
The Airlifter Volume XVII

The Airlifter



Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage

July 18, 2012

Volume XVIII

Financial Report

As of June 19, we have \$8,513.75 in our account. Expenditures since the last newsletter total \$1,612.43. Of that, \$1,000 is a reimbursement to Mike Welch for caps and the rest is convention and newsletter/convention packet related. We sent out our last newsletter and the convention packets to our members who don't have Email. Registration for convention is coming in so our total balance has grown considerably since this date.

Convention

Our biannual convention is only a little over four months away. Tom Stalvey, Roger Greuel and Roger's wife Janet are doing an outstanding job of putting everything together. Registrations are coming in and it looks like we'll have a good turnout. We're shooting for at least 100 attendees. Right now we have a little over twenty who have registered while several others have indicated they plan to be there. Remember that those who plan to participate in the trip to Marietta to tour the Lockheed Martin factory need to submit their full name, date and place of birth, address and place of employment in by August 1 so we can get it to Lockheed Martin's security people in time. Anyone who is not a US citizen will also need to provide their passport number. Please send that information to

Roger Greuel at gfrangus@bellsouth.net or send it to him by mail at: 438 Price Road, Brooks, GA 30205

We're marking the names of those who are planning to attend with an asterisk with a double asterisk on the convention web page at www.troopcarrier.org/convention.html.

We plan to have a "white elephant sale" at some point in which items donated by members are auctioned off with the proceeds going to the association. Any items will be appreciated.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

A Special Honor

Let us extend our congratulations to Darrell Vaughan, who was recently inducted into the Ohio Hall of Valor. Darrell, who is from Lebanon, OH, is one of our newer members. After serving with the 313th Troop Carrier Wing at Forbes, he went to CCK where he was a member of the 50th TAS. On May 12, 1968 Darrell was the loadmaster on one of the crews that landed at Kham Duc to pick up evacuees, an act for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The web page is at www.ohioheroes.org . Congratulations Darrell!

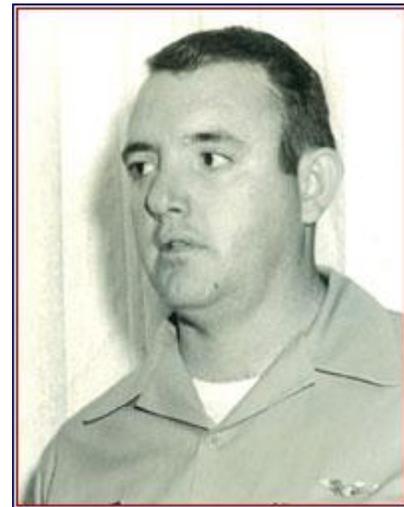
Staff Sergeant Darrell E. Vaughn

United States Air Force

Distinguished Flying Cross

Staff Sergeant Darrell E. Vaughn distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as a C-130E Loadmaster at Kham Duc, Republic of Vietnam on 12 May 1968. On that date Sergeant Vaughn flew a tactical emergency mission into Kham Duc while the base was under fire by hostile forces. By superb flying skill, Sergeant Vaughn evaded the hail of hostile ground fire and successfully evacuated more than 120 Vietnamese civilians and allied ground forces before the field was overrun. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Vaughn reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force

Class of 2012



The Airlifter Volume XVII

Association Caps

A few weeks ago Mike Welch, our president, purchased a number of caps for members of the association to purchase. Due to space, the vendor was unable to place the entire IX Troop Carrier Command patch, which is our official emblem, on the cap. He modified it by leaving off the “Airborne Troop Carrier” from the top and put the name of the association on the back. These caps will be available for sale to convention attendees for \$15.00 apiece, then to the rest of the membership after convention.



The Bamboo Fleet Revisited

A few issues back we featured an article about The Bamboo Fleet, a loosely organized air transport squadron which operated in the Philippines in the dark days of the spring of 1942. I have recently obtained a copy of notes of an interview of Lt. Col. William R. Bradford, who commanded the tiny squadron. The notes shed new light on Bradford and his unit, and gives more information on how they came about and what they did.

Some research reveals that Bradford was a native of Bonham, Texas, and that he was a US Air Service pilot in World War I. He was a founding member of the Order of the Daedalians, with member number 2807. In 1931 he went to Manila to manage a small airline known as Philippine Aerial Taxi Company, or PATCO. After he got to Manila, Bradford was heavily involved with Philippines American Legion Post 1, and became post commander. In 1940 PATCO's assets were purchased by Philippine Airlines, a new company organized by San Miguel Brewery executive Andres Soriano. Bradford held a reserve commission in the Air Corps and decided to go back into the Army. He became base engineer at Nichols Field, then when Far East Air Force was organized in October, 1941 he became chief inspector at the FEAF Air Service Command depot in Manila.

When war broke out, PAL was taken over by Far East Air Force and its chief pilot, former US Navy enlisted pilot P.I. Gunn, was commissioned as a captain and placed in command of a provisional transport squadron consisting of his six Beechcraft 18s – the military designation was C-45 – two Philippine Air Force transports and a single-engine Beechcraft that had formerly belonged to PATCO. For the first few weeks of the war Gunn's squadron operated around the islands. On Christmas Day he and one of his other pilots left Manila with staff members from Far East Air Force, which had been ordered to Australia to reorganize. A few days later his two remaining C-45s also left for Australia carrying a contingent of pursuit pilots. When Gunn's last two C-45s left, there were no more transports left

The Airlifter Volume XVII

in the islands. Bradford assumed a place on the staff of Brig. Gen. Harold H. George, the senior Air Corps officer on MacArthur's staff.

Sometime after the retreat onto Bataan, Bradford was asked if he would fly a code to the commanding general on



Panay. Once he delivered the code, he was to conduct a survey of airfields that were in various stages of construction in anticipation of the arrival of aircraft from Australia. He took a Stearman PT-13 trainer, which had been modified for observation work with the addition of two .30-caliber machineguns. The airmen were calling them O-1s. When he reached Panay, he learned that a Bellanca Skyrocket that he had flown for PATCO was hidden away on the island and was being used for observation work. The commander wanted a better airplane so he and Bradford discussed a trade. When he returned to Bataan, he suggested to George

that they swap one of the Stearmans for the Bellanca. George was all for the idea and sought permission from MacArthur, who authorized the transfer. Bradford returned to Panay with an O-1 and retrieved the Bellanca, which was not in the best of shape. The battery was so dead that no longer did the airplane have to be propped, it would no longer charge. The engine was nearly worn out, with only 200 hours remaining to overhaul.

When Bradford returned from his first flight in the O-1, he carried a crate of eggs and some vegetables in the rear cockpit. They were a big hit with the troops at Bataan Field, where rations were down to practically nothing but rice. The Bellanca was a six-passenger airplane and could carry a substantial load. Bradford took more food back with him on the second flight. This gave George an idea. He told Bradford to fly down to the Del Monte pineapple plantation on Mindanao where an airfield had been constructed and to wait for him there. About the time Bradford left for Panay on his first flight, Captain Hervy H. Whitfield had gone out on a similar mission in the Beechcraft. He was still in the southern islands. George sent a wire telling him to go to Del Monte. The two pilots arrived at Del Monte and waited for several days, wondering why they were there. Finally, George showed up, along with General Douglas MacArthur, his family and staff. George revealed to Bradford and Whitfield that their mission was two-fold. If the Japanese should happen to attack before transports (B-17s) could arrive from Australia, they were to take the MacArthur party to secret airfields to wait for other arrangements to be made. The second purpose of their mission was to set up an operation to move supplies from Mindanao and Cebu to Bataan. George was planning to organize "a supply train" when he reached Australia and they would be at the end of it. Several other airplanes had also been brought to Del Monte, including a WACO that was also a former PATCO airplane and a Grumman amphibious Duck. The Duck was Navy plane that had been sunk at Mariveles on Bataan. Captain (later general) Joe Moore had managed to raise it and get it flying and had been making trips out of Bataan with it. The Bellanca, Beechcraft, WACO and Duck were to make up Bradford's new squadron, which soon came to be known as The Bamboo Fleet.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

Over the next few weeks the pilots made several flights apiece to Bataan. Bradford and Whitfield each made seven round trips. Other pilots included Captain Jack Randolph and Lieutenant Raymond Gehrig, who flew the WACO. They took passengers back to Mindanao on their return flights, men who had been identified by either General Wainwright's headquarters or by MacArthur's headquarters in Australia. Bradford flew out 22 passengers himself.



The night before General King surrendered his forces on Bataan, Randolph and Gehrig made two flights in there from Panay. A few days earlier Joe Moore had come in with the Duck, but his engine had blown a cylinder. Lt. Leo Boelens, a maintenance officer, pulled a cylinder off of a Navy engine and got it running again. A few minutes before the surrender, Captain Roland Barnek (also a later general) flew it out of Bataan with five passengers on board, including Boelens. They got as far as Panay where Bradford came up and picked up the passengers and took them back to Mindanao. The Duck reached Mindanao a few days later.

Bataan had fallen, but Corregidor was still in American hands. On April 12 a special mission of three B-17s and ten B-25s arrived from Australia. Evidently prompted by their presence, Wainwright requested a flight into Corregidor to pick up some passengers. Randolph and Gehrig were still on Panay and they made the flight. According to Bradford, Randolph flew the WACO while Gehrig flew a Stearman, probably the one that had been traded a few weeks before. Although both airplanes nosed over on landing, they came out the next day but only got as far as Panay. Bradford came up from Del Monte with a load of .50-caliber ammunition for a P-40 that was operating out of Iloilo Field but had a mechanical problem and couldn't take the passengers out. A message was sent to Del Monte and Captain P.I. "Pappy" Gunn, who was flying one of the B-25s, came up and got the passengers.

Bradford and the other two pilots remained at Iloilo working on their airplanes. They were joined by three other Americans who had flown out of Bataan on the day of the surrender in one of the Stearmans. Lieutenant Perry Franks came out with two passengers in the rear cockpit, which was so crowded that they each had a leg hanging over the side. They were blown off course and ended up landing on a tiny island and damaged the propeller. They managed to straighten it out but were low on fuel. They finally found a 55-gallon drum of gasoline that had washed ashore after falling off of a Navy barge that had been adrift during a Japanese attack on Cavite in December. They fueled the airplane but ran out again just before reaching Iloilo and cracked up in the water. Franks almost drowned but one of the passengers saved him and got him to shore.

On April 15 Bradford and the others went into town to the home of one of his friends, a pilot from Chicago named Pablo Meng. Meng was boarding up his house and planning to leave the next day, but decided to have a farewell party before he left. They all partied until Bradford got word that Japanese ships had been spotted just offshore. The commanding officer on Panay didn't think they would land, but Bradford had a hunch and went to the airport. Two of the others arrived a little later and they took off for Del Monte just as the Japanese started shelling the town. Randolph and Gehrig had phoo-pooed the warning; they ended up spending the next day in the cellar then sat out through the jungle that night to a sugar plantation where there was a radio. They were picked up by a P-35. Right after Bradford took off, a Lieutenant O'Brien flew the WACO out with two passengers on board. Unfortunately, as they were landing at Del Monte, a Japanese float-plane fighter spotted the WACO and shot it down. All three men were killed. Bradford and his passengers saw it happen.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

The Bamboo Fleet was now down to just two airplanes, the Bellanca and the Duck. The Beechcraft had been strafed and burned at another field on Mindanao. Apparently P.I. Gunn was still on Mindanao and Bradford and the other



pilots were expecting to leave with him, but then a message came down from Corregidor that Wainwright wanted another flight. Col. Grover, the senior officer at Del Monte, thought such a mission was suicidal and Bradford agreed. Grover sent word back to Corregidor that the mission was impossible. A message came back "Try it."

Randolph and Gehrig had reached Del Monte. Bradford later said that "about a score" of pilots assembled to discuss the mission. They determined that the only way to decide who was to fly it was to draw cards. Bradford drew a deuce. The other pilots thought he had palmed it but he told the interviewer that it was just the luck of the draw. He discussed the mission with the

two pilots who had landed at Corregidor a few days before. They decided his best chance would be to arrive right at daybreak as soon as it was light enough to see but too early for the Japanese on Bataan to see him. There were only two possible refueling stops still remaining. Bradford knew there were 1,400 gallons of gasoline on Negros, just across the strait from Iloilo. He decided to land there.

He took off at 3:00 PM on the afternoon of April 18 (or possibly 19th) so as to reach Negros right at dusk. A P-40 pilot went out ahead to escort him. When he reached Bacolod, he went into town to get a few hours sleep. He took off again at 3:00 AM and flew as low as he possibly could. Before he reached Corregidor, he ran into low-lying clouds and had to climb. He arrived ahead of his planned ETA so he headed out to the west of the island to circle until it was time to land. As it turned out, he was further out than he thought and had to come in over the tip of Bataan. Fortunately, the Japanese either failed to see him or didn't believe what they saw, because he received no ground fire and the field wasn't shelled when he landed. He made an uneventful landing, but Filipino mechanics discovered that one of his cylinders had lost compression and the engine had thrown out most of its oil. They worked on it while Bradford slept.

Bradford planned to take off at 3:00 AM so as to cover the most heavily occupied waters during darkness. When he and his passengers reached the airfield, they found the Bellanca still in the revetment. They worked feverishly to roll it down the embankment and into takeoff position. They got aboard and Bradford started his take off run. He got the tail up and was just about to lift off when the left wheel dropped off of the runway onto the gravel on the side of the rudimentary landing strip. The airplane yawed and cracked up. Fortunately, no one was hurt but the airplane was shot. The Bamboo Fleet was gone.

With all hope of getting off of Corregidor gone, Bradford reconciled himself to his fate. He knew the island's defenders couldn't hold much longer and he expected to become a prisoner of war. But then suddenly on April 29, he got a reprieve. Two Navy PBY patrol bombers arrived from Australia and Bradford was notified that he was one of four Air Corps personnel who would be going out with them. Still, he wasn't completely home free. When the two PBYs reached Mindanao, they found the island enshrouded in fog and the pilots were forced to land in unprotected water. The seams on the hull were damaged and started leaking. Bradford worked with the flight crew to repair the damage and they finally got off and made it to Darwin. The other crew was less fortunate. Their airplane drifted into rocks during their takeoff attempt and almost sank. Several soldiers worked with the crew to

The Airlifter Volume XVII

repair the damage while their passengers, including ten nurses, went to Del Monte to wait for them. Finally the crew decided that they had repaired their damage enough to get the airplane off of the water, but they had to go right now. The soldiers who helped with the repairs went with them and their assigned passengers were left behind.

Bradford reached Australia safely and returned to Texas. When he was interviewed in March, 1944 he was the Director of Maintenance and Supply at Hondo Field and living in San Antonio. He remained in San Antonio until his death in 1983.

The PBVs and the Last B-24

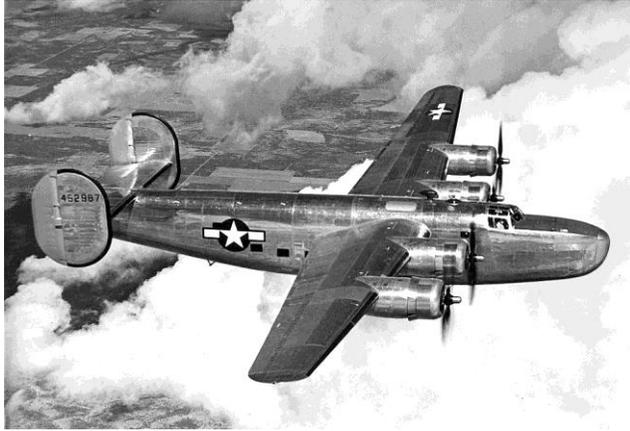
The PBV on which Major Bradford came out of Corregidor was one of two that were sent on a special mission at General Douglas MacArthur's request to deliver supplies to the island and evacuate certain designated personnel, including twenty US Army nurses and several civilian women. The two flying boats from the 101st Patrol Squadron departed Perth on April 27 and flew north to Darwin to pick up their loads. Lt. Commander Edgar T. Neale, who flew with the crew commanded by Lt(jg) Thomas Pollock. The other crew was commanded by Lt(jg) Grover L. Deede. Both crews were made up at least in part by Philippines veterans who had come out of Luzon in December. Deede had been at Broome a few weeks before when Japanese carrier aircraft attacked the town and destroyed his PBV and another along with two B-24 transports. After loading their cargo and refueling, the two PBVs continued on to Mindanao, where they landed on Lake Lanao, a large freshwater lake adjacent to the Del Monte pineapple plantation, on which US engineers had constructed an airfield large enough to handle three squadrons of B-17s.



Later that evening the PBVs departed for Corregidor, where they arrived at approximately 2300. They were met by boats which came out to pick up their cargo and deliver their passengers, most of whom were women. Once everyone was onboard, they took off for Mindanao where they arrived in the early morning hours. Ground fog covered the lake but Pollock found a hole and managed to land. Deede landed in Illigan Bay. His airplane suffered some damage from the waves but Bradford helped the crew repair the damage and they flew over to the lake to refuel. For the next few hours they tried to rest. Sometime that afternoon they attempted to takeoff to return to Australia. Deede got off on his second attempt but Pollock's airplane drifted close to shore and struck some rocks, which knocked a gash in the hull. His passengers were sent to Del Monte and he and his crew worked to repair the damage with the assistance of Air Corps personnel. Finally, sometime the next day they finally got the water stopped. There was no time to have their original passengers brought over from Del Monte so they departed with three Air Corps personnel (stowaways) and several US Navy personnel from the PT boats that had brought MacArthur's party out of Corregidor six weeks before.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

On May 4 a Liberator transport went to Darwin with two volunteer crews, one commanded by Captain A.J. Mueller, who had been in the Philippines with the 19th Bombardment Group, and Captain Arthur A. “Bud” Fletcher, who had



been with the 7th Bombardment Group. Their instructions were to maintain a shuttle into Del Monte from Darwin as long as possible. Mueller had already made a number of flights to Del Monte and had come out of there a few days before in the early morning hours of April 29 about the same time that the two PBYS returned from their heroic flight to Corregidor. Mueller had made some trips in daylight – in late December he earned the Distinguished Service Cross for a B-17 mission – and had made note of landmarks along the route. He had spotted a tiny island between the Moluccas and New Guinea with a lagoon called Yu, or Ju. He and Fletcher decided to use the island as an alternate in the event they were unable to land at

Del Monte, which would leave them short of fuel for a return flight to Darwin.

That night Mueller departed Darwin with a load of cargo and instructions to bring out the stranded passengers from the PBY. Before he left, he told Fletcher that his alternate would be Yu. His crew encountered thunderstorms over Mindanao which prevented them from finding the field. When they did find, they started receiving ground fire and saw no signal that it was safe to land. Mueller decided to head back south, knowing they didn't have enough fuel to make it to safety. As they continued southward, he broke radio silence and had his radio operator send a message for Fletcher that they were going to their alternate, which only Fletcher knew was Yu. Fletcher immediately called for a PBY and intended to go along to show the pilot where the island was. However, no PBY arrived. Finally, after a few days of him sending urgent messages, a colonel arrived from Melbourne. He found Fletcher and put his arm around his shoulder and told him that there was no PBY but a submarine was on the way to pick up the stranded airmen. On May 11, a week after they ditched the airplane in shallow water, they were picked up. Mueller's attempt was the last one made to get into Del Monte. The ten nurses, three civilian women and other passengers were stranded. When General Sharp decided to honor General Wainwright's surrender of all US forces in the Philippines, they became prisoners of the Japanese. After a few weeks the women were loaded onto a ship and transported back to Luzon and sent to the Santo Thomas Internment Camp, where they joined their fellow nurses who had remained behind on Corregidor.

The Paul Meyer Incident

In May, 1973 Stars and Stripes newspaper featured a story that grabbed the attention of the C-130 world. On May 23 a young airman from the 316th Tactical Airlift Wing at Langley stole the airplane to which he was assigned as an assistant crew chief and disappeared over the English Channel. Needless to say, rumors abounded after the incident, with a lot of conjecture about how he was probably shot down. Personally, all I knew was what I had read in the papers until sometime around 2000 or early 2001 when someone sent me a copy of the accident/incident report of the incident. I recently posted it on my web site at URL www.sammcgowan.com/meyers.html if anyone would like to read it. Unfortunately, I apparently failed to save the file showing the transcript of his final conversation. For those who don't want to bother with reading the report, here is the gist of what happened:

The Airlifter Volume XVII

With reservations coming in, we now have a number of people who are not planning to make the trip to Marietta. Janet Greuel, Roger Greuel's wife, is putting together some things to do in the Warner Robins-Macon area that day.

A Suggested Side Trip

Registrations are pouring in for convention and a number of our members are planning on driving. If you're going to be driving from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas or somewhere in that area and have time to spare, let me suggest a side trip to make on your return home. The Natchez Trace Parkway is one of the most historic drives in the United States, and having made a trip down it several years ago, I highly recommend it for those who have the time. It starts just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, which is a little bit out of the way but not that much, and continues on through southern Middle Tennessee into the northwest corner of Alabama then on into Mississippi to its termination in Natchez. It's a scenic trip – especially in October – with a lot of things to see. If you decide to make the trip, plan to allow two full days so you can stop off at various landmarks. This would be a good bike ride as well.

Meyer was TDY to Mildenhall, England with the 36th Tactical Airlift Squadron. Shortly before he left for England, he got married. His wife was being sued by her former husband over an insurance payment she had received. Meyer himself was not involved with the suit but he had become immersed in the situation. He tried to get the squadron to let him go back to Langley early but some kind of compromise had been worked out with the suit and that had seemed to satisfy him. On Saturday evening before the incident, Meyer went off-base to a party at a private home and became severely intoxicated. At one point he was seen on the roof of a neighboring house. The police were called and he was arrested and thrown in the local jail. The squadron first sergeant was called and went downtown and got him out of jail but he was supposed to appear before the local constable the following evening. His airplane was supposed to leave on a flight the next morning but he was removed from the flight. The first sergeant took him to the barracks and told him he was restricted to quarters. However, after pretending to be asleep, Meyer put on a flight suit and somehow managed to obtain a military vehicle and go to the flight line. He called and ordered a fuel truck using an assumed name; he impersonated an officer. He then coerced the fuel truck driver into putting on fuel even though the required three-man refueling crew wasn't present; he claimed the crew was onboard the airplane and impatient to takeoff. After the fuel truck pulled away, he fired up all four engines and began taxiing toward Runway 29.

The details of his flying experience aren't known but Meyer had some kind of pilot license, apparently a private license with no multiengine or instrument ratings. A search of the FAA data base shows two Paul Meyers with private pilot's license, one of which was issued in early 1968. Although he had been allowed to sit in the seat on C-130s by pilots he had flown with and handle the controls, it's very doubtful that he had ever been allowed to land. Yet he somehow convinced himself that he could fly the airplane – by himself, at dawn. At approximately 0500 CET time, he started taxiing. As soon as he started engines, a maintenance supervisor noticed that something was wrong and tried to block his way. Meyer kept taxiing and he was forced to move his truck. Maintenance called the tower and advised them that an unauthorized taxi was taking place. The tower called the Air Police but there was confusion in the communication. Although an Air Police team arrived before he took the runway, they were never authorized to use their weapons to shoot out the tires. In fact, there was no policy for dealing with a stolen aircraft. It can safely be said that as soon as Meyer pushed the power levers up, he was a dead man. Even though he was a licensed pilot, he was trying to fly a 140,000 pound airplane that requires a minimum of two people to operate even in a wartime emergency situation. It is assumed that his alcohol befuddled mind had managed to convince itself that he could fly the airplane across 2,500 miles of ocean to his home in Virginia – without a navigator and probably

The Airlifter Volume XVII

without even any maps. Those who witnessed his takeoff in the early morning light thought he was going to crash. He came off of the ground in a wing-low attitude and almost drug a wing. He managed to get off the ground and made a near-270 degree turn and came back over the airfield and headed off to the northeast over nearby Lakenheath. If he thought he was going to Virginia, he was headed in the wrong direction.

For almost two hours Meyer meandered through the English skies. The incident report states that another C-130 was sent out to look for him and hopefully provide assistance but it doesn't say how long it was before the airplane took off. It also says that an F-100 from Lakenheath was sent out, and many have jumped to the conclusion it was sent out to shoot him down. The incident report states that neither airplane ever made contact with him. Nor did he ever communicate with anyone, with one exception. During the time he was in the air, Meyer spent a great deal of it talking to his wife in Virginia on a phone patch through the TAC Command Post at Langley. The conversation was monitored but only the last 25 minutes was recorded. His final words to his wife were that he had some kind of problem and that he'd call her back after he took care of it. Shortly after he made his final transmission, radar contact – which had been spotty – was lost.

Just what the problem was or what actually happened will never be known. Long-time C-130 pilot Jerry Bennett, who was in charge of scheduling for the Langley rotational squadron, was called immediately after Meyer took off and instructed to get a crew together to go looking for him. In an Email to Bob Woods, an engineer who set up a Yahoo Group to upload information about the incident, Jerry stated that he believed Meyer ran into a line of thunderstorms over the English Channel and took the airplane off of autopilot and lost control. Whatever happened, the airplane went into water and broke apart. The C-130 and F-100 that had been sent out searched until they had to return to base, but never made contact. An Air Rescue airplane came up from Spain later in the day and took over the search. Bad weather hampered the effort but a few pieces were eventually found. In the more than forty years since Meyer died, a lot of rumors have been spread, and even ghost stories about him. In the 1990s noted aviation author Martin Caidin wrote a book called "Ghosts of the Air." One of the featured stories was about how the hardstand from which Meyer departed is haunted. Airmen claimed to hear strange noises during the wee hours of the morning. (Meyer actually departed right at sunrise.) There were rumors that his remains washed up on beach somewhere, but his step-son says no, that none of his remains were ever found.

Chris Gray – Final Flight



Unfortunately, death is something we all have to live with. During the few short years since we first started getting together, we've lost several of our members and other airlift friends. The most recent loss is that of Chris Lane Gray, who has been a member for several years although he was unable to attend our events due to health reasons. Chris passed away on June 30. Chris started out at Charleston AFB, SC in the 41st MAS, then went to 8th Aerial Port Squadron in Vietnam and from there to CCK. The rest of his flying career was spent in C-130s at Dyess and Little Rock and with the 5th Aerial Port Squadron in Europe. A lot of our members served with him at one time or other. After flying for about 12 years, Chris had

to cross-train due to medical conditions. He retired as a master sergeant in 1989. During his final years Chris suffered from Chron's Disease, which caused him a lot of pain and prevented him from traveling. He will be greatly missed.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

New Airlift-Related Books

Do you have a story to tell? If so, you're in luck! Thanks to computer technology, publishing your own book is almost as easy as 1, 2, 3! The easiest and fastest way is to write the manuscript using Microsoft Word then upload it to Amazon.com's Kindle. The process is free and you get a large percentage of the sales.

If you want to see your book in print form, Amazon also has other means, one of which is Create Space. This is how Wayne Warner published his book "One Trip Too Many." wwwcreatespace.com There are also a number of other Print On Demand publishers. Tom Stalvey and I both used Author House, a company that has been around since around 2000. Print On Demand publishers set the manuscript up in book form so copies can be printed and bound as they are ordered. The initial costs start at about \$750.00 (watch for sales, when the cost is reduced by as much as 50%.) The finished product is then available for purchase through most Internet book sellers as well as direct from Author House.

www.authorhouse.com.

The Lucky Loadmaster, by Tom Stalvey. TCTAA member Tom Stalvey recently had a memoir of his military experiences and how they have affected his life published by Author House. Tom enlisted in the USAF in 1965 and was selected for training as an aircraft loadmaster. His first assignment was at Sewart AFB, Tennessee with the 62nd Troop Carrier Squadron. In early 1968 he transferred to Clark AB, Philippines to the 29th Tactical Airlift Squadron. His first trip in-country with a crew was right at the beginning of the Tet Offensive. Over the next eighteen months he was heavily involved in some of the most intense moments in airlift history, including airdrops at Khe Sanh and A Loi. He left Clark in July, 1969 and was discharged when he arrived at Travis AFB, California. Like so many other Vietnam veterans, Tom had a difficult time readjusting to civilian life, largely due to the effects of PTSD. The Lucky Loadmaster is a very powerful book. Contact Tom at tsta7777@yahoo.net to order an autographed copy. It's also available at <http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1468539655?tag=samc06-20&linkCode=sb1&camp=212353&creative=380553>.

One Trip Too Many, by Wayne A. Warner. I came across this book by accident while searching for Vietnam-related books to add to my Amazon book store and recognized the name. In 1966 Lt. Wayne Warner was a pilot in the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron, and well known within the 6315th Operations Group at Naha AB, Okinawa. After graduating from the Air Force Academy in 1963 and completing pilot training, he volunteered for C-130s and went to Okinawa. He extended his tour and was upgraded to aircraft commander after spending several months on the Blind Bat C-130 flare mission. When the Air Force extended a call for pilots to volunteer for fighters, Wayne volunteered and got an assignment in F-105s at Takhli AB, Thailand where he spent the next year. Instead of returning to Stateside, he volunteered for another consecutive tour, this time in A-1s at Nakonphanom. His tour was cut short when he crashed on takeoff (he had been forced to bailout a few days earlier) and was badly burned. After undergoing painful reconstructive surgery, he left the Air Force and studied law. After passing the bar, he was employed by the Air Force as a legal analyst. This is a truly great book, one of the best on Vietnam I've ever read. As far as I know, it's only available through Amazon. <http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1467931551?tag=mcgowanaviation-20&linkCode=sb1&camp=212353&creative=380553>.

Trash Haulers, by Sam McGowan. This is a revision of my previously published book *The C-130 Hercules, Tactical Airlift Missions, 1956-1975*. I've added some new material and made some revisions and corrections. (Unfortunately, I failed to make a correction regarding the Dominican Airlift; I was under the impression that all of the C-130s diverted to Florida and

The Airlifter Volume XVII

Puerto Rico for reconfiguration but the first thirty or so landed at San Isidro without diverting.) I've also expanded my own experiences and added other material.

Anything, Anywhere, Anytime by Sam McGowan. This is the book I consider my best, the one all airlifters, past and present, should read. I started working on it 1994 shortly after I transferred to Houston and have been researching and writing on it ever since. It is the ONLY book ever published that covers the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission from its inception immediately prior to World War II through the Vietnam War and the subsequent assumption of all USAF airlift requirements by Military Airlift Command. The book starts with a prologue describing the first known US airlift operation when Army Air Service pilots attempted to drop supplies to American troops who had been cutoff behind German lines in the Argonne Forest in 1918. It then begins with the development of the Army Air Corps transport mission in the years just before World War II, and then moves into the war. The first third of the book is devoted to US Army air transport operations in all theaters of World War II, including the non-combat Air Transport Command, with the last third devoted to Southeast Asia. Included are chapters covering troop carrier development between the wars, with some coverage of the military politics as Lt. General William H. Tunner and other former Air Transport Command officers waged a political fight to gain control of all airlift assets. While *Trash Haulers* is devoted to the C-130 exclusively, *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime* covers them all, from the C-47 to the development of the C-17, including C-7s and C-123s in Vietnam as well as C-124s in TAC.

The Cave, by Sam McGowan. *The Cave* is a war novel I wrote in the 1990s and had published in 2000. It's based on a combination of my experiences as a C-130 loadmaster on the then-classified flare mission over North Vietnam and Laos and my later experiences exploring caves in Kentucky. The story begins in the 1950s when a small Tennessee boy discovers a magnificent cavern near the Tennessee River. It then picks up in early 1966 when the boy, now in his very early twenties, is flying flare missions out of Ubon, Thailand. You'll have to read it to find out what happens!

*I am currently offering autographed copies of my books for \$20.00 for *The Cave*, \$28.95 for *Trash Haulers*, \$31.95 for *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime* or \$56.00 for the two non-fiction books or \$75.00 for all three. Send a check to Sam McGowan, 3727 Hill Family Lane, Missouri City, TX 77459. They are also available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and direct from the publisher at www.authorhouse.com. (Just do a search for my name.)*

The Airlifter Volume XVII

The 315th Air Division newspaper, The Airlifter

The Importance of History

I have personally had an interest in history as long as I have been able to read, but in more recent years I've become mainly interested in preserving it. Those of us who were part of the troop carrier mission and the tactical airlift mission, as it was redesignated in 1967, have a very rich heritage that needs to be preserved. It is very important for those who were a part to record their own experiences so future generations will have the opportunity to know what we did. If we don't record it ourselves, someone else will and they will most likely leave out most of it. As most of us know, very little attention has ever been paid to the troop carrier mission at all, except for a handful of books published by World War II veterans in more recent years.

There have also been some Vietnam books published in recent years. If I come across a book that is available on Amazon.com, I add it to my Amazon book store, which is linked to my home page at www.sammcgowan.com. Yes, I get a (very) small advertizing fee for anything that is purchased through there but my main intent is to let the public know about the books and other items I have listed.

Sometime in 1964 the public information office at 315th Air Division Headquarters at Tachikawa AB, Japan began publishing a division newspaper, which was distributed to 315th AD units throughout the Western Pacific. At the time 315th controlled a single squadron of C-130As based at Tachikawa along with the 6315th Operations Group at Naha AB, Okinawa, which had recently been expanded to three. It also included the 6485th Operations Squadron at Tachikawa, the 5th Communications Squadron, the 7th Aerial Port Squadron, the 8th Aerial Port Squadron, the 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group and the 315th Troop Carrier Group (Air Commando). It also had operational control of the 22nd Troop Carrier Squadron at Tachikawa, which had transferred to MATS in 1958. Prior to the transfer of two TAC wings and eight squadrons of C-130s to PACAF in late 1965, it also controlled several TAC rotational C-130 squadrons. The 1965-66 expansion added two C-130 wings; a third was added when the 6315th Ops Group was replaced by the 374th Troop Carrier Wing in the late summer of 1966. The 315th Troop Carrier Group and 8th Aerial Port transferred to 834th Air Division in the summer of 1966, but prior to its evacuation, all intertheater and intratheater airlift in the Western Pacific, including Southeast Asia, was under 315th. Consequently, The Airlifter is a very important source of information about Vietnam Era airlift operations.

From May, 1966 to August, 1968 Airman First Class Marion L. Ray was a member of The Airlifter staff, and served as its Vietnam editor. In addition to writing, Airman Ray also took hundreds of photographs, some of which have since become identified with the airlift mission in Vietnam. One of his photographs of a C-130B at Khe Sanh with smoke in the background won an award in early 1968 and is probably the most famous C-130 photo of all time. When he left Tachikawa, all of the papers in which he had been involved were assembled into a bound volume and presented to him. M.L. Ray passed away many years ago and his military paraphernalia is now in the hands of his daughter Samantha, who lives in Mobile, Alabama. In 2001 Samantha graciously loaned me the volume for research and agreed to allow me to have it copied. I had copies made at Kinkos, and sold nearly all of them to division veterans who contributed to the copying costs. Unfortunately, I now have only my personal copy left. One of Tom Stalvey's friends loaned him his copies of The Airlifter, which include issues after the period in the Ray volume. I understand there are issues from prior to 1966 in the hands of 315th AD veterans. Samantha also has her dad's copies of the photographs he took.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

Considering that these newspapers and photographs are an important part of troop carrier/tactical airlift history, I believe the Association should consider purchasing the bound volume and photographs from Samantha, then having a new volume published to offer for sale to the public. This would fit within the scope of our chartered purpose, which includes educating the public. This is something we need to discuss at our next members meeting.

Election of Officers and Committees

While our current focus is on our upcoming convention, we also need to remember that our current officers and board members' terms of office will be expiring next April. One of the items we'll need to consider at our members meetings is the appointment of a nominating committee to pick a slate of prospective candidates to offer to the membership for the election next spring. If you would like to serve on the board or as an officer, or are willing to serve on the nominating committee, please let Mike Welch know. Mike's Email address is michael.m.welch@boeing.com.

We also need to appoint some other committees, particularly Finance and Membership as well as a Convention Committee to pick a location for our next convention. Let Mike know if you're willing to serve.

Convention Locations

Before we know it, our 2012 Convention will have come and gone. As it stands right now, although our by-laws allow an assembly of members once a year or as often as the board should decide, our conventions are held on a biannual basis. We also decided at the 2008 Convention to have reunions at a location where there is some kind of military aviation attraction – museum, military base – that would be of interest to our membership or in conjunction with an air show. One consideration should be region. When we first started having get-togethers, there seemed to be a general consensus to have them at the same location, which was Galveston, Texas. Galveston has both a military aviation museum and a generally relaxed location. We had two there and were planning a third, then had our fourth – the first “official” convention of the organization – in San Antonio. Our most recent one was back in Galveston in conjunction with the annual Wings Over Houston air show. Our upcoming event will be in Warner Robins, Georgia, which is in close proximity to the Southeastern United States. Considering that we are a national organization with members throughout the United States, perhaps our next one should be somewhere in the West.

A primary consideration has to be that there is someone either in the locale or is familiar with the locale who is willing to coordinate everything. We are fortunate this year that we have Tom Stalvey and Roger Greuel, who are doing an excellent job of putting everything together. When we were in San Antonio we had Andy Vaguera and Hector Leyva, who did a fantastic job. There is one place in the West where we have several members and which also has an excellent military aviation attraction – Tucson. Personally, that is the place I would recommend when everything is taken into consideration. There are many potential locations, not the least of which is Dayton, OH and the USAF Museum. However, so many organizations have been going there that its losing its draw. Little Rock is another potential location. There are also several good museums in California. It would really be great if some of our members would suggest a location in October and be willing to head up the planning.

The Airlifter Volume XVII

Captain John M. Birch



When we visit the Aviation Museum at Warner Robins, one of the exhibits we'll see is one containing artifacts of US Army Air Corps Captain John Morrison Birch, who was from the Macon area. Although his name is linked to the John Birch Society, Birch himself died at the hands of Chinese Communists in August, 1945 right after the Japanese agreed to surrender. Unfortunately, Birch's death at communist hands has obscured who he really was, and why it is believed that he was killed.

John Birch was born in India to a missionary couple, but grew up in New Jersey and Middle Georgia. He was a very hardy young man, who spent a lot of time in the outdoors, and very resourceful. As a boy he built radio receivers using copper wire wound around cardboard toilet paper tubes. He was also a very devout Christian. After feeling the call to preach as a young boy, he enrolled at Mercer, a Baptist school in Macon, as a ministerial student. Birch held strong fundamentalist beliefs – his parents had left the Presbyterian faith while in New Jersey because they felt the domination was becoming “modernist.” While at Mercer, Birch became very controversial on campus when he challenged a popular professor. Although he was the top student on the campus academically, he was very unpopular because of his strict beliefs. He became even more unpopular when he became involved with the fiery former Southern Baptist preacher J. Frank Norris of Ft. Worth, Texas. While attending a service conducted by Norris in a tent, he responded to an altar call when Norris stated that there was a need for someone in China and asked who would go. Birch responded, and after graduation from Mercer he enrolled in Norris' Fundamental Baptist Seminary in Ft. Worth as a member of the very first class.

Birch had been in China for almost two years when the United States became involved in World War II. Miraculously, he had made his way through the Japanese lines into the Chinese interior a day or so before Pearl Harbor. For the next four months he wandered nearly penniless through China preaching and depending on Chinese Christians for his sustenance. He knew his country was at war and wrote a letter to the US mission in Chungking offering his services, but initially received no response. Sometime in April he was sitting in a Chinese inn when he was approached by a stranger who motioned for him to come. He accompanied the man to the waterfront and was led to a junk. Inside the cabin he discovered several Americans. Their leader identified himself as Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle. He told Birch that he and his men had just bombed Japan and were trying to make their way to Chungking. Birch was happy to lead them to a point where they could continue on. Doolittle gave the young missionary money to pay for the burial of Corporal Leland Faktor, who had been killed when his parachute failed to open, and to instructions to find his other crews and help them get to Chungking. Birch did as Doolittle requested. He found a Chinese undertaker who refused to accept payment for his services. When Doolittle reached Chungking, he advised Claire Chennault, who at the time was still with the Chinese, of how Birch had helped him and recommended him as someone who could be of service.

After finding all of the Americans, Birch made his way to Chungking to Chennault's headquarters and volunteered his services as a chaplain. Birch was well acquainted with what Chennault and his American Volunteer Group had been doing. Chennault was impressed with the young man, who was fluent in Chinese and familiar with the Chinese

The Airlifter Volume XVII

interior and decided he would be a valuable resource. He offered him a position on his staff as his intelligence officer while he was waiting for the application to be a chaplain was processed and Birch accepted. A few weeks later when Chennault was brought back into the US Army as a brigadier general, he commissioned Birch as a second lieutenant in the Air Corps. As it turned out, the Army chaplain's corps wouldn't approve the application because Norris' seminary wasn't accredited. Chennault sent Birch back into the Chinese interior accompanied by a Chinese enlisted man to set up a network of agents. It was the first of many trips Birch made, on one occasion venturing more than 1,000 miles into the interior. He would find targets for Chennault's bombers and radio back the positions. On one occasion he hiked back to a B-25 base and flew in the lead airplane to show the pilots where a particular target was located. While on his journeys, he preached to Chinese congregations and held services for American and Chinese troops. Like Chennault, Birch was strongly opposed to communism. When the Office of Strategic Services took over intelligence work, Birch refused to accept a transfer into it because of the organization's willingness to work with Chinese communists. Finally an arrangement was worked out under which he worked with the OSS, but continued on Chennault's staff. His exploits were legendary. In one instance he located a spot and supervised the construction of an airfield where C-47s could bring in supplies and evacuate aircrews who had been shot down.

After the Japanese agreed to surrender, Birch was sent on a mission to accept the surrender of Japanese troops in northern China in an area under communist control. His party encountered communist troops. The communists demanded that Birch and his party surrender their weapons. When Birch refused, he was taken prisoner and removed from the party. He was executed and his body was then bayoneted and thrown into a ditch. The circumstances of his death were covered up until the 1950s when they were revealed by a US Senator.

Memorial Service

On Saturday morning we'll be having a special memorial service at the C-130A in the main museum building at the Robins Aviation Museum. Tom Stalvey has made arrangements for a chaplain from the base to conduct the service. He plans to read the names of troop carrier/tactical airlifters who have passed on. Even if you aren't able to be with us but have a name you would like to have read, please get in touch with Tom at tsta7777@yahoo.net.

Political Activity

With 2012 being an election year, let us remind everyone that the TCTAA is a tax-exempt organization and is thus forbidden from engaging in any form of political activity, with certain exceptions. Those exceptions pertain to support or opposition to legislation pertaining to veterans. Any other activity, including supporting or opposing any political candidate is forbidden and can result in the loss of our tax-exempt status. The main thing we have to be wary of is the forwarding of Emails. While it is perfectly permissible to do whatever we want as private citizens, we cannot use the Association Email list for any kind of activity that could possibly be construed as political.