



# The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

December 23, 2008

Volume VIII

## San Antonio



If you weren't there, you missed a good time at the 2008 Convention in San Antonio on November 6-9. Approximately 30 members plus guests were present at The Hyatt Place on the San Antonio River Walk. Due to conflicts with the 433<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing, the schedule was changed around at the last minute and we went out to Lackland on Friday morning and had our board and membership meeting on Saturday. Loadmasters from the 68<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron and the Air Force loadmaster school hosted the group for a tour of a Lockheed C-5A Galaxy after which the group toured the Air Force Basic Training Museum on the basic training facility at Lackland. (For those who don't know, Kelly Air Force Base was closed during the Clinton Administration and the airfield and facilities are now part of Lackland Air Force Base.) The museum is in the same building it was in when many of us went through Lackland for BMT or OTS, but the emphasis has changed to reflect basic training history and many of the exhibits that were there previously have been moved to the USAF Museum in Dayton, Ohio. After touring the museum the group went over to Kelly for lunch at the Kelly O Club, which is now a commercial establishment.

On Saturday morning the officers and board members met for our annual board meeting. Several items were discussed, particularly the time frame and location for future conventions. In the absence of Chairman Ace Bowman due to the sudden onset of an illness, Vice-Chairman Carl Wyrick presided. After the board meeting the group met for the general members meeting,

at which expiring vacancies on the board were filled by unanimously re-electing the members whose terms were set to expire. After the meeting Air Force veteran Bob Layman gave a presentation based on his service at Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam in 1971-72 as a crew chief on a SCATBACK T-39 that was used to ferry film containers and messages from 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force to other bases in South Vietnam and Thailand.

On Saturday evening we were treated to a Mexican buffet at a meeting room near the hotel. The group was privileged to salute a historic US flag that belonged to a USMC veteran and was carried during the siege of Khe Sanh. We were entertained by a mariche band. Our speakers were a British couple – the father was a boy during World War II and often met young American airmen at the pub owned by his father near Saltby Air Base where the 314<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group was stationed. His daughter is active in a local history group and they were instrumental in having a monument to the men and women who served at the airfield erected.

We want to give a special thanks to organizers Andy Vaquera and Hector Leyva for a really fantastic job putting things together. Andy solicited contributions from local San Antonio businesses – including his own – that kept the overall cost down. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the men of the 433<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing for providing transportation to and from Lackland and for taking time out to show a group of aging veterans one of their C-5s. Great job guys!

#### **Financial Report**

Cash on hand as of November 1 = \$7,357.76

Deposit on November 10 = \$1,427.00 (Reunion registration and sales)

Check 1014 = \$ 422.15

Check 1015 = \$1, 509.24

Cash on hand November 30 = \$6,853.37

#### **Renewal Reminder!**

Unless you are a Life or 5-Year member or have previously extended your membership, remember that regular memberships are due for renewal during the first quarter of 2009. Send your renewal to Treasurer Ralph Bemis, 527 Pickthorne Road, Cabot, AR 72023. Regular membership is \$25.00 per year, 5-Year is \$100.00 and Life Membership is \$250.00.

#### **Association Apparel**

Andy and Hector designed some really great T-shirts and golf shirts for the Convention and they were a big hit with attendees. The golf shirts come in either blue or black and are a good way to advertize our organization. Other items include lanyards – I use mine for my company and Hobby Airport security badges – and hat pins. Visit the TCTAA web site at [www.troopcarrier.org/home.html](http://www.troopcarrier.org/home.html) to see photographs and for ordering instructions.

#### **Future Conventions**

The board recommended and the membership agreed that future conventions would be held every two years, with the next convention to be held at a place yet to be decided in 2010. A recommendation was made to have our conventions in conjunction with an air show if at all

possible, and Hector Leyva and Sam McGowan are looking into air shows in San Antonio and the annual Wings Over Houston for 2010. Since air shows are only scheduled in December of the previous year, we won't be able to announce a firm date until a year from now if we go that route. Other options are possible and the board is eager to consider proposals from members who are willing to host a convention in their locale. The group also agreed to move away from Veterans Day Weekend due to possible conflicts. Another recommendation was that all conventions be at a location near something related to aviation since we are an aviation group, either a museum or an air base, preferably with a troop carrier/tactical airlift connection. The board recognizes that, based on the 2008 experience and previous experiences in Galveston, it is imperative that the reunion organizers have a local connection in the town or city where the convention is held. The officers and board are requesting proposals from members for conventions in their local area. Please contact Chairman Ace Bowman, Vice-Chairman Carl Wyrick or President Hector Leyva if you would like to host a convention.

### **Off-Year Events**

Although it was not brought up at the members meeting, on Sunday morning some of those present discussed the possibility of having an off-year group event in the years when no conventions are scheduled. The initial emphasis was on a luxury cruise, although other group activities have also been suggested. At this point we are still in the discussion stage but those who were asked in San Antonio seemed enthusiastic about a cruise. Several members have been on cruises and are enthusiastic about the idea. A cruise ship is akin to a floating hotel, with several restaurants, a casino, shops and nightly entertainment. An ideal cruise would be up the West Coast from Seattle to Alaska, but due to the time frame because of weather, that will probably be best to put off for a couple of years. However, we can go on a Caribbean cruise late in 2009, preferably after hurricane season, meaning the latter part of October and November. Carnival has a cruise out of Galveston that leaves on Monday afternoon before Veterans Day and comes back the following Saturday morning. The cost varies depending on the type of stateroom, but is generally around \$500 per person or less, which includes all meals – including a semi-formal (jacket for the men) dinner each evening - and beverages except for alcohol and soft drinks. Shore excursions are also extra. This particular cruise departs from Galveston on Monday afternoon and is at sea all day Tuesday, then is in port on Wednesday near Marita, Mexico. That night the ship cruises around the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula to Cozumel for the day on Thursday, then departs for the return trip that afternoon and arrives in Galveston in time for breakfast Saturday morning. This is an example of one cruise – others depart from New Orleans, Florida and points on the East and West Coast.

### **Honor Members**

An item brought up and approved in San Antonio was the honoring of troop carrier/tactical airlifters who have passed on with special honors, including a special web page for that member, projects, funds, etc. The first person recommended for honor status is loadmaster Charlie Shaub, the only loadmaster to be awarded the Air Force Cross. The late Warren "Huey" Long was also recommended, as was the late Col. Charles W. Howe. In the future we will probably establish a Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Hall of Fame, but in the meantime we plan to honor these men by making them honor members of our organization. One way to honor someone is to make a donation to the Association in that individual's name. All donations are fully tax deductible and they can be used to further the goals of the organization. The names of those who are memorialized by a contribution will be posted on the web site.

### Honorary Member

We would like to welcome John DeLauriers as an honorary member of the association. John, who lives in Galveston, Texas where he is retired from the fire department, was a US Army helicopter crewmember in Vietnam in 1972. He was a crewmember in a formation operating near the town of An Loc when they saw a burning C-130 cross in front of them. The helicopters followed the stricken airplane to the ground and picked up the crewmembers, including TCTAA members Ralph Bemis and Charlie Armistead. John was with us at the two events in Galveston and we are happy to honor him for his role in saving the lives of our fellow airmen and friends.

### Forum and Email Group

We want to encourage everyone to use the Forum on the web site and to subscribe to the TCTAA members Email group. Although there were some problems with spammers on the forum initially, those problems have been rectified. Several boards have been set up. The TCTAA members Email group currently has approximately 16-20 subscribers and is becoming active. We do have [www.troopcarrier.org](http://www.troopcarrier.org) Email addresses available so if you would like to have one, contact the web site administrator at [administrator@troopcarrier.org](mailto:administrator@troopcarrier.org).

### Ardmore and The Four Horsemen



In December 1956 the first operational C-130s were delivered to the 463<sup>rd</sup> Troop Carrier Wing at Ardmore AFB, Oklahoma. Five brand-new airplanes were delivered that day, and 55-0023 was the first to arrive. It was met by a welcoming committee and christened as "The City of Ardmore" and is now on display at Dyess AFB, Texas. Billie Mills was a young lieutenant copilot in the 774<sup>th</sup> TCS at the time. Following is an Email he wrote in response to an Email sent out by

CMSgt. Bob Layman commemorating the delivery of the first operational airplane.

*...FOR I WAS THERE IN THE 774TH TCS, WHEN GENE CHANEY AND STUMP COLEMAN AND AL MARCHMAN DELIVERED THE BEAUTY. THOSE WERE THE DAYS YOU COULD MAKE A 3 ENGINE TAKE OFF WITH OUT ASKING FOR PERMISSION, THE AUTO PILOT WASN'T ALLOWED TO BE USED FOR ABOUT 3 YEARS, AND THE FLIGHT ENGINEER WAS ALSO THE CREW CHIEF AND OWNER OF THE INDIVIDUAL AIRCRAFT HE WAS ASSIGNED.*

*THE WING COMMANDER WOULD NOT LET ANYONE CHECK OUT IN THE C-130 UNTIL WE HAD 2000 HOURS PILOT TIME SO THE SQUADRON HAD A STANDING LIST OF VOLUNTEERS TO FLY ANY THING AND ANY TIME ON EITHER THE C-130 OR THE C-119 FORK TAILED DEVIL--STRAINING TO GET THE 2000 HOURS. THE SQUADRON PATCH WAS CHANGED TO THE **FAMOUS GREEN WEASEL** , SO CALLED BY MAJOR WHISPERING JACK WHEELER, DESIGNED AND DRAWN BY LTS, VINCE SANTUCCI, BILLIE B. MILLS, AND THE BASE SERVICES LT-AND I CANNOT RECALL*

HIS NAME. CAPT CHANEY AND I DELIVERED A C-130 TO ASHYIA (SP) AND HAD THE FIRST BATCH OF GREEN WEASEL PATCHES MADE.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN, BUT LAUGHING CALLED **THE THUNDERWEASELS**, WERE BORN AT FORT CAMPBELL DURING A LOCAL FLIGHT, WERE ACCEPTED BY THE 463RD WING COMMANDER COLONEL JAMES DANIELS, AND WE WERE ALLOWED TO FLY OUR FIRST SHOW AT HIS RETIREMENT AT ARDMORE. AFTER MOVING THE WING TO SEWART AFB, TENNESSEE, THE TEAM DECIDED WE NEEDED A MORE SOPHISTICATED NAME AND **THE FOUR HORSEMEN** TITLE WAS ADOPTED, THE HORSEMEN PATCH WAS DESIGNED TO BE USED ON THE FLYING SUIT AND A BLAZER WHEN WE HAD A SHOW. THE C-130A WAS THE ONLY MODEL USED BY THAT GROUP SINCE SHORTLY AFTER AN OUTSTANDING SHOW AT NASHVILLE AND SEWART, CINCTAC DECIDED THAT THE TEAM BE DISBANDED SINCE ONLY "FIGHTERS" COULD FLY REAL FORMATION--WE ALL CRIED AND BID THE GLORY TIMES GOODBY WITH A FEW SCOTCH AND WHATEVERS.

MY FAVORITE C-130A WAS 50030, BECAUSE THE CREW CHIEF/FLIGHT ENGINEER WAS T/SGT DENISON TAYLOR, BETTER KNOWN AS "THROTTLES" TAYLOR SINCE EVERY CHANCE HE GOT HE WOULD GO OUT AND RUN UP THE ENGINES UNTIL THE LINE CHIEF OR MAINTENANCE OFFICER WOULD ORDER HIM TO QUIT MAKING NOISE AND/OR BURNING UP FUEL. IN LATER YEARS AT 13AF STAN/EVAL AT CLARK I WAS PRIVILEGED TO HAVE SMSGT THROTTLES AS FLIGHT ENGINEER ON MY TEAM.

The US Department of Defense recently announced the identification and burial of remains of the crew and a single US Army passenger that was aboard the 463<sup>rd</sup> TAW that was shot down immediately after taking off from the besieged camp at Kham Duc on May 12, 1968. Kham Duc was featured in the April edition of The Airlifter. Following is the news release and immediately behind it is an Email from Col. Billie Mills, who was pilot of the last C-130 to come out of the camp with passengers onboard.

### **Servicemen MIA From Vietnam War are Identified**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the group remains of six U.S. servicemen, missing from the Vietnam War, are soon to be buried with full military honors.

They are Maj. Bernard L. Bucher, of Eureka, Ill.; Maj. John L. McElroy, of Eminence, Ky.; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Stephen C. Moreland, of Los Angeles; and Staff Sgt. Frank M. Hepler, of Glenside, Pa., all U.S. Air Force. These men will be buried as a group on Dec. 18 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

Two other servicemen, who were individually identified in October 2007, are also represented in this group. They are Capt. Warren R. Orr Jr., U.S. Army, of Kewanee, Ill., and Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class George W. Long, U.S. Air Force, of Medicine, Kan.

Representatives from the Air Force and the Army mortuary offices met with the next-of-kin of these men to explain the recovery and identification process and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the secretary of the Air Force and the secretary of the Army.

On May 12, 1968, these men were on board a C-130 Hercules {s.n. 60-0297} evacuating Vietnamese citizens from the Kham Duc Special Forces Camp near Da Nang, South Vietnam. While taking off, the crew reported taking heavy enemy ground fire. A forward air controller flying in the area reported seeing the plane explode in mid-air soon after leaving the runway.

In 1986 and 1991, U.S. officials received remains and identification tags from sources claiming they belonged to men from this incident. Scientific analysis revealed they were not American remains, but it was believed the Vietnamese sources knew where the crash site was located.

In 1993, a joint/U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), traveled to Kham Duc and interviewed four local citizens concerning the incident. They led the team to the crash site and turned over remains and identification tags they had recovered in 1983 while looking for scrap metal. During this visit, the team recovered human remains and aircraft wreckage at the site. In 1994, another joint team excavated the crash site and recovered remains, pieces of life-support equipment, crew-related gear and personal effects.

JPAC scientists used forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence in the identification of the remains.

**From:** [Bill & Ann Mills](#)

**To:** [Scatback Scribe](#)

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 16, 2008 12:56 PM

**Subject:** Re: Six C-130 Servicemen MIA From Vietnam War are Identified

Scatback, Thanks for the article and information.

I knew Major Bucher and the crew who were from our squadron. I arrived at Kham Duc and the airborne mission commander,(The Commanding General, 834th Air Division), who was on scene in a C-130) assigned me as "number 6 in the holding pattern. Later he directed my crew as the next aircraft to land to pick up the remaining personnel on the ground. When I arrived in the stack I could see some smoke from the mountainous riverbed where Major Bucher had crashed.

I was in the 774th TAS, that is I was attached to the 774th, and happened to be the last C-130 who landed at KHAM DUC that day. I was assigned to 13 AF, as Chief C-130 Stan Eval and as such I flew at least 2 weeks each month in Viet Nam, with my stan/eval crewmembers one week, taking any mission as a regular crew and one to two weeks flying with other C-130B/E aircrews from 463TAW or 314 TAW, including aiding in TAC Rotation Aircrews Theater orientation( as if most of the rotators had not already spent a significant amount in Theater and I knew a great number of them) .

My crew that day were 774th line crews, (I have a copy of those flight orders-but like most all old flyers I can;t find them just now but I will-I remember that LT. Pat MacNanee was the cp and Capt. Bryan Peach was my nav.--my problem is I need the orders to identify the FE and LM--I sincerely apologize for not having their names at the moment --all did good work that day.)

We were to take out the last remaining troops--about 115 men who were the final rear perimeter guard. That group included an Infantry company/detachment, about a dozen US Marines, and a few special forces troops.

My crew had watched the C-130 that had gotten shot up and crashed on the runway landing but managed to get his C-130 off the runway before it quit skidding, so the runway was open enough for us to land and take off. An earlier C-130 had managed to struggle off even though it had received extensive fire. So we reworked the performance data and began our approach from the east and were advised to takeoff to the east since the heavy guns were near the west end of the runway.

When I contacted the Ground Commander's CP, I was asked to land as short as possible since the ground troops were located at the approach end of the runway and they were the only people left on the ground at Kham Duc. We landed in about 1000 feet stopped and turned the airplane around to be ready

to take off when the troops boarded. Looking down the runway, we saw about 100 troops, full field packs, weapons, and running as hard as they could to our position. I asked the CP if they wanted us to pick them up and that we would wait on them since we were the last opportunity to leave. They said they were ok and for me to go as quickly as the troops boarded. (later at a kham duc reunion, the senior army at the CP said they were in a chopper at that time).

I sent my 2 LM's out to get in front of the airplane and insure that no soldier ran under the props since the anxiety was running very high and the troops had been at their final defense post for at least a day. I asked Capt. Peach to take charge to the troop loading and to make sure they went to the front of the cargo compartment since there were many soldiers heavily loaded and tired. Capt Peach and the LM did a super job in expediting loading. I had told Peach that I wanted him to watch out back since I was going to back down the runway so I had enough takeoff runway. He had the ramp up level and was watching for the extensive debris strung along the runway because of the damaged or crashed aircraft, helicopters and vehicles on the runway.

When we had backed about 1200 to 1400 feet down the runway I asked Peach to have the LM close the ramp just as I stopped, started up the power to max ,ramp closed brakes released and we were fortunate to get off the ground without a single hole in the airplane from enemy fire or that debris. We landed about 25 minutes later at CHU LIA AB where busses met the troops. The troops were generous to us with their words of appreciation. We then got on board, took off, and headed back to KHAM DUC. On reporting in as we approached the area, we were advised that all troops had been evacuated successfully and for me to return directly to TSN and report to 834th CC. The General met me at the airplane and said "Good Job, Thanks," and told his aide that I was awarded the "Silver Star" and to take care of the paperwork. I asked to have all my crewmembers awarded the same Silver Star. I never heard any more about it for about 2 years when received that award in a ceremony at 13th AF HQ. I SEARCHED BACK, WENT TO SEE THE 463RD WING OOMMANDER TO SEEK HIS ASSISTANCE TO GET THE CREW RECOGNIZED BUT ALL I EVER GOT WAS NO HELP. I HAVE ALWAYS WONDERED HOW ONE GUY CAN GET THE MOON AND THE OTHERS GET ANOTHER DAYS SERVICE COMPLETED.

One thing about our approach and landing at KHAM DUC-- on starting my decent and approach i was advised that a flight of F-4's were going to drop bomblets along the south side of the runway to assure the Bad Guys kept their heads down. The F-4's flew (lead and wing dropping a string of bomblets down the runway at 340 knots and in trail. About 20 seconds later the 2nd flight element pair did the same bomblet drops. By that time I was about 200 feet short of the runway and about 30 feet high when the first element made his second bomb run and by the time I was on the ground the next element passed by dropping his final weapons. I did get a call saying they were leaving the area as no more weapons were left. That support gave us quite a thrill to say the least as they had dropped within 200/ 400 yards from the runway and the field boundary. About 6 months later I met a friend that I had met when we were in the same seminar at Command and Staff College in 1964-65, Captain Bob Russ. We talked about what we were doing and the Kham Duc topic came up. I mentioned I was there and I had the privilege of being escorted by a flight of four F-4's. He said that he had wondered who was dumb enough to land, stop, and load a C-130 in that disaster area. Then he said I should have it would have been mental cripple-- like me. We bought each other a drink, one under the excuse that I landed, and a second when he admitted that going by to bomb at 200 feet at 340 knots was at least the dumbest thing he had ever done-- two ( 2 ) times!! (Note: Yes that was the TAC 4 star CINC a few years later-- General Robert Russ, a great guy always!!)

Scatback. hope I didn't bend your ear too much here. One thing more- When I was at Little Rock AFB in 75-78 , MAC deecided to name some of Scott AFB streets for some of AIRLIFT Special People. I submitted Major Bucher's name for an airlifter that got THE AIR FORCE CROSS for valor and should

certainly be recognized. So if you ever go to Scott you can down stroll that street named for our friend and Squadron Mate.

### **Troop Carrier Christmas**



I am writing this on December 17, barely a week before the beginning of what to most Americans is the most poignant, if not happiest, time of the year. In a nation established primarily by Christians, December 25 has long been recognized as an official holiday and a time when Americans seek to express their appreciation for grace and the promise of peace on earth through gift-giving. Yet even though Christmas is an official holiday, it has not been taken off by the soldiers, sailors and airmen engaged in carrying out their country's national objectives, at least not since that miraculous Christmas of 1914 when British and German troops fighting in the trenches in France put aside their weapons and met each other in No

Man's Land to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. Christmases for troop carriers and tactical airlifters have been generally of a far different nature.

The troop carrier mission was only beginning to evolve when America found itself in another war in December 1941. The young American and Filipino soldiers attempting to hold the line on Luzon in the Philippines had no idea that their commander-in-chief had decided to abandon them to their fate. A small air transport squadron under the command of former US Navy petty officer pilot turned US Army Captain Paul I. Gunn flew dispatches, supplies and personnel around the islands, including delivering a load of Christmas turkeys to US troops on Mindanao for the last Christmas dinner many would ever eat and the last until after the war for those who found themselves as prisoners of the Japanese. By Christmas 1942 millions of young Americans were in uniform and more than a million had gone overseas. Young American soldiers, sailors and airmen would be in combat over four Christmas holiday seasons during the most terrible conflict in human history.

The most famous troop carrier Christmas story took place in December 1944 when troop carrier crews assigned to the IX Troop Carrier Command dropped supplies to the besieged 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at the Belgian town of Bastogne. Bastogne lay in the line of German advance in the Ardennes and shortly after the men of the 101<sup>st</sup> were sent to defend it, they found themselves surrounded and cutoff from all means of supply except by air. Originally scheduled to go to Paris for R&R, the Screaming Eagles went into battle without adequate ammunition and when the ground supply routes into the town were cut, they were in a predicament. The only means of resupply was by air and poor winter weather characterized by low ceilings, fog, rain and snow prevented this until two days before Christmas when the

weather finally cleared enough to allow airdrops and close air support. Between December 23-27, IX Troop Carrier Command flew more than 900 sorties, including more than 40 glider missions, delivering supplies to the paratroopers at Bastogne. The resupply was not without cost – at least 17 and possibly as many as 21 C-47s were lost. One mission resulted in the loss of 26% of the C-47s in the formation.

The war was over by Christmas 1945, but the world had entered a new period of instability as opposing philosophies struggled for dominance in the post-war world. December 1948 saw USAF troop carriers engaged in a non-combat role as they played a role akin to Santa Claus flying flour, coal and other badly needed supplies to the blockaded city of Berlin. It is a point worth noting that while the Military Air Transport Service is often credited with the conduct of the operation that came to be known as The Berlin Airlift, it was actually a troop carrier operation from start to finish, and all aircraft and personnel operated under one of five troop carrier groups that had been assigned to United States Air Forces, Europe for the mission. A special mission known as Operation SANTA CLAUS brought Christmas gifts to Berlin for the city's children. Another highlight of the airlift was a Christmas Eve performance by the legendary Bob Hope.

The year 1950 was another bad year for US military forces. In June North Korean troops invaded South Korea and the US responded by sending troops to oppose the Communists. In late November Chinese Communist troops entered the war and began pushing United Nations forces out of North Korea. The Far East Air Forces Combat Cargo Command kept retreating soldiers and Marines supplied as they retreated southward out of the Chosen Reservoir and evacuated casualties from hastily carved out landing strips along the route. FEAF troop carriers evacuated UN forces out of airfields in the North and by Christmas Eve the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and US Army 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had been evacuated out of North Korea to South Korea where they were held in reserve. While the Marines were marching south toward Hagaru-ri and the ships that awaited them, FEAF Combat Cargo Command transports were airlifting UN troops out of Yonpo Airfield in North Korea. Air terminal personnel from the Combat Cargo Support Unit loaded the CCC C-46s, C-47s, C-54s and C-119s with men and equipment for airlift either south or to Japan. As the advancing communist troops threatened South Korea, 12 C-54s from the 61<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Group airlifted Korean orphans from Kimpo to Chedju-Do in Operation CHRISTMAS KIDLIFT, which was depicted in the movie "Battle Hymn" based on the experiences of Ohio minister and Air Force reserve fighter pilot Col. Dean Hess. (In the movie the orphans are evacuated by C-119s.) The Korean War continued for two more years, with heavy fighting that often saw troop carrier crews airdropping supplies to troops in the field.



There were no Christmas events in the long war in Southeast Asia to compare to Bastogne and the retreat from North Korea, but troop carriers and tactical airlifters operated around the clock throughout South Vietnam and Thailand and many have stories to tell. The men of the 483<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing started a custom of painting up one of their C-7A Caribous every year as the "Santa Boo" and

flying Christmas presents to US Army Special Forces camps around South Vietnam. (The airman second from the right is Frank Godek, a flight engineer who lives near Galveston and was with us in 2005 and 2006.)

My personal Christmas experience was in 1966. I was at Cam Ranh Bay on the shuttle with the 35<sup>th</sup> TCS. On Christmas Eve our crew lost a starter at Binh Tuy airfield. A new starter was sent down to us from Saigon and while we were waiting for it to arrive, the engineer, Willy Patrick, and I went to the Airmen's Club for something to eat and the officers went to the O Club. We were flying with Lt. Col. Kevin Montgomery and he wanted us to have a little bit of Christmas, even though we were stuck. Willy and I changed the starter under the light of a cart provided by transient alert – Binh Tuy was an Air Force air base and had an A-1 outfit stationed there. While we worked we kept hoping that the sniper the transient alert guys told us about was a Catholic and was celebrating Christmas too! I don't recall what we did the next day, but I know we flew all day and the only turkey dinner I had was a C-ration. When I got back to Naha after the shuttle I learned that my roommate had been in Bangkok on the shuttle and his crew had been assigned to fly some of Bob Hope's entourage around! Since they were on an A-model, they got the lesser personalities while Bob himself went on an E-model that had been sent to Bangkok just for the mission because it was a lot quieter. Dennie Carroll, my roommate, had Anita Bryant on his airplane and was really proud of the autographed albums she gave the crew.

The Bob Hope Show was something that was long a part of the troop carrier mission during the Christmas Holidays and had become a military tradition by the 1950s. Hope first performed for the USO at March Field, California in 1941. Ninth months after the US entered the war he made his first overseas tour when he went north to Alaska. In 1943 he made his first trip into the combat zones when he went to the European Theater of Operations. By the end of the war he had entertained troops all over the world and broadcast all of his radio shows from military bases.

Hope's association with troop carriers began during the war and in 1948 it was cemented when he went to Germany at the request of Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington to entertain the airmen involved in the Berlin Airlift. From then on, he was overseas for Christmas every season. He traveled overseas courtesy of MATS, then traveled on troop carrier transports in the once he arrived in the overseas theaters. After the Korean War ended his annual tours took him and his entourage to more remote places such as radar stations in Alaska but in 1964 he resumed his practice of visiting combat troops when he went to South Vietnam for the first time. For the next eight years he went to Southeast Asia every Christmas Season. He and his entourage would fly to Bangkok on a MATS/MAC transport then use a PACAF C-130 to fly to South Vietnam or upcountry Thai bases for his shows. Hope would often board a helicopter or C-123 or C-7 to fly to some of the more remote outposts without a runway long enough to accommodate the larger C-130s. He announced that his 1972 tour was going to be his last and while it was his last annual holiday tour, he made special trips to military installations overseas as long as he was physically able. Hope is gone now, but his memory will live on in the minds of the men who flew him and his entourage around.

### **Hurricane Ike**

We were fortunate to be able to use our status as a recognized charity to provide financial aid to member Steve Privette and his wife Linda after their home was demolished by Hurricane Ike.

The Privettes lived in the little community of San Leone on Galveston Bay and their house was destroyed by the home surge. Our members contributed approximately \$1,800 which was passed on to the Privettes to assist them with reestablishing themselves during the interim before they received compensation for their loss from their insurance company. The Privettes are currently in temporary living. They sent a note conveying their gratitude to the Association for the financial help we were able to provide.

### **Membership Goals**

During our board meeting in San Antonio, Vice-Chairman Carl Wyrick recommended that we set an association goal for each current member to recruit three new members during the coming year. As of this writing, our membership stands at 104, including our new honorary member. The TCTAA is the ONLY recognized veteran's organization that is dedicated solely to veterans of the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission. One of our goals is to provide a means of bringing veterans of the mission together. We will be publishing a current membership list and sending it to all members shortly after the beginning of the New Year.

### **Past Issues Online**

Past issues of The Airlifter are available to be read online on the TCTAA web site at [www.troopcarrier.org/home.html](http://www.troopcarrier.org/home.html). All issues for the past year are on the site – the digital manuscripts of the previous issues were lost with the theft of my laptop in late 2007 but I do have the paper copies and plan to scan and post them in the near future.

*Merry Christmas  
and Happy New  
Year!*