



# The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

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Volume VI

## Finances

As of May 31 we had \$6,446.60 in our bank account. A deposit of \$362.00 was made on July 10, bringing the total to \$6,806.60. A total of \$1,300 has been spent on the upcoming convention, primarily as a deposit with the hotel.

## San Antonio in November!

Planning is underway for our 2008 Convention to be held at the Hyatt Place on the River Walk in San Antonio November 6-9. Everyone should have received a registration form so if you haven't sent it in, please do so at your earliest convenience. Remember, the cutoff date for registration is September 30. If you don't have your form, there is one on the association web site at [www.troopcarrier.org/home.html](http://www.troopcarrier.org/home.html). If you don't have access to the internet, contact Andy Vaquera at 210-679-8684.

## Membership

Our membership currently stands at 91, including 17 Life and 28 5-year members. Spreading the word about our association and recruiting new members is a task that we all can share. Andy Vaquera is chairman of the membership committee, but he could use some help getting the word out. The best way to attract new members is to tell our friends about what we have done and are doing. Pass the word!

## Airlift Heroes

Just as with all military missions, troop carrier/tactical airlift has our share of men who have been involved in some of the more heroic missions in our history. Col. Bill "Bones" Blanton was a C-119 pilot with the 314<sup>th</sup> TCG in Korea, as were others of our members. Bill has put his recollections of his experiences down on paper in a book for his family – and was gracious enough to send me a copy a few years ago. Col. Don Strobaugh, whose military career is a lesson in airlift history, wrote down his experiences as they happened in a journal. Others have no doubt done the same thing. The only way a record of what we have accomplished since the US troop carrier mission was established during the dark days at the beginning of World War II is through written accounts. In this issue we have an article about Carl Wyrick, our vice-chairman, that was published in an issue of the 315<sup>th</sup> AD newspaper. Bobby Gassoitt, one of our board members, was Carl's navigator on that mission and sent me an Email

of some of his own recollections. Ace Bowman has contributed some of his recollections of his time with 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division in the early 1960s. Such accounts offer a glimpse into our rich history. Even if you don't think you're a hero, you're a hero in someone's estimation. Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks!

### **Letters**

The following letter from Ace Bowman describes some of his experiences with 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division.

Sam –

Something has dawned on me in recent times. Samantha's book (I indeed remember that from 2005 ) has recently kept it alive; however, no matter what, there is almost always a reference to 315<sup>th</sup> whatever the topic. And when you have pointed out several times over the past few years that 315<sup>th</sup> shutdown forever in 1969, it sort of floats by because an awful lot of other things shut down forever then, so far not to return. Particularly AF units of all descriptions.

But the light comes on that I am one of the few, very few, guys still walking around that actually was assigned to 315<sup>th</sup>. From June 1960 to April `1964. And though my previous duty unit, the 6485<sup>th</sup> OPRON was only two blocks up the street in the Tachi Base Theater Building, I had never been inside the the 315<sup>th</sup> building, a two story very makeshift affair that was not on anyone's list for Architectural Excellence. All in all, not really much bigger than a WWII barracks building.

The manning matched. After about three weeks, one knew everybody else. When I got there, the manpower count had risen a bit. One major reason for that was the installation of a Stan/Eval Section. Basically the same group that came up from Ashiya; Stan/Eval was a "gift" from Strategic Air Command that was absorbed AF Wide. They moved in with Flight Safety on the first floor. Also on the first floor was Public Information(Captain), Manpower (Major Jess Webb), and a small admin shop. Upstairs was Operations. That included Transport Movement, manned 24/7 with an Ops captain and ops NCO; Chief was a Major. Next door was a mixed bag; Training was one alleged title, and that was me. Boss was LTC Jack Laubscher, who could have cared less. And in the same Section were the Frag writers; Since my "training" job had really left with the last C-119, I learned to write Frag Orders, a skill which shortly became a boomer. Next up the hall was the DO and Assistant DO (John Herring and Malcom Hooker; both were to wear stars and are pretty well known to the TCTAA community). Across the hall directly was the Plans Section, run by LTC Tommy Ricks, a really smart good guy brought in from Pope by the Commander, BG Theodore Kershaw. Col Ricks had been a Troop Carrier squadron Commander as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt in WWII. Finally, at the end of the hall past DO, there was Gen Kershaw's command section. By far the "plushiest" suite in that lousy building, but would never be rated as much by many, many of the offices on the Eastside (Depot side) of Tachikawa. Anyway, it was manned by the General, his Aide, a super secretary, and an NCO aide. A final office was the LG folks; actually, they were in a different Bldg and "Consolidated" with the MATS Wing, and the 5<sup>th</sup> AF 6100 OPRON; a huge pile of behind the line Goons, 54s, and others. Their T-33s and other jets were at Yokota. Didn't want to know much about them then, and don't want to learn now.

That really was about it, except for some admin guys, and a few safe watchers and such. Maybe around 100 people altogether.

At times, I wondered why the hell I was there since I had no real job, and no one seemed very inclined to talk about it. And it was soon apparent that more than a few others felt the same way. Actually, the Hq was taking on the extra manning because PACAF and the powers that were saw what was coming in SEA and were pretty sure that there would be a need to send airlift support folks South in the soon future. That was more than correct. By X'mas 1960. I had far more time in Bangkok than all other Far East locations combined.

Ace



The following article appeared in the May 2, 1966 issue of the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division newspaper The Airlifter:

### **FIRST IN DOMINICAN**

*Hq 315<sup>th</sup> AD.- An Air Force captain now assigned to the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division and a member of the division commander's crew has written his name into the annals of C-130 history.*

*Capt. Carl A. Wyrick flew the first Hercules into the Dominican Republic when rebel agitators threatened that Caribbean nation. However, the captain's job wasn't completed when he landed the "Herky Bird" on the sand-blown patch of runway at San Isidro. It had only begun.*

*"We lived in the Hercules Hilton and heated our shaving water in the aircraft's galley," the officer said. "When we left the states we planned on air dropping everything – people, food, ammo – the works. But when we were two hours in the air they gave us the word to land at San Isidro."*

*On the flight from the States, Captain Wyrick flew at the head of the 144 aircraft in an in-trail formation. (i.e., one behind the other). "Within the next 10 days these aircraft flew more than 1,600 sorties., resupplying US Army units in the islands.," he said.*

*In addition to his responsibilities as an aircraft commander, the captain and his crew manned the control tower at San Ididro, established parking and unloading procedures, and a multiple of other tasks necessary to prepare a sleepy little strip of concrete into a major freight and passenger processing point.*

*This still wasn't the end of the work-line for the captain's crew. They also flew air evacuation missions to Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico, returning from each trip with a load of food and supplies.*

*"Since we had initially planned to air-drop all of our personnel and equipment on the island, we weren't prepared to unload on the ground," Captain Wyrick said. "We*

*assigned a navigator to the unloading job and gave a hundred military policemen to help with the job.”*

*All of the 111 aircraft carrying equipment on the first sortie were unloaded by hand. Cardboard cushions had to be pulled by hand from under jeeps and other heavy equipment.*

*The captain and his crew also flew the first flight check on emergency navigational aids installed at San Isidro by personnel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mobile Communications Group from Shaw AFB, SC.*

*“We had no aborts on those 1600 sorties in the States,” the captain said. “and for the first five days we didn’t have any maintenance people around. Then we got an enroute support team.”*

*A native of Coahoma, Texas, Captain Wyrick entered the Air Force through the Aviation Cadets in 1954. He received his commission through the cadets.*

Bobby Gassiott was Carl’s navigator on this mission. The following is an Email from him. Below that is an article I have written including a brief account of the mission and my own crew’s experiences. We were Captain Marvin Shoupe, Captain Cornelius J. Carney, Lt. Derrick Eller and A1C Don Sweet.

Hi Sam, Yes I was Carl’s Nav on this mission. That was the most innovative ten days of my AIR Force career; you name it-we did it.

By “we” I mean the whole crew, Col. Welch-the Wing CO., 2 pilots, 2 navs, 2 FEs, 2 or 3 LMs. If we could get that crew together we could write a book. I know the other pilot-Huey Long- is no longer with us. John Coble was the other nav. Carl could tell you the other crewmembers. Brig. General York was in command of the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne troops. He authorized me to assign 20 airborne troops to each C-130 to help offload the cargo by hand so to speak as we had no offloading equipment.

There was 20 some-odd C-130’s loaded with combat ready paratroopers an the rest of the 144 deployed C-130s were loaded with equipment and supplies rigged to airdrop. There was no way that over 120 aircraft could hold over the TACAN ship long enough to take their turn at being offloaded by hand at San Isidro. A number of aircraft were diverted to Ramey AFB, Purto Rico, where some had their loads derigged for airdrop and reloaded as rolling stock to be delivered to San Isidro at a later time.

And that was just the beginning of first day of ten of the most memorable days of my tour in the Air Force.

BOBBY GASSIOTT

### **Dominican Airlift**

In April 1965 a revolt broke out on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, an island occupied by Haiti on the western end with the remainder of the island constituting the

Dominican Republic. The tiny country had been ruled since 1963 by a military junta, and in 1965 supporters of the over-thrown President Juan Bosch rose up in arms to reinstate him. Because Bosch was a leftist who had spent time in Cuba, the United States was wary of him and his followers, and using the pretext that American lives on the island were in danger, on April 28 President Lyndon Johnson sent in a force of Marines, whose mission was to secure a helicopter landing zone to evacuate US civilians from the island. As the Marines were landing, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg was put on alert, along with every available C-130 squadron in the United States, including MATS units on both coasts. Even US Navy ski-equipped C-130Bs were ordered to east coast bases. This author was at Ft. Benning for a week of dropping troops and shortly after we heard on the radio that Marines were landing in the Dominican Republic, we got a call to report to our airplanes and head back to Pope. When we arrived late that evening, we found a ramp crowded with C-130s from all over TAC and the east coast MATS bases at Charleston and McGuire.

At 16:30 on April 29 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup>, the “division ready force” was ordered to Pope to board C-130s for an airborne invasion of the Dominican Republic, with the main objective being to secure the airfield at San Isidro in operation POWER PACK. Thirty-three C-130s carried the brigade’s troops and 111 others were loaded with heavy equipment, a total of 143 airplanes. The 464<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing at Pope had been designated as the lead unit and the first airplane was flown by our own vice-chairman, then-Captain Carl Wyrick, a troop carrier pilot with extensive service, including time in South Vietnam in C-123s with MULE TRAIN. Col. Welch, the 464<sup>th</sup> wing commander, flew in Carl’s airplane as the mission commander.

My crew was not part of the mission as we had been put in crew rest as soon as we arrived back from Benning and the crews for the mission had been scheduled. Don Sweet, the engineer on our crew, and I both lived in the barracks and decided to go off-base to get something to eat. We were driving around the field and passed under the departure end of the runway just as Carl and Col. Welch were taking off. Their airplane was loaded to Emergency War Plan gross weight and they used up the entire runway to get off the ground. A pall of black smoke from 576 Allison T-56 engines hung in the air over the flight line. I felt disappointment at not being part of the mission, but when I found out later what had happened, I was glad I wasn’t!

The formation headed southeast out of Pope toward the Atlantic Coast and on down toward the Caribbean. They encountered a line of tropical thunderstorms along the way and the entire formation scattered to penetrate it. When they were two hours out of Pope, the lead airplane received word direct from the White House that instead of dropping their troops and equipment into San Isidro, they would instead land and offload their men and equipment. This was good news for the paratroopers in that they would not face the dangers of the coral drop zone, but it also meant the crews and troops would have to de-rig the heavy equipment loads on the airplane. All of the troop-carrying airplanes were able to land at San Isidro, along with 43 of the heavy

equipment birds, but the rest of the formation was diverted into either Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico or Homestead AFB, Florida to de-rig. Since there were no 463L K-loaders at San Isidro and only a couple at Ramey and Homestead, the troops and crews were forced to do everything by hand. The airport at San Isidro became saturated and crews had to wait, without crew rest, at Homestead and Ramey. Some crews put in crew days of more than thirty hours!

Our crew was alerted as soon as the first airplane arrived back at Pope. We took off around daybreak with a mixed load of troops and vehicles. It was my first combat mission and I was flying from my home base in North Carolina! As we approached the island, we homed in on the VOR on *USS Boxer*, the helicopter assault ship that had brought in the Marines two days before. Tropical thunderstorms were over the mountains and a column of smoke rose from something burning in the stricken city. Captain Marvin Shoupe, our AC, made an assault landing and taxied off of the runway onto a taxiway that was lined with equipment. Several small British jet fighters were parked off to the side. A C-124 was sitting with its clamshell doors open offloading vehicles. A marshaller waved us to a parking spot and as soon as we were stopped I lowered the door. The troops had already disconnected all of the tie-down chains except for one aft and one forward and as soon as the ramp touched the ground and the loading ramps were installed, the first vehicle rolled off. Everything was off of the airplane in a few minutes and I was left with a dirty airplane and tie-down chains and devices scattered all over.

As soon as the last vehicle left the airplane and the loading ramps were uninstalled I closed the ramp and told the AC we were ready to taxi. Within not more than ten minutes from the time we landed, we were back in the air. The whole episode was a forerunner of what my life would be like over the next five years. As soon as we reached a safe altitude I went back and started stowing equipment, then used the broom to sweep up the cargo compartment – I didn't want the crew chief to be ticked off at me! Our crew made two more trips before we were pulled off of the mission as we were due to rotate to Kadena in a few days and at the rate we were going, we'd be out of flying time when we arrived.

POWER PACK continued until May 4, and by the time the airlift came to an end more than 10,500 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne troops had been transported from Pope to San Isidro. An additional 3,000 US Army and 1,000 US Air Force personnel were also on the island, along with some 4,000 Marines. Regular flights to "the DR" were common for TAC C-130s until September of the following year, when the last US military personnel were withdrawn from the island.



## **Farewell to the C-130E**

It's hard to believe that some of the same C-130 E-models that were being delivered to the flight line at Pope AFB, NC in December 1963 have been around for all of these years! Originally developed as a stop-gap long-range airlifter for the Military Air Transport Service until deliveries of the C-141 Starlifter could begin, additional airplanes were ordered for new troop carrier wings that had been authorized for TAC and to replace older A and B-models. Oddly enough, the C-130E actually outlived the C-141 in Air Force service, but now their long career is coming to an end. The first E-models were delivered to MATS squadrons at McGuire AFB, New Jersey, Charleston AFB, South Carolina and Travis AFB, California and to the TAC wing at Dyess AFB, Texas (originally the 64<sup>th</sup> TCW, the Dyess wing was re-designated as the 516<sup>th</sup> TCW in 1963) which had been flying A-models that had been passed down from the premier C-130 wings at Sewart AFB, Tennessee when they converted to the B. By 1965 TAC had three wings of C-130Es, the 516<sup>th</sup> at Dyess, the 464<sup>th</sup> at Pope which had transitioned from C-123s and the 314<sup>th</sup> at Sewart AFB, Tennessee.

The extra fuel in the huge pylon tanks that had been permanently installed between the engines on either wing extended the C-130E's range considerably over older models and consequently, the E was preferred for overseas deployments and routine missions. It was due to the E's range that the Pope rotational squadron at Evreux, France was given the mission of transporting Belgian paratroopers to the Congo for the dramatic DRAGON ROUGE/RED DRAGON mission to rescue white hostages being held by Simba rebels. When the US decided to increase tactical air power in the Far East in April 1965, all TAC C-130Es on rotation elsewhere were brought back to their home bases, then redeployed to man rotational squadrons in Okinawa and the Philippines. Later that year the Pentagon decided to increase troop carrier strength in the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division and three squadrons of E-models, one from each TAC C-130E base, were selected to move overseas.

Initially, due to their longer range, the primary mission of the E-models was to provide overwater airlift between off-island depots in Japan and Okinawa while the older A and B-models would be used for in-country operations. But as the new Military Airlift Command received its full complement of C-141s, more C-130Es were sent to rotational units in South Vietnam and Thailand for theater airlift. In 1968 MAC gave up all of its C-130Es to TAC. Two years later the Air Force began phasing out the older A and B models and sending them to reserve and guard units. By 1972 all C-130As had left PACAF and only one squadron of Bs remained and it was scheduled to deactivate – four squadrons of E-models now made up PACAF's tactical airlift strength.

In the 1970s the Air Force took delivery of the C-130H, which was essentially an E-model with more powerful engines and a few other improvements, particularly the installation of an auxiliary power unit that could be operated in-flight. Yet even as the

older A and B models went to the reserves and new C-130Hs came into the inventory, the C-130Es continued in service, first with TAC and then with MAC, after an airlift reorganization saw the combining of the tactical and strategic airlift missions. Recent military reorganization has finally seen the end of the E-model's long and rich career. Airplanes that saw service from Vietnam to Iraq are now headed for the bone yard.

### **Pappy Gunn To Be Inducted**

He's been dead for almost fifty years, but the Arkansas Aviation Hall of Fame is finally getting around to inducting perhaps the state's most prominent aviator. Paul Irvin "PI" Gunn, a native of Quitman, will be inducted into the hall this coming November. Although his active duty association with troop carriers was brief, then Major Gunn was in charge of all air transport operations in the Southwest Pacific Area of Operations and the commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Air Transport Squadron during the dark days of early 1942. In April he transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group and spent the rest of the war in combat operations and on the staff of General George Kenney, originally the commander of Fifth Air Force and then of Far East Air Forces. He returned to airlift operations as a civilian after the war as president of an air taxi company based in Manila, with the US government as his biggest customer. He is most famous for converting light and medium bombers into powerfully armed strafers, but as Pappy Gunn, his name was a household word throughout the Far East Air Forces in World War II.

### **Escape from Chosen**



One of troop carrier's finest hours was the support of US Army and Marine Corps personnel during their withdrawal from North Korea in the late fall of 1950. A few months earlier, in June, North Korean troops had crossed the demilitarized zone that divided the two countries, prompting a military response from the United States. Far East Air Forces' Combat Cargo Command was put to work evacuating American civilians out of Korea and airlifting troops of the Eighth Army

from Japan to airfields on the Pusan Perimeter. As the need for air transport became obvious, Combat Cargo Command searched for every available C-47, C-46 and C-54 in the theater, along with former transport pilots to fly them. At the time the only troop carrier aircraft in the Far East were the C-54s assigned to the 374<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing, which had transferred to Japan from elsewhere in the Pacific. Although the C-54s were excellent transports, their wheel weight was too heavy for the Korean runways. The C-47s and crews that were rounded up were assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> Troop



Carrier Squadron and all of the C-54s were in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Additional troop carrier squadrons were brought over from the US, including Tactical Air Command's 314<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group, which came over from Sewart AFB, Tennessee with brand-new Fairchild C-119s.

Although the situation looked bleak during the first weeks of the new conflict, by September the tide had turned, particularly after General Douglas MacArthur launched what too many was believed to be an ill-advised invasion behind the North Korean's backs at Inchon. The invasion was a success and soon United Nations troops were driving northward across the DMZ and deep into North Korea. By mid-October UN forces had occupied nearly all of North Korea as what remained of the North Korean army had been driven north to the banks of the Yalu River. On the other side of the river China, which had become a communist country two years before, was massing troops. On October 25 Chinese troops crossed the Yalu and entered the conflict. Over the next month the UN troops continued their offensive, but by November 26 it had become obvious that Chinese troops had surrounded part of the US X Corps, which included the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and elements of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry, USA and a contingent of British Royal Marines. General MacArthur ordered the surrounded troops to fight their way out of the trap and FEAF Combat Cargo Division was ordered to keep the troops supplied during their retreat.

Winter came early in 1950 and temperatures in North Korea dropped well below freezing. The only means of evacuating wounded was by air, and the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS, who had begun calling themselves "the Kyushu Gypsies" in reference to their frequent moves since the beginning of the conflict, was ordered to evacuate casualties. The Gypsies flew their C-47s into hastily prepared landing strips at Koto-Ri and Hagu-Ri and came out with as many men as each pilot thought he could carry. Had it not been for the C-47 crews, many of the wounded soldiers and Marines would have perished. For their efforts, the men of the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS were awarded one more unit citation to add to those the squadron had earned while fighting in the Southwest Pacific a few years before.

While the C-47s were landing with cargo and bringing out patients, their peers in the TAC C-119s were delivering needed cargo to the soldiers and Marines by airdrop. After the retreating Marines left the vicinity of Koto-Ri, they found their way blocked by a looming chasm left when the Chinese blew up the bridge spanning the gorge at the south end of the Chosen Reservoir. The gorge put a halt to all vehicle traffic and the men were effectively cut off. Their only option was to span the gorge, and the only means of doing so was with a Bailey Treadway Bridge, a prefabricated bridge that had been developed during World War II. Such a bridge was in Japan, but there was no way to get it to where it was needed. The only possibility would be to attempt to transport the bridge in sections, and airdrop them to the Marines. Experimental drops were carried out in Japan by 314<sup>th</sup> TCG C-119s and US Army Quartermaster riggers, and they were found to be successful. Eight sections were loaded onto eight C-119s for

aerial delivery to a drop zone that had been set up on top of a ridge near the gorge. The drop mission went off without a hitch and as soon as the sections had been removed from their rigging, they were moved to the gorge and were soon spanning the chasm and providing a means of continuing the retreat.

While the 21<sup>st</sup> TCS C-47s and 314<sup>th</sup> TCG C-119s were supporting the soldiers and Marines retreating from the vicinity of the Chosen Reservoir, Combat Cargo Command C-46s and C-54s were operating into other fields in North Korea and picking up troops and equipment. Thanks to the efforts of the troop carriers, a possible military disaster was turned into an orderly retreat. General William H. Tunner, the MATS officer who had been sent to Japan on temporary duty to take charge of airlift operations into Korea, was featured on the cover of TIME magazine. The title of the feature article was "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime," after a comment Tunner made to the reporter. He said "We can move anything, anywhere, anytime" in reference to the troop carrier crews of the Far East Air Forces Combat Cargo Command. A few weeks later the CCC became the 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division.

*See you in San Antone in November!*