead Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117

or

Send an email to dragonfly369@charter.net with your order request and then use Paypal to send
payment to dragonfly369@charter.net.