



The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association
Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage
www.troopcarrier.org

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Chairman's Corner:

As Chairman, let me add my congrats to the newly elected Officers/Board members and my thanks and appreciation to those individuals who are stepping down. I echo the President's comments about our organization becoming long in the tooth as he says and would encourage us all to contact our comrades, invite them to join us and continue to inject new blood (certainly any YOUNG(er) BLOOD!) into our group. Mike speaks of losing our Veteran Members; I prefer the term Vintage to keep my focus and memory on the important issues of life (like fine wine!).

It is not necessary to remind members of an organization like the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association that you only get out of an organization what you contribute to it, so keep your eyes and ears attuned for things that need to be done in the Association, step forward and be part of the solution. We all know from experience that sometimes it is easier to just do it yourself than have to convince others to join in the fray; your Association Officers have a tendency to do that and as a result they burn out. They forget that none of us are as young as we used to be. Remember that today is the youngest day of the rest of your life! And who knows you might find the participation invigorating. Like sex, membership in the TC/TAA should not be a "spectator sport." (Spoken like someone who is 83 years young!)

Plan now to make the October 2018 Reunion in Fairborn a highlight on your schedule for the year; if you have not yet contributed to the Memorial honoring Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift at the Air Force Museum, open the ole purse strings and kick in some coins.

Although 2017 is already one-fourth in our rear-view mirrors, may this year be good to you and yours and may it exceed all your expectations. Much health and happiness, be sure to stop and smell the roses and work hard to become the person your dog ALREADY thinks you are. - TURNING THREE

George Dockery
Chairman

President's Address:

Hey from the Left Coast - Troop Carrier and Tactical Airlifters. By now your Spring weather should be in full force and have some flowers and veggies coming up in your gardens. The weather here on the West Coast is getting better as we had the wettest winter in my 28 years here but the skiing was fantastic. Hope everybody's health is going in the direction you want it to.

We recently had our 2017 elections - Congrats to our new Officers/Board Members: Vice Chairman - Ricky Davidson from Colorado; Secretary - PJ Daigle from Arkansas; Board Member - O. Thomas Hansen from Washington; and Alternate Board Members - Freddie Rodriguez from Texas and Ken Eith from New Jersey. To the Officers/Board Members who retired or had health issues and resigned from the board: Vice Chairman - Carl Wyrick from Texas; Secretary - Sam McGowan from Texas; Board Member - Tom Wark from Florida; and Alternate Board Member - Walt Dudow from Texas. Thanks loads for all the work and dedication to the TC/TAA throughout the years - you kept us healthy and we are still thriving.

We continue to lose some old timers or as we should say - "Veteran Members." We sure do not want this organization getting into the long tooth mode like some of the other older military organizations. Membership is up as we now have 347 members - we are shooting for 400 by the time we meet October 2018 in Fairborn, Ohio. We now have 93 Ten-Year Members and 64 Life Members. Speaking of 10-Year Members - if you joined in 2007 you are due to renew - why not go for the gold and up it to LIFE?

Speaking about our October 11 - 14 Fairborn Reunion - Ray Snedegar, Jack Brankamp and I have wrapped up the final touches on the reunion. It will be held at the Holiday Inn and cost \$109 a night. You will be able to register directly with the hotel soon. The highlight of the week will be when we dedicate our Troop Carrier Tactical Airlift Memorial to the U.S. Air Force Museum on October 13. This is a must attend event - hope everybody has earmarked this historic event on your calendar.

Concerning the Memorial - we are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel as we are now at 79.5% donated towards our \$32,850 goal and 69% donated if when we replace the \$5,000 funds from the general account. We recently had a \$5,000 donation from the Jay Gerding family from Tucson, Arizona. Everybody give a big shout out this important family - THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Looking forward to seeing everybody in 551 days in Fairborn, Ohio - Load Clear.

Mike Welch, President

Treasurer's Report:

Current balance, \$25,060.02. Breakdown is \$14,629.88 General Fund, \$10,430.14 in the Memorial Fund. We've raised \$26,130.14 for our memorial fund goal of \$32,850.00 so far. We've paid Dodds Memorial \$15,750 with another \$3,000 on the way for a total of \$18,750. This will leave us with a balance of \$22,060.02, of which \$7,430.14 is in the memorial fund. In addition, Sam McGowan will be depositing \$245.00, \$225 in dues and \$20.00 for the memorial fund, bringing our total to \$22,305.02.

Ralph Bemis, Treasurer

The following contribution came from Jay Miller. We not only appreciate member contributions, we encourage them! Your stories help preserve our heritage.

The Black Knights of the 346th Tactical Airlift Squadron

James C. Miller, Ph.D.

April 2017

There are a number historical accounts of the 346th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS) on line. For example, Wikia Fandom Military (1) and Wikipedia (2). Unfortunately, these accounts are (a) somewhat inaccurate, and (b) do not include much in the way of details about the squadron's activities during the Vietnam War. This article is designed to fill that latter gap. However, before that I have discussed here some errors and mysteries about the squadron's history, promulgated in these and other on-line postings.

There are some other AAF/USAF 346th units for which I've seen I've seen documentation. The 346th Bombardment Squadron was a B-17 Flying Fortress squadron that operated during World War II, assigned to the 99th Bombardment Group, Fifteenth Air Force. It was inactivated at Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts on 31 Mar 1974. There was a 364th Fighter Squadron in the 350th Fighter Group in England in WWII, and a 346th Group in the 316th Bombardment Wing in Okinawa in 1944. The 346th Test Squadron is located at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)-Lackland TX, providing cyberspace operational testing capabilities. It is part of the 318th Cyberspace Operations Group and 688th Cyberspace Wing, both aligned under 24th Air Force and Air Force Space Command. None of these units has a connection to the 346th TAS. Now, those errors and mysteries.

It has been written that our squadron was first activated as the 346th Troop Carrier Squadron in the Air Force Reserve in 1949 and trained at

Memphis Municipal Airport TN. While this is apparently true, the military history of that airport from that time makes no mention of airlift. The 155th Fighter Squadron was formed there in that period. In 1961, the 155th did become an airlift squadron.

It has also been written that in 1951 the 346th was called to active duty for the Korean War and served until 1953. While I have found no specific record of that duty, the 344th TCS Fat Cats operated the C-46 Commando out of Tachikawa AB during the Korean War (3) and they may well have have been a sister squadron of the 346th within the 516th Wing at the time.

It has also been written that in 1955 the 346th (also the 345th and 347th) was activated at Sewart Air Force Base TN as a rotary wing troop carrier assault unit, participated in Operation Sage Brush and was inactivated the following year. However, an on-line history of Sewart AFB (4) lists no 346th among the helicopter squadrons in the 314th wing during that period. I don't think that the helo ops are part of the history of the 346th.

I'm pretty sure that the history of the 346th has been assumed, probably correctly, to parallel the history of the 516th Troop Carrier Wing which was in Memphis. According to that wing's history (5), the wing was

Assigned to the reserves in the 1949 conversion to the Wing Base reorganization as the 516th Troop Carrier Wing, the wing performed reserve troop carrier training under the supervision

of the 2584th Air Force Reserve Training Center at Memphis Municipal Airport (MAP), Tennessee until April 1951. Upon entering active duty in place that month [consistent with Korea ops] the wing assumed responsibility for operating and maintaining the USAF portion of Memphis MAP and participated in tactical exercises and worldwide airlift. The wing converted from Curtiss C-46 Commando to Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar aircraft in 1952. It was replaced by 463d Troop Carrier Wing in January 1953.

No helicopter operations at Sewart appear in this summary. There is an on-line record for the 348th TCS having been a part of the 2584th Air Force Reserve Training Center at Memphis. It seems likely that the 516th wing included at various times the 345th, 346th, 347th, and 348th squadrons over the years, and perhaps the 344th as well. So, it certainly is possible that there was a 346th squadron within the 516th at Memphis, but I have found no specific record of same in on-line searches.

Chronologically, the next information written about the 346th indicates that on 8 Oct 1956 the 346th was activated as a fixed wing troop carrier assault unit at Sewart AFB and equipped with Fairchild C-123 Provider aircraft. However, the Sewart AFB history, above (4), shows that base populated by the squadrons (77x TCS) of the 314th Wing during that period, not including the 346th.

Then it is said that the 346th moved to Pope Air Force Base NC in 1958 when Tactical Air Command consolidated its C-123 units there. The 346th continued to fly the Provider until 1963, although after December 1961 most of the squadron was deployed to Southeast Asia. This also seems to me to be very unlikely. However, see my major caveat, below

The history of the 516th, cited above, probably clarifies the 346th history in the following chronology of the 516th Wing:

Constituted as 516th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium on 10 May 1949 [Memphis]

Activated in the Reserve on 26 Jun 1949

Ordered to active service on 16 Apr 1951
[consistent with Korea ops]

Inactivated on 16 Jan 1953

Activated on 19 Jul 1962 [Dyess AFB]

Organized on 1 January 1963

Re-designated 516th Troop Carrier Wing on
1 Mar 1966

Re-designated 516th Tactical Airlift Wing on

1 May 1967 [italics added]

The logical conclusion is that the 516th and, presumably, the 346th squadron, was inactivated in 1953 at Memphis and re-activated in 1962 at Dyess AFB. However, there is a major caveat here.

There is an account from *Air Force Order of Battle*, created 5 May 2011, of the “346th Troop Carrier Squadron” flying the C-123 in Vietnam (6). This 346th was supposedly activated 8 Oct 1956 and stationed at Sewart AFB (no dates) and then Pope AFB 14 Jul 1958 to 1 Apr 1963. They deployed as part of “Mule Train”, as described in the report. Some paragraphs are out of order in this electronic document and it has some disconnected comments about Ranch Hand, which started in 1962, so I’m not quite sure what to make of it. This 346th was commanded at that time by Lt. Col. Floyd K. Shofner. The squadron operations officer was Maj. Wayne J. Witherington. The trip to Clark AB was made via Hickam, Wake, and Guam, flying in loose formations of three. They navigated (as we did seven years later in the C-130E) with newly installed LORAN sets and sun observations. These ferry operations “set the pattern for future C-123 transoceanic flights.”

Early in-country missions were almost entirely logistical: foodstuffs, wheeled loads such as jeeps and power generators, helicopter rotor blades. Personnel lifts supported the installation of Air Force radar and communications equipment for the tactical air control system (TAGS). They flew under visual flight rules, and the recently installed TACS radars at Saigon (*Paris*), Da Nang (*Panama*), and Pleiku (*Peacock*) provided informal traffic advisory assistance when in the clouds.

A dozen hard-surface airfields became the nucleus for the Mule Train route structure. These were generally located about main population centers and military bases, and had been used by the C 47s of Air Vietnam and the Vietnamese Air Force. C-123 scheduled passenger runs and military logistics missions linked Da Nang, Tan Son Nhut, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot, Hue, Da Lat, Soc Trang, Qui Nhon, and Vung Tau, and virtually every Mule Train sortie took off or landed at one of these airfields. These air stations made up a chain of primary fields, affording an adequate skeleton for a countrywide airlift system. Coverage was least satisfactory in the Mekong Delta country in the south, where soft ground made construction difficult.

Aircrews generally flew about three of every four days. Their itineraries allowed the aircraft to return to Tan Son Nhut by nightfall. Aircrews made every effort to return to Saigon each evening, since sleeping and messing facilities elsewhere were rare.

Though quite interesting, the document fails to describe what happened after the early Mule Train operations. Chronologically, it seems as though the 346th could have been removed from the 516th wing during the Wing's inactive period, 16 Jan 1953 to 19 Jul 1962, and the squadron could then have been active within the 464th Wing. However, an on-line Pope AFB history (7) shows no indication of that happening. So, on the one hand, I must conclude that the squadron designation is wrong in this *Order of Battle* document: it was not our 346th TAS. On the other hand, I note that the document parallels nicely Walter J. Boyne's "Mule Train" article in the February 2001 *Air Force Magazine* (8), and Boyne says that the first two C-123 squadrons in Mule Train were the 346th and the 777th. Somewhere, some historical documents are mixed up. Perhaps that first Mule Train squadron under Lt Col Shofner was the 776th? That would make more sense. Anyone? (*Editor's note – It was the 346th. The 345th was at Sewart with C-123s and the 346th and 347th at Pope in the early 1960s. The 345th went to Naha as a C-130 squadron then became the 35th when the 516th activated at Dyess. Don't trust "on-line" histories.*)

In 2011 the *Abilene Reporter News* posted a timeline of airlift operations at Dyess AFB (9). They cited their source as Dyess AFB, presumably the Public Affairs Office. The timeline chronicled the activation and operations of the 64th Troop Carrier Wing and its 17th and 18th Troop Carrier Squadrons from activation at Dyess on 8 Feb 1961 through its inactivation and replacement by the newly organized 516th Troop Carrier Wing on 1 Jan 1963. The 516th at that time included the 18th, 345th, 346th and 347th Troop Carrier Squadrons, while the 17th TCS was inactivated. Unfortunately, the timeline is quite vague about Vietnam operations by the squadrons of the 516th. The 18th TCS was gone by the time I arrived at the 516th in 1967, and the 345th had already moved to PACAF, but the 346th and 347th were still there. (*Editor's note – when the 516th activated at Dyess and equipped with C-130Es, the 18th TCS transferred to Sewart. When the 317th TCW transferred to*

Lockbourne from Evreux, France in 1964, the 18th TCS transferred there to join it.)

The New Guy, aka FNG

I finished up undergraduate pilot training (UPT) at Webb AFB in Big Spring TX on 14 Jun 1967 (Class 67-H), selected the C-130, and moved 100 miles east to Dyess AFB in Abilene where I was assigned to the 346th TAS, which had received the TAS designation on 1 May of that year. Lt Col Carroll R. (Lucky) Graham was our squadron commander. I spent the next three years in the 346th. I assume that my progress and experiences as a squadron pilot that I describe here are reasonably representative of those of other pilots in the 346th at that time.

I attended Sea Survival for a week at Homestead AFB; this was the only survival training I ever received. Then I attended C-130 upgrade training for three months at Sewart AFB in Nashville. The USAF had just taken over the C-7 Caribou from the Army, and their training was at Sewart also. There were several times when, due to a strong headwind on final approach a Caribou's ground speed would be almost negligible. The Sewart tower was reported to have asked on tower frequency at least once, "Caribou hovering on final: say your intentions."

Being a Co-Pilot in the 346th

Anyway, I returned to Dyess, was checked out locally and became a tactically-qualified co-pilot in December 1967. About a month before the Tet Offensive. Good timing. Some of the guys I recall from those early days and who are not mentioned below were Navigators Darrell Royal, with whom I flew later in Vietnam, and Mike Yerxa, with whom I made my first non-CONUS trip as a CP, to Panama in Dec 1967. Also pilot Chuck Wiedemeir (sp?), with whom I flew from Mildenhall and who had an airline career with Delta. Chuck was known by Delta flight attendants as "The Candy Man" for handing out candy to child passengers during ramp delays. And of course, my best active duty buddy, pilot Dick Gazda, who flew for many years with Eastern Air Lines and now lives in Florida.

1968 opened with an Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) for our wing at Dyess (516th TAW). We flew our airplanes to Forbes AFB in Topeka, Kansas, on 10 Jan 1968. We conducted

low-level formation flights and airdrops there and returned to Dyess on 13 Jan. Because of the white-out conditions in Kansas, low-level navigation was a problem, and our flight of nine C-130s got pretty lost on the way to the drop. On 17 through 19 Jan, we flew from Dyess to Navy Cecil (Jacksonville, Florida) to Pope AFB (Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Fort Bragg), then Pope to Navy Cecil to somewhere else in North Carolina and back to Pope; then Pope back to Dyess. This was for something called "Falcon" (a name usually associated with USAFA). On 22 Jan, we deployed to Pope for operation "Boldshot 3-68." We flew airdrops there, and returned home on the 26 Jan.

On 9 Feb 1968 the 346th began a three-month squadron deployment to Mildenhall AB in England. On 16 Feb, my crew received our checkout flight for the Berlin Corridors, flying to Tempelhof Airport in East Germany (West Berlin). The three Berlin Corridors were flown only in visual conditions, below 10,000 feet altitude. It was strange seeing MiG fighters on the ground below us. Our crew had other "adventures", including an engine flame-out, twice, at Torrejon AB. No fun being stuck at Torrejon: Franco was pretty restrictive about U.S. forces leaving the base. Also, on 3 Mar we took a load down to Wheelus AB at Tripoli, Libya, and spent the night. I cannot find reference to it now on the internet, but one of the propellers from the B-24 *Lady Be Good* was on display as a memorial at Wheelus. I knew what it was and was touched by the display.

On about 5 Mar 1968, our squadron was informed that our rotation at Mildenhall was being terminated and that we were being moved to Clark AB in the Philippines, from where we would commence combat operations within South Vietnam. The other C-130 rotation squadron at Mildenhall was informed at the same time that their rotation at Mildenhall was being extended from three months to six months to cover our absence. The result was a massive drinking party in the stag bar at the Mildenhall officers' club. Several rounds of glasses were thrown into the large stone fireplace. The base commander sent in the club officer, a young WAF, to quiet us down. We soon had her swinging from the oak beams in her skirt. Finally, the base commander sent in the Air Police in the early morning hours, and we all ran out the back door.

Here's our crew's itinerary for the move to Clark. On 11 Mar 1968, we flew to Loring and on 12 Mar we flew back into Dyess. Having been gone a month, we had only time to do our laundry before we flew out on 15 Mar to MacClellan AFB in northern California and on to Hickam AFB in Honolulu (aka Hickalulu). On 16 Mar, we crossed the Date Line, re-fueled at Wake Island and flew on to Anderson AB at Guam, arriving on 17 Mar, Guam time. We broke for a day at Guam, but made it to Clark AB on 19 Mar. We flew 50½ hours in seven days, starting on 11 Mar. I dead-headed only about three hours of that time.

On 21 Mar 1968, we flew from Clark into Cam Ranh Bay AB, picked up Republic of Korean (ROK) troops and KIAs, in urns, and flew them to Kimpo AB in South Korea. (Interestingly, the U.S. does not transport troops along with KIAs.) There was an arrival ceremony at Kimpo to honor the ROK dead. On 23 Mar, we flew replacement ROK troops (with kimshi rations, of course) to Tan Son Nut AB and flew back to Clark.

On 27 Mar, we flew to Cam Ranh and then Tan Son Nhut. We stayed overnight at an old French hotel in the city. All U.S. troops (except us, of course) had helmets, flak vests and M-16s. On 28 Mar, we took more ROK troops and their dead to Kimpo, then hopped over to Osan AB to spend the night.

On 29 Mar, we flew to Kimpo, picked up replacement ROK troops, flew them to Tan Son Nhut, dropped them off, and flew back to Clark. During the leg from Kimpo to Tan Son Nhut everyone on the crew took a nap except me. I was watching the airplane. Then I suddenly woke up. Fortunately, we were over water and between reporting points when I dozed off inadvertently. We were tired. At this point we had logged 94.5 hours of flying time in 17 days. As a result of fatigue-impaired immune function, the whole cockpit crew had come down with a virus. We were DNIF at Clark for a couple of days to recover.

On April Fool's Day, we flew to Cam Ranh Bay via the Marine airbase at Chu Lai to begin our first in-country shuttle. That shuttle lasted only two weeks, until 15 Apr, when we returned to Clark. We were housed on RMK-BRJ Hill at Cam Ranh; hot, noisy and dusty. At some point in this or the next rotation, we were housed in the Quonset huts near the O Club. Some frequent stops for us on this and other shuttles were Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa,

Tuy Hua, Da Nang, Chu Lai, Binh Thuy, Qui Nhon, Ban Me Thout (east), Hue/Phu Bai, Pleiku, Duc Co, Dong Ha, and Quang Tri. The 9th of April at Ban Me Thout may have been the day that the VC lobbed in a few mortar rounds while we were there. Barry Martin and I considered getting behind some sandbags in front of the aircraft, but they were protecting the aircraft fuel pit which was the apparent target. On 13 Apr, we learned that a C-130 had been lost at Khe Sanh. This was the B-model (61-0967) of the 774th. April 14th was Easter Day, and we flew all day.

Generally, our work-rest cycle in 1968 through 1970 was 12 hours on and 14 hours off for five cycles. We'd report for duty in the evening, work 12 hours, rest 14 hours, then report for duty two hours later than the previous evening. By the 5th cycle, we had delayed our report time 10 hours and were now reporting in the morning. We'd work 12 hours that day, have a nice dinner, sleep like the dead for 12 hours that night, be awake for 12 hours the next day, and then report for work again that night. As a result we were never properly rested. I documented this terrible work-rest cycle in my book, *Fatigue*, in the *Controlling Pilot Error* series (McGraw-Hill, 2001).

On 24 Apr, we headed back to Cam Ranh via Cubi Point and Da Nang for another short shuttle. A new place that we visited during this short shuttle was An Hoa. On 27 Apr, we were a bladder bird, carrying jet fuel as cargo in large rubber bladders to Ban Me Thout.

April 28th was a memorable day. We were scheduled to block out early in the morning to airdrop in the A Shau Valley as number three in a group of several aircraft. Our aircraft commander, John Cutney, was not happy about the idea. He had spent 15 months flying as a co-pilot previously in east Asia, with many hours of combat time. He saw this, correctly, as a very dangerous mission. The weather was poor in the Valley so, to keep things moving I guess, we were sent out on a normal day's frag order. At Hue we picked up 19 very new KIAs in body bags and delivered them to Da Nang. They bled all over the floor. After we had turned them over to the morgue formally, the flight engineer called for a fire truck and hosed out our cargo compartment.

We were followed into Da Nang by a B model that had taken an unexploded round through the left wing, making a 3-foot hole. They made a

beautiful emergency landing and then parked next to us on the ramp. A flap actuator rod was hanging down from the hole in the wing and the aft wall of the #2 fuel tank was exposed. (Photo by J.C. Miller)

The crew of that aircraft told us the following story as we stared up at the hole in the wing: They were number two up the Valley. Number one had taken no ground fire. The ceiling was so low that the F-4s that were supposed to protect them would not come down through the clouds. Number two took ground fire, as did number three. Number three, our original assignment, was hit badly and tried to crash land. The loadmaster tried to bail out, but his chute hung up on the aircraft. Number three was, of course, 60-0298 of the 773rd, manned by a crew from 29th. We were extremely thankful to have avoided being number three up the Valley, and I grieve for that crew. We heard and saw heavy bombing that day while at both Hue and Da Nang.

On 7 May, our crew flew via Kadena to Tachikawa, which would become our base of operations for the rest of the month, and until we returned home to Dyess. Six crews from our squadron took four airplanes to Tachi. The rest of our squadron was still at Clark. Our leg from Kadena to Tachi was a MedEvac flight, during which I deadheaded and sat in the cargo compartment. The young amputees on board got to me.

On 9 May, we flew our first Korea run: Tachi – Misawa (northern Japan) -- Taegu – Kwang Ju – Kunsan – Osan. This was a daily run. Typically, we would fly the Japan to Korea run all day, spend that night and the next day in Osan, take the incoming aircraft at Osan that evening and fly approximately the reverse route all night. Note the all night work after being awake all day. Clever scheduling. The 12th of May was U.S. Armed Forces Day, and the base at Tachi was open to visitors. I saw the Japanese Defense Academy Drill Team and a demonstration of a Skyhook pick up of a person on the ground by a USAF HC-130 with whiskers passing overhead. The costumes worn by the very little Japanese children were beautiful.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam on 15 May 1968, E-model 63-7875 of the 29th MAS in MAC made a hard landing at Quang Tri. The left wing broke off. Everyone got out OK but the aircraft was a total loss. The following year, I flew with the flight engineer (FE) from that incident (anyone recall his

name?). Apparently, the pilot was a bit tense about landing at Quang Tri, which was a high-threat area. The crew was from Stateside and had not been executing max-effort landings in country on a regular basis. These things happen. The FE later became a bit infamous. The safety investigation board asked a somewhat dumb question about how he first knew that the wing had broken off. He answered, "I got a 'wing off' light." I love it.

On 15 May we flew the same run as above, to Osan. The next night, the aircraft that came into Osan was not an E model, so we could not fly it out. Typical. The night of 17-18 May we flew back to Tachi via Taegu. While in Osan, I had run out of cash and checks and was writing unnumbered checks at the Officer's Club to get cash. Also typical. On 20 May, we flew Tachi – Kunsan – Osan, passing very close to Mount Fuji enroute to Kunsan. A beautiful, moon-lit, snow-covered sight. The next night, no airplane came in to Osan; it had broken at Yokota. The night of 24-25 May we flew Osan – Kimpo – Kunsan – Kwang Ju – Suwon – Misawa – Tachi; a very long night. The Misawa stop was to provide some post-earthquake support. "A massive earthquake on 16 May 1968 caused over \$1 million worth of damage to Misawa AB." Misawa had been a fighter base for us since the end of WWII.

During one of the nights when we were stranded at Osan, we received word that our squadron was leaving Clark to return to Dyess, ending the deployment that had begun with the squadron's departure from Mildenhall in February. We felt a bit stranded. Each of us had a small amount of our personal belongings with us at Osan, more in our quarters at Tachi, and the rest in our quarters at Clark. We wondered if we'd ever get everything together and get home! On 25 May we flew back to Clark via Osan and I was able to get some cash and checks from our trailer.

On 28 May 28 we flew Clark – CCK (Taiwan) – Osan – Kimpo – Tachi. The Kimpo to Tachi leg was another emergency Medevac flight. On 29 May we flew from Tachi to CCK, and on 30 May to Bangkok. On this mission we carried a heavy cargo consisting of an edition of the *Stars and Stripes*. We were told that this was the highest priority mission in PACAF. The take-off from Tachi was memorable for three reasons. First, the Tachi runway was short (5,500 ft with overruns), and the local Communists had erected 100-ft high

poles in a field across the street from the south end of the runway. Second, we were at an unusually high, waived take-off weight (165,000 lbs). Third, we encountered moderate-to-severe turbulence on the climb out; i.e., the aircraft was almost uncontrollable and there was no way that we could read the instruments. On 31 May 31 we flew Bangkok – Ubon (Thailand) – Cubi Point – Clark, finally. At Cubi, we saw the first OV-10 Broncos being delivered to Southeast Asia.

On 2 Jun we flew Clark – Cam Ranh – Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) – Clark. We carried only one pallet on this mission: a 10' x 10' x 10' steel container (Conex) containing about \$1,000,000 in \$20 bills, we were told. The escort was a full Colonel with sidearm plus four armed guards. The cash was to be given to U.S. personnel leaving Vietnam and headed for home, in exchange for the Military Payment Certificates (MPC) we were forced to use in country in lieu of cash. Next, home beckoned! We packed up our re-united belongings. On 4 Jun, we flew from Clark to Wake Island. That was a great place to sit by the ocean with a drink at night and watch the gentle waves lap at the beach. On 5 Jun we flew to Hickam, crossing the date line. At Hickam, this young Lt Miller lost at 21 Aces at the O'Club and bought one and a half rounds of Mai Tais for our group of 19 officers (the six Tachi crews and the mission commander). *C'est la vie*.

The next day, also 5 Jun, we flew back to Dyess. After a few days off, the regular drill of local training missions and support missions followed. On 27 Jun, we flew to Cannon AFB to be the static display C-130 for "Falcon 68," a familiarization exercise for USAF Academy cadets. An engineer and I, the co-pilot, were left there with a vehicle to babysit the airplane. We stayed at a small Rodeway Inn in Clovis. In those days, the main attraction in town was the Dairy Queen. We were pretty bored, with one exception. I ran into UPT buddy Frank Frulio again. He was going through upgrade training in the F-100. The very first F-111B flight simulator was in place at Cannon, for the Aussies. Frank, a former F-101 weapons operator, had become friendly with the guys who ran the simulator. Frank took me over to the sim to see if we could fly it a bit. His buddy was doing some maintenance on the sim and needed someone to fly it. So I sat in the left seat and flew it, while Frank sat in the right seat and operated the weapons systems. Great fun!

A week or so later, we picked up a multi-aircraft mission to move a Guard unit from Nevada, to Richards-Gebaur AFB near Kansas City. This experience revealed more than usual how petty some commanders could be. The original plan was to stay overnight in Reno and then, each day, fly a load to Richards-Gebaur and return to Reno. However, when we arrived at Reno on 12 Jul, we were informed that there was no way we miscreants were going to be allowed to spend the night there. We were to fly a load that day to Richards-Gebaur and spend the night there. The first aircraft loaded up and took off. It went around, instead of over, the small hill south of the Reno runway. That was curious. The rest of us stood on the ramp, looking south, wondering what was going on. Finally, the aircraft re-appeared heading north toward us, still climbing, trying to get put of the valley. Now suspicious, we hit the Dash-1 charts and realized that, because of the summer heat and Reno's altitude, the loads planned for the aircraft were too heavy. They had been planned for early morning take-offs in cool air, when "there is more lift in the air." So, instead of carrying the normal 5 or 6 pallets per load, all of the loads were reduced by a pallet or two for safety. That, of course, required more trips. So we did that on 12 through 14 Jun. It turned out that the quarters at Richards-Gebaur were inadequate and we had make another hop and stay at nearby Forbes AFB, instead. What a goat-rope.

On 4 Aug 1968, my first child was born at the Dyess base hospital. In the meantime, the 516th Wing was preparing to support a large exercise to be conducted on the Greek-Turkish border. This was Exercise Deep Furrow 68, which simulated NATO repelling an invasion of Greece. The squadron assigned me to the crew carrying the squadron's maintenance equipment to give me another day or two in town. On 7-8 Aug, with mother and baby still in the hospital, we flew the maintenance kit to Lajes Air base in the Azores via a stop-over at Langley AFB VA. After dropping the kit at Lajes, we flew back to Dyess on 9-10 Aug, again stopping at Langley. The kit was then in place while aircraft from our Wing transited Lajes enroute to Greece. On 13-14 Aug, I picked up my mother-in-law at the Abilene airport and brought the wife and baby home from the hospital.

On 15-16 Aug, we returned to Lajes via Langley to pick up the maintenance kit. We flew the kit to Rhein-Main AB in Germany on 17 Aug,

then on to the Hellenic Air Force's Elefsis AB in Greece on 20 Aug. Elefsis AB was outside the northwest edge of Athens. It was hot, dry and dusty. Our accommodations were large tents near the taxiways, with the sides rolled up. Taxiing aircraft would blow dust through the tents. The "bathroom" was an open slit trench with wooden seats, the one on the end labeled "Any General Officer;" rank to the right, of course. Our crew, having relatively little to do, spent as much time in Athens as possible, using the local bus service to get to Athenai Beach there, just off the end of the runway of the Athenai airport (now closed) in Glyfada, a southern suburb of Athens. Hotel rooms at the beach front were extremely cheap then. We stayed at the King Minos, Villa Katerina, Blue Sky, and Ideal hotels. On 22 Aug we flew our only participation in the airdrops along the Greek-Turkish buffer zone. One of the crews lost an engine, but stayed in formation and made their drop. Interesting. Eventually, I returned to Dyess and the new baby.

On 6 Sep 1968 E-model 62-1785 of the 314th Wing at CCK was shot down at Tan Phat, near Bao Loc, killing all five on board. Later that year I heard suspicions that they had been hit by friendly artillery. This was always a danger in South Vietnam. We received an intell briefing before each mission. When we were fraggged to fly to a location where the Army was firing artillery outbound, the briefing included the directions they were firing. This info was, of course, about 24 hours old and no longer valid. To account for this problem, each C-130 was jerry-rigged with an Army FM field radio in the bookcase above the navigator's station. It was connected to one of the HF radio antennas that ran from above the cockpit up to the top of the vertical stabilizer. The navigator would try to contact Army artillery to find a path we could fly and not be in the line of fire. Sometimes this worked.

The next year, after I made the unit move to CCK in 1969, I learned that our navigators did not understand the artillery coordinates given to them in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid. UTM Grid was an Army thing, so it was not taught to USAF navigators. I had learned UTM grid in Army ROTC in college, so I gave our squadron navigator a quick lesson and he passed along the info to others. Someday the systems and logistics commands of the three services will get their act

together, as suggested by Barry Goldwater and many others. It hasn't happened yet, though.

On 24 Oct, we departed Dyess in support of an exercise called Coronet Finch. Apparently, this was a deployment in response to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia during the period 5-26 Oct 1968. Our role was to bring troops and equipment home. We flew to Goose Bay, Labrador, on 24 Oct and then on to Ramstein AB in Germany on 25 Oct. We picked up troops and flew to Lajes on 26 Oct and then to Goose Bay on 27 Oct. On this leg, our cargo compartment air conditioning and pressurization unit failed. Instead of generating about 15 psi of pressurization, we could only generate about 3 psi from the flight deck unit. We descended to a lower altitude so that the cabin elevation would be below 10,000 feet.

At Goose, we swapped partial loads with another aircraft in our gaggle so that we would have only equipment on board and no passengers. On 29 Oct, we flew from Goose to Mountain Home AFB in Idaho. We flew this 2,400 mile leg at only 14,000 feet, having loaded extra fuel on board to account for a higher fuel burn rate at the lower than usual altitude. We flew along the northwest side of the Great Lakes, through the Rockies and past Jackson Hole, Wyoming. We had clear skies the whole leg, and the scenery was beautiful. Of course, the Fourteener peaks in Colorado were slightly above our altitude, so we navigated quite carefully. We all had headaches upon arrival at Mountain Home.

Becoming an AC in the 346th

I had my AC upgrade check ride at Dyess on 2 Dec 1968. On 4 Dec, I deployed with the 346th to Tachikawa AB. We flew to MacClellan AFB that day. On 6 Dec we flew to Hickam. On 8-9 Dec we flew to Wake Island, crossing the date line again, then on to Tachi on 10 Dec. On 12 Dec I went in country to Cam Ranh. Having no crew of my own yet, Bob Carter was my AC. He was also an instructor pilot. He and I swapped left and right seats on nearly every mission. Bobby Reynolds was our navigator.

At some point when I was at Cam Ranh during my Tachi rotation, I was very shocked to see my OTS roommate, Richard Haven VanDyke, listed in the *Stars and Stripes* as MIA as of September 11th. That leads to a long, sad story that I'll skip here, but it's posted on line.

On 25 Dec, we flew Cam Ranh – Hue – Da Nang – An Hoa – Da Nang – An Hoa – Da Nang – An Hoa – Cam Ranh. An Hoa was under siege and we were one of four C-130s re-supplying them that day. One load was food. The rest of the loads were shells and 155 howitzer barrels (two per airplane). One of the other aircraft's crewmembers sang a carol to us over the radio that day: “Jingle bells, mortar shells, VC in the grass. Take your Merry Christmas and ...” you can guess the last line. Due to nearby ground fire, we flew a high-speed, 500-ft downwind, pitched onto base with flaps and gear coming down in the turn and landed on the PSP. No chance for a go-around without touching down. The one revetment was half-way down on the right side of the runway. We'd get stopped, turn around at the departure end, back-taxi, and back into the revetment to unload. After the next aircraft landed and passed us, we'd back-taxi while they backed into the revetment to get clear of the runway and then we'd take off. While we were in the revetment, the airplane following us in almost hit a forklift that crossed the approach end of the runway just as the aircraft flared. The other crew thought that they had hit it. I flew the left seat that day. Challenging, to say the least, but I did OK.

On 27 Dec we flew Cam Ranh – Pleiku – Cam Ranh – Nha Trang (twice) – Cam Ranh. At Pleiku, we saw a C-47 Dragonship operating. Amazing tongue of fire! On our first departure from Nha Trang, a hot air duct blew in our left wheel well, triggering a fire light. We did a 180 and landed downwind. Bob was in the left seat that day.

On 28 Dec we flew Cam Ranh – Pleiku – Pleiku – Nha Trang – Qui Nhon – Cam Ranh. We conducted six personnel airdrops at Pleiku of novice Montagnard forces, led by Green Berets. Bobby Reynolds had to be careful to keep the jumpers away from the punji stakes at the downwind side of the drop zone; part of a village defense system. I was in the left seat that day. The jumpers were tailgating, 22 at a time. After two sticks had jumped on one of the sorties, and I had just completed the first 180 of the racetrack, the last stick ran from the front to the back of the cargo compartment. The plane pitched up quite a bit, but was very controllable. Our very experienced loadmaster was very apologetic. They had surprised him.

That day, the Pleiku and An Khe airlift control personnel were meeting together and

barbecuing steaks while they were at it. We had to depart for the remainder of our mission just before the barbecue. We were very disappointed, because we seldom had access to decent food. After engine start, the ALCE commander from Pleiku, a Lt Col (bless him), trotted out onto the ramp with a large plate of freshly-cooked steaks. Our loadmaster ran out, snapped off a brisk salute (on the ramp, no less!) and brought the steaks aboard. As soon as we had the gear up I engaged the autopilot for the climb-out (not exactly recommended) and we all attacked our steaks with our bare hands. One of the best steaks I've ever eaten. That shuttle ended on 30 Dec.

1969

On 8 Jan 1969 it was back to Cam Ranh via Qui Nhon for another shuttle. On 17 Jan I flew with LtCol Abbott from our squadron. Great guy. He flew C-47s as a co-pilot in the Berlin Airlift. He was one of two very senior Lt Cols in the 346th. Lt Col Rankin had also flown the Airlift as well as the Hump. These two guys were amazing to fly and talk with.

On 19 Jan Bob Carter was in the left seat. Enroute north from Binh Thuy to Tay Ninh, we usually headed across Saigon. However, Paris GCI in Saigon cleared us north-northwest, direct Tay Ninh. I saw smoke on the ground at 12 o'clock and called "Airstrike!" Bob and I looked up and saw two South Vietnamese F-5s rolling in on the site. They were belly up to us, meaning that they could not see us. Bob initiated a max-rate roll to the left, I grabbed the yoke and helped. We rolled almost completely inverted, dropped from about 12,000 ft to 3,000 ft, and rolled out level and heading about west. The loadmaster became a bit concerned about being upside down, but Bob kept positive g on the aircraft and did not over-stress it. Later, we took a small arms round through the leading edge of the right horizontal stabilizer at Duc Pho while flying a 700 ft downwind west of the field. That night, we took off at 2125 and flew back to Tachi, arriving at 0540. What happened to crew rest that day??

Next, we learned that our rotation at Tachi was to be cut short so that the squadron could prepare for the unit move to CCK AB in Taiwan. The official transfer occurred on 15 Mar 1969; on that date the 346th TAS was re-assigned from the 516th TAW at Dyess to the 314th TAW at CCK AB, Taiwan. On 30 Jan, I flew an emergency Medevac, Tachi – Itazuke – Atsugi – Tachi. Lt Col Van

Houten was the aircraft commander. On 2 Feb, I flew with Lt Col Van Houten from Tachi to Hickam, crossing the date line. We had a phenomenal 125-knot tail wind and were able to overfly Wake Island, our primary destination, all the way to Hickam; 13 hours. We stayed overnight and, again on 2 Feb, flew from Hickam to Dyess.

I headed out on 10 Feb with Bob Carter to Pope AFB to participate in Exercise Boldshot/Brim Fire 4-68. We stayed at the Heart of Fayetteville Motel on the outskirts of Fayetteville. Some hookers set up shop in one of the rooms, making the gay manager jealous. On 12 Feb we flew an airland mission to Eglin AFB Auxiliary Field 6 in Florida and back. We were only on the ground 5 minutes at Aux 6. On 13 Feb we did the same thing. On 15 Feb we stopped briefly at Aux 6, then flew on to Altus AFB OK and back to Dyess. On 27 Feb it was back to Pope, via Bergstrom and Eglin Aux 6 to participate again in Boldshot/Brim Fire 4-68, with Lt Col Van Houten as the aircraft commander. We flew two round trips from Pope to Aux 6 on 1 Mar. We flew to Aux 6 on 2 Mar and then back home to Dyess. A typical exercise for us.

On 8 Mar, I embarked on my first overseas mission as an aircraft commander, still a 1st Lieutenant. This was Exercise Focus Retina (see *Time*, "The Longest Jump," 28 Mar 1969). We flew to Pope the first day, then out to Hamilton AFB, at the north end of San Francisco Bay on the 9 Mar. We flew to Hickam on 10 Mar. Enroute, the navigator tried to help, by radio, a Beech 18 establish his overwater position. On 11 Mar we flew on to Wake Island, crossing the date line. The next day, 13 Mar, we flew to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. On 14 Mar we flew to Pyong Taek and Suwon in Korea. Suwon, on the west coast, was our base of operations for the exercise. We flew back to Pyong Taek and returned to Suwon that same day. On 17 Mar we flew an airdrop at Kimpo. We flew a container delivery system (CDS) drop on 18 Mar and another on 19 Mar. These drops were part of the main exercise. Our job was to drop the lead troops and equipment ahead of the C-141s carrying the 82nd Airborne from the U.S. Note that it was a MAC C-141 that dumped the Army's MG Deane into the portion of the river that cut through the sand bar onto which we dropped; the TAC C-130 navigators saw the problem during planning and dropped beyond the water.

We flew back to Kadena via Pyong Taek on 21 Mar and then to Wake Island during the night of 22 Mar. The night of 23 Mar we flew to Hickam and then to Hamilton on 24 Mar, landing at 0550. The lights of San Francisco were beautiful in the pre-dawn twi-light as we coasted in over the Golden Gate Bridge. On 25 Mar we flew Hamilton – Pope – Dyess. Because we were an all-Lieutenant crew in terms of the three officers, we were written up in the base newspaper.

On 8 Mar 1969, E model 64-0545 of the 50th TAS crashed short of the runway at CCK AB, killing all 12 on board. The main cause was found to be the weather being below minimums for the approach. However, the board also found that pilot fatigue may have contributed to the decision to make the approach and the inability to align with the runway when it was in sight (they rolled into a turn at a low altitude and caught a wingtip on the ground). The reason for my mention of fatigue was a long-standing complaint by crews who lived on base of nighttime testing of the jet engines used on the KC-135 based at tankers at CCK. Even after I arrived at CCK, the noise would keep us awake at night. It seems ironic now to me that a fatigue-related accident occurred at CCK just before I got there, considering my later professional work in operator fatigue after graduate school.

My wife and daughter were to go to the Seattle area to be with her folks in preparation for joining me in Taiwan. I got myself assigned to a static display for Army training at McChord AFB. I flew there on 8 Apr and I and took one of our dogs, a sweet-natured terrier mutt, with me in a kennel carrier in the empty airplane. The guys in back eventually let him out and he watched them play cards. Then they put him up in the cockpit where, looking through the floor-level windows, he was a bit surprised at being so high above the ground! In time he settled into a nap on the empty co-pilot's seat. I visited with my in-laws and dropped off the dog. On 10 April, we fired up the aircraft and flew it back to Dyess. When we turned on the flight deck air conditioning/pressurization system at McChord, it blew dog hair all over the cockpit!

Getting a Crew in the 346th and the Unit Move

Later in April, I was assigned my first permanent crew as an aircraft commander (AC). My engineer was SSgt Larry Groner and my navigator was Capt Ed Wilson. My loadmaster,

Tom Bruchmann, was a young, red-headed kid from Iowa, a 1st-term E-4, who was headed for Vietnam on five waivers. One waiver dealt with the fact that he had less than 12 months left in the service and, thus, should not be going to Vietnam. Most of us were on waivers for not having had jungle survival training, and I had not even been to basic survival training. Tom took it all in stride.

I drove the wife, daughter and other dog to Seattle. On the 22 Apr we celebrated my promotion to Captain (temporary). I flew from Sea-Tac to the new Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, which we at Dyess had watched under construction as we headed over it on missions to the east. I signed in at Dyess, stayed with friends and out-processed on 26 May. This was a long time after departing the rotation at Tachi on February 2nd, but I was probably a tail-end Charlie in the unit move.

On 27 May my new crew and I deadheaded to Forbes AFB to check out in the B model C-130 so we could ferry one from TAC's ownership to PACAF ownership at Clark AB. We did the check ride in the afternoon in 58-0725. The next day, we flew that airplane to Majors Field (Greenville TX) and then on to McClellan AFB. The airplane broke on 29 May and was repaired. On 30 May we flew to Hickam. Because of the limited fuel capacity of the B model, we had to make sure that the headwind was mild enough that we could make it all the way to Hickam. Ed Wilson calculated and monitored our "point of no return" very carefully, as did Larry Groner and I. On 31 May we flew to Wake Island, crossing the date line and landing on 1 June. The next day we transited Andersen AB on Guam and flew on the Clark, where we "sold" the airplane to PACAF. (Where is that receipt?) On 4 Jun 4th, we all deadheaded, hung over, to CCK. Upon arrival, we had search and rescue photos taken as part of our in-processing (I have that photo somewhere; pretty haggard looking; too much alcohol in Angeles City maybe?).

On 16 Jun we flew to Cam Ranh to start a shuttle. Bob Carter was assigned as the instructor who would give us our in-country familiarization. On 25 Jun Bob gave a left-seat familiarization ride to my co-pilot. We flew a Medevac mission. I rode in back out of interest in seeing how the medical folks executed their work. Those med techs worked harder than anyone else I saw around airplanes in Vietnam. This day we made pick-ups at Camp Evans and Quang Tri. Many of these kids were

fresh out of amputation surgery. As we know, USAF flight nurses were eventually banned from flying in-country. A huge loss.

On another Medevac on 29 Jun we blew the #4 generator over Camp Evans and had to divert back to Cam Ranh. We completed the mission after a pretty quick repair. We came back out of country to CCK on the night of 30 Jun – 1 Jul. On 10 Jul we flew down to Quang Tri, Da Nang and back to CCK. We “pulled the 1st Marines out of I Corps,” whatever that note of mine meant. We also blew the #2 starter at Da Nang and had to have a buddy start.

John Moylan, an Irishman from Boston, became my co-pilot. We deadheaded back to Cam Ranh on 26 Jul. On 30 Jul we flew Cam Ranh – Pleiku – Da Nang – Hue – Da Nang – Dong Ha – Da Nang – Dong Ha – Cam Ranh. We followed the procedure at Dong Ha to leave the engines running in low-speed ground idle, exit the aircraft and remain in a bunker until the Army unloaded the cargo. They were fast! Then we trotted back out, taxied and got the heck out of Dodge. We had practiced minimal-checklist departures for situations like this.

Just after midnight on the morning of 7 Aug there was a sapper attack next door to Herky Hill at a place we called the 22nd Replacement Battalion but what was actually the 6th Convalescent Center. Many of us watched the attack from the second floor landings of our quarters on Herky Hill, just east of the 6th, and then watched the local AC-47 gunship hose the area southwest of the 6th. Impressive. More info can be found by Googling “6th Convalescent Center.” A few of our C-130s received some shrapnel damage from sappers on the Cam Ranh ramp, but the revetments did their job. This may have been when I noticed that, occasionally, a patch on the fuselage skin looked suspiciously like a flattened Coke can.

On 8 Aug we flew Cam Ranh – Bien Hoa – Cam Ranh – Nha Trang – Cam Ranh – Bien Hoa – Binh Thuy – Dalat/Cam Ly – Cam Ranh. Dalat was at 4,000 ft in the mountains and was the site of the Vietnamese military academy. Frequently, we picked up loads of wonderful vegetables at Dalat. The huge green onions were especially good. We had a very difficult time getting decent food. We even had some 12-hour missions with no pre-mission meal or anything to eat during the mission.

For example, on 11 Aug we took off at 0630 and flew Cam Ranh – Tan Son Nhut – Da Nang – Tan Son Nhut – Vung Tau – Tan Son Nhut – Cam Ranh. Occasionally, the MPC series would be changed without prior warning, and we could exchange for the new series only at our home base (Cam Ranh for us). When we took off early in the day from Cam Ranh, we had no access to a mess hall. On such days, we would hit a roach coach at the first big base and get some food. This particular morning, we reported at 0430 for the 0630 go, with no breakfast as usual. (Chow Hall 5 on Herky Hill had either not been built or was not open early enough.) We arrived at Tan Son Nhut and learned that an MPC change was happening that day. The MPC we had with us was worthless and we had no access to the new series MPC until we returned to Cam Ranh. So, we flew without eating all day. To make matters worse, the Aussies were barbecuing at Vung Tau. Even though I begged them for food for my crew, they wouldn't give us any. Other than on that one occasion, I love the Aussies deeply.

Occasionally, we would liberate food or other items from a pallet. Once when we delivered a load of vegetables and had been chewing on green onions, we were asked if we had pilfered the load. Breathily, we answered, “Noooooo!” (Okay, an old joke.) Often, a C-130 would deliver a pallet of frozen, 55-lb cases of steaks to the Special Forces. Often, one of these cases would somehow fall off of the pallet, turn up at Herky Hill and find its way to the barbecue grills. Purely an accident. John Moylan once traded (cold beer, I think) for an AK-47 and ammo at Song Be. Flying one day with Bob Carter, the loadmaster strapped John securely on the open cargo ramp while they were over water and John blasted away behind the airplane.

Another day we had too many pax on board. We were at a remote field and a US Army advisor loaded too many Vietnamese troops on our aircraft, against my instructions. We discovered this during our short-field take-off roll. When I rotated, the aircraft did not go up, as expected. Fortunately, the terrain and tree tops fell away at the end of the runway. I was able to keep us level. We milked up a little bit of flaps, got the gear up, and eventually were flying properly again. I always made sure that we counted the pax on board for every leg after that—I no longer trusting the Army to do it for us. Live and learn, with some luck.

When we were not in country, we were still busy. For example, we returned to CCK during the night of 12-13 Aug. On 18 Aug we flew to Cubi Point and back, and the on 22 Aug we flew to Naha and back. On 4 Sep we flew to Iwakuni and back, and on 8 Aug flew a local at CCK.

So, now some information about the life of 346th family members at CCK. In Aug 1968 my wife (#1) and just-1-year-old daughter arrived in Taiwan on tourist visas. The Navy was the administrator of U.S. military activities on Taiwan and had told the squadron early on that dependents could not come with the squadron in the unit move. This became a major area of anger and contention. Congressional inquiries later led to the finding that the Navy's policy was illegal, and that the DoD should have allowed us to bring our families, if desired, and paid to move them. For those who had brought their families with them previously with Navy permission, the tour length was 20 months; for the rest of us it was 15 months. We were on our own. I rented a small house at #16, Lane 217, Min Chuan Lane in Taichung, and we lived on the economy.

Since she was unofficial, my wife was not allowed to shop in the base exchange or commissary at CCK. This, too, was later found to be an illegal policy. Lucky Graham's wife, Dixie, coordinated among the unaccompanied squadron members to buy items for women and babies and then she distributed them to the unofficial wives. She was an angel! Ironically, unaccompanied men could buy these things legally for their Chinese girlfriends, but I could not buy them legally for my wife and child.

My wife, a teacher by trade, found work at Chung Hsing University in Taichung in the foreign language department as a native speaker of English. The department sponsored her for a 1-year work visa. Meanwhile, at the house, we employed a young lady named "Robin" as our ama. She watched our daughter while my wife was teaching. A middle-aged gentleman named "Grinky" was our yard boy. Robin worked 5 days a week and Grinky worked one day a week. We also paid an elderly night watchman who probably, in turn, passed neighborhood money to the local gang of burglars. Generating employment opportunities such as these were accepted methods of spreading our wealth to the local economy.

Robin, of course, provided essential services, allowing my wife to work. Grinky was just a pleasure to have around. At my request, Robin would make fried rice for lunch. She thought she should make something better for me because fried rice was viewed as "left-overs." However, I loved my fried rice. I also convinced her to use a little bit of peanut butter to seal the edges on her spring rolls. Another treat for me. I recall Grinky laughing at me as we all ate in the tiny kitchen and dining areas because I was using chopsticks with my fried rice. He was using a spoon. They must have thought I was nuts.

On 12 Sep we flew to Hue and Da Nang and back to CCK, then went back to Cam Ranh on 15 Sep for another shuttle. The closest I came to getting killed in Vietnam was at Song Be on one of many take-offs from there. Army helos would depart parallel to us, on our right. As I rolled on one semi-max-effort take-off the combat controller (*Tailpipe*) radioed us that a UH-1 helo was departing also. Just as I broke ground, the UH-1 banked left across our nose. I dove and went under the helo, so close to the trees that we thought we'd have branches in the wheel wells. Tailpipe apologized profusely, saying that the helo had not used the radio.

Air traffic was always an issue in Vietnam. At that time, Tan Son Nhut was said to be the busiest airport in the world. We would not try to contact the tower before entering its traffic area. Instead, the procedure was to clear visually for traffic while we entered the traffic pattern, then wait for tower to ask, for example, "C-130 number 3 on right downwind say your call sign." We'd oblige and tower would resume it's nearly continuous instructions with, for example, "Roger, Spare 805 cleared to land behind the Caribou..." and go on to their next set of instructions for someone else. Crossing traffic on long final at Tan Son Nhut was common. A 3-ship formation of Army UH-1s crossed in front of me on final one day, and a photo recon jet let off a hugely intense flash below me on final one night. Also, we never flew at 9,000 ft, aka Buddha's altitude. That was reported to be the altitude at which Vietnamese F-5 pilots would cruise somewhat blindly while having a cigarette after an airstrike.

Meanwhile that September, a typhoon had struck the island of Taiwan, and our aircraft there were evacuated to Mactan Island. After the storms

abated in Taiwan, Lucky sent squadron personnel in jeeps and trucks into Taichung to check on the unofficial dependents. He sent me a message at Cam Ranh saying that Bob Carter had located my wife and daughter and that they and the house were OK. How much more could one ask from a commander? Our shuttle was over, so we took an aircraft from Cam Ranh to Mactan on 2 Oct and stayed in Cebu at the Magellan Hotel. Tough duty.

On 4 Oct, we flew back to CCK. On landing, the winds there were extremely strong and gusty. I used full aileron control plus differential power on final to keep the wings somewhat level. The touchdown was soft due solely to a timely gust of wind. A Colonel riding the bunk complimented me on a "fine landing, son." Of course, I really had little to do with it. We had to "fly" the ailerons and rudder on the ground to keep the wings from tipping while we taxied to the ramp. The aircraft was tied down with chains immediately. On base, we found that the two flagpoles in front of wing headquarters were bent halfway up at a right angle, and we were told that they had been bent the other direction, too, before the eye of storm passed. The tower's wind speed indicator had broken at 150 mph. There was a lot of damage along the road from CCK to Taichung.

On 20 Oct, we departed for a Thailand shuttle, flying to Bangkok via Qui Nhon and Cam Ranh Bay. In Bangkok, we worked the standard, non-combat 16 hours on – 13 hours off schedule. This made for long work days and 29-hour cycles that the body rebels against, but days off were fun. The jewelers there (Venus, James) would conduct temple and market tours for us, giving us lots of Thai beer to induce us to buy jewelry. We did. To this day I use a money clip from there.

October 28th was quite a memorable day. First, we flew Bangkok – Udorn – Bangkok. We had a speed control problem on the #2 propeller and Larry and I went into ALCE to see if we could have maintenance look at it. The ALCE commander met us with the news that they needed an emergency Medevac at Takhli. A U.S. Army Lieutenant at a remote hilltop site had shot himself in the head and they needed to get him into surgery in Bangkok as quickly as possible. Would we take the mission? Larry and I realized that we could fly the mission on three engines, if needed and immediately said yes. The ALCE commander said that he would coordinate with Don Muang tower; they always

gave us problems. Larry and I ran across the ramp, and I told him to start engines. I grabbed Tom and told him to tell the aerial port guys that if they didn't get the pallets off the airplane by the time I was in the seat, we'd speed offload them across the ramp as we taxied. Tom loved that! I climbed into my seat and strapped in while Larry and the co-pilot finished starting #3; #2 was already running. We speed-read the checklist and Tom announced over the intercom that we were clear and he was about to close the ramp and door. The co-pilot said that we already had permission to taxi, so I did. The tower controller came up on the ground frequency and cleared us for take-off.

As we started rolling down the left runway, the near end of which was next to our parking ramp, I hit the starter buttons on the outboard engines. Once they were up to speed I pulled us off the ground. We had been cleared for a right turn-out, so I executed that at low altitude, raising the flaps and gear. We flew quite low past the south side of the airport's civilian passenger terminal, which probably startled a few people and certainly rattled windows. Don Muang departure control came up on the radio, still on the ground control frequency, and gave us a heading direct Takhli. Of course, Ed was on it and confirmed the heading. I left the power at max and kept our altitude low. We were handed off to Takhli approach. Takhli approach advised us of the helo coming off the mountain. We saw him crossing the approach end of the runway and landing on the ramp near the arrival end of the runway. I executed a short-field landing on the runway, turned onto the ramp and stopped next to the helo.

A medical team ran out from ops joined the folks with the wounded Lieutenant, who was on a stretcher, and they all ran up our cargo ramp, which Tom had opened as we taxied in. Tom said we were clear to taxi, and the tower told the co-pilot we could go. We probably were not parked on the ramp more than two minutes. I put us back on the near end of the runway with about 3000 feet remaining and executed a max-effort take-off. As we broke ground, the #2 prop control failed and Larry feathered it immediately, before we lost all hydraulic prop control. He had been watching it like a hawk and his hand shot past my head to the #2 T-handle as soon as he saw the problem.

Takhli tower saw us feather the prop and asked us if we needed emergency assistance. I re-

assured them that we were OK. However, we were required legally to declare an in-flight emergency. So, here we were, an emergency Medevac flight, headed for a large, international airport. There is no higher flight priority than a Medevac flight with an in-flight emergency. We were amused to hear airliners being diverted to holding patterns and complaining about it. We lined up for the left runway, executed a semi-short-field landing, turned off at the designated ramp on the left, where an ambulance was waiting. The medical team disappeared with the Lieutenant, and our day was over. We taxied back to the C-130 ramp. The next day we learned at ALCE that the Lieutenant had survived.

The call from tower reminds me of another call that had us laughing. On gear retraction after take off we heard what sounded like the nose failing to lock into its over-center device. I called tower for a visual inspection, asking in jargon if our nose wheel had “fallen out.” “No sir,” was the response. “We don't see anything lying on the runway.”

On 29 Oct we flew Bangkok – NKP – Udorn – Phan Rang (Vietnam) – Bangkok. October 31st we flew Bangkok – U Tapao – Udorn – NKP – Bangkok. The next day, November 1st, we participated by chance in a Commando Image, described elsewhere as “A Pacific Air Force special interest airlift mission” (I looked this up decades later). We had flown out to U Tapao, returned to Bangkok and took off again. We had to shut down #2 and return to Bangkok (was this the same aircraft as above?). Meanwhile, three aircraft were lined up to take Thai troops to Long Thanh in Vietnam. A big, Thai send-off ceremony was occurring on the ramp with Thai generals and civilian bigwigs. For some reason, there was suddenly no crew or aircraft available as the third ship, so we were pressed into service. Weird. Ed and I flight-planned while the rest of the crew and aerial port rigged another aircraft for passengers. Then we flew the troops to Long Thanh and returned to Bangkok, but not without a bit of a problem

There was a hitch getting to Long Thanh; we needed two tries. We were pretty heavy, carrying enough fuel for the round trip. As we headed south to fly around the southwest edge of Cambodia, we were abreast Thailand's beautiful Pattaya beaches when the #2 engine crapped out again (what was it with #2 engines?). Larry had to dump fuel to help us keep some reasonable altitude.

In theory, the fuel evaporated in the air before landing on the beach. In theory. Back to Don Muang, repair or replace the airplane, I don't recall which, and off again. Another long day.

On 6 Nov we flew back to CCK via Saigon. On 12 Nov we flew CCK – Naha – Tan Son Nhut – Bangkok and then to Kadena on 13 Nov, where we needed an engine change and then had a few other things break. We finally flew back to CCK on the 16th on a “one-time flight” for maintenance. Life was never dull.

On 17 Nov, a rocket attack damaged E model 62-1824 of the 346th on the ground at Quan Loi (The Quan Loi Queen). Loadmaster Norm Thomas was killed by shrapnel. Thomas was my loadmaster, Tom Bruchmann's, roommate at CCK. A day or two later, Lucky Graham sent word to me in Taichung that Tom was hurting pretty badly. Tom was due to go on his last shuttle in country with us before departing CCK and active duty. I took a six pack and went to his room in the enlisted quarters. We sat up much of the night talking. I passed the word from Lucky to Tom that it would be OK if Tom skipped that shuttle with us. He thought about it, but in the end he said that he would feel too much guilt if he skipped it and then something bad happened to us. He went with us. Nothing bad happened and Tom went home to Davenport, Iowa. A great guy and excellent loadmaster.

On 25 Nov we headed back to Cam Ranh via Qui Nhon. On 27 Nov, we flew a “max pax” run,. We flew max pax the next day, too. We had many maintenance problems on both days.

On 29 Nov Larry and I pulled taxi/engine run-up alert from noon to midnight. In the evening, we had to undo the results of a strange taxi accident. As most readers recall, each aircraft was parked with its nose fully into a high-sided, three-sided revetment to protect it from shrapnel. Thus, after engine start we backed the airplane out of the revetment into the center of the taxiway. Backing properly took some practice, but we all did it pretty much every day and had no problem with it. Usually. In this accident, the pilot had taxied too far aft before turning the nose to line up the aircraft with the taxiway line between the rows of revetments. His right wing swung around and the tip hit the tail of the aircraft parked directly behind him, then hit the revetment behind his wing as he brought his engines out of reverse into forward

thrust, then hit the tail of the other aircraft again before he got his airplane stopped. (Sounds like a fatigue-related accident to me, but I'm a bit biased.) So, the first airplane was sitting to the right of the taxiway centerline with its right wingtip between the second airplane's tail and the right-hand revetment wall (right-hand as you look into a revetment). The second airplane had been knocked cattywompus, with the nose wheel several feet to the left of the nose wheel parking spot.

Larry rounded up a bunch of generator-powered maintenance lights so we could see well. I backed and filled the first aircraft until I could get its right wing tip out from between the tail of the other aircraft and the revetment wall. Larry was on headset outside, guiding me. I pulled this first aircraft back into its original revetment. Then, I had to back and fill the second aircraft to get it aligned properly within its revetment. I had to do this without bumping the revetment in front of the aircraft with the radome. An interesting evening, indeed.

Sometime in this latter part of 1969, our crew had another bizarre experience, this one with maintenance. We were scheduled one night to fly a bird back to CCK. We took our pre-flight briefing before heading to the aircraft and were advised that we'd be flying it back with three engines. No sweat with an empty aircraft. Then we went out to the aircraft on the ramp. Instead of seeing four engines hanging on the aircraft with one of the props feathered, we saw three engines and a piece of canvas where #2 was supposed to be hanging! (#2 again.) Our basic response was the phrase now known as "WTF". The maintenance folks expected us to fly it like that. I refused. My main argument was to ask the maintenance folks to show me where in the Dash-1 I could find charts for take-off and landing with only three engines hanging on the wings. They finally relented and agreed to hang a dead engine on the wing. They did and we flew the aircraft to CCK later that night. It's funny now, but I was pissed at the time.

This reminds me of another end-of-shuttle occurrence and Col Eugene Wernette. Remember him? He was the wing commander at Cam Ranh for a while. During my C-130 upgrade training at Sewart in 1967 he was a (very senior) classmate. My Sewart roommate (Jim Lumley?) and I tutored him a bit. I never thought Wernette was the sharpest tool in the drawer. He was known for and

eventually cashiered for browbeating aircrews into flying broken aircraft at Cam Ranh. I had two such run-ins with him there on the ramp. I won one and lost one with Wernette. Another evening we were the second aircraft to head back from Cam Ranh to CCK. We'd usually depart about an hour apart. As we were pre-flighting, we got word to stand down – there was a problem. It turned out that the problem was fuel contamination. The first aircraft was gliding back toward Cam Ranh with almost no engine thrust. Coming in over water at night, the pilot landed long and hot and wound up overheating the brakes and blowing a tire in the overrun. Hello. I'd probably have landed long and hot, too. We all knew he was a hero for saving the crew and airplane. Wernette dumped all over the pilot for damaging the airplane. What a jerk.

We flew missions on 30 Nov and 2 Dec. On the 2nd, we again had KIAs that bled on the floor. Larry washed out the cargo compartment at Qui Nhon. An aerial port guy's foot was crushed trying to load a K loader onto our aircraft at Tuy Hoa. I pulled alert again and then we flew missions on 7 and 8 Dec. On one of these night missions we flew the airplane that Chuck Burnfield and Chuck Roberts of the 346th had ground-looped the day before at Gia Nghia (JE Dabney, *Herk: Hero of the Skies*, 1979, pp. 352-353). Harry van Horn and Dutch Hintz, two of our 346th IPs and an engineer flew the airplane back to Cam Ranh after it had been lightened up considerably.

A ground loop puts a lot of side strain on the landing gear tracks of the C-130, tending to pull the tracks on one side loose from the fuselage wall. So, not being trusting souls, that evening, Larry acquired maintenance lights again. We lifted the wheel-well skirts and illuminated the wheel wells brightly. Maintenance had cleaned the walls and covered them with dye, looking for cracks around the gear tracks. We didn't find any, either. The airplane flew fine. I heard how Chuck had ground-looped the aircraft by leaving #1 and #2 in full reverse and staying on the left brake while coming off the right brake and bringing up the power on #3 and #4. I used the same technique in the mud not too many months later. Chuck later became a general officer in the Reserve or Guard.

On 9 Dec we took off 64-0515 and flew Cam Ranh – Tay Ninh west – Bien Hoa – Bu Dop – Bien Hoa – Song Be – Tan Son Nhut – Dalat/Cam Ly – Cam Ranh. We were a bladder bird going into

Bu Dop, which was a high threat field. A Huey Cobra flew near each of our wings to suppress enemy ground fire. That worked. We returned to CCK the night of 10 Dec.

On 15 Dec E model 62-1800 from the 50th TAS crashed inverted near the runway while flying approaches at Tainan, south of Taichung. All 8 on board were killed. I had become good friends with several of the crewmembers, especially the navigator, and was pretty upset about the crash. The investigation board found that a propeller had reversed in flight. A crack was found in the propeller control system, but it was thought that the crack occurred in the crash. Some weeks later, Paul Katsuki (now on Facebook) of the 346th and his crew saved an E model from crashing at Hue. They received a "Well Done" award from *Flying Safety* magazine for their heroics. When Paul reversed the props on landing, #3 prop hung at the low-pitch stop (23 degrees of forward pitch) instead of reversing. With asymmetrical reverse thrust, the aircraft veered off the left side of the runway. Paul pushed the throttles forward to execute a go-around, but #3 stayed where it was. They got airborne, but asymmetric thrust put them into an uncontrolled right turn. Fortunately, they were landing to the north. Thus, the turn pointed them toward the beach and not toward the mountains. The co-pilot, a former football lineman as I recall, locked his knee and held full left rudder. They nursed up the full flaps and gear and recovered at Da Nang.

The inspection of Paul's faulty prop revealed the same crack as found in 62-1800 as a cause of Paul's prop failure. The crack was caused by a vestigial cam surface used in another propeller application. The finding grounded the USAF's entire E model fleet until props could be inspected for cracks. We then could fly only E models on which, at least, both outboard props had been inspected and found to be OK. The cams were ground off all of the prop mechanisms in the fleet after that.

On 16 Dec, we flew to Bien Hoa and back to CCK. December 17th was my 26th birthday. On 19 Dec we flew to Kadana and then Yokota, shutting down #4 in flight for a propeller control problem (at least it wasn't #2). On 20 Dec we flew to Pusan and Kwang Ju in Korea, then back to CCK. Keeping us busy.

Though I did not record the specific dates, there were some other interesting occurrences in the

latter half of 1969 with my crew. On one occasion, we were a Medevac aircraft out of Quang Tri for Da Nang. Da Nang was recovering more than one battle-damaged F-4 that had been hit by ground fire. Thus, they were emergency aircraft and had priority over us. We were instructed to circle over the water east of Da Nang while their recoveries took place. Eventually, we reached minimum fuel and advised Da Nang tower. They instructed us to continue holding. We were approaching only 4,000 lbs of fuel in the tanks (about 1,000 lbs per each of the four main tanks), and Larry was advising me to declare an emergency, when one of the fuel indicators dropped to zero. (The indicators were specified to only $\pm 1,000$ lbs accuracy.) We declared an emergency and were able to land immediately. We were extremely concerned that we were going to flame out on final and very happy to get on the ground in one piece. My bad; really bad.

On another Medevac out of Quang Tri, we had a head injury on board and were advised by the medics that they needed us to stay pressurized at ground level pressure to minimize brain edema in the patient. In combat, we never pressurized the aircraft below 3,500 ft above ground level (AGL). Small arms fire reaches about that height. Our pressurization system used extremely hot air (550°C?) from the engines. A small arms round penetrating the bleed air ducts in the leading edge of the wing could easily cause a wing fire and loss of the aircraft. We had a dilemma, but made a plan and executed it. When we broke ground, I kept us at max power (932°C TIT) and treetop level and the CP pulled up the gear and flaps. We were pressurized. Ed gave me a heading for the shortest path to the beach and I turned to it immediately after lifting off. We flew at high speed at treetop level, figuring that we would be moving too fast for someone on the ground in the jungle to get a good shot at us. We coasted out at 310 kts indicated airspeed (KIAS), the fastest I've seen an E model go. Then I traded airspeed for altitude, punching up through the clouds, praying that we would not hit another aircraft, until Panama, the GCI site at Da Nang could see us on radar. The plan worked. God is merciful.

We brought a floor load of KIAs to Da Nang. There are very specific rules about the treatment of KIAs in transit, and the AC is expected to enforce them. On an in-country mission, the AC

is the escort for the KIAs. The rules are based upon respect for the KIAs and the morale of the troops. I went in to ALCE to check on our mission, appointing Ed formally as the OIC of the KIAs at the aircraft. When I had been in ALCE for a few minutes, the ALCE commander approached me and said that I'd better get back to my aircraft because there was some sort of problem. Upon my return, I found Ed (a Captain) and the aerial port commander (a Lt Col) nose to nose in a massive argument. I got that stopped and learned what the problem was. Aerial port was in a hurry to unload the KIAs and load us with pallets for our next leg. They wanted to move the KIAs out of the cover of the cargo compartment and under the "cover" of the wing. Ed had refused permission, saying that laying the KIAs out on the ground under the wing was insufficient cover. I sided with Ed, which really sent the Lt Col into orbit. Fortunately, the ambulances showed up just then to transport the KIAs to the morgue and the situation was de-fused.

Becoming an IP in the 346th

In the second half of December, Lucky Graham gave me and Ron Matestic three (versus the usual ten) instructional rides at CCK to make us into instructor pilots and then we took our check rides and passed. I took my check ride at CCK on 23 Dec. On one of my instructional rides, as we back-taxed at CCK, Lucky told me that I would next demonstrate a 3-engine take-off from the right seat. He punched me off of intercom and told the other members of the crew something, then put me back on. I lined up on the runway, brought the outboards up and rolled. I eased #3 power in as I gained airflow over the tail, while Lucky held #2 back (#2 again!). Lucky then announced a simulated fire in #1, and I called for the shutdown of the engine. Which he did! There I was, a few feet off of the ground with #1 feathered, #2 being held back by Lucky, gear down, half flaps, in an uncontrolled left turn, hurling every epithet I could think of at my squadron commander. He responded calmly, "You didn't say 'simulated'!" He was "Lucky" that I was too busy to throw something at him.

I could have dived from our 200-ft bluff at the end of the runway toward the beach, but I wasn't sure how much airspeed I would gain. So, I continued the flat turn to the left, milked up the flaps to get airspeed, came around and landed. In the meantime, the Chinese controllers in the CCK

tower were going nuts, seeing our feathered prop, while Lucky tried to calm them down. We also almost flew at a very low altitude through the restricted airspace for the active anti-aircraft gun emplacement near the approach end of the runway (Taiwan and mainland China were in a formal state of war). I learned an important lesson that day: an instructor always says "simulated."

Years later, I learned more. Working on an Air Force test and evaluation project in the 1980s, I happened across Ron Matestic again. He was a squadron commander at Pope AFB. I asked him if Lucky had pulled the same trick on him. The answer was no. (I guess Ron remembered to say "simulated.") Ron also told me about the strakes that had been fitted to the rear belly of the C-130 to help prevent snap rolls during low speed flight with two engines out on one side, a maneuver no longer practiced in the C-130 because it is too dangerous! Oops. (As a side note, we lost Ron unexpectedly in 2005. A sad loss for all concerned.)

Having mentioned the China (Taiwan) vs China (mainland) war, recall that CCK was a Chinese Air Force base from which F-104s flew. They would launch T-33 drones toward the mainland and fly F-104 CAP over them. When the mainland MiGs came up toward a drone, the F-104s would jump them from above. Occasionally, a Chinese (Taiwan) F-104 would do victory rolls over the CCK runway to celebrate shooting down a MiG. One day, as I was on short final in the left seat at CCK, a 104 came screaming right over the top of our aircraft, dropped even lower toward the runway and pulled up hard into a victory roll. For a moment I was angry about such a dangerous maneuver over another aircraft. Then I thought, what the heck, he deserves his celebration.

On 27 Dec we flew to Naha and then on to Cam Ranh on 28 Dec for another shuttle. We experienced an interesting sequence of occurrences in late February. On about 11 Feb 1970, troops from North Vietnam advanced through northern Laos. On the 17th USAF B-52s bombed targets in northern Laos. The enemy advance was halted by the Hmong army, supported by USAF fighter bombers, some of which were firing the Bullpup (AGM-12) air-to-ground missile. (I looked all of this up decades later. At the time, of course, we had no clue about the "big picture." Nor did we know who "they" were, but we were pretty good at finding the real crew chief.) On 21 Feb my crew

was tasked with a very high priority PACAF mission to go from CCK to Kadena AB, pick up Bullpup warheads and fly them to Udorn AB, Thailand for Plain of Jars support. We broke at Kadena and went into crew rest. The part that was sent to Kadena to fix us was wrong. We went back into crew rest, awaiting the correct part, while PACAF headquarters at Hickam stewed. Fortunately, an old friend from OTS, Bob Goodenough, was in the command post at Kadena and he protected us from harassment by PACAF. (I ran into quite a few OTS and UPT buddies in Asia.)

Finally, the aircraft was repaired and we were alerted. I sent my co-pilot and Ed Wilson to flight plan while I went to the aircraft with the engineer and loadmaster to make sure that the load arrived and was loaded with due haste. We were parked on a hardstand next to the nuclear weapon storage facility at Kadena. Shortly after we arrived at the aircraft, a large convoy of empty flatbed trucks, Air Police vehicles with their emergency lights on and other vehicles arrived at the hardstand across the taxiway from us. At first, I thought it was our load coming out. Then I realized that something else was going on. The Air Police set up a cordon of armed guards around the other hardstand. I saw them stop the van carrying Ed and the co-pilot coming from ops.

I hopped down from our aircraft's cargo ramp and headed for the other hardstand, where I could see some silver on a fatigue hat. One of the Air Police locked and loaded, aimed at me and hollered "Halt!" By now I was pretty pissed off. I hollered back something polite, like "What the hell is going on here?" He hollered back, "A nuclear weapon evacuation drill." I looked at the captain across the way and screamed, "Get your ass over here!" He looked a little startled and pointed to himself. I hollered, "Yes, you!" I may even have added "On the double!" He trotted over and I got in his face (I was taller) and started screaming about high priority and PACAF and Bullpup warheads and getting the Wing Commander out there to explain this delay to PACAF (I was not kidding) and lots of "asshole" and other evocative descriptions. He was appropriately taken aback. He asked, "What can I do?" Pointing at the van I said, "First, let my crew through so we can finish our @#\$%^& pre-flight." He threw me a quick salute (even though I was a captain, too) and ran toward his hardstand, waving his hand in a circle

over his head. They all jumped in their vehicles and departed. I felt pretty good. But that was not to last.

We flew the load to Udorn on 23 Feb arriving about 0100 on 24 Feb. We were supposed to go from there to Tan Son Nhut. However, we had a problem with a valve in the #3 engine; probably for the starter. Larry Groner pulled the nacelle covers and was sitting on the engine, trying to get the valve to work. Eventually, I called crew rest, and informed "Hilda" (aka, Saigon Tea at Tan Son Nhut). We headed into base ops. They called transport and we headed for billeting. They sent us to the King Hotel in Udorn. We got to bed about 0400. Ed and the co-pilot were in one room and I was in the next, with the door open between the two rooms. About 1000 I awakened enough to notice that my briefcase was no longer on the bedstand next to my head. That alarmed me because my government issue .38 was in it. My first thought was that Ed or the co-pilot was playing a trick. I looked into that room, saw and heard them sleeping and realized that they were too pooped to be playing tricks. I turned around and saw that the window screen had been sliced open. I looked out from my second-floor room into the field next door and saw my briefcase and some of its contents, along with many other items, strewn in the field.

Thai burglars had used drain pipes to shinny up the wall (their muddy bare foot prints were on the wall) and they had stolen items from a number of rooms, mostly from Thai businessmen. They got my .38, my Argus C-3 camera, my DoD and Chinese military identification cards, and other items. The Thai police and the Air Police and the OSS all came out. What a goat rope. Needless to say, there wasn't much more rest that day. Eventually, we got home.

In March at CCK, a captain (Steve Bailey?) was appointed to do a Report of Survey on my loss. They actually flew him to Udorn to investigate the loss of a revolver worth \$60.03, the ammo, my flying gloves and my hack watch; \$102.34 in total. He returned and told me that we were supposed to have stored our weapons in the safe at base ops at Udorn. I asked him how I was supposed to know that? He told me that there was a sign there with the info on it. I asked him where the sign was; I hadn't seen it. He told me that it was across from the base ops desk. My response was that at 0300 in the morning, after a full crew duty day, I was

supposed to be reading a sign that was posted behind me? I thought that was pretty stupid, and he seemed to agree. I never heard another thing about it. For all I know I may still owe the government \$102.34 plus over 45 years of interest!

In early 1970 the B models that had been based at Tan Son Nhut were moved to Cam Ranh, and our E models at Cam Ranh were moved to Tan Son Nhut. My work in 1970 was then constrained mainly to daytime missions from Tan Son Nhut with my instructor aircrew, giving new crews their in-country familiarization, just as Bob Carter had once done for me. I would get up just before dawn, run a mile on the track (thanks to the new "aerobics" research of young Capt Ken Cooper of USAFSAM Brooks AFB, where I worked in the 1980s), shower, get a quick breakfast at the O Club, go to Saigon Tea, pick up my instructor and student crews, work all day flying around Vietnam sitting in the right seat and dispensing sage advice, have dinner at the O Club or just off base in Saigon, and get a good night's sleep. Quite nice, all considered.

Early in 1970 we flew an in-country ROK passenger mission out of Tan Son Nhut. The ROK had a detachment at the aerial port squadron there; they manifested the ROK passengers and loaded the baggage pallet that was locked onto the rails of the cargo door. We took off with my instructor crew and our in-country familiarization crew on a nice morning, with me in the right seat. "Nice" was not to last. Before we even turned out of traffic, my instructor loadmaster said over the headset, "Cap'n Miller, we got serious fumes!" I said, "Bad enough to land?" He said, "Yes, sir!" I said, "Prepare to land. No further intercom transmissions." I keyed the radio switch on tower frequency and said "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday!" to break into the continuous talk stream. There was silence. I gave our "Spare" call sign and position, declared an emergency due to fumes in the aircraft and said we'd land on the left runway with no further radio transmissions. (Today, I think maybe I should have shut up we should have flown a "radio out" pattern. Hindsight.) The pilot in the left seat flew an efficient traffic pattern, we received a green light from the tower (not that I really cared!), landed, and turned off of the active smartly with several fire trucks in our wake. I always appreciated them in such situations. We stopped and the loadmasters evacuated the full load of passengers expeditiously, like in about 30 seconds. I was the last of the

cockpit crew to head for the crew entrance door. As I descended the flight deck stairs, my instructor loadmaster stopped me and said "We found the problem." There was a Honda 90 on the cargo pallet. This was against regulations, so it had been buried under the luggage. When the cargo ramp was up, the Honda's gas tank was semi-inverted, and gasoline leaked out. The fumes were gasoline! Dangerous.

The firemen helped the loadmasters clean up. We made another pass through aerial port to get squared away, took off again and completed our day's mission, albeit a little late (nothing new). The next morning, when I came into Saigon Tea to fly again, I asked around about the incident. I learned that an ROK troop who was a passenger on our flight had conspired with an ROK buddy in aerial port to load the Honda 90. I asked what would happen to them. The answer was, "They shot them."

This was quite unsettling to us Westerners. However, such occurrences were not unusual in Asia. Some examples:

- I mentioned the two Lt Cols in our squadron, Abbott and Rankin, who had flown as copilots in the C-47 during WWII. One told the story of flying Chinese troops over the Himalayan "Hump" and having the Chinese troops throw one of their own out of the open passenger door as a joke. These were not paratroopers.

- I flew a load of prisoners to An Thoi, where there was a Vietnamese prison. I was instructed to be sure that we did not allow the South Vietnamese Army guards throw any prisoners out of the aircraft as a method of intimidating the other prisoners for interrogation purposes.

- CCK was a Republic of China Air Force Base and, as I mentioned above, they flew F-104s from there on combat missions over mainland China every day. We were told that if a sentry at the base perimeter were to be found sleeping, he would be shot in the head where he slept. Perhaps a myth.

- Not a myth, however, was the burglary of several officers' rooms in the American BOQ. One room was that of my navigator at the time (after Ed Wilson). His and others' belongings were found in a Chinese airman's locker. The airman was shot.

We had another mission March of 1970 that I now suspect occurred as an indirect result of Lon Nol's take-over of the Cambodian government from

Prince Sihanouk on 18 March 1970. I did not take photos, for I had no camera at the time. About four C-130s were assigned to shuttle for a couple of days from Pleiku to Binh Thuy. We were moving approximately 5,000 refugees from the northern part of Cambodia. I don't know how they got to Pleiku. They were reportedly being taken by boat from Binh Thuy to southwest Cambodia. Almost all were women and children.

They crowded the edge of the flight line at Pleiku. The Vietnamese military tried to control them, but when a C-130 would park, they would rush toward it before the engines were even shut down. We took several loads of the refugees. Instead of rigging seats for 90 or so passengers, they were floor-loaded with cargo straps for forward restraint. The passengers would walk as far in as possible, stepping over the straps. We would signal them to remain standing until we had as many people as possible on board. Then we would have them sit. They smelled good. They apparently chewed wintergreen to minimize airsickness. On one load, a young woman had a young gibbon clinging to her neck. We took the gibbon, too. It was scared in flight, and we could hear it screaming occasionally. On another load the co-pilot (Bud Beeler) and I stood on opposite sides of the cargo ramp and took independent counts of the number of passengers we had carried on that sortie as they offloaded. We both came up with the same number: 230.

Late April-early May 1970 I was in country again and flew the load of prisoners (mentioned above) to An Thoi on Phu Quoc island, presumably to the Cay Dua (Coconut Tree) prison. The Cambodian incursion occurred in May and June of 1970, and we began to fly a lot of support missions to Katum, Bu Dop and Djamap. Within the first days of the incursion, we had flown a bladder bird into a field at the border (probably Bu Dop). While we were offloading, news reporter Gary Shepard, then of CBS, approached me to request a ride for him and his cameraman back to Saigon. They had the first film of NVA underground quarters, hospital and bunkers in Cambodia and needed to get them home fast for a scoop. I pointed out that we had no seats rigged (the bladder pallets took all of the cargo compartment). He said they would just sit on the bladders and hang onto the ropes on top. I told him it was OK with me, but he needed to let the Army know that they were on board in case we went

down. We took him to Saigon, he said thanks and disappeared. In the 1990s, I contacted him by letter and he told me that the film made it the U.S. faster than any in Vietnam war history, and that he owed me a beer. However, this was shortly before Gary was mugged in Malibu and suffered brain damage.

We flew the Bangkok shuttle again in May. On one mission, while parked on a hard stand near the runway at Ubon, we watched the launch of 32-ship F-4 strike. That was pretty impressive! Back in country in late May into June, and late June into July 1970, we flew often to Bu Dop and Katum in support of the Cambodian incursion. On 29 May, with co-pilot Bud Beeler, and flight engineer McKinney, we went into Katum as a bladder bird with a Cobra on the wing again. On 29 or 30 June we went to Bu Dop with two or three other C-130s on a special mission. President Nixon had set a 30 June deadline for withdrawal from Cambodia. Most of our troops were airlifted out by helicopter. However, the troops who had walked in first and penetrated the farthest now, symbolically, walked back out. I'm sure they appreciated the political significance of that effort. Bu Dop was only two miles from the border. We went there to pick them up and bring them to Bien Hoa. They were the dirtiest, smelliest, most bedraggled troops I ever carried. They were encrusted with mud, some walking with their legs wide due to chafing, many carrying their M-16s upside down over their shoulders. They were very, very tired and unable to generate much enthusiasm for their upcoming rest time at Bien Hoa. A news photographer stood next to me in the shade under the wing of my aircraft. He snapped a picture of troops going up the ramp of the aircraft next to us. One troop had an American flag on the side his helmet or pack. I thought I recalled seeing that photo later in a news magazine, but I can't find it on the Internet.

In July 1970 we also visited Vung Tau, Dalat, flew a Medevac, and performed airdrops at Hoc Mon DZ north of Tan Son Nhut, and An Khe. Hoc Mon was fun. The airdrops were for jump-qualified troops in Saigon who needed to jump at least once a month to get their jump pay. At the end of the day the team on the DZ asked for a low pass so they could film it. I obliged, coming in at high speed 50 feet off of the ground and then pulling up sharply. I asked, "How was that?" They said "Great! You blew dirt all over us!"

In-country in late July 1970, we flew to Soc Trang and Ham Tan on the south coast, and flew some Thai troops home to Bangkok from Long Thanh. On this trip into Long Thanh we saw a number of strange, single-engine, tail-dragger aircraft backed into the revetments there. They had six-bladed props. After the advent of the Internet, I learned that they were the Lockheed YO-3A "Quiet Star," developed for battlefield observation. It was designed to observe troop movements in near-silence during hours of darkness. Reportedly, "nine production YO-3As were sent to Long Thanh North, Vietnam in 1970."

Djamap was an Army supply base and runway near the Cambodian border that was opened in support of the Cambodian incursion. It was about 4,000 ft long with 3,000 ft on one side of a hilltop, a hard area at the top of the hill, and 1,000 ft on the other side of the hilltop. We'd land uphill on the 3,000 ft side, unload on the hard hilltop, then take off downhill the opposite direction. I'd carry an extra 10 kts on final because I needed to pull the nose up twice as far as usual to land up hill at near stall speed. During the monsoon season, which starts in April or May, the dirt runway would become muddy at night and dry out a bit during the day. We'd usually plan to start landing there after about 0900. One morning I was in the left seat and we had several C-130s overhead waiting for the Tailpipe team to tell us that the mud had dried enough for us to land. Eventually, I was the first aircraft in. Once on the runway, I pulled the props into max reverse and pressed on the brakes. The pedals went right to the floor. The anti-skid system had released the brakes because we had no traction in the mud. The field was still too muddy for landing. I maintained directional control with differential power, but was not slowing down sufficiently to stop on the hilltop. I saw Army personnel and forklifts heading for the trees as we roared up the hill. We charged across the hilltop and downhill into the pristine mud on the unused portion of the runway.

I knew that if we stopped, we'd probably become mired. Emulating Chuck Burnfield, I brought #3 and #4 to full power and ground-looped slowly in the mud. Then I added full power on #1 and #2 and we slowly made our way back up to the hard-packed hilltop. Once we shut down and exited the aircraft, we found that it was almost completely covered in mud. After we unloaded and waited for

the sun to dry the runway a bit, we headed back to Tan Son Nhut where the FE had a cherry picker and high pressure hose come out and he washed the mud off.

Earlier, I mentioned the difficulties we had getting fed. Eventually, Chow Hall 5 was built on Herky Hill. At first, it served only three meals a day. Thus, crews with nighttime report times were still unable to eat before a mission. Finally, they began a middle of the night meal. Shortly thereafter, Ed Wilson asked for five eggs at that nighttime meal. The airman behind the counter told him that he was only authorized to serve two eggs and that Ed could come back for seconds. Ed became angry, telling the airman that he had to get to the flightline and didn't have time to be coming back for seconds. The airman responded that this was policy. Ed calmed down, apologized to the airman for getting angry, and asked to see the supervisor. A master sergeant appeared. Ed braced the master sergeant up against the wall and read him the riot act for such a stupid policy. Ed was absolutely furious that aircrews would be treated this way, and the master sergeant could only nod and say "Yessir!" as Ed dumped on him. The policy ceased immediately. That's the only time I've ever seen a master sergeant get braced!

We used to joke that the food in Chow Hall 5 was so bad that we should post the chow hall's coordinates on the perimeter fence for the VC who shot rockets at us. (Actually, the food was adequate and we were thankful to get it.) We were sitting in the O'Club Annex on Herky Hill one day when several rockets came in. As usual, the attack was over in a matter of seconds. Then all the electrical power went off and the Big Voice started saying something about alert and attack and taking shelter. Never could understand the Big Voice; too garbled (or maybe it was the beer). As was the custom, we opened the refrigerator that was stocked with beer especially for such occasions and resumed drinking. Then Ron Matestic ran in saying that Chow Hall 5 had been hit. Everyone applauded. He said, "No, really. There are folks hurt!" So we all ran over to see if we could help. Several people had been hit by shrapnel, one pretty badly in the back. He was medevac'ed home and we heard he was OK.

In 1970, Lucky Graham retired and was replaced as commander of the 346th by Lt Col Donn P. Hill. Having had only Lucky as a commander for three years, my peers and I were

concerned about the change. Fortunately, Lt Col Hill was an excellent squadron commander. I learned this when Lt Col Hill was still very new to the squadron. I had broken at Naha AB and there was suspicion at the Wing that I had broken on purpose (a reasonable suspicion, but not true on this occasion). We finally arrived back at CCK a day late at about 0200, and the squadron commander, Lt Col Hill, met the aircraft on the ramp. This is never a good sign. He asked me exactly how we had broken at Naha. I explained the situation. He agreed that I had acted properly as the AC. He told me that I was to see the Wing Commander at 0800 the next morning, and that he (Lt Col Hill) would accompany me. The first thing said in the Wing Commander's office was by Lt Col Hill, who said that he believed that I had acted correctly. That closed the incident for me. Lt Col Hill could do no wrong in my book after that, and that's what I told the other guys in the squadron.

Epilogue

That was about it: aircrew life in the 346th TAS during most of the squadron's Vietnam years. My family and I returned to the States in August of 1970. I went to the 38th TAS at Forbes and worked there as an IP for 10 months. My favorite airplane in PACAF was Bunch of Sevens (63-7777). It appears that, ironically for me, it went to my organization, the Air Force Research Lab (AFRL), in 2003 at Kirtland AFB while I was working for AFRL at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio. A document prepared 19 Mar 1971 by admin at Forbes indicates that my total combat flight time for

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Mar 1968 through Aug 1970 was 682.8 hours with 181 combat missions and 689 combat sorties; I'm sure the system missed a few missions, but that's close enough for government work. I assume those numbers are about average for my peers of that period. History records that on 31 May 1971 the 346th TAS was inactivated at CCK and replaced by the 21st TAS from Naha AB, Okinawa.

I punched out around the time that the 346th was inactivated and went to grad school with GI Bill help. I studied psychophysiology, which is the investigation of human physiological responses to environmental and behavioral stresses. I developed a main area of interest over the last 45 years in the cognitive effects of fatigue stress, especially in military and transportation systems. We willfully avoid nighttime sleep and normal circadian (24-hour) biological patterns to work at night. This is especially true in the military, law enforcement, health care, infrastructure management, and emergency services. The result of ignoring basic biological demands for nighttime sleep and 24-hour rhythms is fatigue. Cognitively, fatigue makes us stupid, though we are unable to perceive that effect in real time. Our stupidity elevates our risk for incidents and accidents. There's lots of data out there showing that effect. Most of my own journal articles and government technical reports are posted at ResearchGate (10). My paperback and ebooks are available at Amazon (11) and Smashwords (12). Anyway, zài jiàn or, as Southerners in Taiwan would say, “Tsai chen, y'all.”

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TAC Airlift Memorial

As President Welch noted in his address, the memorial fund is approaching our set goal of \$32,850, which will cover all known expenses at this point. We recently received a very generous donation of \$5,000 in memory of Jay Gerding, who passed away recently. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Please send donations to Ralph Bemis, 248 Valley View Drive, Kerrville, TX 78028. Remember that we are a 501c (19) Wartime Veterans organization and all contributions are fully tax deductible. Those who wish may contribute through PayPal using either your PayPal account or your credit/debit card. A donation link has been added to the Memorial fund web page –

<http://www.troopcarrier.org/memorialfund.html>.

Be advised PayPal charges 2.9% + \$.30 per transaction so we'd appreciate greatly if you add a few bucks to make up for the fee if you elect to contribute using the PayPal site.



Several weeks ago, Ricky Davidson, who is now our vice-chairman, Emailed that he was sending me a special surprise. A few days later, I got a small box from Fed-Ex. When I opened it, I found the glass pictured on the right. It turned out to be a Tervis insulated tumbler with our logo, the emblem of the World War II IX Troop Carrier Command, on one side and the image of the front of the Wright Patterson memorial on the other. Not familiar with Tervis, I showed it to my wife, who said it is a great glass and that our friend uses nothing but. She gets them at Williams-Sonoma. I poured a glass of ice tea and, sure enough, she is right. It is my favorite drinking utensil.



Move forward a few weeks and I get an Email from President Welch that the Association is going to purchase 100 of them, and that 50 will go to Bill Kehler in Little Rock to hold for the Professional Loadmaster Association event that will be there in September, and the other 50 will go to Andy Vaquera to take to our Ohio event a year from this October.

The Association is purchasing 100 of these glasses and they will be available to the membership for \$25.00 (\$20.00 + \$5.00 shipping) or \$45.00 for two (including shipping.) These are the same 16-inch insulated tumblers available at retail outlets all over America. They are good “glasses,” made by an American company dating back to 1946. At some point, I don’t know when, they will be made available to the membership to purchase. If you have questions, contact President Welch at

mikewelch333@gmail.com. If you wish to place an order, contact Andy Vaquera at

andyvaquera@sbcglobal.net for ordering information or mail him a check at Andy Vaquera, 1506 Oak Cask, San Antonio, TX 78253.