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# The Airlifter Volume XIX

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## *The Airlifter*



Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

*Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage*

October 31, 2012

Volume XIX

### **Financial Report**

As of today's date, we have \$6599.44 in our account, which includes income from the sale of shirts, caps etc. and from the auction at Convention. A year ago we had \$5729.61 after a \$1,150 deposit to the Museum of Aviation, which means we basically broke even on the Convention.

### **Convention**

The 2012 TCTAA convention – the fifth assembly we've had – has come and gone. We had 43 registrants, of which two did not show up and one had to cancel due to a death in the family. One individual, Frances "Muff" Millen, did not come to Warner Robins but joined the group to tour the Lockheed factory at Marietta. In addition, there were a number of spouses and other guests present for a total of around 60. The list of those who came is on the web site at [www.troopcarrier.org/convention.html](http://www.troopcarrier.org/convention.html). Those who weren't with us missed a truly outstanding event. Event Chairman Tom Stalvey and Roger and Janet Greuel did a fantastic job putting everything together. We had great presentations by Lockheed/Martin VP of Sales Peter Simmons, Ray Snedgar and Debra Ross, a representative of the local VA Center, after our members meeting on Thursday. That evening we met in the Rotunda at the Robins Aviation Museum for drinks, snacks and socializing. On Friday most of the group journeyed by bus to Marietta to tour the Lockheed/Martin C-130J production line. Each evening we had "TAC Movie Night" with military videos in the meeting room, with popcorn provided by the hotel. Saturday morning we returned to the Museum for a special memorial service in the cargo compartment of C-130A 478, which is incorporated into the main building. Our special guest was a young female colonel from the wing at Robins whose dad was a C-130 pilot at Clark and Langley. After the service we met in the Café for lunch then spent the afternoon touring the museum grounds. That evening we returned to the Museum for dinner and heard Bob Patterson's account of his illustrious Air Force career from second lieutenant to major general.

Texas was the best-represented state, followed by California, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and Washington State. There were also members from Oregon. A good time was had by all!

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To see all of the pictures from the banquet, go to [http://starlingmallard.smugmug.com/StarlingMallard-Events/TCTAA-5th-National-Convention/26089213\\_PWC9DG](http://starlingmallard.smugmug.com/StarlingMallard-Events/TCTAA-5th-National-Convention/26089213_PWC9DG). The password is “airlift.” There are some 294 pictures in all. To save them, just right click on the photographs you want. We only had the photographer with us for the Saturday night event. If you have pictures you’d like to share with the group, Email them to me at [sammcgowan@troopcarrier.org](mailto:sammcgowan@troopcarrier.org). I took a load of pictures myself. We’ll be adding them to the convention page on the web site.

### Stan Davis



At our convention in Warner Robins, one of our activities was the memorial service we held in the cargo compartment of the C-130 in the main museum building. Among those whose names were submitted for remembrance were our members who have passed on. Now we’ve lost another one. Stan Davis, who was Member # 7, passed on a few days ago on October 29.

Although I crossed paths with Stan at Cam Ranh Bay in 1969-70, I’m not sure that we ever actually met. We came into contact when he responded to a letter I sent to Air Force magazine when I was starting work on my book on the C-130 in the 1980s. We talked several times on the phone and had been in Email contact for years. Stan started out as a loadmaster at Charleston around 1966 then went to CCK in early 1969 and was assigned to the 50<sup>th</sup> TAS. After leaving active duty, he joined the West Virginia Air Guard and served with the 756<sup>th</sup> TAS at Martinsburg. His obituary is online at <http://www.keeneybasford.com/sitemaker/sites/KEENEY1/obit.cgi?user=788132DavisIII>.

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### A Major Award

In one of his stories about growing up in Northern Indiana in the 1930s, the late Jean Shepherd told the story of how his father received a large leg lamp as a prize from a contest he had entered, and how he told everyone it was “a major award.” That’s how I felt when Tom Stalvey called me back to the podium at our Saturday night banquet and presented me with the beautiful blown glass C-130 shown to the left. To say that I was caught completely by surprise would be an understatement. It turns out that Tom got permission from the executive board to purchase an award for me (which I don’t feel I really deserve.) After several inquiries, Peter Simmons of Lockheed/Martin referred him to Lillie Glass, a glass-blowing company in Smyrna, Georgia.

All I can say is thanks to everyone from the bottom of my heart.

*(On the right is Jim Tomlinson, a new member that I knew at Pope and Naha. Freddie Rodriguez is to his right.)*

### Election of Officers and Appointment of Committees

On April 1, the terms of offices of some of our board members as well as our vice-president Ralph Bemis and treasurer Tom Stalvey expire. Right after the first of the year, we’ll be sending out ballots for an election. While we hope our expiring board members and officers will be willing to serve for another term, some may wish to step down. Tom Stalvey has to step down due to health concerns so we will need a new treasurer. By the terms of our By-Laws, the Chairman, President, Secretary and some board members are elected for three year terms while the rest are for two. Our last election was held in early 2011 and the two-year officers/board members’ terms are expiring. If you would like to serve on the board or as an officer, or are willing to serve on the nominating committee, please let Mike Welch know. Mike’s Email address is [michael.m.welch@boeing.com](mailto:michael.m.welch@boeing.com).

We also need to appoint some other committees, particularly Finance, Membership, By-Laws and Convention Committee. Let Mike know if you’re willing to serve in any capacity.

### 2014 Convention Location

Our 2012 Convention has come and gone so it’s time to start looking for a place for 2014. As it stands right now, although our by-laws allow an assembly of members once a year or as often as the board should decide, our conventions are held on a biennial basis. We also decided at the 2008 Convention to have reunions at a location where there is some kind of military aviation attraction – museum, military base – that would be of interest to our membership or in conjunction with an air show. Because we have had four conventions in Texas – three in Galveston and one in San Antonio – and now one in the East, it might be a good idea to have the next one somewhere in the West. Tucson was suggested during a recent board member conference call and Jim Esbeck has

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started checking into having one there. At the board meeting in Warner Robins he presented information he has received from some of the local hotels, which are eager to host us. Tucson offers both the Pima Air Museum, which is a commercial museum with a large collection of military aircraft, and the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (better known as the Aircraft Graveyard or bone yard), which is part of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The Pima Air Museum offers tours of the bone yard - <http://www.pimaair.org/>. (The secret CIA/Evergreen International airfield is north of Tucson but inaccessible to the public.) However, Jim has some health issues and if we do go there for 2014, he'll need a lot of help to get things organized. (We currently have five members in Arizona and three of them, including Jim, are in Tucson. There are a number of retired troop carrier/tactical airlifters in the area.) Some have also suggested Dayton, Ohio, the location of the USAF Museum. Ideally, someone will offer to put together the Convention at a location near their home. If you would like to suggest a location AND ARE WILLING TO HELP with the planning and organization, contact Mike Welch at the Email shown above.

### A Heroic Bird



In September, 2011 C-130E 63-7868 was flown from Little Rock Air Force Base to Robins Air Force Base on its final flight as it was being retired from active military service. Because of its history, 868 was selected to be placed on display at the Robins Aviation Museum. It was originally delivered to the 464<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing at Pope AFB, NC in 1964. Later that year, it made its way into the history books. In November, 1964 868 was one of fifteen C-130Es from the 464<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing that was on rotation to 322<sup>nd</sup> Air Division at Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France. At the time a major crisis was underway in the former Belgian

Congo, where Marxist rebels had embarked on a reign of terror in the Republic of Congo. In August the Simbas, as they called themselves, began taking white hostages in the city of Stanleyville. For 111 days, the world watched in horror while American and Belgian leaders searched for a solution to the problem.

Meanwhile, several different plans were being developed. One was put forth by the Air Force Special Air Warfare Center that would use air commando C-46s to deliver CIA operatives, mostly Cuban immigrants who had been recruited for the Bay of Pigs, to the vicinity of the city to effect a rescue. Although the special operations force deployed to the Congo, it wasn't used in the rescue. Another plan put forth in the US was for a large-scale airborne operation using US paratroopers. In the end, the plan that was selected was the one that was put forth by United States Air Forces Europe and the Belgian government, which called for the USAF to provide the transportation for a Belgian "commando" made up of young Belgian paratroopers, most of whom were draftees, who would take possession of the Sábanas Airfield at Stanleyville and rescue the hostages. The plan called for a 12-airplane rescue force with three other C-130s, one to carry maintenance equipment and two as spares. As it turned out, 868 was a spare.

After deploying first to Ascension Island then on to Kamina Airfield in the Congo, early on the morning of Tuesday, November 24, the rescue mission – code name RED DRAGON/DRAGON ROUGE – departed Kamina. The plan

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called for Chalks One through Five to each drop a full complement of 64 paratroopers right at dawn. The 320 paratroopers would secure the airfield then Chalks Six through Eleven would land and discharge troops and equipment. Chalk Twelve was configured as a hospital ship and would remain on the ground. Chalk Six was flown by a crew from the 777<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron under the command of Captain Mack Secord. Shortly after takeoff from Kamina, one of the life raft stowage doors on top of the wing came open and the raft came out and deployed and wrapped around the tail. Secord immediately turned back to Kamina; once they landed, his crew transferred their load to the spare, 7868. Secord's load included several small three-wheel vehicles, a couple of armored Jeeps and some brooms, which were supposed to be used to sweep the runway of broken glass. Fortunately, the runway wasn't littered with anything except 55-gallon drums which the Belgian commandos quickly rolled away. By the time Secord arrived at Stanleyville, the other C-130s had landed; discharged their cargo and troops and departed. Secord was instructed to land and remain on the ground along with Chalk Twelve to await the arrival of the hostages.

The crew waited for what seemed like hours. As it turned out, Secord had suffered a brain concussion the night before when he hit his head on the top of the crew entranceway when he climbed into his airplane in the dark to take a nap. Finally, the first hostages arrived at the airfield in trucks, and they were all wounded. Although the rescue was successful, the Simbas had moved the hostages out into the streets when they realized a rescue was underway and had turned their weapons on them just as the first Belgians reached the area. Several hostages were killed and many were wounded. The injured hostages spotted Secord's airplane first and saw that the engines were running so they headed for it. Secord's loadmasters, one of whom was A1C Al Collins from 5<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port, realized the people needed medical attention and directed them to the other airplane, which had been rigged as a hospital. At first, the hostages refused to get off of the airplane but the crew finally managed to convince them that they should move to the other airplane where there were doctors and a medical crew to treat their wounds.

Once the most seriously injured had been moved to the hospital ship and they had picked up enough to make up a load, Secord began taxiing out for takeoff. As they rolled along the taxiway, two Simbas jumped out of a clump of elephant grass and ran alongside the airplane. One attempted to force the right paratroop door while the other fired a burst from his submachine gun into the wing. The crew was not aware of the Simbas' actions, but they were observed by the other crew. The pilot, Capt. B.J. Nunnally, warned Secord on the radio that their wing had been shot up and that fuel was streaming out of it. Secord said later that he either didn't hear the warning, or "didn't want to hear." He decided to land at Leopoldville rather than returning to Kamina. Once he became fully aware of their situation, he and flight mechanic SSgt Crawford Ingraham decided to land with no reverse to avoid sucking fuel into the engine intakes. They landed without incident. Secord was later awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for the flight; the 464<sup>th</sup> TCW was awarded the 1964 MacKay Trophy. All participants were awarded the Air Medal.

After DRAGON ROUGE, 868 remained at Pope for a time. At some point it transferred to Ching Chuan Kang Air Base on Taiwan. Whether or not it went over with the 776<sup>th</sup> TCS when it transferred to PACAF from Pope in late 1966 is unclear. In 1971 when the 374<sup>th</sup> TAW at Naha inactivated and its E Flight CIA support mission transferred to CCK, 868 was one of five C-130Es assigned to the mission. When the new 374<sup>th</sup> transferred to Clark, 868 went along with it and remained in the Pacific for sixteen years before it returned to the US to the Rhode Island National Guard. It later returned to its original home at Pope for a time then went to Little Rock prior to retirement to its final home at Warner Robins.

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## A Wartime Veterans Organization

The Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c) (19) not for profit organization, which means it is organized for "past and present members of the Armed Forces." For the definition, check this web site - <http://taxmap.ntis.gov/taxmap/pubs/p557-033.htm>. However, the TCTAA is also recognized as a "wartime veterans" charitable organization due to our membership being made up of 90% or more of veterans who served during designated periods – World War II, Korea, Vietnam and from 1990 to the present. "Wartime veterans" status allows all donations to the organization to be fully tax deductible. It also restricts us to more than 10% of members who are not veterans; for example, wives, children of veterans and other interested parties. As a charitable organization, we can accept donations for certain purposes, including benevolence. For example, after member Steve Privette's home was destroyed by Hurricane Ike, members contributed to a special fund to help him and his wife find a place to live and cover other expenses until they could receive insurance compensation. Wartime veterans' status is a valuable status that is not available to many other veterans' organizations due to the makeup of their membership.

## Heroes of An Loc

### No One Could Survive, but They Did

553 Vietnam Bureau  
SAIGON — The burning C130 plowed through the marsh. Landing gear, parts of the wings, nose and tail section flew in all directions.

The big plane burrowed into the muck, spun around, broke in two and whooshed up a whirlwind of debris and flames. An army chopper pilot chasing the crippled C130 in his Cobra Gunship watched the crash and reported: "There's no way anybody is going to come out of there alive."

Later, all seven crew members scrambled or were helped out of the twisted wreckage.

Capt. Don B. Jensen, 28, of Provo, Utah, was the aircraft commander on the ammunition run to An Loc Tuesday. At his right was the co-pilot, Maj. Leigh Pratt.

Just before 12:30 p.m. Jensen worked his plane down from about 6,000 feet through heavy air traffic and began a low level run into An Loc.

"During the pullup just prior to dropping our cargo we started taking ground fire and our right wing caught fire," Jensen recalled.

Pratt and the flight engineer, T. Sgt. Ralph W. Kent, quickly scanned the maze of instruments.

The fuel to number four engine was shut off. "It would have to draw fuel by gravity," explained Kent. He said indicators also showed that number three engine had lost all oil.

In the cargo compartment S.Sgt. Ralph Bemis, loadmaster, peered out at the right wing and reported that number three was aflame and that the fire was spreading along the side of the plane and to the rear.

Up front Pratt, a veteran of nearly 12 years at the controls of C130s, had shut off number three. "Without oil the engine would soon freeze and the stress might tear the wing off the plane," he said.

Pratt jerked his head and listened. He had lost communication with Jensen.

But no matter. They stayed

with "procedure". While Jensen "played" the number one and two engines, Pratt pushed number four to maximum power.

They got the plane up to 3,000 feet. "Not high enough to bail out," they said.

Then they increased air speed in an attempt to "blow out" the fire. That didn't work.

Easing the plane earthward,

while still in a left bank, the fliers aimed for a long stretch of marshland. Flames and smoke trailed the C130.

Overhead, Army Capt. Don Gooch, a Cobra pilot from F Troop, 8th Cav, marveled as the big plane settled onto the ground in a three point landing and then began plowing through the marsh.

He watched the plane churn and spin and break in two and speculated that no one could survive the crash. He saw other choppers arriving over the scene.

Inside the C130 Jensen and Pratt pumped vainly, comically on the brake pedals. Bemis, S. Sgt. William C. Armstead, a loadmaster, and a Vietnamese

loadmaster bounced around the cargo area.

Bemis slammed forward into a section near the front exit. Radios and supports and chains and earth buried him.

The plane finally crumpled to a stop and Kent slithered out of the top of the ship while Jensen wiggled his 200-pound frame through a window about 12 by 18 inches.

"Beautiful," said Pratt as he calmly unstrapped and followed Maj. Robert Kirkpatrick, the navigator, to help Bemis. Pratt spent 20 minutes digging out the injured airman.

Armstead, who initially aided Pratt, quit because of severe pain in both arms. He learned later that his left elbow had been shattered by a small arms round.

Suddenly the crew flinched as Gooch and other Cobra pilots opened up on Communist troops moving toward the fallen plane.

And now the crew spotted the rescue choppers and wondered, "Where the hell did you guys come from?"

### Early Return For Training

WASHINGTON (Special) — A recent policy change by the Department of the Army makes it possible for eligible military personnel to return to the U.S. a minimum of 60 days before their expiration of term of service (ETS) to receive transition training at one of the 10 U.S. skill centers.

Eligibility has been extended to cover all persons in all pay grades who are within six months of their ETS.

Officers, warrant officers and enlisted men and women who are retiring, being released from active duty, or are reaching their ETS within the next six months are eligible for the program. They are encouraged to see their transition counselors for all the important particulars.



American soldier uses towels to make a shield against hot tropical sun as he catches up on his reading. Men are from C Co., 196th Inf. Brigade, in position northeast of Quang Tri. (UPI)

We in the TCTAA are blessed with the presence of certain men within our ranks who have been recognized for valor. Within our ranks are several members who were awarded the Silver Star, including Bob Kirkpatrick, Charlie Armistead and Ralph Bemis, who were members of the crew commanded by Captain Don B. "Doc" Jensen that was shot up severely over An Loc on Tuesday, April 18, 1972. The article relates what happened:

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Bob, Charlie and Ralph were all with us in Warner Robins. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get a picture of the three of them in and around the C-130, but I did get several shots of Charlie and Ralph and, for the first time, heard their personal account of what happened before and during the crash. I was under the impression that they crashed right after they were hit over An Loc, but Charlie told me they were in the air for about 15 minutes before the impact. He was looking out the right paratroop door keeping watch on the fire when he suddenly saw the flap separate from the airplane, then the fire spread into the right wing wheel and into the cargo compartment.



Charlie is demonstrating where he was sitting with his back against the CDS buffer board. Ralph was sitting to his right on the dual rails while holding on to the litter stanchion by the window. When the airplane impacted, they were both torn loose and thrown against the forward bulkhead. The buffer board came loose from the floor and Charlie was tossed up and over it. Ralph ended up with his head and shoulders under the cockpit floor at the 245 bulkhead. Ralph spent six months in the hospital; Charlie about six weeks. There was also a Vietnamese loadmaster on board. Ralph Bemis points to the location where he ended up after the crash. It took the rest of the crew and Army helicopter personnel almost half an hour to free him. Bear in mind that the airplane was on fire.



Ralph and Charlie on left. Bob, Ralph and Charlie standing in front of UH-1 of the type that rescued them.

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One of our featured speakers was Ray Snedegar, who was the Standardizations loadmaster for the 60<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Wing at Travis AFB, California in 1975. On April 4, 1975 Ray, whose background includes service in air commando AC-47s and EC-47s and C-130Es at CCK, was with the crew of C-5A 68-0218 when they went into Tan Son Nhut with a load of artillery pieces for the South Vietnamese and came out with a load of Ameriasian children and their escorts, most of whom were young American women. As the airplane was climbing out, the ramp locks failed, causing an explosive decompression – several people were sucked out. Fortunately for Ray, the senior flight engineer prevented him from going down into the cargo compartment and he was strapped in a crew compartment seat when the airplane impacted.

Ray gave about an hour or so presentation in which he told the story of how the mission came about, the mechanical failure, the crash-landing and the aftermath. Prior to departure from Travis, one of the bell cranks operating three of the ramp locks was replaced, but instead of ordering a replacement part from Lockheed, maintenance took one off of another airplane that had been grounded. Since 218 was an earlier serial, there were some differences between the two bell cranks and even though the locks operated normally, each operation caused damage. The airplane was already loaded when the repair was done, and the loadmasters didn't operate the doors until they reached Saigon. The locks failed as the airplane was climbing through 23,000 feet, causing catastrophic damage. The pilots did a 180 to return to Tan Son Nhut but the airplane was barely controllable and it smacked into the ground on the east side of the Saigon River, and actually bounced across it before it hit again.

After the wreckage came to rest, Ray and other crewmembers began providing aid to the injured, some of whom were dying. The crash site was some distance from any roads and it took awhile for assistance to arrive. At one point a young nineteen year old woman came up to Ray carrying her severed ear and asked him to reattach it. He obediently tied it to her head! It turned out that the girl was actually Ray's distant relative, a third cousin.

A documentary movie has been shown on some TV channels – it's available on the Internet at <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=C-5A+Crash%2c+Babylift&view=detail&mid=C20F28548027865070A6C20F28548027865070A6&first=0> .

### **Tell Your Story!**

The electronic revolution has caused unprecedented changes in the way we live, particularly in how we are able to obtain and disperse information. One of the most revolutionary changes is in publication. Until recently, anyone who wanted to publish a story was forced to either find a commercial publisher who was willing to market it or pay someone to put it into print form. Thanks to technology, that is no longer the case. It is actually possible to publish complete manuscripts for, well, nothing! Amazon now owns a company called CreateSpace which allows an author to publish his/her manuscript in print form. The result is a good quality book. The manuscript can also be published for purchase from Amazon for their Kindle or from Barnes and Noble for their Nook.

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We have a lot of people among our membership who have interesting and exciting stories to tell. I proposed at the Warner Robins convention that if members will write up an account, I will organize the accounts into a book and have it published, with all proceeds going to the Association. It will cost us literally nothing, unless we want to spend a few hundred bucks for editorial services (which is really not necessary. We have at least one retired USAF PIO among our membership.)

Please write up your story and either Email it to me (preferred) at [sammcgowan@troopcarrier.org](mailto:sammcgowan@troopcarrier.org) or mail it to me at Sam McGowan, 3727 Hill Family Lane, Missouri City, TX 77459. I guarantee you that if we don't publish accounts of our experiences, no one else will.

The stories do not have to be all aircrew either. Any account related to the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission is more than welcome.

### The Rescue of Dieter Dengler



One evening at convention we showed the movie "Rescue Dawn" about the ordeal and eventual rescue of US Navy Lt(jg) Dieter Dengler, who was shot down over Laos on February 1, 1966 and became a prisoner of the Pathet Lao who captured him. Although the movie is "based on" Dengler's experiences rather than supposed to be 100% accurate, it is fairly close to the account related by him in his book "Escape From Laos." The main differences are that he and his fellow escapee USAF Lt. Duane Martin signaled an Air Force C-130 on two occasions rather than one, and the movie doesn't show that the prisoners were moved to a new camp after he joined them.

Dieter Dengler was a German immigrant who came to the United States in 1957 and immediately joined the Air Force. Even though he barely spoke English,

he completed basic training and eventually became a small arms weapons mechanic with the USAF Marksmanship Team. At the completion of his enlistment, he moved to California and enrolled in college at San Mateo to study aeronautics. As soon as he had enough college credits, he applied for the US Navy aviation cadet program. Upon completion of the program, he was assigned to A-1 Skyraiders and was eventually based on the carrier RANGER. After flying missions over South Vietnam, RANGER moved north to Yankee Station and Dieter was shot down on his first mission over North Vietnam (his target was socked in and the flight was diverted to bomb a target in Laos.) He was captured by Pathet Lao and taken to a camp where he was imprisoned along with six other prisoners, two of whom were Americans. Lt. Duane Martin was a USAF helicopter pilot who had been shot down over North Vietnam but had crossed the border into Laos several months before. The other American was Eugene DeBruin, an Air Force veteran and Forest Service smoke jumper who was flying as a kicker on an Air America transport when he was shot down in 1963. The other prisoners were a Chinese and three Thais who were flying with DeBruin. Both Air America pilots died in the crash. Dengler was a strong individual who had grown up under harsh

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conditions in Germany during and after World War II. When he attended the Navy survival school, he not only escaped from the camp, he actually gained weight by eating out of garbage cans. His strong spirit still prevailed when he became a prisoner of the Pathet Lao. He immediately decided that he was going to escape at the earliest opportunity, but his plans had to be put on hold when the prisoners were moved to a new camp. Although with the exception of Martin (based on Dengler's account), the other prisoners were reluctant to escape, they eventually agreed to a plan, and this is where the troop carrier connection comes in.

In 1966 the 6315<sup>th</sup> Operations Group at Naha AB, Okinawa was maintaining a detachment with the 8<sup>th</sup> TAC Fighter Wing at Ubon RAFAB, Thailand as the 8<sup>th</sup> TFW ABCCC (FAC/FLARE) mission. Crewmembers from the 815<sup>th</sup> TCS at Tachikawa were also part of the mission, as were loadmasters from the 7<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron. The final camp where Dengler and the others were held was located south of the Mu Gia Pass in the Annamite Mountains which separate Laos and Vietnam. Dengler relates in his memoir that the prisoners observed the C-130 flare missions that operated in the vicinity of the camp each evening and decided to signal them when they escaped. Their initial plan was to overpower the guards and take control of the camp, then signal the C-130. As it turned out, Dengler and Martin decided to leave the vicinity of the camp rather than take a chance on communist troops having been warned that the prisoners had overpowered the guards and rushing to recapture the prisoners. The fate of the others is uncertain, although one of the Thais eventually escaped from another camp two years later and was rescued by Thai troops. Dengler and Martin made their way through a dense briar patch following the small dog that had lived in the camp with them. Their plans to signal a C-130 were thwarted by the commencement of the rainy season and heavy thunderstorms that developed over the mountains.

Martin wasn't in too good a shape and was becoming demoralized due to their ordeal as they battled heavy rains and swollen rivers. They discovered an abandoned village and were taking shelter in it. After several attempts at building a fire, Dengler retrieved some carbine cartridges he had thrown into the river and extracted the powder and used it to finally get one going. That night when they heard a C-130 coming, they lit torches and waved them around in an SOS. The C-130 crew dropped a few flares but then left. They knew they had been seen and were expecting rescue choppers to come in at dawn, but none appeared. Martin's spirits sank and he told Dengler he was going to die. Dengler encouraged him to hang on. He went searching for food at a nearby village and Martin went along. As they approached the village, where they planned to steal corn, they encountered a child on the path. The child ran shouting toward the village. The villagers came out. Dengler and Martin were kneeling in supplication but one of the villagers swung his machete and first cut Martin in the leg, then cut off his head. Dengler charged them and caused them to back away, then ran into the jungle. He managed to evade a search team of Lao and North Vietnamese soldiers – including women – and eventually made his way back to the abandoned village where they had been hiding. His personal account is very spiritual – at one point he saw a vision of his deceased father pointing in the direction for him to go. He was very demoralized himself and was particularly angry at the C-130 pilot that he thought had abandoned them. (The crew had reported the fires to intelligence when they returned to Ubon.) He decided that when the next C-130 appeared, he would burn the village down. That night he did just that.

A C-130 crew from the 35<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron came over the village. The crew consisted of Captain Robert D. Bartunek, AC, Captain Steve Taylor, CP (he was also AC qualified), Lt Dick Herman, navigator, SSgt William Rambin, flight mechanic and Airman First Class Sam McGowan, Airmen Second Class Sam McCracken, Mike Cavanaugh and Willy Donovan as loadmaster/kickers. When he heard the airplane, Dengler started setting the huts on fire. I was on the headsets in the back of the airplane and heard Bartunek, Taylor and Herman talking about the fires, and how someone was setting them. Dengler set about nine fires in all. I did not see them myself, as I was in

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the back sitting on the door holding the flares in place with my feet. Bartunek was wondering who was setting the fires and what they might mean. At the time, we had some fighters either with us or on the way and I believe they may have made some passes on the village to take a closer look. In the movie, they show the fires being spotted by helicopters which open fire on them. In reality, Dengler was the only one in the village as Martin had been slain earlier that day. We, at least the officers, knew that there were Allied teams operating on the ground in Laos and there was some discussion that the fires might have been set as a signal from one of those teams.

In his account, Dengler related that early the following morning he was awakened by a thunderstorm. In the light from the frequent lightning, he saw the parachute from one of the flares hanging in a nearby bush. He made his way to the bush and retrieved the flare. As he touched it, he had a sudden feeling of a connection to his adopted land. The parachute became a symbol to him of America, and of his family and friends in California. He placed it inside the knapsack he had constructed for his belongings before he was captured. Although it had been taken from him, he retrieved it when he escaped. Dieter and Martin escaped the camp on June 29, 1966. We spotted his fires a few nights later. Bartunek reported the burning village but USAF intelligence failed to act on it because there were no records of any airmen being shot down in that area recently. Dengler wandered forlornly in the jungle until July 20 when he was finally spotted by USAF Lt. Col. Eugene Deatrick who caught a glimpse of something white in a riverbed below. Dengler was waving the parachute. Even then, intelligence and Rescue didn't want to send in a chopper, but Deatrick insisted. Fortunately, for Dengler, Rescue agreed to send out a Jolly Green. He was finally rescued 23 days after the escape.

As for me, I forgot about the incident and although I heard that a Navy pilot was rescued from Laos, I never connected him to those fires. Apparently Bob Bartunek was aware of the connection, but was ordered not to talk about it. He was called in to talk to intelligence after Dengler was rescued. Around 1999 when Bob and I came into contact through the Internet, he told me the story of how he and Dengler had gotten together through the Skyraider Association. Even then, I really didn't understand the role we had played. I was under the impression that Dengler had merely picked up a parachute he found and didn't realize it was from a flare we had dropped over him. I'd seen his book in the library but never read it, at least in part because I had him confused with another Navy pilot who had escaped or been released after collaborating with the North Vietnamese. It wasn't until after I saw the Herzog movie that I ordered a copy of Dieter's book from Amazon.com and learned how closely connected the Blind Bat C-130s were to his rescue.

To find out more about Dieter Dengler, there are several sources:

*Escape from Laos* – by Dieter Dengler. This is Dieter's personal account that was published many years ago. It may be available from Internet Book Sellers

*Hero Found* – by Bruce Henderson. This is a recent book by journalist Bruce Henderson, who was a member of the crew of RANGER when Dieter was lost and recovered. Currently available in book stores and online book sellers.

*Little Dieter Needs to Fly* – This is a documentary film shot by Werner Herzog giving Dieter's personal account before a camera. It is available from Amazon.com and other sources.

*Rescue Dawn* – The Werner Herzog feature film starring Christian Bale. (Christian Bale also starred in the movie *Empire of the Sun* as a boy.) It is available from Amazon.com and other sources.

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*A footnote to the story: Air America crewmember Eugene Debruin, who is depicted as being somewhat nutty in the movie, was reported by the Lao government to have voluntarily remained in Laos after the ceasefire and married a Lao woman. In his book, Dieter referred to Gene as "a kook." He also says that Debruin had previously escaped and was recaptured and severely tortured.*

*The following is from TCTAA Member Bob Pitts:*

### MOAB



**MOAB** was a 6.2 technology demonstration with potential application to hard & deeply buried targets. The ordnance was 21,000lbs total weight, 18,000lbs of explosive, bomb length: 30.5ft, bomb diameter: 40.5in. The weapon concept employed 18,000lbs of reclaimed Tritonal, grid fins for control, sophisticated autopilot, and a pallet/cradle design for bomb deployment.

Mr. Al Weimorts an Engineer at USAF Weapons Research Laboratory (WRL), Eglin AFB, FL contacted the Air transportability Test Agency (ATTLT) at Wright Patterson AFB, OH requesting guidance and assistance for an upgrade or replacement for the Vietnam Era BLU-82 (Daisy Cutter). After phone-cons and meetings including UA Army Natick Research Development & Engineering Command, (NRDEC), ATTLA and AFWRL the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) 6.2 Tech Demo was approved Sept 2002.

Final Design Review was completed 11/21/2002. Autopilot design and simulator testing, 6 Degrees Of Freedom (6-DOF), Actuator/Lattice Fin development and Fabrication, and System Integration were all completed by late January 2003. Three demonstration drops were done 01/27/2003-02/03/2003-03/10/2003.

Flight Test	1	Extraction and Control
Flight Test	2	GPS Guided Inert
Flight Test	3	GPS Guided Live

A contracted B-52 Integration study identified additional design work was necessary---strong back, sway braces, and attachment points. SUU-72/A ACM pylon authorized from AMARC for testing. There are many sites on the web that provide data (some good – some not so good) on large conventional munitions delivered from many different aircraft. Bottom line is cargo aircraft that perform airdrop from rear cargo doors can also deliver munitions.

Bob Pitts, CMSGT, USAF (Ret)

### Jim Sims and the C-5A Missile Launch

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Bob's article reminds that I recently learned that my friend Jim Sims was one of the two loadmasters who dropped a Minuteman Missile out of a modified C-5A in October, 1974. While I was aware that a test launch from a C-5 was made, I only learned recently that Jim was one of the two loadmasters. The other was CMSgt Elmer Hardin. I first heard officially that there was an Air Force plan to use C-5s to launch missiles during a briefing at Dover by MAC commander P.K. Carlton a few weeks before I got out. General Carlton, who had spent most of his career in SAC, seemed amused by the idea. During the same briefing, he told us about MAC's plans to stretch the C-141 and add aerial refueling capability. The briefing was sometime in

early 1975 and I don't remember him telling us that one had already been launched, nor do I remember anything at the squadron about such a test having been conducted, which is surprising since the Air Force is one huge rumor mill.

Jim Sims, who now lives in the Charleston, SC area (and who we need to get into the TCTAA) is an old-time loadmaster who flew C-124s out of Donaldson AFB, SC. The first time I met him was at Vung Tau, RVN when he was there along with aerial port legend Major Stephen Como supervising the loading of Australian troops and vehicles onto a small force of about five C-130Es from the 779<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, which was TDY to Mactan in the PI in the fall of 1965. I ran into him again a few times after I went PCS to Naha. He was with the 315<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing (Air Commando) at Tan Son Nhut in Stan/Eval. Later one when I went to C-141s with the



58<sup>th</sup> MAS at Robins AFB, GA I would run into him out in the MAC system. He was based at Charleston. In September, 1970 I too was assigned to Charleston after I returned from Clark. When I got there, I learned that Jim was also assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military Airlift Squadron, but he was spending most of his time TDY to Pope where he was working with the Tactical Airlift Center

developing airdrop procedures for the C-5A, which had just entered operational service the previous June. They were having some problems with some of the tests, one of which was that parachutes were whipping the top of the cargo compartment during paratroop tail-gating. The entire airdrop program was cancelled when minute cracks were discovered in the wings of an airplane. In order to extend the life of the wings, the Air Force decided to restrict C-5s from low-level flights.

A few weeks ago Jim told me in an Email that he was one of the two loadmasters on the missile launch. Prior to the drop, he had attached a MAC patch to the side of the missile and when film of the drop was reviewed, the patch was

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clearly visible. The officers in charge of the tests got all in an uproar because they thought P.K. Carlton would be offended, since he had come out of SAC. Actually, he thought it was a great touch and called Jim up and told him so!

There are several film clips on the Internet of the drop. I've not seen any showing the MAC patch. This one is pretty good, although they added additional footage such as the one showing a C-5 in modern camouflage. Actually, at the time all C-5As had gray bellies and white tops. <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=C-5+missile+launch%2c+1974&view=detail&mid=36EB2D514A21E457BE9136EB2D514A21E457BE91&first=0> .

### **The Troop Carrier Story**

I recently worked up a Power Point presentation relating “the troop carrier story” from the time the mission began immediately before the outbreak of World War II through the transfer of all TAC and PACAF tactical airlift squadrons to MAC in 1975 and their resulting return to Air Combat Command after the Gulf War for a few years. In the late 1990s, they went into the Air Mobility Command. After working it up, I sent it to the officers and board members and Mike Welch pointed out that there are almost 90 slides in it! While many of them are photographs, I am going to try to cut it down somewhat. I also need to add notes to each slide so those who might wish to use the presentation with various groups understand what is being depicted. Once it's in final form, I'll send it out to the membership for their personal use.

### **Spread The Word!**

At our 2008 Convention in San Antonio, our then-Vice Chairman Carl Wyrick recommended that we start a policy of each member recruiting three new members each year. Since that time we have grown slowly, with our most recent spurt due to our recent convention in Warner Robins, GA. For example, of those present, seventeen are new members who had never attended one of our functions before. At present, we have 137 members, including about 25 inactive (meaning their dues aren't up to date.) We have found a few through advertisements but the majority have found out about us because someone told them about the Association and encouraged them to join. A major topic of our board and members meetings was recruiting new members, with an emphasis on recent military retirees. However, at the same time lets don't forget that there are large numbers of Vietnam Era veterans out there who just now reaching retirement age. Most of us are in touch with other troop carrier/tactical airlift veterans through various means, including “social media.” We have a representation on Facebook where there are quite a few airlift veterans from the Vietnam Era to the present. The key to attracting new members is by letting them know about the Association, and how much fun we've been having at our events. Feel free to send our newsletters to your friends, and while you're at it send them a link to our web page – [www.troopcarrier.org](http://www.troopcarrier.org). Membership forms are on the site and are accessible from the membership page – [www.troopcarrier.org/membership.html](http://www.troopcarrier.org/membership.html).

### **General William Wallace Momyer**

General William W. Momyer, who is perhaps best known by tactical airlifters for his role as commander of Seventh Air Force in Vietnam, passed away on August 10, 2012. While he is often thought of as a fighter pilot, General Momyer also had a long association with the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission that began in late 1942 in North Africa. A native of Muskogee, Oklahoma, he grew up in Seattle, Washington. After graduating from the University of Washington, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet in 1937. Upon completion of primary pilot training, he was completed the pursuit pilot school in 1939. The young officer was assigned to the test and

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evaluation program for the Curtis P-40 Warhawk. In February 1941 he went to the Middle East to serve as a technical advisor to British Royal Air Force fighter squadrons that had equipped with the P-40. A year later he returned to the US and was assigned to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Pursuit Group, soon to become the 33<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Group, and took the group to North Africa in October, 1942.

In early 1942 IX Support Command ordered Col. Momyer to take his group to Thelepte, an advanced airfield in the desert in Western Tunisia. His group of P-40s was joined by a French P-40 squadron known as the Lafayette Escadrille and a light bomber squadron flying Douglas A-20s to conduct combat operations over the front lines. They were kept supplied at the remote forward airfield by trucks and by C-47s bringing in supplies from Algeria. After the Allied victory in Tunisia, Momyer's group moved first to the

Mediterranean island of Pantelleria, then to Sicily. In October, 1942 after the invasion of Sicily, he was relieved to return to the US, where he became a member of the Army Air Forces Board, serving as chief of the combined operations section where he was instrumental in the development of US Army air/ground cooperation tactics. In 1946 he was assigned to the staff of the newly established Tactical Air Command as Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans (A-5.)

In his capacity as TAC A-5, Col. Momyer was heavily involved with troop carrier planning, particularly the Air Force's acquisition of the Douglas C-124 as a troop carrier transport, a decision TAC was not happy with due to its lack of capabilities. Momyer protested the acquisition to the Air Staff. In 1949 he attended the Air War College (which had evolved from the Army Air Forces Board) and became a member of the faculty. In that capacity, he was instrumental in the development of Air Force doctrine. After attending the National War College, he returned to operational command as commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Wing in Korea. In 1958 he returned to Tactical Air Command as Director of Plans. In 1961 he was assigned to the US Air Force staff, first as director of operational requirements then as assistant deputy chief of staff, programs and requirements. In all of those positions he was heavily involved with planning for troop carrier operations.

In July 1966, after serving as commander of Air Training Command, Lt. Gen. Momyer went to Saigon to serve as deputy chief of staff for air with MACV and as commander of Seventh Air Force. One of his first actions after his arrival was to request a reorganization of airlift resources in South Vietnam, at least in part due to the recent Air Force/Army agreement to transfer the Army's Dehavilland CV-2 Caribous to the Air Force. He asked for the assignment of a full wing of C-130s to South Vietnam but PACAF elected to maintain its C-130 bases at offshore locations. He requested the activation of a new air division in Saigon dedicated solely to airlift and the 834<sup>th</sup> Air Division, which had formerly been a fighter division in Louisiana, transferred to Saigon and activated on October 1, 1966 as the command organization for the 315<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing (Air Commando) and the 483<sup>rd</sup> Troop Carrier Wing along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aerial Port Group. In addition, 834<sup>th</sup> had operational control over 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division C-130s on temporary duty from bases elsewhere in the Pacific. As Seventh Air Force Commander until August 1968, General Momyer presided over the most intense period of the Vietnam War for American troops and airlift forces, including the communist 1968 Tet Offensive, the defense and resupply of Khe Sanh, the return of Allied troops to the A Shau Valley in Operation DELAWARE and the evacuation of the camp at Kham Duc. Upon completion of his tour as Seventh Air Force commander, he returned to the US to take command of TAC.

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During his tour in Vietnam, General Momyer's appreciation for tactical airlift forces increased, particularly for the C-130. At the height of the siege of Khe Sanh, he ordered that C-130 operations be restricted to airdrop to reduce the airplanes' exposure, due to their status as "an instrument of national policy" that should be preserved for future conflict. In his end of tour report, he emphasized the unique nature of the tactical airlift mission as opposed to air transport in general, and stressed that strategic and tactical airlift resources should never be combined. In the report, he pointed out that there was no difference between a MAC C-141 crew operating into a rear area airfield and a civilian MAC contract transport crew in a 707, while tactical airlift crews were conducting combat operations and constantly under fire. (While tactical airlift squadrons lost around 100 airplanes in Southeast Asia, MAC airlift units did not suffer a single combat loss. MAC losses were two C-141s and one C-5 to accident.) When the Air Staff put forth a proposal to consolidate the strategic and tactical airlift forces at the end of the war, General Momyer and the TAC staff strongly protested the plan. General Momyer retired in September, 1973.



Tom Wark, Bill Keheler, Don Hessenflow and Cathy at the banquet.