The United States Air Force Academy
Class of 1963
and
The War in Southeast Asia

Arnold Hall
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The USAFA Class of 1963 and The War in Southeast Asia

This difficult war was our war. The Vietnam War was hardly a footnote in the news when we graduated. Nevertheless, most of us served tours in SEA or had assignments between 1963 and 1975 in direct support of combat operations.

Classmates' assignments within SEA included aircrews, intelligence officers, flight surgeons, weather officers, civil engineers, aircraft maintenance officers, command briefers, communications-electronics officers, OSI, advisors to the South Vietnamese Air Force and other allies, and scores of other duties critical to the combat efforts**.** For those living in South Vietnam or flying over all of SEA, each sunrise brought with it the possibility of being under fire before the next sunrise—which brought with it . . . Members of the Class of 1963 were awarded 34 Purple Hearts for wounds sustained in combat. Whatever assignments we had in the war zones, we had to overcome more challenges and dangers than we faced in similar jobs back home.

Eighteen classmates—more than one out of every 30 graduates—died flying combat missions. Some who recently arrived in SEA were in their first weeks of combat. Others were seasoned combat veterans nearing the completion of their tours--or were back again for another.

Besides inherent dangers involved in flying—in our first 30 years after graduation, 34 of our 46 deceased classmates had died in aircraft—flying combat in SEA brought additional risks besides just being shot at. These extra risks likely contributed to the losses of our 18 classmates.

Annual monsoons occurred throughout SEA. The forecast for my base in NE Thailand was for 80 inches of rain in May through August—2 inches of rain, every 3 days, for 4 months. At many remote bases, our maintenance troops worked long hours in the bad weather, primitive conditions, and with limited equipment to provide us with safe aircraft. Difficult conditions brought risks of making mistakes easier for them and for us who flew.

Some political Rules of Engagement aided the enemy and made our jobs more difficult.

Unlike night flying over the U.S. with its interstate highways and many cities and towns, in much of SEA, when it is dark, it is *dark*. Away from cities, few lighted ground references helped with navigation or helped pilots stay oriented in the darkness when wildly maneuvering to avoid ground fire. Night flying included some of the most dangerous missions.

Many of us flew old aircraft reequipped for a new war. Often combat loads pushed or exceeded published gross weight limitations for takeoff. When forward air controllers (of which our class has many) flew O-1 Bird Dogs, adding a person in the back seat usually exceeded the Flight Manual weight limits—and that's when we were all young and skinny. Most of the time we got away with such excursions beyond recommended aerodynamic limitations. Unfortunately, when an aircraft emergency occurred on takeoff with combat loads near the limits, fliers often had only seconds to make life-or-death decisions.

A major tactic of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in South Vietnam was to mass and attack small outposts in the dark or in weather so bad our airplanes couldn't come to the rescue. Nevertheless, many classmates tried at much greater risks to themselves because of low cloud ceilings, higher surrounding terrain, and flying well within the range of those massed troops with AK-47s and automatic weapons.

Higher headquarters waived many parts of regulations that provided extra margins of safety for peacetime fliers. We often waived other parts, ourselves, to try to accomplish the mission

assigned—and most of the time we got away with it. We were just starting to learn, or accept, that being an Academy grad didn't make us immortal—even if we were Golden Boys of the USAFA Class of 1963. Nevertheless, when friendly lives were at stake on the ground, most regulations went out the window. We did whatever we could to save those lives.

We were a brotherhood in that unpopular war. That sense of brotherhood helped us go out day-after-day, mission-after mission. Most of us knew we'd risk our lives to try to save the ones in danger just as they would try to save us if we were on the ground and needed help. In the highest traditions of the United States Air Force some classmates died doing just that.

Laos was supposed to be a neutral country and should have been spared the destruction of the war. However, the North Vietnamese stationed tens of thousands of soldiers and workers in Laos to maintain supply lines known as The Ho Chi Minh Trail. Thus, a secret war began. Many of our classmates flew combat missions over "neutral" Laos almost daily.

Small teams of Army Special Forces were inserted into the jungles near the Trail to report on North Vietnamese activities and to find targets. When such teams were discovered, they were quickly outnumbered by maybe hundreds to one. Extracting them became a top priority for the Army and the Air Force. Helicopters, forward air controllers, and attack aircraft raced to the scene. Deadly battles erupted as helicopters tried to extract our troops. Two of our classmates died supporting such extractions. One classmate earned the Air Force Cross, our nation's second highest award for extraordinary heroism, during a night rescue from an extremely hot recovery zone.

If you keep some of those items in mind as you read the following pages about heroic members of the Class of 1963, you will better understand their stories. I predict many classmates with a religious bent who read the next 18 pages may find themselves thinking. *There but for the grace of God go I.*

I close this introduction with some of my favorite lines from the great song, *Reunion*, penned and sung by some USAF troubadours who spent time in Southeast Asia with us. *Reunion* is one of several great songs of our time and our war on the *Fast and Low* CD available on Dick Jonas's site, Erosonic.com

Better than anything else I can offer, these words capture what many of us feel.

Brothers in a time of blood and dying
A comradeship with bonds that never fade.

So here's to Thud and Phantom and Skyraider
And here's to Birddog, Jolly Green, and Hun
To the men who flew the skies of Southeast Asia,
And those friends of ours who flew too near the sun.

Learn, think, reflect, and be proud you had such heroic classmates.

Jimmie H. Butler, USAF Academy Class of 1963

David Joel Wax

20-Dec-1965

Dave grew up in Brookline, MA, hometown of another American combat hero, John F. Kennedy. Dave shared a big house with parents, grandmother, uncle and 4 siblings. Sister Pam characterizes Dave as "my hero, my protector, my 'tormentor' and my partner in crime. There was always fun to be had when he was around." She didn't see him as much once he got his 1934 Ford with a rumble seat. He always seemed to be at the center of things as "people were drawn to his charm and dazzling smile."

In high school, Dave was active in football, basketball, and track. At the academy he played lacrosse and was on the Religious Counsel, and the Ethics and Rally Committees. After graduation, Dave completed pilot training at Craig AFB, AL, and soon was a C-130 Hercules pilot at Dyess AFB, TX. In mid-1965 Dave's squadron of 15 transports deployed to Taiwan at a base commonly called CCK. This was only a few months after we started bombing North Vietnam. Forces were building in South Vietnam, but more airfields were needed. So Dave and his squadron mates would fly down to Nha Trang AB, South Vietnam for 5-day TDYs. Their job was to go to nearby Cam Ranh Bay and pick up cargo offloaded from ships in the big harbor.

According to Lowell Schroeder, "Each day we shuttled cargo . . . out to dirt strips adjacent to army bases in the interior up and down South Vietnam. We flew 4 to 8 legs (missions) a day. Long, hard, hot, humid days. But we got really good at flying our planes. Precise approaches, because the dirt strips were only 1,800 feet long. It was fun if you didn't get killed."

On 20 December Dave and his crew had flown a full day and were relaxing in their Quonset hut. A major came in saying they needed Dave's crew ". . . to suit back up and fly a night mission to Tuy Hoa, a short dirt strip." The Army base was under attack and needed supplies.

Classmate Stinky Steinbrink's crew had parking-ramp duty to help crews launch and get back off the flight line after missions. Stinky was with Dave on the crew bus that took them to the C-130, which was loaded with bladders of fuel for the beleaguered base. Stinky saw them off and later was on the ramp waiting for their return when he was told Dave's C-130 never made it to Tuy Hoa. The first landing attempt was unsuccessful on the poorly lighted strip. Coming around for another try, the Hercules exploded a few miles from the base. Some aircraft wreckage and crew remains were located within a day or so. The cockpit was missing—and remained so for 28 years. At a memorial service in Washington, D.C., Dave's parents talked to an officer from the recovery team. He said an explosion had blown the cockpit more than a mile away from the rest of the fuselage. Dave is buried at Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego.

"I knew Dave Wax well. Smart, funny guy." **Lowell Schroeder**

"When we got the news that his plane had been shot down on December 20, 1965, the world became a grayer place. . .. It was a grievous loss to my family and all who knew this beautiful human being, a loss that leaves a hole in your heart forever. . .. His great spirit lives on in our hearts." "He lives on in my son, Dave, and all the other Daves who have been named in his honor." **Pam (Wax) Bosworth**

Lee Aaron Adams

19-Apr-1966

Lee (Larry) Adams seemed born to fly. He already was a pilot before he left his hometown of Willits, CA for a couple of years and an Associate's Degree in Aeronautics at Santa Rosa Junior College. He also was captain of the football team there. Activities at the Academy included football, Honor Rep, flying at the Aero Club, Summer Squadron Commander, and 6 semesters on the Commandant's List.

After pilot training at Reese AFB, TX, and Combat Crew Training at Nellis AFB, NV, Lee was an F-105 Thunderchief pilot assigned to Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC, in June 1965—and shortly thereafter at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand.

Lee flew possibly his most interesting mission on 31 October 1965—the first SAM Hunter-Killer Mission, by presidential directive. The XO (Executive Officer) of the *USS Oriskany* flew in to Takhli in an A-4 Skyhawk loaded with bombs and a primitive, magic box that supposedly would point a needle at an active search radar for Surface to Air Missiles. The Navy commander would lead. Eight F-105s would follow. Lee would fly one of the Thuds.

The story referenced below is a first-hand account well-told by Gary Barnhill, one of the 8 Air Force pilots. Great narrative: flying on the deck at 550 knots loaded with 750 pound bombs; a "Dooms Day Mission" when not everyone was likely to come back from the Hanoi area, but the type all the pilots fought to get on; the A-4 disintegrating over the target with the pilot probably surviving but never returning from North Vietnam. That was part of what Lee experienced. I suspect 31 October 1965 was the day Lee earned his Distinguished Flying Cross. Barnhill's article includes this paragraph. Picture Lee in the middle of the action.

"A DFC awarded that day could have described any of the pilots on the mission: Thunderchiefs...Hunter-Killer mission...against Surface to Air Missiles...deep within hostile territory...low level high speed run...encounter withering ground fire...pressed the attack...dropped bombs in heart of target complex... remarkable mission...overwhelming odds... skill... aggressiveness..."

Lee survived that extraordinary mission but not a more routine, daytime mission along the northern edge of Tally Ho, a few miles north of the DMZ on 19 April 1966.

Lee was "one of the finest people I've met in my life. A very intelligent, thoughtful man."
Fred Wood, former USAF Flight Surgeon, Lee's roommate at Takhli.

"Lee was in my squadron all four years at the Academy and was the rock all of us looked to when things got tough." **Jack McTasney, Class of 1963**

"The most remarkable characters in my life were the heroes I was honored to fly with in 1965. They didn't all come home. Nam was not a very glamorous or patriotic war, but every fighter pilot I knew put his life on the line as if it were." **Gary Barnhill, F-105 Pilot at Takhli**

For an extremely well-told war story about 31 October 1965, see *SAM Hunter-Killer Mission* By: Gary Barnhill at http://www.burrusspta.org/barnhill.pdf

Frank Delzell Ralston, III

14-May-1966

Frank earned 2 letters each in football, track, and wrestling at East Denver High School. As a senior, he was All City Linebacker—and Quarterback—and runner-up for All City in the Pole Vault and 157-pound-class wrestling. Frank was a superb athlete, and he was strong.

Frank, Willie Parma, and Joe Lee Burns were best friends at the Academy. At UPT, they adopted West Pointer George Lippemeier, and became known as the 4 Musketeers through F-4 training and at Ubon.

Frank is shown with his mascot, Elmer, a 200-pound teak elephant with real ivory tusks. Joe Lee suggests that the generous consumption of Singha beer or other spirits may have influenced Frank's decision to purchase Elmer in Bangkok. In 1966, the 433rd TFS flew mostly night missions, after which Frank and Elmer made frequent trips to the Ubon club. Elmer seldom went to the club with anyone else—because hardly anyone else could carry him. Note the numerous flight-suit knife pockets dangling from Elmer's neck. They are trophies from fighter pilots who entered the Ubon bar with pockets still attached.

Sadly Elmer went to Denver after his tour at Ubon—Frank did not.

On 14 May 1966, less than a month after Lee Adams went down near Tally Ho, Frank disappeared in the same area. Lt. Steve Leisge was in the lead F-4. "We dropped the first flare to verify we were near the target and were positioning to drop several more while number two was to be positioning for his bomb drop. We didn't hear a response from #2 acknowledging our transmission confirming the target. We made several more attempts and on guard channel while retracing our route several times. There was no response and we didn't see any fires or indication of a crash. The whole flight we didn't see tracers or flashes indicating ground fire. The karst is tall and sheer in that area, evidently, they went down in a valley and we couldn't see them, though this is really hard to accept - we still had lots of fuel that should have burned on impact."

"There's a place God overlooked when He said Let there be light
Cause there's no place in the world so dark as Tally Ho at night."

From *Tally Ho Tonight* on the *Fast and Low* CD

"Combat is also the place where you make friendships that last forever. There's something about sharing danger, overcoming fear, earning each other's' mutual trust, and surviving that bonds warriors together for a lifetime." **Joe Lee Burns, USAFA Class of 1963**

"This tribute to Frank (providing information to Frank's High school class for their 50-year reunion) is wonderful, heartwarming. I'm sure you're getting a big smile from those guys looking down at us from above." **Bob Kan, F-4 pilot, 433rd TFS**

"Frank was an outstanding pilot. Mainly due to his abilities and dedication we were the first crew in the 433rd TFS to become combat ready in the F-4." **Roger A Knopf**

"Our 50 year reunion at the Zoo is in October. The remaining three Musketeers will meet up again to celebrate Frank's life. Sure wish "Elmer" could join us one more time, too . . . . . Frank will be there . . . . ." **Joe Lee Burns, USAFA Class of 1963**

The first-person account of Frank's disappearance is based on an email from Steve Leisge on 15 October 2013 and differs from some other reports. (updated 4 November 2013).

Patrick Edward Wynne

8-Aug-1966

If Dean McDermott had a mental image of the soldier-scholars he wanted the Academy to produce, that picture might have looked like Pat Wynne. Smart, creative, an outstanding communicator, follow-on grad school in international relations at Georgetown. The dean likely wished more of us were like Pat.

In high school in Melbourne, FL, he participated in football and track and was state orator champion—a prelude to his 1963 selection as the outstanding cadet in intercollegiate speech competition.

While most of us strived to survive the 4th class system, Pat found time to document its idiosyncrasies in his weekly Dodo column, *Smiles from the System*. Remember some of these? "Somebody said they're going to start issuing pillows in biology class."; "There WILL be a voluntary spontaneous pep rally at tattoo this evening."; FAMOUS LAST WORDS: "Boy, I'm sure glad academics are here. It ought to ease up now. PEW »63; or his view of receiving lines where ". . . your name starts out Wynne and comes out Lose." Somewhere there's a line about going to the wrestling matches with his blind date in Denver. Pat ate lots of popcorn. She won second place.

Pat's imagination, writing skills, and persistent drive propelled him to Dodo Editor, Editor in Chief of the Talon, and positions on the Polaris and Contrails staff—while many classmates were striving to stay off the D-list.

After grad school, Pat went to pilot training at Williams AFB, AZ. Following combat crew training in the F-4C, he was assigned to Eglin AFB, FL, before a deployment to Ubon RTAFB in mid-1966. Pat and Tom Fryer reached Ubon just as MiG Killer Doug Hardgrave was preparing to head home in July. Doug remembers Pat pretty much slipping into his vacated crew slot with Captain Larry Goldberg. Pat likely was thrilled as Goldberg was one of the first USAF F-4 instructor pilots and shared the MiG Kill with Doug on 30 April.

Pat's roommate, Tom Fryer, remembers 8 August: two flights of F-4s launched from Ubon for North Vietnam. Pat was in the first; Tom in the second. According to Walter J. Boyne's article, *Ring of Remembrance*, one aircraft couldn't refuel. Thus Pat was in a flight of 3 that dropped to 50 feet above the Gulf of Tonkin to penetrate North Vietnam about 40 miles NE of Haiphong. After attacking trucks near the Chinese border, two of the three F-4s were badly damaged by intense AAA fire. Pat's aircraft had serious control problems. Pat and Larry disappeared. Tom's flight searched for the missing F-4 but was unsuccessful in making contact. Details of what happened to Pat were unknown for more than 40 years.

Some of those details are in the story of Pat's Ring on p. 29.

"A short life lived with Gusto. We will always remember you and your great smile, upbeat personality and drive to be the best you could be. I remember your piano playing, the winters you pulled me up the hill to sled ride and the letters we exchanged. You were so busy but took the time to entertain a little sister. . . . We will never forget you! Love to you, Your brothers and sisters." **Cathy Bessette, Pat's sister**

Some of this information is from *Ring of Remembrance*, by Walter J. Boyne, available at <**http://www.8tfw.com/wynne.html**>.

John Peter Skoro, Jr.

13-Sep-1966

Unlike most of us, John Skoro seemed to enjoy Doolie Summer. He was asked why nothing at the Academy seemed to bother him. His answer: he grew up as a Serb in Gary, IN. In high school he'd run track and cross-country and earned 4 letters as a swimmer. At the Academy, he discovered a new sport—fencing. He soon earned a new nickname, *Animal*, for his cat-like reflexes and killer instinct with a blade.

During our 4 years, with the likes of John, Bill Ebert, Dom Martinelli, and Warren Manchess, the Academy fencing team ended with a winning streak of 39-0. He was captain our senior year, earned All American honors in the saber, and was named "Fencer of the Year" at the NCAA Nationals.

Bill Ebert recalls those years. "We all remember John for his unpredictable antics and incredible skill as a saber fencer. He's the only person I remember making Coach Toth laugh out loud and then scold John in his strong Hungarian accent for being *silly*."

In pilot training at Reese AFB, TX, his instincts and reflexes made him a highly skilled pilot. His silliness, however, got John kicked out of pilot training. Unlike the stern Coach Toth, the powers-that-be at Reese didn't laugh out loud, then scold. Reports came in one night that he'd flown his T-38 at fairly high speed down the main street of Lubbock, TX, so he could buzz his girlfriend's house. He quickly became the assistant club officer at Reese.

John hired a lawyer and eventually the Air Force decided John's skills fit being a fighter jock better than a career club officer. He reentered UPT a few months later, graduated higher than he would have in 65-A, and got his dream assignment, an F-100 Super Sabre. "So the cat lands on his feet, aggressive as ever," according to former roommate, Bob Winegar.

Bob's F-4 Squadron opened Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam in 1966. John's F-100 squadron deployed there soon after. They lived in nearby hootches and renewed their close friendship—but not for long. On 13 September, John's F-100 crashed while attacking an automatic weapons site near Qui Nhon, SVN. One report said the F-100 climbed to about 4,000 feet after being hit, but John did not make any radio calls or attempt to eject. Later Bob flew over the crash site several times. He saw a long scrape of "well over 100 yards, maybe 2 or 3 times that" before the plane broke up. Bob got the impression John had pressed his attack too low to successfully pull out. "He (John) had a reputation for getting close to his work. I had the feeling a few hundred more hours on the learning curve might have mixed enough caution with his aggressiveness that we'd still have him today."

While taking off the next day from Phan Rang, Gene Knudsen's F-4C had a control failure and crashed. John and Gene were buried at the Academy cemetery on 27 September 1966.

I was here, John. I remember you often. Such a waste. You were a hell of a fighter pilot.

Ellery Voge

I met Johnny Skoro during BCT. . . .I always looked forward to seeing him because it just didn't seem to be getting to him like it was most of us. He seemed to be enjoying himself!

Robert F. Winegar '63, M.D. & P.A.

Much of this information comes from the eulogy written for Checkpoints by Bob Winegar.

Harold Eugene Knudsen, Jr.

14-Sep-1966

Gene went to high school in Paradise—Paradise, CA, that is. He lettered in football, earned 2 in basketball, played baseball, ran track, and was a wrestler. He played in the band, was in DeMolay and was an Eagle Scout.

At the Academy he played in the Pep Band and was on the Dean's list one semester. After pilot training at Laredo AFB, TX, Gene spent 6 months at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, for his Combat Crew Training in the F-4. His first operational flying assignment was with the 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, NM, where he arrived in March 1965. About a year later, the squadron deployed to Phan Rang, AB, South Vietnam. In his 6 months flying out of Phan Rang, he averaged about 25 missions a month. Since Phan Rang was much closer to Saigon than Hanoi, most missions likely were to support ground forces in South Vietnam and to attack targets found by forward air controllers. Some missions could have been up into southern Laos.

On what should have been a routine takeoff on 14 September, something went horribly wrong with the F-4. Academy classmate Will Rudd described what happened.

"I was stationed with Gene at Phan Rang AB, RVN, when he was killed. Gene was crewed with Capt John Crietzberg, the 389th TFS Life Support Officer. Gene and John were flying together when their aircraft took off, and during the normal turning flight rejoin that we did on every flight, the aircraft appeared to overshoot the lead aircraft, roll inverted, and shortly after, crashed south of the runway at Phan Rang. John Crietzberg was picked up by helicopter, but Gene did not survive the crash. Gene was our friend and comrade."

The likely cause of the crash was a flight-control malfunction. On a normal rejoin with a lead aircraft, an experienced pilot wouldn't come close to needing 90 degrees of bank and never would roll inverted. So something kept Capt Crietzberg from using the normal amount of bank. Such rejoins are immediately after both aircraft take off a few seconds apart. The F-4s would have been just a few feet hundred feet above the ground. Once the aircraft exceeded 90 degrees of bank, the ejection seats would fire the pilots more toward the ground than up toward the sky. If the aircraft was completely inverted, the ejection would be directly toward the ground leaving virtually no time for a pilot to separate from the seat and for the parachute to deploy. The pilot flying the aircraft would have recognized the aircraft couldn't be saved before Gene would have independently decided to eject. So when the aircraft commander ordered bail out, only seconds remained for either to get clear, and he likely was only a couple of seconds from dying, as well.

Sadly, Gene went down just one day after John Skoro was lost on a mission out of Phan Rang, as well. Both were buried at the Academy Cemetery on 27 September 1966.

I was serving as an F-4 crew chief on the day Lt. Knudsen went down at Phan Rang. I saw his aircraft bank shortly after takeoff and it went behind a hill and then a boom and a large cloud of black smoke rising. The pilot got out but Lt. Knudsen did not.

We lost a good man that day. **David W. Helmke, 389th T.F.S.**

Robert Michael Gilchrist

7-Oct-1966

Bob came to the Academy from Littleton, CO, after a year at CU Boulder. Following graduation he was off to Laughlin AFB for pilot training, then to Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, to check out in the F-4C Phantom in August 1964. Upon completion, Bob joined the 431st Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) at George AFB, CA.

In mid-1965 the 431st got TDY orders to Ubon RTAFB, and Bob got to cross the Pacific in his F-4. He was one of our earlier classmates to experience combat. Barely 2 years after entering pilot training, Bob was over Tally Ho (North Vietnam just above the Demilitarized Zone) on 4 September 1965 in an F-4.

By December Bob had 51 missions and took a break to visit his big brother, John, in Saigon. After mission number 56 on 17 December, Bob's TDY assignment was complete, and he headed back to George. He and his front seater did manage to get a letter of reprimand for destroying the wrong bridge on a mission. Bob's attitude? "It was an enemy bridge, wasn't it?"

Bob was given a PCS assignment to Spangdalem AB, Germany—and a choice: go as a back-seater, or go as an aircraft commander after upgrade training and a TDY en route to SEA to get his total missions over North Vietnam up to 100. Easy choice for Bob, so his upgrade began.

While having dinner at the O' Club, he saw an attractive young woman having dinner with her parents. Bob told his friend, 'I'm going to marry that girl." Bob invited himself to join them and thus began a tragic love story on the scale of Romeo and Juliet, but for different reasons.

If the Air Force had royalty, theirs would have been a royal wedding. Bob's father was a 2-star general in command of the Air Force Accounting and Finance Center. Bob's soon-to-be-fiancé was Cindy Cole, visiting her family between semesters at UCLA. Her father, Dick Cole, had sat alongside Jimmy Doolittle as their B-25 left the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Hornet to raid Tokyo on 18 April 1942. As of this writing, Dick Cole is one of the 4 surviving *Raiders*.

Love grew quickly during the short time before Bob would leave once again for Thailand. The couple favored a wedding in Thailand with Cindy staying in Bangkok while Bob flew missions from Ubon in eastern Thailand. Both USAF fathers discouraged that choice.

In mid-1966 Bob again was westbound from California in an F-4. He became a Nite Owl, night fliers who flew many of their missions in the southern part of North Vietnam including Tally Ho. One evening in early October he was well on his way to his 100th mission when he stopped at the Ubon club for what Nite Owls considered breakfast. Ralph Wetterhahn was having dinner, so our classmates shared a meal. Bob talked of his upcoming wedding in Hawaii.

A few hours later, Bob's F-4 crashed in the water off Tally Ho.

The engagement ring Bob had sent to Cindy arrived a day or two after the MIA notification. He had asked her to wait a year if he was shot down and missing. Cindy waited two.

"There's a place God overlooked when He said Let there be light
Cause there's no place in the world so dark as Tally Ho at night."

From *Tally Ho Tonight* on the *Fast and Low* CD

See *Remembering My Brother, Military Service 1959-66*, a great tribute written by John R. Gilchrist, Jr., Lt Col, USAF Retired.

James Donald Goodman

9-Jan-1967

Jim may be our only classmate who didn't graduate from high school. Before his senior year, Little Rock High School was closed in the battle over the integration of public schools. So Jim attended Little Rock University during his year before coming to the Academy.

He was on the Dean's and Commandant's lists several times, matching up two semesters to be on the Superintendent's Merit List. During June Week he received the award for being the Outstanding Squadron Commander.

After pilot training at Webb AFB, TX, Jim flew EC-121H Warning Stars out of Otis AFB, MA. The radar-carrying aircraft maintained continuous orbits off our northeast coast to extend early warning of Soviet bombers attacking America. On 11 July 1965 classmate Tom Fiedler was lost on an EC-121 that crashed off Nantucket Island. Tom's flight jacket was among debris picked up, and his car keys were in a pocket. Jim drove Tom's car back to the Midwest to deliver it to Tom's parents.

In early 1966 Jim checked out in AC-47 gunships and arrived at the 4th Air Commando Squadron at Danang AB, South Vietnam, in April. He was primarily a night flier, as AC-47s provided air cover to cities and were often called in to repel Viet Cong attacks at night on American and Vietnamese outposts. He averaged about 20 missions per month. Many of his missions likely drove off nighttime attackers, and his actions likely helped save many friendly lives.

For a mission flown down in the Mekong River delta, he was personally decorated by Vietnamese Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu with a Vietnamese Silver Star. Jim's crew had assisted a US Coast Guard cutter taking fire from the shore of the Mekong as it approached a ship in the early morning darkness. Fire from the AC-47 silenced several machine guns and kept the ship from escaping until ground forces arrived. The ship carried more than 7,000 weapons.

On the night of 8/9 January 1967, Jim's crew flew to the aid of a small Special Forces camp near Quang Ngai. The cloud ceiling over the camp was at 2,000 feet, well below the AC-47s primary orbiting altitude of 3,000 and well within the range of .50 caliber machine guns. The crew accepted the risk because lives on the ground were in danger. Under the overcast the AC-47 was silhouetted against the low clouds. Every time the side-firing guns fired, the lines of tracers arcing down also pinpointed the aircraft for the enemy gunners. Jim's crew continued the attack until they were hit by .50 caliber machine guns. The aircraft caught fire and crashed in flames. In addition to the Purple Heart, Jim was posthumously awarded his second Distinguished Flying Cross for the mission.

Classmate Dick Sula escorted Jim home for burial at the Academy on 17 January 1967.

"He strove to be the best he could be in everything he did & truly had a good heart. He was the best & brightest that our family had to offer, his record at the Academy testifies to this & to this day his loss is deeply felt by everyone who knew him." David Shamhart, nephew

Douglas Holman Butterfield

5-Jun-1967

Doug graduated from high school in Vista, CA, in 1958. He lettered in football, tennis, and earned 2 in wrestling where he captained the team his senior year. He also lettered in football during his year at Palomar Junior College before coming to the Academy.

According to Bob Schultz, a close friend in high school, "He (Doug) played one year of Junior College football and was a starter at linebacker. He was small but a tough cookie. Doug was CA State Wrestling Champion in the 154-pound class. He was a straight A student and President of the Senior Class and Student Body."

Doug excelled academically at the Academy as well, earning a spot on the Superintendent's Merit List all four years with something like a 3.97 GPA. He graduated 8th in the class and went directly to grad school at Purdue. Excelling militarily, as well, Doug was one of the few in our class who served as a Cadet Group Commander.

After earning a master's degree at Purdue, he began UPT at Williams AFB, AZ, in March 1964. After earning his wings, he stayed in the Phoenix area to check out in F-100 Super Sabres at Luke AFB.

Doug was an F-100 pilot when he left for SEA in August 1966. He appears to have flown most of his combat tour as a fighter pilot, reaching 455 flying hours in F-100s after completing UPT in March 1965. The Air Force had a requirement to provide qualified fighter pilots to be Air Liaison Officers (ALOs) assigned to major Army ground combat units. In March 1967, Doug was chosen to be such an advisor with the Army. He likely got an in-country checkout as a FAC in Cessna O-1 Birddogs and was assigned as an ALO/FAC to the 1st Air Cavalry Division headquartered at An Khe in the central highlands of South Vietnam.

He would advise Army commanders on the availability and use of Air Force aircraft to support the division. When flying a Birddog, he would look for enemy activity or signs the enemy might be moving into areas that would threaten the division.

FAC visual reconnaissance missions normally covered an assigned area in a somewhat random manner without any prearranged flight plan. Normal FAC altitude in-country was 1,500 feet to stay above the effective range of small arms fire. FACs flew higher over .50 caliber machine-gun threat areas, or down to treetop level if there was something important to check out. Birddogs carried enough fuel to fly between 3 and 4 hours.

On 5 June 1967 barely two months before the end of his combat tour, Doug took off on such a mission. He made his normal check-in by radio with controllers at the end of one hour. He did not check in at the end of the second hour. Contact could not be reestablished with Doug, so a search began. The crash site was discovered only 5 miles from An Khe. It appeared Doug had been shot down without having a chance to make a May Day call.

Being a FAC was a risky job. Doug was one of nearly 300 killed during the War in SEA.

"I remember Doug, as a light hearted individual, who didn't, sweat, the small stuff. He did very well in pilot training." **Roger T. (Tom) Giles, UPT, 65-F, Williams AFB, AZ**

Clarence Joseph Hemmel

21-Oct-1967

Joe lettered 3 years in football and track at Helias High School in Jefferson City, MO. At the Academy he was a squadron commander, was on the Superintendent's Merit List every semester but 1, and graduated 40th in the class.

After completing pilot training at Williams AFB, AZ, Joe moved over to Luke AFB for 8 months of Combat Crew Training in the F-100. His first operational assignment was at Cannon AFB, NM, for six months. Three of those months were a TDY assignment to Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, for his first missions in combat as the war began to expand. In November 1965 his duty station changed to Clark AB in the Philippines. In January 1966 he was TDY again to Vietnam, returning to Clark in April 1966.

Since his temporary duty assignments didn't count as credit for an unaccompanied tour in the combat zone, at some point Joe transferred to the 612th TFS at Phu Cat AB, near the coast in central South Vietnam. Most of his combat missions would have been in support of ground forces in South Vietnam and normally under direct control of a forward air controller (FAC). Phu Cat was east of the border between Laos and Cambodia, so he likely flew missions in southern Laos, as well.

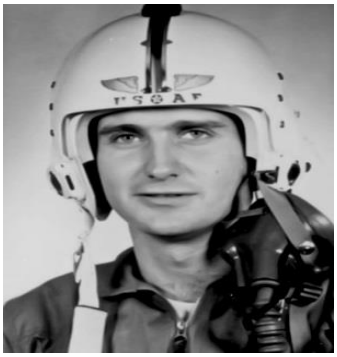
On 21 October 1967 Joe was number 2 in a 4-ship flight of F-100s attacking a target near the coast about 30 miles SE of Danang in South Vietnam. A FAC controlled the strike. Normally the FAC maneuvers over or very near the target while the fighters are cleared in one at a time to drop bombs where the FAC directs. The fighters are usually in a loose, extended trail formation following lead in a big rectangular pattern. They stay far enough apart so when one aircraft's bombs hit, the next plane is almost in position to attack. The FAC gives a quick correction from the bombs that just exploded, and the next fighter rolls in aiming for the new spot. Once the pattern is established, the FAC and the pilot rolling in focus on the target. Unless a pilot reports problems coming off target, no one is watching his aircraft because he's expected to continue in the pattern by locating the aircraft ahead and taking up spacing for his next bomb run.

This all comes into play because after Joe attacked the target, he seemed to pull off normally without any distress call. The FAC turned his attention to number 3 and getting him on target. At some point shortly thereafter, the FAC spotted an explosion and fire in the water offshore. Radio checks quickly confirmed Joe was missing. The FAC likely called off the strike, and everyone started looking for Joe's parachute while the FAC confirmed the fire likely was from the crash of Joe's aircraft.

No parachute was seen, and no beeper was heard. Normally a beeper packed in the parachute starts broadcasting a sound on the emergency frequency as soon as the risers on the parachute extend after ejection. The absence of a beeper and a parachute suggests Joe likely was wounded coming off the bomb run, and the aircraft continued across the coast out of control and crashed.

Thomas Barry Mitchell

22-May-1968



Tom lettered in football and was the president of his high school class in Rumson, NJ. At the Academy he worked on Contrails and the Dodo staff and played in the dance band.

Following pilot training at Laredo AFB, TX, Tom was assigned to fly C-130s with the 18th Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) at Sewart AFB, TN, and Lockbourne AFB, OH. In May 1966 he moved to the 41st TCS at Naha AB, Okinawa. A 1967 bio form lists extensive TDYs in-country in 1966-67, then classified FAC work in the C-130 in 1967. His TDYs in-country would have been much like Dave Wax's had been when coming down from Taiwan. Perhaps TDYs would have been a couple of weeks to fly tactical airlift missions moving people and supplies to smaller airfields.

In 1967 he began flying "FAC" missions in a C-130 at night under call signs such as Blind Bat. After American aircraft bombed a friendly Laotian town in 1966, a directive went out requiring all airstrikes in Laos be controlled by FACs. Regular FACs flying Cessnas out of Thailand and South Vietnam handled that role in the daytime but couldn't carry enough flares to work successfully with F-4s at night. The fix was to qualify C-130 pilots to be FACs and send them over Laos loaded with flares. They carried enough flares to keep a target area lit up for as long as necessary and could more readily handle the fast-movers.

On the evening of 22 May, Tom was the copilot on Blind Bat 01 flying such a mission. Night flying over the Trail was dangerous because the trucks were out of hiding and on the roads—and the AAA guns were fully manned and active. Fireworks shows one never forgets!

Tom was working over the Trail along some of the hotter roads in Laos SW of the DMZ. Classmate Phil Maywald and his partner were finishing up a FAC mission in an O-2A.They noticed ground fire in the vicinity of where Blind Bat 01 was working and called a warning to them. The answer back was the fire hadn't been close.

About 10 minutes later the airborne controller, Alley Cat, couldn't get contact with the C-130. Phil couldn't make contact either, so Blind Bat 01 apparently had gone down without a call. The final radio call about the ground fire probably was from Tom in the copilot's seat.

In a tribute to the lost crew, the Blind Bat 01 call sign was never used again.

"He was a really fun guy. Sometimes things happen and you turn the person into a plaster saint, but he wasn't. He was constantly taking apart engines; he used to drive my mother crazy."

Josephine Fitzpatrick, Tom's stepsister

"As a result of my instructional rides and checkout of pilots Bill Mason and Tom Mitchell, I came to the conclusion that Torn was an exceptional C-130 pilot and a go-to guy for the Blind Bat mission." **Harold W. Lowe, fellow Blind Bat pilot**

"Tom was the class president of the Class of 1959 at Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School, Rumson, N.J. He was serious, well liked and a good friend to us all." **David Foster**

"I wore the MIA bracelet of Thomas Mitchell's when I was 12 years old. The day he was concluded dead, my heart sank. I wore that bracelet till it broke in half."

Jennie McLeod Kennedy

See http://www.talkingproud.us/Military/Blindbat/Blindbat01/Blindbat01Loss.html

Wayne Ellsworth Newberry II

29-Sep-1968

While in high school in Tipton, IA, Wayne earned 7 letters in football, basketball, and track. He would later earn 3 letters in track at the Academy. After graduating from high school in 1956, Wayne enlisted in the Air Force. He was assigned to a Tactical Missile Wing equipped with Matador missiles in Bitburg, Germany.

At the academy, he was on the Commandant's Merit List 6 semesters and the Superintendent's List once. He served as Squadron Commander for 12th Squadron. Following pilot training, he was an Instructor Pilot in T-38s at Reese AFB, TX. After checking out in A-1 Skyraiders at Eglin AFB, FL, he was assigned to the 6th Special Operations Squadron. He arrived at Pleiku AB in the central highlands on about 30 August 1968. A-1 Skyraiders were a favorite aircraft of forward air controllers, Jolly Green Giant helicopter crews, and any friendlies in trouble and outnumbered on the ground. A-1s carried lots and lots of ordnance, could hang around for a long time, and could put their bombs where needed.

Wayne's early missions would have been to support ground troops, to attack targets discovered by FACs, and to provide air cover when people on the ground needed to be rescued. On 29 September Wayne and another A-1 pilot were scrambled from Pleiku to attack enemy troops approximately 30 miles west of Kham Duc, SVN. Various reports give different ideas about just what kind of mission Wayne was on. One suggested he might have been on a SAR (Search and Rescue). A-1s routinely proved support for the Jolly Greens, but I'd never seen such missions characterized as going out to attack enemy troops.

I found a major clue when a posting by Wayne's brother, Gary, said USAF letters to Wayne's father indicated the two Skyraiders ". . . were supporting friendly ground forces that had been surrounded in enemy territory." Kham Duc is 17 miles east of the Laotian border, so enemy forces had surrounded friendlies 13 miles into Laos. Since in 1968 we had no friendlies officially on the ground in Laos, Wayne likely had been scrambled to support the emergency extraction of a surrounded and heavily outnumbered Special Forces team.

The two A-1s attacked under very low clouds, probably in a mountainous jungle-covered area. Such attacks were dangerous because of restricted airspace for maneuvering between the clouds and trees. Aircraft stayed closer to perhaps massed troops with AK-47s and automatic weapons, and were an easier target when silhouetted against low clouds. Such attacks are generally avoided—except when friendlies are in danger on the ground.

Wayne's A-1 was hit on his second pass and rolled into the trees with little time or altitude to bail out. No chute was seen; no beeper was heard.

As I said in the introduction, the emergency extraction of Special Forces teams became a top priority of FACs, helicopter crews, and attack pilots. It appears Wayne willingly took great risks to save the lives of others in danger and gave his life in the finest tradition of the US Air Force.

"There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about you. You knew that I always looked up to you and I want you to know how very proud I am of what you did and the ultimate sacrifice you paid. You may be gone but you are never forgotten. Love, **Gary**"

Joseph Samuel Pirruccello, Jr.

8-Dec-1968

Joe, son of a World War II combat pilot, came to the Academy from Wright-Patterson AFB OH. At the Academy he was on the Dean's Merit List twice. Known as *Irish* and as *Minstrel Joe*, he livened things up whenever he showed with his guitar.

After graduation, Joe went to pilot training at Craig AFB, AL, then continued on as a T-33 instructor pilot. In December 1966 he transitioned to T-38s and continued to instruct at Craig, then at Sheppard AFB, TX, beginning in April 1967. In 1968 he entered training at Hurlburt Field, FL, to fly the A-1 Skyraider. Joe began his combat tour on 26 October 1968 at NKP, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand.

The few missions Joe got to fly with the 602nd Special Operations Squadron would have been over Laos. In central Laos where the Ho Chi Minh Trail was, Skyraiders would escort helicopters infiltrating Special Forces teams in an operation known as *Prairie Fire* or infiltrating Laotian troops in a highly classified program known as *Pony Express*.

In northern Laos in an area code-named Barrel Roll, a back-and-forth ground war pitted a CIA-backed guerilla army against the North Vietnamese invaders. The North Vietnamese advanced during the rainy season when less air support could be used against them. The Laotians were on the offensive during the dry season when Skyraiders and other aircraft could drive back enemy soldiers. The 602nd supported both parts of Laos—and maybe into North Vietnam—when someone was down and they were called upon to escort the Jolly Green Giant helicopters.

On 8 December a Skyraider from the 602nd was shot down in northern Laos. The pilot had been strafing enemy troops when his Skyraider was hit by small arms fire and started burning. The pilot bailed out, and a call for the Jolly Greens sounded.

Joe scrambled in one of the Skyraiders, probably under the call sign *Sandy* used by A-1s assigned to rescue escort. The downed pilot was in an area populated by many enemy troops. This citation to accompany a Silver Star described Joe's actions that day.

> He repeatedly flew his slow and vulnerable propeller-driven aircraft at extremely low altitude in mountainous terrain with extremely limited airspace and in a heavily defended hostile environment. Despite the intense and accurate hostile fire, Captain Pirruccello made repeated attacks on highly concentrated hostile troop emplacements in order to protect the survivor. With complete disregard for his personal safety, he continuously placed his aircraft between the hostile automatic weapons fire and the helicopter attempting the pickup.

On one pass, Joe's aircraft was hit by small-arms fire and crashed without any apparent attempt by Joe to get out. He gave his life in the successful attempt to save the other pilot.

Joe's Silver Star was presented posthumously to his widow, Kathleen, with son, John (6), and daughter, Susan (4), attending. Joe's father had earned a Silver Star during World War II.

Thomas Edward Clark

8-Feb-1969

Tom was a star fullback on his high school team and graduated with honors in Emporium, PA, in 1957. After 2 years at Penn State, he came to the Academy where he was on the Commandant's Merit List every semester but 1. Following pilot training at Vance AFB, OK, he spent several months in combat crew training at Castle AFB, CA, before a tour in B-52s at Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico. In April 1968 he went to Luke AFB, AZ, for his checkout in F-100s, then arrived at Phu Cat AB on the coast of South Vietnam in late November 1968.

During his first two months he averaged about 3 combat missions every 4 days over South Vietnam and Laos. On 8 February 1969, Tom was in a flight of 4 F-100s attempting to destroy an antiaircraft gun site in Laos about 25 miles west of the DMZ, probably along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A significant danger in attacking AAA sites is the aircraft becomes almost a fixed target for the gunners. They can put up a barrage of shells for the aircraft to fly through.

Apparently the target was a 23mm gun emplacement, normally with 2 or 4 barrels firing together. As a FAC flying Cessnas over the Trail in 1967, I feared 23mm guns the most. They have a high rate of fire like a machine gun sending out fast-rising shells that explode on contact. At night the shells look like a fiery rope racing upward into the sky.

So Tom was bravely attacking guns that could put up hundreds of explosive shells between the gunners and his F-100. Tom's plane was hit on one of his attacks and crashed without any indication Tom had a chance to get out.

While Tom was listed as Missing in Action, he was promoted to major. In 2011 his recently identified remains were returned to Emporium to the hero's welcome Tom deserved.

Mountain Boy
He loved the mountains and the trout streams.
He loved his family and all the townspeople.
He had friends wherever he went.

His goal was to serve his country and later in life retire in these mountains,
but he loved us all enough to give his life for his country.

The family (R. B. Clark)

"Tom was serious, solid, a squared away cadet, and a lot of fun to be with. I remember his great smile." **Lou Matjasko, Class of 1963**

"Major Clark was returned home to Emporium, PA in October of 2011. He is buried in St. Mark's Cemetery and was awarded full military honors. His welcome home through the main street of Emporium was one of dignity and honor for his service. It was the most impressive display of patriotism I have ever witnessed." **Nila DeFrancesco**

"He was a hardworking, determined young man, with a fun loving, kind and loyal nature. He was determined to succeed in school, sports, his career and family, and in his short life, he did. I am a better person for having known Tom Clark." **David M. Smith**

Robert F. Rex

9-Mar-1969

While in high school at Odebolt, IA, Bob earned 7 letters in basketball, track, and cross-country. At the Academy, he focused more on singing and became President of the Protestant Choir and VP of the Chorale. Following graduation, Bob was off to Craig AFB, AL, for pilot training, then to assignments flying C-130s at Charleston AFB, SC, and Maguire AFB, NJ, which included flights to SEA. After training to become a forward air controller (FAC) in Cessna O-2As, Bob arrived at NKP (Nakhon Phanom RTAFB) in northeast Thailand. In July 1968, he became a FAC in the squadron I'd left 6 months earlier, so I understand the missions and the areas he flew.

Typically Bob would fly his Cessna on 20-25 classified missions per month over the heavily defended Ho Chi Minh Trail in central Laos—with occasional excursions into the fringes of North Vietnam. It appears Bob specialized in flying *Prairie Fire* support missions. *Prairie Fire* was the even more highly classified program of inserting Special Forces teams along the Trail—and trying to withdraw them under heavy fire when those teams were discovered.

I was amused to learn Bob became known at NKP for his swagger stick. Pictures of Bob near the FAC crew quarters show it to have been a rather ostentatious piece of hardware, much more impressive than the swagger sticks sometimes appearing in British movies. E.K. Loving reported Bob ". . . always carried a swagger stick while at NKP. It became a squadron sport to steal his swagger stick. I delivered the swagger stick to Bob's parents in 1971 in Odebolt."

A flagstone on the FAC memorial in Colorado Springs characterizes FACs as: *Men who flew willingly to the sound of battle*. Bob was doing exactly that on 9 March 1969. He and an Army Special Forces Sergeant scrambled out of NKP to help control the extraction of a Special Forces team more than 100 miles from the base.

The team members were trying to escape from numerically superior enemy ground forces deep in enemy territory. In this instance an actual prairie fire had started and was covering part of the area with dense smoke. Other rescue fliers were having trouble locating the team in the smoke. Bob flew down into the smoke to try to determine the team's precise location—and never came out of the other side.

Another flagstone at the FAC Memorial states: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man give his life for his friends." John 15:13.

Or, perhaps, that a man gives his life for brothers he's never met.

"I was a 23 year old 2LT pilot in need of a leader. Bob Rex took me under his wing. We got shot at together and partied together. I thank God for his friendship and will never forget him."

Jim Glanton, 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron

"My 86th mission was a lot longer - 5 hours on 9 March 1969 with Lt. Searcy as we went looking for a fellow Airman, Bob Rex, *Nail* 40.Listening on the radio, hoping to hear his beeper, and hearing nothing made those 5-hours very, very long. No, *Nail* 40 will not be forgotten, swagger stick and all." **Russ Parrish, former SSgt, USAF, Combat Photographer**

John Hooper Hathaway V

11-Oct-1969

John lettered in football and track at high school in Deland, FL. At the Academy he lettered one year in football and served as manager. He graduated with a degree in Public Affairs.

John went to pilot training at Reese AFB, TX, then to Castle AFB, CA, to learn to fly KC-135 tankers. His first operational assignment began in February 1965 when he was assigned to the 32nd Aerial Refueling Squadron at Lockbourne AFB, OH. The squadron had a commitment to keep tankers on alert at Goose AB near Canada's northeast coast. The 32nd experienced numerous other TDY deployments. By January 1969 when John was notified of his upcoming assignment to fly AC-119Gs at Nha Trang AB, South Vietnam, he'd spent more than 6 months TDY to Southeast Asia. While flying KC-135s, he'd logged 46 missions over South Vietnam and 48 other missions refueling B-52s for Arc Light bombing missions in SEA.

In 1969 John had about 3 weeks of Combat Crew Training at Lockbourne for the new AC-119G, side firing gunships modified from the old C-119 cargo planes. In February he was assigned to C-flight of the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Tan Son Nhut AB, near Saigon. Under the call sign, *Shadow*, C-flight's gunships flew armed reconnaissance, provided air support for troops-in-contact, and worked with night FACs. In February one *Shadow* crew flew 2 sorties and fired 150,000 rounds to prevent Fire Support Base Thunder II from being overrun. After such support to save friendly lives on the ground, a close-out message often received was "Good night, thank you, and God bless you, *Shadow*!"

A press release about one of John's missions told of him and his crew coming to the rescue of a Vietnamese Army outpost in the Mekong delta. John was flying night patrol when the attack began. The outpost was surrounded when *Shadow* arrived, and John's crew drove off the attackers. Such likely were many of the missions John flew.

On 11 October 1969, the left engine on John's AC-119G, *Shadow 76*, caught fire just as they were taking off. At slow speed on only one engine, there was hardly enough air flowing over the ailerons and rudders to keep the aircraft from rolling left. The aircraft crashed only 350 yards from the SW perimeter of the base. Three crewmen and a South Vietnamese airman survived, perhaps due to the final actions of the pilots to maintain some control of the crash. John was not one of the survivors.

The original deployment of the AC-119Gs had been delayed because as Bill Hamilton put it, "As a result of trying to cram in all of the equipment that had been developed up to that point, the aircraft was overweight and the loss of an engine on takeoff resulted in a negative climb rate." An "extensive weight reduction program" helped, but the AC-119Gs would be flown right at the limits of what could mean life or death if an engine failed on takeoff.

"I regret to inform you that I will not be able to attend this service. John was a wonderful human being. He is still missed by his family and lovingly thought of often. John was a true military man who believed it was his duty to serve his country. and of course, this is the sad reason I am writing to you." **Carole (Hathaway) Dapoz**

Park George Bunker

30-Dec-1970

Park lettered 3 years in football and was president of the student council in his high school at Harvey, IL. At the Academy, he was on the Dean's List several semesters and earned the award for being the outstanding grad in Electrical Engineering (EE). After graduation Park was off to UPT, a tour flying B-52s, then to the Air Force Test Pilot School in 1969. In 1970 he became a FAC in Vietnam, with a follow-on assignment to grad school in EE.

While serving as a FAC at Duc Hoa between Saigon and the Cambodian border, Park volunteered for the Steve Canyon program. In a few months Park turned in his Air Force uniform and began flying as a *Raven* FAC in civilian clothes in Laos. Lt. Craig Deuhring was a lieutenant with Park in both places.

"Park was a breath of fresh air – a laid back, quiet guy who was in charge of the pool of lieutenants assigned to cover Duc Hoa operations and a filter of common sense between us and the unpredictable lieutenant colonel . . .. Park was older than we were, probably pushing 30 years old. . .. He was mature and easy going, and we all liked him instinctively."

Craig's welcome to Park as a new *Raven* included a wild descent through low clouds to get into the legendary Laotian airfield known as Lima Site 20-Alternate. Most *Raven* flight operations bore little resemblance to USAF standards. While at 20-Alternate Park sometimes worked with the famed Lao-Hmong General Vang Pao.

On 9 September 1970 flying by *Raven* standards put Park and his Birddog into the trees while trying to slip through a mountain pass under clouds too close to those trees. Minor cuts and bruises—much less than Park would later suffer when snagging his wedding ring came close to severing a finger.

In November Park came back home for a 30 day leave to visit Janet and son, Gary. He returned to Laos to complete his tour due to end in early February 1971.

On 30 December Craig was flying when he heard *Raven 23* was down on the PDJ (*Plaines des Jars*). A *Raven* FAC had spotted part of a tank under the edge of some trees. FACs always wanted to destroy enemy armor, but the *Raven* was almost out of gas. Park was nearby and happy to take over the target and some inbound A-1 Skyraiders. Sadly the tank was the bait in a flak trap designed to kill a *Raven*. Hidden antiaircraft guns spewed fire at Park's Birddog and knocked out his engine. He set up for a crash landing in an open area with trees lining 3 sides. Parts of the ambush forces were in those trees, and Park was under fire almost immediately. Park later reported he was hit several times, had tried to surrender, but they wouldn't stop shooting.

About the time Park would have entered the graduate Electrical Engineering program, Janet wrote to Colonel Wakin asking that the Academy consider naming the Outstanding Cadet in Electrical Engineering Award for Park. Now the cadet who receives that award during graduation week is told that the award is given "in memory of Park G. Bunker."

In another of the many interconnections in these stories, nearly 40 years later Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne picked Craig Duehring to be his Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Leo Tarlton Thomas, Jr.

19-Dec-1971

Hailing from Georgetown, KY, Leo's high school activities included football, baseball, basketball, track, and tennis, National Honor Society, and being Key Club President. He lettered 17 times in the 5 sports and earned All-State honors in football and basketball.

Leo was on the Commandant's List most semesters at the Academy as well as playing football and being a squadron commander. After graduation, he went to UPT at Craig AFB, AL, then stayed on as an instructor for five years. In 1969 he and Bob Venkus joined up for F-105 training at McConnell AFB, then were off to Takhli for a full tour as F-105 Wild Weasels. By August 1971 Leo was back in SEA, this time in F-4s at Udorn with the 555th TFS. He also served as Wing Exec.

On 19 December 1971 Leo was scheduled for a routine mission over northern Laos. He was taking a young navigator on his first combat mission. According to Joe Lee Burns, the flight line was astir that morning organizing cover for a SAR for another F-4 crew shot down overnight. Leo headed off to help save the lives of others. His F-4 was shot down as he attacked an antiaircraft artillery (AAA) site near the attempted rescue. The FAC followed Leo's plane down and saw no ejections before the crash. Leo's friends went back that afternoon and destroyed the AAA site while it was firing.

"I think of Leo and the others often and wonder why I am approaching 60 years of age and they were so young." **Peyton J. Dudley, 555th TFS**

"I have visited his name at the Wall in DC several times. Leo was a fine man and an excellent pilot. He has not been forgotten." **Roy J Spencer, Jr.**

I've often taught writers you can reveal character through what others in the story say about the person—especially when readers have confidence in the credibility of that other person. Thus, I'll share parts of a 1998 email from USAF icon, Colonel Joe Kittinger, Commander, 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Udorn in December 1971.

"Leo was one of the best fighter pilots and gentlemen that I ever knew. He was assigned to my squadron, the 555 TFS. He and I flew together quite frequently on many combat missions in Vietnam. . . .

"Leo was one of the most popular young officers at Udorn. He had a tremendous sense of humor and was respected by his peers and senior officers. He was the kind of officer and pilot that every senior officer wanted on his team because he was such a great person and officer. . . .

"When I could, I always had him on my wing. We were a great team together, and when we went up north I always would try to have Leo assigned to my flight. . . .

"In my three combat tours in Vietnam I lost many great friends and aviators-but losing Leo was one of the hardest and most difficult ones for me to accept because he was so special and such a good friend. . . . The USAFA should be proud of such a gallant Warrior, Gentleman and American. He brought great credit to that institution.

Leo was special." **Colonel Joe Kittinger, Commander, 555th TFS**

Jerry Donald Driscoll

24 Apr 1966 – 12 February 1973

Jerry came to the Academy from Chicago after a year at St. Mary's College. Pilot training at Craig AFB, AL, followed graduation, then he was off to Combat Crew Training in the F-105 at Nellis. Assigned to the F-105 wing at McConnell AFB, KS, Jerry soon was at Korat RTAFB, Thailand, and flew his first combat mission on 15 November 1965.

According to Colonel Monroe Sams, Commander of the 388th TFW, Jerry—the only lieutenant in his squadron—progressed well. "His eagerness to learn, mature attitude, and military bearing soon gained the respect of the entire squadron. . . . In March and April of 1966 he advanced to element leader and then to flight leader."

The target on Jerry's 112th combat mission—81st counter over NVN—was the Bac Giang railroad/highway bridge about 30 miles north of Hanoi. Jerry was number 4 in the 2nd of 3 flights of F-105s at 1,000 feet racing at 550 knots toward the bridge. The squadron commander ahead was shot down before Jerry felt his Thud jump. Moments later his roommate called, "*Pecan* 4, you're on fire." A 120-foot flame looked like a blowtorch. Along with many warning lights, the stick froze, and the aircraft rolled upside down. Jerry survived the high-speed, low altitude ejection but was captured almost immediately. Thus began 81 months as a Prisoner of War.

The North Vietnamese decided marching 52 POWs through the streets of Hanoi on 6 July 1966 would be a good propaganda move. The Communist leaders were lobbying for having War Crimes Trials for the captured Americans. Jerry headed up the second group. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese had been turned out to line the streets. "It got out of hand. They were a raging mob, throwing sticks at us. I was punched and kicked; it got so bad it was even a matter of survival for our guards." They finally reached the safety of a stadium where guards could hold off the screaming crowd. The march and war crimes trials were denounced internationally.

"When one is placed in the situation we experienced in North Vietnam, there comes the great, painful realization that what we all take so much for granted is no longer available. In such a situation you can't help but appreciate what we have in this great country of ours. That appreciation became even greater when, after seven years of living under Communism, I returned to find a very grateful nation welcoming us as we stepped off the airplane."

Among Jerry's military awards are the Silver Star, 2 Legions of Merit, 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 2 Bronze Stars, 10 Air Medals and 2 Purple Hearts.

In May 2013 many former POWs gathered to mark the 40-year anniversary of the dinner President Nixon hosted at the White House for all returning POWs. US Navy Commander Everett Alvarez, Jr., who was captured after being shot down on 5 August 1964, was the longest held prisoner in North Vietnam. In an interview he said, "We had a code: Return with Honor; our dignity; our reputation; our character."

Jerry persevered against a brutal enemy and brutal conditions and lived up to that code. We are very proud of his dedication and devotion to duty under extremely difficult circumstances.

John Lorin Borling

1 June 1966 – 12 February 1973

Like Jerry Driscoll, John Borling came from Chicago to the Academy. Following pilot training in Laredo, John got checked out in F-4Cs and was assigned to George AFB, CA, shortly before deploying to Ubon RTAFB, Thailand. His SEA tour started on 13 December 1965. His combat mission on 1 June 1967 was his 97th.

That evening Capt J.B. Stone talked to John and his partner A.J. Meyers about their upcoming mission to bomb the Bac Giang railroad/highway bridge north of Hanoi. The 3 agreed to meet at the bar in 5 or 6 hours. J.B. showed up. John and A.J. didn't.

As the flight approached the target, a wingman reported John's F-4 had exploded in a fire ball. In the dark no chutes were seen, and no radio contact was made with the two downed fliers.

John's summary of what happened included: "Ejected and hit the ground. It was that close. I hit on a long, steep, furrowed hill and went bouncing downhill like some kind of crazy jumping bean. I ended up in a beat-up heap at the bottom. I was alive, but with disabling pain in my back, ribs, and ankles. There was blood everywhere. I couldn't walk. I was broken."

Having suffered a broken back during his ejection barely a month earlier, John wasn't capable of participating with Jerry in the infamous Hanoi street march in early July.

During the long years in Hanoi, John composed poetry. He memorized his creations and shared them with his fellow captives using the now-famous tap code. After the repatriation flight to Clark AB, PI, he bought a tape recorder to transcribe all his poems. A book of John's poems, *Taps on the Walls: Poems from the Hanoi Hilton*, is available from Amazon and other sellers.

John's military awards include 2 Defense Superior Service Medals, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, 2 Legions of Merit, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 3 Bronze Stars, 2 Purple Hearts, and 6 Air Medals.

"I'll offer an observation and a fact. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was very important to us in North Vietnam. As with religion, faith in country was a powerful sustaining force."

In May 2013 many former POWs gathered to mark the 40-year anniversary of the dinner President Nixon hosted at the White House for all returning POWs. In a television interview, John was asked about the physical torture endured by all POWs in North Vietnam. "We maintained that we wouldn't give anything for free. So the thing was do the best you can. Make them hurt you and hurt you bad. Bend but don't break."

US Navy Commander Everett Alvarez, Jr., who was captured after being shot down on 5 August 1964, was the longest held prisoner in North Vietnam. In an interview he said, "We had a code: Return with Honor; our dignity; our reputation; our character.

John persevered against a brutal enemy and brutal conditions and lived up to that code. We are very proud of his dedication and devotion to duty under extremely difficult circumstances.

MiG Killers of the USAF Academy Class of 1963

The 1950s where our formative years. When an airplane flew over, we looked skyward. We grew up on tales of Capt. James Jabara becoming the first jet ace, Capt. Joseph McConnell, Jr., and other USAF pilots prowling Korea's MiG Alley in F-86's and downing MiG-15s.

A few years later many of us experienced a feeling almost like electricity in the air as we emerged from the Arnold Hall theater while imagining ourselves flying MiG Alley with Robert Mitchum in *The Hunters*. Almost all of us wanted to become MIG Killers.

Three of us did!

Doug Hardgrave
30 April 1966 ~ MiG 17

Ralph Wetterhahn
2 Jan 1967 ~ MiG-21

Norm Wells
6 Jan 1967 ~ MiG-21
5 Jun 1967 ~ MiG-17

Doug Hardgrave:

April 29, 1966 had been a bad day for the good guys. Six American aircraft had gone down. Search and Rescue efforts were still ongoing the following day.

Doug was flying in an F-4C Phantom with Captain Lawrence (Larry) Goldberg. They were number 4 in a flight assigned to high-altitude Combat Air Patrol over an attempt to recover an RF-101 pilot. With fuel running low, the lead element of two F-4s left to refuel from a tanker.

North Vietnamese controllers saw this as the moment to send in 4 MiG-17s to attack the two remaining F-4s. The enemy strategy was reasonable; the results were not what they hoped for.

Doug described the cannon fire from the MiGs as looking like incoming "orange fireballs." In the ensuing dogfight while low on fuel, Larry and Doug maneuvered behind one of the MiGs. Doug recalls that "One AIM-9B was fired from dead 'six o'clock' at one mile and 1,500 feet. The pilot had a good chute. It looked as if the missile may have blown him out of the jet and his seat worked automatically."

As Doug and Larry rejoined their element leader, the danger wasn't over. They landed at Udorn RTAFB in northeast Thailand with barely four minutes of fuel remaining. Thus, in just under 3 years after graduation, Doug became the first Golden Boy to earn the title of MiG Killer and the second Academy grad to do so.

See pp. 13, 18 of *USAF Phantom II MiG Killers 1965-68* by Peter E. Davies, Osprey Combat Aircraft * 45 for more on Doug..

Doug's tour ended in early July just after the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron transferred to Ubon RTAFB to join the rest of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. He left for the states in early July before Captain Goldberg had completed his combat tour. Pat Wynne arrived at Ubon about the same time to begin his tour in F-4s.

In a sad bit of irony that interconnected Golden Boys with each other in SEA, near the end of July, Pat essentially replaced Doug and teamed up with Goldberg. Just over a week later, Pat and Larry Goldberg were shot down near the Chinese border of North Vietnam on 8 August 1966.

Doug returned for a second tour in the 555th in 1972 as a front-seater in F-4s and for more aerial combat. He was leading a two-ship element of F-4s in December 1972 when his wingman shot down a MiG. Doug flew during Linebacker I in the spring of 1972 and Linebacker II when the B-52s went to Hanoi in December 1972. He logged 119 missions over North Vietnam.

Ralph Wetterhahn:

By December 1966 the North Vietnamese began more aggressive tactics with the MiG-21s attacking the daily strike forces sent against targets in North Vietnam. When MiG-21 pilots focused early on the bomb-laden F-105s, the American pilots had to jettison their bombs more often before reaching the targets.

Colonel Robin Olds, veteran fighter pilot and double ace from World War II, commanded the 8th Tac Fighter Wing at Ubon. He decided to develop a plan to counter the new tactics. Olds picked a team to develop a plan that became Operation Bolo. The 4-man team included two Golden Boy lieutenants: Joe Hicks and Ralph Wetterhahn.

The plan our guys helped put together involved deception on a grand scale. Typical 7th Air Force planning sent the strike force on many of the same routes and at similar times, day-after-day. North Vietnamese radar operators and controllers routinely identified the bomb-laden F-105 formations and their F-4 escorts by altitudes and predictable call signs. Thus they knew which formations to attack to cause early jettisoning of bombs.

The strike force on 2 January 1967 was different. The North Vietnamese controllers could readily identify the fighter escorts and the other support aircraft. On this day, the radar returns they readily identified as heavily loaded F-105s were F-4s ready for the MiG-21s to start a fight.

Olds lead Operation Bolo. He chose for his wingman on this most significant air-to-air battle of the War in Southeast Asia our own First Lieutenant Ralph Wetterhahn. Being chosen over other fighter pilots with years more experience for this vital role was a great honor for Ralph. Yet Ralph likely preferred a chance to lead his own element or flight, thus being likely to get the first shots at the enemy. Nevertheless, Ralph flew on Olds's wing—and still shot down the first of 7 MiG-21s claimed by the 8th TFW Wolf Pack. With Ralph close by, Olds made one of those 7 MiG Kills, as well.

Ralph's request to return for a second tour was quashed by the USAF bureaucracy. So Ralph went back flying Navy A-7 Corsairs off an aircraft carrier. Hearing a few of his stories

See pp. 19, 25, 26 of *USAF Phantom II MiG Killers 1965-68*; by Peter E. Davies, Osprey Combat Aircraft * 45 about Ralph.

convinced me the Navy decided to invest one airplane in Ralph, and then be done with him. Belatedly, the Air Force did give him another chance at Korat. The war ended before his 3rd tour really started. Ralph is a published author and a go-to guy for analyzing aircraft remains from our war, and others, and determining what happened in the last minute or two of that aircraft's life. His book, *The Last Battle*, is the definitive account of the 1975 Mayaguez Incident.

Norm Wells:

Although 2 January 1967 ended with the Wolf Pack having destroyed half of North Vietnam's MiG-21s, the day started as a real bummer for Norm. Shortly after taking off on Operation Bolo, his element leader had an aircraft problem. Wing Policy: one aborts; both abort. So Norm was relegated to the cheering section on the flight line when the victorious fighter force returned to Ubon.

In late 1967 the MiG-21s also had become more aggressive against weather reconnaissance aircraft sent over North Vietnam. In the first week of December, we lost an RF-101 and an RF-4C. After Bolo, the North Vietnamese focused on the morning weather recce aircraft again.

On 5 January Norm and Captain Dick Pascoe led a 2-ship flight of F-4s—very tight formation; radio silence; appear on radar as a single bird on a weather recce mission. Nothing like spending part of an early January morning as 1 of 4 Americans over North Vietnam 3 days after the North Vietnamese Air Force had been humiliated.

No MiGs rose to the bait.

Recce Aircraft Deception, Take Two was different. The next morning on what was Norm and Dick's 13th mission since arriving at Ubon in December, they descended below a 3,500 foot ceiling and headed down the northeast railroad toward Hanoi. As they passed between Hanoi and Phuc Yen airfield, the guns finally opened up. The F-4s climbed above the overcast and headed for home. An EC-121 radar surveillance aircraft orbiting over Laos reported aircraft airborne over Phuc Yen. The 2 F-4s turned and engaged 4 MiG-21s. Norm and Dick got one with a missile. Another pilot trying to evade an attack from their wingman stalled, spun, and ejected. January 1967 score: Wolf Pack F-4s 9; North Vietnamese MiG-21s 0. MiG-21s remained relatively inactive for more than two months.

Nothing like when the Wing Commander brings his camera to get a picture of you after a successful mission.

On 5 June 1967 a mission was likely to draw MiGs. Colonel Olds was still pursuing his goal of becoming an ace in SEA, so he was lead. This time the Golden Boy on his wing was Norm. Late in the dogfight Olds was out of missiles and transferred the lead. Norm and Dick were after an aircraft at low altitude and were having trouble identifying it as a MiG. Off to the side, Olds had identified the MiG-17 and finally called, "Well, shoot him, Pascoe!"

Dick fired an AIM-9 and replied, "I just did." Norm and Dick put a second star on their F-4 on the 4-year anniversary of graduation.

Norm returned to Nellis as an instructor in the Fighter Weapons School where he taught in the Fighter Weapons Instructor's Course and Wild Weasel Course. Later as a Lt Col selectee, Norm escaped the Pentagon and returned to the 8th TFW in F-4s flying out of Kunsan AB, South Korea.

See pp. 16, 17 of . . .*And Kill Migs*, by Lou Drendel, Squadron/Signal Publications for narrative by Norm and more pictures.

The Air Force Cross

The Air Force Cross is the second highest combat award Air Force personnel can earn. It is awarded "for extraordinary heroism, which does not justify award of the Medal of Honor." At the October 2007 Falcon Heritage Forum, *Your Heroes of USAFA*, commemorative plaques were placed outside dormitory rooms previously occupied by the Academy's single Medal of Honor recipient, Lance Sijan, and the 16 graduates who earned Air Force Crosses. Among the 49 classes that had graduated by 2007, the Class of 1963 proudly claims two of those sixteen extraordinary heroes, Jack McTasney and Phil Maywald. Their stories illustrate sometimes there's little difference between missions that earn the Air Force Cross or the Medal of Honor.

John B. (Jack) Mc Tasney
8-9 November 1967

Philip V. (Phil) Maywald
21 May 1968

Jack McTasney:

On the afternoon of 8 November, things were going from bad to worse for a 12-man Army Special Forces team in the mountains on the Laotian side of the A Shau Valley. They had been discovered and ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army battalion. In the ensuing battle, 2 Army choppers sent to rescue the survivors were shot down. Nightfall didn't help. Nearing midnight, Jack launched from Danang AB in an HH-3E Jolly Green Giant and headed for the A Shau. Captain Gerald Young joined up en route as the backup Jolly Green. John Frisbee would title his Valor series article about Jack's mission: *Into the Jaws of Death*.

The A-1 Skyraiders supposedly inbound to fly cover for the Jolly Greens couldn't be contacted. The Army gunships were low on fuel. Jack's crew located the survivors on a steep hillside. No normal landing and pickup. Holding a hover long enough to pull survivors out on the penetrator would take too long in the expected ground fire. Jack thought he could get the nose wheel and one main gear down on the hillside and stay there—if the main rotors didn't hit trees or the upslope. The good news was flares from an orbiting C-130 could give some perspective in the darkness. The bad news was flares would light the large helicopter for the gunners with heavy automatic weapons surrounding the survivors.

Jack gave his crew a vote. They agreed to try this dangerous tactic to rescue those in danger. They touched down and started taking hits immediately. Survivors ran toward the downhill side of the helicopter and required extra time to get to a door. Frisbee describes that in those several minutes ". . . the Jolly Green hung there, a fat, illuminated, motionless target that the most inept enemy gunner could hardly miss."

For More details on Jack's mission, see "Valor Into the Jaws of Death" by John Frisbee, May 1987 Air Force Magazine at
http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/Documents/1987/May%201987/0587valor.pdf

Several weren't missing. Jack lost both generators and the interphone. Two severed lines flooded the cargo compartment with fuel. Three survivors got aboard before Jack had to get the crippled helicopter airborne again. He had about enough fuel left to reach Khe Sanh, a US Marine outpost with no lights or approach aids for its metal landing strip. At 200 feet above the ground, Jack's number 2 engine flamed out. Everyone survived the rough landing without additional injuries. The Jolly Green Giant would never fly again.

Meanwhile, Captain Young went against the same flak trap Jack and his crew had survived. The second Jolly Green was shot down in flames. Over the next 17 hours, Capt Gerald Young earned one of 14 Medals of Honor awarded to USAF personnel in all the years of the Vietnam War. His crewmembers were awarded Air Force Crosses posthumously.

In December 1967 Jack received his Air Force Cross at Danang from USAF Secretary Harold Brown.

On 23 January 1968, Jack earned a Distinguished Flying Cross for making the first night water rescue by an HH-3E in SEA. He made two night landings on water to rescue two fighter pilots down near a "hostile coastline." On 3-4 May Jack made 3 attempts to pull out a surrounded Special Forces team in the A Shau Valley. On the third attempt his Jolly Green was damaged so severely, he had to make an emergency landing in the A Shau. He managed to fly the crippled helicopter far enough to save his crew and aircraft—and earn the Silver Star for Gallantry in Action.

Phil Maywald:

If FACs are characterized as men who willingly flew to the sound of battle, I'd characterize Phil as a FAC who often didn't have far to fly. When Terry Koonce, (USAFA '61) crashed while strafing on Christmas night, 1967, Phil was the night FAC who saw the crash.

On 27 February 1968 Phil was nearby when an OP-2E Neptune dropping sensors along the Ho Chi Minh Trail was downed by 37mm AAA. The September 1968 *National Geographic* has a 2-page spread of what it might look like when the US Air Force shows up to rescue 7 Navy crewmen. Consider that Phil was in one of those O-2As pictured in the artist's conception.

On 6 March Phil decided to probe around where another FAC had gotten some small secondary fires on a previous strike. Phil's first strike started a raging inferno in a hidden fuel storage area. He directed airstrikes the rest of the afternoon. The smoke column was visible for nearly 100 miles. Phil earned the 2nd of his 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

On the night of 22-23 May, Phil noticed antiaircraft fire a few miles east where Blind Bat 01, a C-130, had been dropping flares. He called out the ground fire, and Blind Bat 01 responded it hadn't been close. About 10 minutes later Alley Cat, the night airborne controller, could not get a response from Blind Bat and asked Phil to try. No further contact could be established as Blind Bat 01 had gone down in those few minutes. The copilot likely responded to the warning about the ground fire. That copilot was classmate Tom Mitchell.

The previous day Phil had flown the most significant mission of his career. Major Jerry Dwyer was over the Ho Chi Minh Trail near the A Shau Valley. Triple-A fire took off one wing of his Cessna O-2A just outboard of the rocket pod. Jerry radioed a quick May Day call, then dived from the doomed aircraft. Phil responded from 25 miles north.

Soldiers were shooting at Jerry as he neared the ground. Phil was the first man overhead and designated the on-scene rescue commander by Crown. The next two hours were a series of

battles. Jerry shot at least two attacking soldiers and survived a hand-grenade attack when it failed to explode beside him. Overhead, Phil was pretty much everywhere. He flew treetop level passes to locate the close-in threats to Jerry and sometimes fired marking rockets at them. At higher altitude over the heavily defended area, he directed airstrikes and organized the incoming aircraft. After suppressing some AAA, Phil cleared in a Super Jolly Green. The helicopter got over Jerry but took a number of hits. The HH-53 had to withdraw after a crewman was wounded.

Phil directed more airstrikes while awaiting more Jolly Greens. At one point he had 11 A-1 Skyraiders circling, and he was still in command. As darkness approached, 2 Jolly Greens neared but without enough fuel for the pickup and return to base. Crown told them to abort.

Phil had one more piece of magic to play. In 1967 he'd been a *Raven* FAC flying in civilian clothes out of clandestine landing strips in southern Laos. He told the chopper pilots if they would make the pickup, he could take them someplace to refuel. With no time to waste, Phil directed the lead helicopter toward Jerry, then flew beneath to confirm Jerry's position. The helicopter downwash nearly put Phil's Cessna into the trees. After he recovered and turned back, he was surprised to see the Jolly Green climbing instead of hovering. The penetrator had gotten close enough for Jerry to grab it and hold on.

Phil flew a regular mission from Ubon on the 24th and was told to recover at the 23rd TASS headquarters base at NKP. He was grounded from combat, because he was being nominated for the Medal of Honor. Some politics got involved. Three weeks later Phil was told he would receive the Air Force Cross. I've often said if in all that wild and dangerous maneuvering Phil's airplane had been hit by just one bullet, he might have gotten the Medal of Honor.

In November 1968 Phil received his Air Force Cross in ceremonies at Bitburg AB, Germany. Colonel Bernie Fisher, who earned the Medal of Honor for his rescue of a fellow pilot at the A Shau Special Forces camp in 1966, attended. Shaking hands afterward, Fisher said, "Phil, you deserve the Medal of Honor," and Fisher didn't even know Phil had been nominated.

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Major Combat-related Medals Awarded to members of the Class of 1963

Air Force Cross	2	Silver Star	35
Distinguished Flying Cross	361	Bronze Star	52
Purple Heart	34	Air Medal	2,805

Thanks to Bill Ball for looking at a lot of records and doing a lot of tabulating.

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Some classmates who didn't get back to their base in the aircraft they left in.

I'm not sure of a better way to put it. Probably most were shot down but rescued by friendly forces. I doubt this list is all inclusive as we don't have a database on this. Let us know.

Joe Lee Burns	F-4C	Chuck Donohue	C-130
Lucky Ekman	F-105	Ron Fogleman	F-100
Bud Gilligan	HH-43	Johnnie Hall	HH-3C
Kipp Kippenham	F-100F	John Newhouse	F-105
Gary Nenninger	O-1	Ike Payne	O-1
Dave Rotz	F-4	Wayne Warner	A-1

The Story of Pat's Ring

On 8 August 1966 Lt Patrick Wynne and Captain Larry Goldberg disappeared in their crippled F-4C after flying through heavy AAA fire in North Vietnam. Searches that day by other fliers did not find any burning wreckage or establish contact with either pilot.

Southeast Asia included vast areas of triple-canopy jungles and areas with vertical karst outcroppings rising 2 to 3 thousand feet from a level plain. Unless witnesses in the air or on the ground saw parachutes, smoke from the crash site, or the aircraft coming down, fliers and their aircraft could be lost forever. In addition, the North Vietnamese couldn't be trusted to identify combatants taken captive as required by the Geneva Conventions.

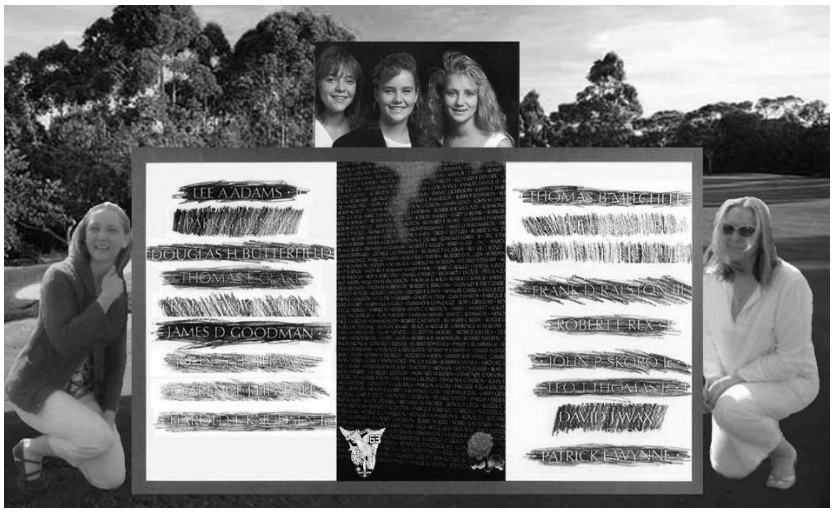
Ten years later remains were found that by 1977 were identified as the two missing pilots. A fracture of a thigh bone suggested Pat might have ejected. For 3 more decades, however, no additional information was available on what actually had happen to Pat. However, a Chinese family living in North Vietnam had known the answer from Day 1.

In August 2007, Herbert Schaffner of Consortium Companies moved to a new satellite office of the Kentucky company in Guangzhou, China. He married a Chinese woman. At a family gathering, he met his wife's uncle, who had been 10 in 1966—and living in North Vietnam. The uncle told of his father seeing an intense fire and concluding an aircraft had been shot down nearby. The father investigated and found Pat who had survived the ejection but was badly injured. Pat was taken to their home, and they tried to save his life. It's unclear whether he died with them or was taken away by soldiers. Nevertheless, the father kept Pat's ring. The uncle received the ring from his father. The uncle had taken the ring to an American consulate in China but received no help in returning it to Pat's family. Herbert identified it as a USAFA Class of 1963 ring and said he would get it returned. The firm's CFO, Roger Schreiber, identified Michael Wynne was Pat's brother and gave Michael a call. The ring now is on permanent display in the cup cabinet of the Class of 1963 in Arnold Hall at the US Air Force Academy. Its story is unique in the history of the nation's newest military academy.

Patrick, your treasured 1963 Air Force Academy class ring was returned home today, 22 Oct 2008, and presented to your very proud brother, Michael. We thank you for your unfaltering service to us all and your ultimate sacrifice. We hope you and your loved ones are once again comforted by the efforts of these Chinese friends and our delivery of your ring home to your family. Please rest in peace, my new found friend. **Roger Schreiber, Consortium Companies**
Some of this information is from *Ring of Remembrance,* by Walter J. Boyne, available at **<http://www.8tfw.com/wynne.html>.**

Special Thanks to Gary West and his Special Daughters

In the late 1990s Danell (15), Hillery (11), and Stormie (12)West (shown above the rubbings) went on a field trip to Washington, D.C. Gary had given them a list of our 18 names and asked if they might get photos of the names of Doug Butterfield and John Hathaway. The girls chose to do more, making rubbings of those eighteen names of members of the USAF Academy Class of 1963. Those 18 rubbings were placed alongside an image of a panel of the Wall and that picture became a surprise Father's Day present for Gary. In 1998 Gary brought copies of his present to our 35-year reunion and gave them to classmates as a poignant reminder of classmates we lost in Southeast Asia.



Now those rubbings have been an inspiration once again. The rubbings are integral parts of images created to honor our 18 in special ways. Without the efforts of Danell, Hillery, and Stormie, we couldn't have honored our 18 nearly as effectively in ways they deserve.

Thank you from the Class of 1963 to Danell, Hillery, and Stormie—and Gary.

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REQUIEM FOR A PILOT

HE FLEW

He flew. In his younger times he tried to match the grace of the sparrow, darting and flashing, breathlessly and skillfully using the air as a palette to show his joy at performing with such precision. Striving for perfection, he flew.

He flew sometimes as the hawk, soaring and riding the wind, effortlessly scaling the thermals, climbing at will to heights that could only be passion; there, the naked world lay exposed to his marveling eyes. and as the hawk he struck from the sky, casting fire in his righteous anger. Daring his very life, he flew.

He flew as no creature has flown since the beginning of time. He flew with such power that the gentle winds tore apart before the fury of his transit. The pressure of his full-grown wings squeezed moisture from the humid air and left its own white finger of cloud to mark his path. The air itself shattered before him and screamed in pain. The sound of his passage was more than thunder, and it caused the earth and us upon it to tremble. The thrill of his flight filled his very soul with life. Supremely, he flew.

And after he passed, the birds and the jealous planet below paused a long moment in silence, left with only an echo and a memory, before resuming their leaden existence. He flew as none other before; he flew as none to follow. He will fly no more.

Yet still he flies! Look there in the heavens! Just out of sight in the clouds right before you, he dwells now in the glorious prismatic sunrises and rainbows, in the mysterious beauty of the northern lights and the breathless green flash at sunset, making his home in the sky he loved so well. Mourn not: the aviator is home! He flies now with God.

Classmate Hank Hoffman, 2001