

# William M. Blakeslee

## F-105 History

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11-Jul-67

4360

Twenty-one pilots graduated from F-105 Course number 111509E at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The pilots began training on 23 February 1967 and were assigned to Class 68-A in the 4523 CCTS under the 4520 CCTW. Most of the students had come from overseas bases and all received assignments to the 388 TFW at Korat or the 355 TFW at Takhli.

Before the end of the year, seven pilots (one third of the class) were shot down; three were killed, and four became POWs.

The pilots were:

Lt Col Thomas H. Kirk, Jr. from Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. POW on 28 Oct 67.

Maj William G. Bennett from Wiesbaden AB, Germany. Assigned to the 333 TFS at Takhli. KIA on 2 Sep 67.

Maj William M. Blakeslee from Camp New Amsterdam AB, Netherlands. Assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat.

Maj Charles E. Cappelli From Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli. KIA on 17 Nov 67.

Maj James E. Light, Jr. from Torrejon AB, Spain. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. 100 missions on 7 March 1968.

Maj Robert L. Stirm from camp New Amsterdam AB, Netherlands. Assigned to the 333 TFS at Takhli. POW on 27 Oct 67.

Maj Ellsworth E. Tulberg from Space Systems Division, Los Angeles, California. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli.

Maj Joseph B. Williams from Ramstein AB, Germany.

Capt James L. Aldrich from Ankara Air Station, Turkey. Assigned to the 333 TFS at Takhli.

Capt Gene I. Basel from Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli. Shot down and rescued on 28 Feb 68.

Capt Lawrence G. Evert from 3 AF Headquarters, RAF West Ruislip, England. Assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli. KIA on 8 Nov 67.

Capt Harry N. Gainer From RAF Bentwaters, England. Assigned as a Wild Weasel pilot in the 44 TFS at Korat, after graduating from Wild Weasel class 67WWIII-15 on 18 October 67.

Capt Joseph A. Grimaud from Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned as a Wild Weasel pilot in the 44 TFS at Korat, after graduating from Wild Weasel class 67WWIII-15 on 18 October 67. Completed 100 missions on 30 June 1968.

Capt Ramon A. Horinek from Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. POW on 25 Oct 67.

Capt Erik C. Lunde from Ramstein AB, Germany. Assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli.

Capt Martin D. Scott from Ramstein AB, Germany. Assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli. Flew 100th mission in March 1968.

Capt Richard E. Smith, Jr. from Ramstein AB, Germany. Assigned to the 333 TFS at Takhli. POW on 25 October 67.

Capt David L. Tucker from Ramstein AB, Germany. Assigned to the 333 TFS at Takhli. Flew his 100th mission on 8 March 1968.

Capt Ronald A. Venturini from Ramstein AB, Germany. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. Flew his 100th mission on 7 March 1968.

Capt Calvin F. Jewett from Sembach AB, Germany. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. Flew his 100th mission in March 1968.

1Lt Gary S. Olin from Misawa AB, Japan. Assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli. Flew his 100th mission on 7 March 1967.

On 15 March 1967, five pilots originally assigned to this class were dropped from the course to attend course 111504Z, Familiarization/Currency Training in the T-33 under the 4524 CCTS. They later

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reentered F-105 training in Class 68-B on 24 April 1967. These pilots were:  
Maj Byron E. Black from Hickam AFB, Hawaii  
Maj Gerald C. Ehst from Kadena AB, Okinawa  
Maj John J. Tobin from Maxwell AFB, Alabama  
Capt Charles D. Vittitow from Tachikawa AB, Japan  
Capt Wayne A. Warner from Naha AB, Okinawa

Originally assigned to this class, Maj Richard R. Smith from Camp New Amsterdam AB, Netherlands, was held over, on 22 March 1967, for a future class due to medical reasons.

*Hq 4520 Combat Support Group Special Orders MD-7, 23 February 1967 and MD-10, 15 March 1967.*

### 31-Aug-67

3825

The 34 TFS history for the month of August 1967, reported that, "... numerous targets were struck by pilots of the squadron in the Chicom Buffer Zone and within the Hanoi restricted area. A marked increase was noted in all modes of defense (AAA, SAMs, MiGs) due primarily to the sensitivity of the targets." Squadron pilots flew 411 combat missions during the month, 407 to North Vietnam and 4 to Laos for a total combat time of 1063:20 hours.

"Combat pilot strength stood at 36 line pilots. During the month of August, four squadron pilots completed their tour of 100 missions over North Vietnam. Those completing were: Maj Harry Pawlik, Maj Donald F. Fryauf, Capt Jack A. Phillips [on 2 Aug] , and Capt David C. Carter. [Not listed in the squadron history for completing his 100th mission this month was Maj John O. Rollins II.] No losses were suffered during this month and 13 replacements arrived during this period of time. Two officers, Captains Skoglund and Shulmister, that had been on temporary duty with the squadron from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, returned to their home station."

The 13 pilots arriving in the 34th in August were: Maj William M. Blakeslee, Maj Kenneth W. Mays, Maj Donald Eugene "Digger" Odell, Maj James L. Taylor, Maj David C. Dickson, Jr., Maj William J. King, Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky, Capt Robert M. Elliot, Capt Robert B. Middleton, Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver, Capt Douglas A. Boyer, and 1Lt Lee E. Hollingsworth.

The Squadron Commander was Maj George G. Clausen. Maj Roderick Gene Giffin was the Operations Officer and Maj William M. Blakeslee the Executive Officer.

*388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 34 TFS history, 1 - 31 Aug 1967, microfilm NO584, frame 0080.*

### 21-Sep-67

6563

In a published order, Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS commander, designated 29 squadron pilots as Combat Ready in the F-105. The same pilots were listed in a separate order as qualified to be Flight/Element Leaders in F-105s. The pilots were:

Maj Almer L. Barner, Jr.	Capt Douglas A. Beyer
Maj Charles E. Bishop	Capt Robert M. Crane
Maj William M. Blakeslee	Capt Hugh W. Davis
Maj George G. Clausen	Capt Nicholas J. Donelson
Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.	Capt Robert M. Elliot
Maj David C. Dickson, Jr.	Capt George W. Hamlin IV
Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.	Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe
Maj Roderick G. Giffin	Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver
Maj David D. Igelman	Capt Irving R. LeVine
Maj William J. L. King	Capt Robert L. Martin
Maj Kenneth W. Mays	Capt Robert B. Middleton
Maj Donald E. Odell	Capt Sam P. Morgan
Maj Dwight E. Sullivan	Capt Harry G. Paddon III

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Maj James L. Taylor                      1Lt Lee E. Hollingsworth  
Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky

*34 TFS Special Orders 45 and 46 dated 21 September 1967 provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.*

**23-Oct-67**

3436

Air Force planes bombed three targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A.

Struck earlier on 18 October, the Lang Dang railroad storage yard (BE 616-01586) at 21-38-02N and 106-35-11E in the northeast buffer zone was struck again on 23 and 24 October.

Air Force planes also struck the Lang Nac railroad spur (BE 616-03745) at 21-40-40N and 106-36-42E. Pilots estimated the northern and central parts of the spur were cut.

The third target was the Thanh Moi railroad yard (BE 616-01398) at 21-35-57N and 106-32-17E. The 388 TFW last struck this target on 6 October 1967. "Olympia" flight from the 34 TFS attacked the yard. The flight took off at 05:55. Their lineup was:

#1 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying F-105D 60-0512 as mission commander on his 80th mission.  
#2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying his 8th combat mission in 61-0162.  
#3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich flying 62-4359  
#4 - Maj James L. Taylor flying 59-1743.  
Spare - Maj William M. Blakeslee in 62-4248

It was Capt Shuler's first mission to RP-6 and it did not go well for him. "When I arrived at the aircraft, the crew chief advised that cartridge start was inoperative so engine start would be by air cart. I had never done an air cart start in the Thud. I signaled for air and at about 10% RPM brought the throttle forward instantly realizing that I should have hit the ignition button first (the fire from the cartridge provides ignition of the fuel). The result was a loud boom, illumination of the flight line around spot 16, and burning fuel dripping from the tail of aircraft 61-0162. I asked the crew chief if I should shut it down to which he responded 'No sir, I think you are suppose to keep it running.' About that time the Line Chief came running towards the aircraft giving the speedbrake signal and gesturing for me to move the throttle back and forth. When the fire was out I was cleared to go.

"... During the join-up after takeoff, I misjudged my rate of closure on lead ... and had to slide under and beyond him then sheepishly back in to position delaying three & four's join-up. Not a good start to my first trip to Route Pack 6.

"After dropping off the tanker and greening up, I decided to check the 'cage' button in case we jumped any MiGs during target area egress. Stupidly I depressed the 'pickle' button instead and dropped my bombs. ... Reluctantly, I keyed the mic button and said something to the effect, 'Olympia Lead, Olympia 2, I just had an ordinance release'. After checking to see that my bombs hadn't blown any Navy ships out of the water, Larry asked me to show him my belly and when I did he said, 'Yep, you're clean -- tag along'. Feeling totally useless, we pressed on to the target. I thought about hosing off a few seconds of 20 mm going down the chute but figured with the way the mission was going for me, I'd end up shooting Larry down, so I refrained from a 60° strafing pass.

"While post-strike refueling over the Gulf, Larry noticed that I still had one bomb on the MER. After leaving the tanker he asked me to drop the bomb safe but several attempts failed to release it. So the next option was to jettison the ... rack. Lefty Leftwich, flying as Olympia #3, suggested that I zoom up to reduce airspeed before jettisoning the rack. After checking below again, I zoomed and hit the Jettison External Stores button and the ... rack separated from the aircraft."

He had one more screw-up to endure. "After landing, I followed Larry to our parking spots, he was in

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Spot 15 and I was in Spot 16. ... Still fuming about my horrible performance and not focused on the simple task at hand, parking the aircraft, I failed to realize that we were coming in to the parking area from the east and that the spot numbers were descending. ... Before I could say 'not again', I passed Spot 16 and had to make a misery lap around the parking area. Red faced again, I shut down the engine without incident -- the only thing I did right the entire mission."

He logged 3.7 hours for the flight.

BDA photos from 24 October revealed the yard was unserviceable and nine rail cars were damaged or destroyed. (Report to CINCPAC)

*Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & Jake Shuler mission spreadsheet and "8th Mission Narrative" via e-mails 27 May and 28 July 2010 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.*

### 25-Oct-67

1186

After striking Phuc Yen Airfield in the morning when Capt Ray Horinek from the 357 TFS was shot down, the 355 TFW and 388 TFW went after the Paul Doumer bridge (JCS 12) in the afternoon. It was their second mission of the war against this heavily defended target. Pilots from the 354 TFS " ... led the strike force in, and when they left, North Vietnam's largest bridge was downed for the 2nd time." (355 TFW history, Microfilm NO463, frame 1565).

Four flights of F-105Ds from the 355 TFW bombed the bridge:

Four F-105Ds in "Bear" flight struck the bridge at 0911Z.

Two F-105Ds in "Bison" flight and four F-105Ds in "Kingfish" flight attacked at 0912Z.

Four F-105Ds in "Wildcat" flight dropped their bombs on the bridge at 0913Z.

Strike flights aimed for the third through the ninth spans from the northeast bank. The pilots didn't see bomb impacts due to rapid egress and smoke.

The flak suppression flight attacked three sites three nautical miles northwest, two sites one nautical mile southwest, three sites three nautical miles northeast, and two sites two nautical miles east southeast of the center of the bridge. All AAA sites appeared to be well covered by CBUs. Flights received intense, accurate 37/57/85-mm AAA barrages on pull-out from the target bursting at 4,000 to 8,000 feet. The flak continued for approximately three minutes bursting between 4,000 and 10,000 feet until the flights had egressed half way up Thud Ridge. The gun sites that fired were located 5,400 feet north northeast and one nautical mile north on the river bank from the center of the bridge.

At 0908Z, while the force was on ingress heading 074 at 10,000 feet altitude at 20-59N and 105-30E, two SAMs were observed heading 250 degrees at the force's 12 o'clock position. When first observed, both SAMs were at 10,000 feet and climbing. Detonation occurred at approximately 17,000 feet. Distance between the force and the missile was estimated at 7,000 feet.

Three minutes prior to time over target, "Bison 2" could not arm his right in-board pylon. "Bison 2" left the flight with "Bison 4" as escort and, at 0920Z, the two pilots expended their ordnance on a road in RP-5. "Bison 2" and "Bison 4" dropped four M-118s on or near the road at coordinates 20-59-00N and 105-59-55E. Dust and smoke precluded BDA.

Four minutes after they attacked the bridge, "Bear Lead" and "Bear 2", using their M-61 gun, strafed Hanoi SAM site B-01-2 (BE 616-02351) at 21-17-12N and 105-53-05E. Their slugs impacted well within the target area but precise BDA was precluded by post-strafting maneuvers.

Maj Dale W. Leatham, "Shark 1", led the strike force of sixteen F-105s from Takhli. They were first to

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attack the target. Second in the strike force was Maj Charles Edward Cappelli, 354 TFS, who led "Bear" flight. Capt Gene I. Basel was "Bear 2" and Capt Lawrence G. "Jerry" Evert was "Bear 3" flying F-105D 62-4385. The third strike flight was led by Maj Richard E. "Gene" Smith as "Wildcat 1". "Wildcat 2" was Maj Gene Boone, an instructor pilot from Nellis on temporary combat duty. "Wildcat 3" was Capt Donald W. Schalk, and number 4 was Capt John D. Thomas. Each plane carried two 3,000-pound bombs.

"Wildcat Lead" in F-105D 58-1168, Maj Richard E. Smith, Jr., received a direct hit by 37-mm AAA at pull-off from his dive bomb run from the bridge. At 6,500 feet, heading 360 degrees at 550 knots, his aircraft immediately started porpoising and then nosed up and started spinning. At the time the aircraft nosed up, a beeper was heard but no chute was observed. The pilot's status was initially unknown. One AIM-9 was destroyed with the aircraft. (355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ????? OPREP-4/???? in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1391. Top of OPREP is illegible.)

Fourteen years later, Capt Basel described the action in his book, "Pak Six". "Minutes from the target, Bear 3 got into trouble. Jerry Evert was flying an already notorious airplane, number 385. That Thud had gremlins, bad ones. The mechanics had torn that airplane apart over and over, had all but replaced every component of the flight control system, and still it went crazy on nearly every mission -- usually at a critical point. We were approaching Hanoi from the west at about 500 knots. Jerry began struggling with his cursed airplane as it rolled and pitched violently. ... He shot out of the formation, out of control. His speed brakes opened and the plane slowed enough to regain some control. Jerry turned back and number four followed him for protection."

As the two remaining planes in Bear flight headed toward the bridge, two SAMs were launched at the strike force. The missiles missed but then AAA opened up. "Flak began to blossom here and there in groups of six. Big red flashes grew in an instant to thick black puffs that lingered as if marking the spot. The air became filled with sound. The big voice yelled about MiGs, and the Weasels had gone to work."

Each of the four flights pulled up then rolled over diving on the bridge and released their bombs. "I yanked the wings level in the dive, the nose pointed steeply down, the afterburner spouting flame and rocketing me toward the earth. ... I stopped looking at anything but the sixth span of the huge bridge. The glowing gunsight crept up to the span, I made one quick correction, paused, then pickled."

By the time Capt Basel pulled up from his bomb run, the sixth plane over the target, the gunners had perfected their aim. As he led the third flight down, Maj Gene Smith from the 333 TFS was hit by AAA and he ejected over Hanoi.

As each plane joined up with its flight, the F-105s headed for the safety of Thud Ridge. "We were ... going as fast as we could, jinking and weaving wildly. Every bad guy in the valley was still shooting. ... We passed Thud Ridge at the speed of sound with MiGs giving chase. They didn't have a chance. We had that extra edge of speed they lacked: adrenaline."

Twenty-one F-105s dropped a total of 63 tons of 3,000-pound bombs. "Again the bridge was rendered unservicable by the destruction of 2 cantilever spans just east of the island, the eastern pier supporting the span, and the highway deck on the span just west of span number 5."

One pilot from Korat flying against the bridge was Maj William M. Blakeslee from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 59-1743.

"Barracuda" was the Wild Weasel flight protecting the strike force. One of the Wild Weasel crews from the 357 TFS was Capt Billy R. Sparks, Jr. and his EWO Maj Charles A. Lombardo. They were both awarded the Silver Star.

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But it was a costly day for the F-105s. During their attacks on two big targets in Hanoi, Takhli lost two planes and the pilots became POWs.

Later in the day, tragedy struck a pilot from Korat when Maj Aquilla Britt, 469 TFS, the lead 388 TFW pilot striking the Doumer bridge, died when he collided with a C-123 on the runway at Tan Son Nhut as he landed in a blinding rain.

"The [Doumer] bridge was repaired and serviceable by 20 November 1967."

*"Pak Six", by G. I. Basel, pgs 54 - 60 & National Archives Archive Control Number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B & "The Tale of Two Bridges", pg 75 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756.*

### 14-Dec-67

3488

From Korat, two pilots from the 44 TFS and seven from the 34 TFS flew in today's strike against the Paul Doumer bridge (JCS 12). The mission was designated RT56A-225 and the target coordinates were 21-02-31N and 105-51-43E. The pilots were:

Maj White flying F-105D 60-0422 and Capt Thomas A. Tobin, Jr. flying 60-0435, both from the 44 TFS.

Two of the pilots from the 34 TFS were: Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. in 59-1759. On 24 April 1968, under SO G-1210, Maj Daniel was awarded his 10th to 16th oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal for missions he flew between 4 Oct 67 - 29 Feb 68.

Capt Sam P. Morgan in 62-4387. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1244, Capt Morgan was awarded the second oak leaf cluster to the DFC for this mission.

Maj David D. Igelman from the 34 TFS received the DFC (2nd OLC)

Four of the 34 TFS pilots formed "Simmer" flight that took off at 1105. The mission lasted for 3 hours 35 minutes. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4359.

#2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee in 62-4270. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Maj Blakeslee was awarded the 3rd Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

#3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO

#4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen in 61-0068. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Lt Col Christensen was awarded the 4th Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

It was Maj Armstrong's 36th combat mission. "We finally got in on the Doumer Bridge [JCS 12] in downtown Hanoi. We were delayed 5 hours waiting for the weather to clear. When we dropped off of the tankers we could see (coming up the Gulf of Tonkin) that the entire delta was clear. They launched 6 SAMs at us from the Red River south of Hanoi as we headed up but nobody got hit. As we approached the target for a left roll-in, we had swung further to the north than we anticipated. Consequently I wound up rolling-in almost straight ahead with a split 'S' maneuver. I had to maneuver the aircraft quite violently to get lined up and I'm not sure I hit the bridge. I saw two bomb impacts to the south of the bridge when I bombed. My #2, 3, & 4 men all lost me as I pulled off and I went out by myself. There was heavy 85-mm, & 37/57-mm in the target area. Cactus #4 did not come back [Capt James Eldon Sehorn, 469 TFS, POW]. His situation is unknown." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 15.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Sam Armstrong described additional details of this mission. "On 14 December we bombed the Paul Doumer bridge in Hanoi for the third time in the war. It was back on the 25th of

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October when we last struck it and when Major Britt had been so tragically killed after leading the mission. The weather was questionable so we delayed our take-off for five hours waiting for clearance. When we got a look at North Vietnam from the Gulf of Tonkin, we could see that the clouds were all gone so this one was for real! Earlier, the tactic was to go further North up the Gulf of Tonkin and head almost due West to parallel 'Little Thud Ridge' and attack the Hanoi area from the Northeast. We had concluded that the shielding by these low mountains was really not very effective so that it was smarter to head directly at the target from the Gulf. So when we headed inbound on a Northwesterly heading, we had about 70 miles to cross before getting to the target. I saw six SA-2s being launched against us but they apparently weren't guided so were not a threat. I must say, however, that watching an SA-2 launch -- knowing what the consequences to you might be -- did get one's attention whether it guided or not.

"I was leading 'Simmer' flight, which was the third flight in the formation. My #2 man was Major Bill Blakeslee who was a poor pilot by day and a drunk by night (he lived in my hootch and was apparently so apprehensive about the next day's mission that he drank himself to sleep each night). #3 was Col. Stewart who was our Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations in the wing. Three weeks later when Col. Jim Bean, the D.O., was shot down this very young colonel was elevated to this important position. But this was his first Pack VIA mission. The #4 man was Lt. Col. Christensen who was a recent arrival in our squadron and this also was his first Pack VIA mission. So I sensed the apprehension of the new guys as the flak started coming up in our midst after the SA-2's subsided so I transmitted: 'Steady Simmer. Steady as she goes'.

"That might have reduced their tension some but we were shortly confronted with a difficult roll-in. We got a MiG warning call before the SA-2's started up so the whole formation had increased speed and swung further North than planned. Rather than a roll-in with about a 20-degree angle to the bridge, we were headed right down it. I transmitted: 'This is going to be steep'. With that I rolled upside down and pulled the nose of the aircraft down to achieve a straight-ahead dive angle. Instead of diving at 45 degrees, I was closer to 60 degrees which felt more like vertical. The bridge was only about 10 feet wide so it wasn't easy to line up directly down it for the bomb run. That's where the 'pendulum effect' becomes a factor. Explanation: The orange bomb sight is projected on the combining glass in the windscreen. The sight is depressed a number of mils depending upon the effect that gravity will have on the ordnance being fired/dropped. In other words, depressing the sight caused the pilot to aim long to compensate for gravity. A mil is defined as a foot drop at a thousand feet. About 20 mils depression was enough for the Gatling gun or rockets fired at long range since they had a velocity above that imparted by the F-105. For gravity bombs, more depression was necessary which was greatly dependent upon dive angle, airspeed and release altitude. Normally this was about 120 mils since we planned for a 45-degree release at 500 knots at 8,000 feet altitude. Since the F-105 had tapes for airspeed and altitude, it was convenient to set the markers respectively at those airspeeds and altitudes. When those markers flashed by - hopefully at the same time - it was the instant to hit the bomb release button. So 120 mils depression of the sight put it much lower than the vector of the aircraft through space. If you were left of the target, you rolled right to put the sight on the target. The 'pendulum effect' meant that you would roll to the point that the velocity vector was aligned but when you rolled wings level, the sight was off to the right. Since this defied common pilot logic, the usual outcome was that the pilot never got properly lined up prior to bomb release. That's what happened to me although I should have known better. So my bombs probably didn't hit that narrow target. Fortunately, some of the other guys had better luck since we did do some damage.

"Meanwhile, I pulled a lot of 'g's' after I released my 3,000-pound bombs and turned left to head towards the Gulf. None of my flight was with me! I don't know what happened to Blakeslee at that moment. Stewart and Christensen were so disoriented that they pulled out straight ahead and flew down the main street of Hanoi supersonically. Eventually we all got back together on the tanker." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 20.)

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On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Maj Armstrong was awarded the 3rd oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

*National Archives air strike films, archive control number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649C & 388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 1387.*

**17-Dec-67**

612

In the afternoon, F-105s from the 388 TFW attacked the Lang Lau railroad bridge. Maj Sam P. Morgan from the 34 TFS was mission commander. "... We had eight F-4s behind us, four weasels out front, and the sixteen thuds. The F-4 leader was Bogislofski (?) and we talked the night before about the MIGs. I told him to not stay with us but to patrol and go after the MIGs. He said he was told he had to stay with us. I told the Weasels to stay out front and not come back when the MiGs jumped us. We were three minutes from the target when the MiGs came down. They got one F-4 and one F-105 right away. I called for burners and take it down as we could race them to the target. We were Mach 1.2 in the dive when the lead Weasel started hollering that he was hit and his back seater looked dead. It turned out he hit a CBU in flight with the back canopy.

"We almost passed the target due to the speed and confusion. I did a very high speed pop up and hit the bridge which was the target. On the pull out I was hit in the left wing root which rolled the airplane to the right and I almost hit my wingman.

"The wingman was Neal Graham, the new wing commander, and it was his first mission in Pack VI. We went into Laos, refueled, and went back over Thud Ridge until it got dark. We could see the F-4 and the F-105 burning on the ground below us.

"When we got back to Korat it was dark and it was late. When I went to the debrief I was alone, no one else showed up. I never saw Neal Graham again as he must have been ill and died a few days later. [NOTE: Col Neil J. Graham had become 388 TFW commander on 22 November 1967 and died of a heart attack on 19 January 1968.]

Capt Morgan was awarded a Silver Star for leading this mission. Hq 7th Air Force approved the award on 20 June 1968 under SO G-1834.

In the Wild Weasel flight, EWO, Capt Paul John Mongillo, 44 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, was killed instantly when he was struck by a CBU pellet dropped by a USAF aircraft. "... Beale and Mongillo were working their Weasel mission below the strike force. The strike force got jumped by MIGs and had to jettison their loads. One of the CBUs apparently opened and Paul got the BeeBee through the canopy and helmet." The pilot, Maj Robert S. Beale, brought the airplane (F-105F 63-8347) down at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand.

Capt Ralph D. Bohr replaced Capt Mongillo as Maj Beale's EWO. (Dave Brog, e-mail to Weasel Net, 1 Dec 2002.)

Capt Mongillo was born 22 January 1933. He entered the service from Riverside, New Jersey. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall on panel 32E line 15.

In addition to a MiG-21 shooting down Capt Ellis in his F-105D, a MiG-17 shot down "Hornet 3", F-4D 66-7774 from the 497 TFS out of the 8 TFW from Ubon. The plane was flying MiG CAP for the Lang Lau railway bridge strike. The two crewmen, Maj Kenneth R. Flenor, and 1Lt Terry Lee Boyer, became POWs. (CNA Loss/Damage Database.)

Four pilots from the 34 TFS formed "Locust" flight that took off at 1345 and flew for 3 hours during the mission. The flight line up was:



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- #1 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0530
- #3 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #4 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III

This was Maj Armstrong's 38th combat mission. "The target was a bridge south of Thai Nguyen [the Lang Lau Rail Road Bridge]. We were going in the land route on a heading of due east when some MiG-21s came swooping down from 9 o'clock and fired at the force. Bass 1 who was flying the left rear corner was hit directly by the second air-to-air missile fired by the MiGs. [Capt Jeffery Thomas Ellis, 469 TFS, POW.] He was burning badly and finally got out just west of Thud Ridge OK. No rescue possible there. Locust 1 had called Bass to break but for some reason he hadn't. Ozark Lead was hit by flak and the EWO in the rear seat was killed instantly. [44 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Maj Robert S. Beale and EWO Capt Paul John Mongillo, KIA.] We jettisoned our CBUs and broke hard right about the same time. Locust 4 reported 4 MiGs turning in on us and two missiles bracketing my aircraft but I never saw them. We continued the turn and looked for other MiGs but no luck. #4 says he got a shot at a MiG and wound up coming out by himself. Ozark 1 recovered safely at Udorn." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 16.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong provided more details of this mission. "My next mission was on the 17th of December and it was memorable ... [as] the mission that I think I was the closest to being shot down. The target was a bridge South of Thai Nguyen and we were going the land route. We knew that this meant MiG action! Sure enough, we were attacked by two MiG-21's after we crossed the Red River. The first one launched two heat seeker missiles at our formation. The first one hit Bass lead who was Captain Jeff Ellis of the 469th that day. The second missile was apparently headed for me but one of the guys in our flight called for us to jettison the bombs and break right. They tell me that the second missile passed right through the position that I would have occupied had we not made the break. Then we heard the sound over the radio of a parachute beeper going off and that was our first indication that Jeff Ellis had bailed out (He became a POW and after being repatriated became a wing commander in Air Training Command). We continued our turn and exited the area. The other aircraft in the formation continued on to the target and successfully dropped their bombs.

"Ozark lead, the lead Wild Weasel called that he had been hit. We listened as Don Hodge [Maj Donald W. Hodge, 34 TFS] came along side and told him (Bob Beale) that his backseater looked like he had been hit and was in bad shape. Bob safely recovered at Udorn but his backseater, Captain Mongillo, was dead. We thought that he had been hit by flak although the shrapnel that killed him had come through the canopy rather than from the bottom of the aircraft. It was later suspected that he had been killed by a CBU from one of the bomblets that we punched off. Normally the Weasels were far enough out in front that this could not have happened but the true facts never came out because we were too busy worrying about the next mission."

*388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilms NO583 & NO584 & Dave Brog, former F-105 EWO, E-mail, 27 May 1998.*

**19-Dec-67**

2577

In the morning missions from Korat, for the second day in a row, four F-105Ds in "Crossbow" flight from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, struck the Hanoi Railroad Classification Yard (JCS 21) at coordinates 21-01-18N and 105-50-39E. Crossbow flight consisted of:

- #1 - Maj Stanley Henry Horne
- #2 - Maj Francis J. "Frank" Byrne
- #3 - Lt Col William N. Reed
- #4 - Capt Dennis W. Jarvi, flying F-105D 60-0435.

## William M. Blakeslee

### F-105 History

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Each pilot dropped six 750-pound bombs on the south end of the yard. Capt Jarvi was awarded the Third OLC to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (Dennis Jarvi, undated letter to Ron Thurlow) Maj Byrne was awarded the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (Francis Byrne, letter to Ron Thurlow, 22 Sep 2001.)

Capt Earl J. Henderson, also from the 469 TFS, was in another flight that attacked the rail yard. It was his 51st combat mission into North Vietnam. His plane carried six 750-lb bombs.

"Short water route to downtown. SAMs started at 3 minutes out. One SAM detonated 50' from me. Heard and felt explosion. Total of 30 SAMs fired. Heavy 85s started as we crossed Hanoi. Steep dive. Good bombs. Intense 37/57 right after pull off. More 85s two minutes later. Worst yet!"

Capt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (4th OLC) for this mission. "...Captain Henderson was a member of a strike force of twenty-four F-105s assigned to attack an important railroad car repair facility in the vicinity of Hanoi, North Vietnam. Despite extremely heavy and accurate antiaircraft fire, attacks by over fifteen surface-to-air missiles, and greatly restricted visibility, Captain Henderson ... placed his ordnance on target, causing extensive damage to this vital repair complex. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

The 34 TFS also participated in today's morning strike. The four pilots in "Simmer" flight took off at 0600 and flew for 3 hours 20 minutes during the mission. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0134

This was Maj Armstrong's 39th combat mission. "The first airplane I started up this morning was bad so I had to go to another one and got off about 20 minutes late. I went out to the tankers in the Gulf (350 miles) all by myself but got there in time to make the mission. Our target was a railroad yard [JCS 21] between the Doumer Bridge and the Hanoi Railroad Bridge. There were 3 trains stopped there as we had knocked down the bridges on either side. As we approached up the delta, they fired about 16 SAMs at the force. One came as close as 500' to me but most were no threat. The flak, mostly 85-mm, was the heaviest and most accurate that I have seen. It was bursting all around me for a full minute prior to roll-in. We rolled in and I had a real good bomb run. We really tore up the yard and I could see cars already burning as I dove down. We got in and out with nobody lost although 4 guys got minor hits. No MiGs seen." (Armstrong combat log)

Lt Gen Armstrong provided additional details in his memoirs. "Our target was a railroad yard close to the Doumer Bridge. This was a morning mission so it was dark as I started my aircraft. I discovered some serious problems with this aircraft and aborted it. They hurried me to a spare aircraft and that one was okay. But this delay caused me to takeoff several minutes behind the rest of the guys. I proceeded by myself to join everybody on the tanker in the Gulf. They had already refueled and were just about to get topped off before heading for the target. So I took all of my fuel at once as we dropped off the tanker at the 19th parallel and headed for the target some 170 miles away.

"They fired about 16 SA-2's at us on the way in and the 85-mm flak was the most intense I had ever seen. One of the 85-mm batteries fired their 8 barrels and I noted the flak exploding around me at my altitude, 100 feet away in the sequence in which it was fired. I was sitting right in the middle of it!" (Armstrong memoir manuscript)

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 16 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 22.*

# William M. Blakeslee

## F-105 History

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The four pilots of "Locust" flight from the 34 TFS left Korat at 14:20 for a TOT of 15:30. They refueled from Red Anchor 43 going to and returning from the target. Their flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr. flying F-105D 59-1743
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0072 on his 31st combat mission.
- #3 - Maj William M. Blakeslee flying 60-0462
- #4 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 60-0428

After studying his mission card many years later, Jake Shuler wrote, "This mission apparently was a Commando Club strike on a target in northeast Laos in the Phou Louang area, 20- 22N and 104-18E. Directions received from Lima Site 85, Channel 97."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 21st mission as "Bass 01" against a target in northern Laos. It was a Commando Club mission against the Ban Hat Heng barracks. "100 % in target area. Entered RP-3 on egress."

*Jake Shuler 20 Dec 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 23-Dec-67

6715

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS took off at 14:40 and refueled with Red Anchor 40. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis flying F-105D 62-4387
- #2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee flying 61-0072
- #3 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 58-1157
- #4 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer flying 61-0132
- Spare: Capt Irving E. LeVine in 60-0505

This was Capt Shuler's 34th mission. "This apparently was another Commando Club mission, target coordinates 20-25N and 104-10E, 094 degrees at 25 NM from Channel 97."

*Jake Shuler 23 Dec 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011.*

### 26-Dec-67

5853

"Locust" flight from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, attacked targets at Quang Khe in RP-1 at location 17-43N and 106-26E north east of Dong Hoi. The flight took off at 13:50 for a TOT of 15:38. Their mission lasted 2.5 hours. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Maj William M. Blakeslee flying F-105D 60-0530
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0092 on his 36th counter
- #3 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 58-1157
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge flying 60-0428

The flight encountered three firing AA gun sites.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 52nd combat mission into North Vietnam. His target was the Ron Ferry complex near Dong Hoi in RP-1.

On his 26th mission, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 2" against gun bunkers in RP-1. "100%. Two bunkers destroyed."

Capt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, also hit a target in RP-1. It was his 55th combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Truck park in pack I.

# William M. Blakeslee

## F-105 History

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"Armament: 6x750

"Combat Skyspot mission. After drop, we looked for moving equipment on road. Nothing. Came home."

*Jake Shuler's combat mission spreadsheet & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 26 Dec 67 & Earl Henderson, combat diary & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 27-Dec-67

5854

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, attacked barges at the Ron Ferry complex near Dong Hoi in RP-1 at location 17-37N and 106-17E. The flight took off at 06:40 and their mission lasted 2.3 hours. Their lineup was:

#1 - Maj William M. Blakeslee flying F-105D 60-0464  
#2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0152 on his 37th counter  
#3 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying 60-0505 on his 53rd counter  
#4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge flying 61-0220  
Spare: Lt Col James B. Ross in 58-1157

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 3" against a truck park in RP-1. "100%. Numerous road cuts. One large secondary. Two trucks. Moderate 37/57 mm." It was his 27th combat mission.

*Jake Shuler's combat mission spreadsheet & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 27 Dec 67 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 31-Dec-67

4858

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Gator" flight against a target in Laos. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1157  
#2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, KIA 14 Feb 68  
#3 - Capt Sam P. Morgan  
#4 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

It was Maj Armstrong's 44th combat mission. "This was a Commando Club mission on a target 20 miles east of San Neua. The weather was undercast. We carefully selected our I.P. to be in the 'Fish's Mouth' so that we would automatically get a 'counter'. The weather was completely undercast so we couldn't see where the bombs hit. No post-strike refueling since we still had gobs of fuel. We did some air work on the way home. Very uneventful."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flew in another 34 TFS flight that bombed trucks and troops near the "Fish's Mouth" in RP-3. It was his 57th mission into North Vietnam.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Simmer 3" against a road segment in the Steel Tiger region of Laos. "100%. Road cut and land slide" It was his 28th combat mission.

Maj David D. Igelman from the 34th flew a mission for which he received the DFC (1st OLC).

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 18 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 31 Dec 67 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 21-Jan-68

4869

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in RP 1 using Sky Spot radar. The flight took off from Korat at 0700. Its line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361  
#2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

# William M. Blakeslee

## F-105 History

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#3 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

#4 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying his 68th combat mission.

It was Maj Armstrong's 59th combat mission. "This was another practice brief for me as Mission Commander but we went over to Pack I as the weather was bad up in Pack VI. We did a Combat Sky Spot on a target south of Mu Gia Pass but couldn't see our bombs impact due to clouds." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 15 minutes.

On his cigar band, Maj Dickson recorded the mission as against Dong Hoi in RP-1.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 24 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 21 Jan 68.*

### 17-Feb-68

4879

"Crossbow" flight from the 34 TFS dropped bombs using radar on a target in Laos. The flight took off at 0620. Its line up was:

#1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

#2 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0167

#4 - Maj William P. Shunney

It was Maj Armstrong's 69th combat mission. "This was a 1st alternate target divert to Laos for a radar drop. It was all real quick and simple. I'd take 31 more just like it." Their mission was 2 hours 20 minutes long.

Capt Joseph S. Sechler, also from the 34th, flew his second mission over North Vietnam. His flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj Kenneth W. Mays

#2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler

#3 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

#4 - Capt John S. Murphy

Capt Sechler logged 2:30 flying hours.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 27 - 28 & Joe Sechler flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.*

### 20-Feb-68

5872

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 87th combat mission against a target near Dien Bien Phu, in RP-5, North Vietnam.

Capt Joseph S. Sechler, also from the 34th, flew his fourth mission over North Vietnam. His flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

#2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler

#3 - Maj James Hardin Metz

#4 - Capt Anthony F. Germann

Capt Sechler logged 3:00 flying hours.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bass 4" to bomb Vinh airfield in RP-3. "... Fired at SAM ring." It was his 45th combat mission.

*Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 20 Feb 68 & Joe Sechler flight log via*

# William M. Blakeslee

## F-105 History

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*e-mail 28 Apr 10 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**31-Mar-68**

5165

Five F-105 pilots assigned to the 34 TFS in the 388 TFW at Korat completed flying 100 missions during March 1968. Since Capt Robert D. Pielin flew his 100th mission in July 1966, the first pilot in the 34th to do so, these five were the 76th through the 80th pilots from the 34th to achieve this goal.

#76 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.

#77 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer - 12 March 1968

#78 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. - 17 March 1968

#79 - Maj William M. Blakeslee - 23 March 1968

# 80 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.

After arriving home on 23 March 1968, Maj Dickson's assignment returned him to the Air Defense Command this time to Tyndal AFB where he flew F-106s. He remained there until he retired as a major in 1970.

Maj Falls was also assigned to the Air Defense Command as an F-106 pilot. He belonged to the 318 FIS, McChord AFB, WA. He died in the crash of F-106A 59-0148 on 22 April 1969 near Mt. Rainier, WA.

Capt Beyer was reassigned to Wurtsmith AFB MI as a KC-135 aircraft commander. (Doug Beyer, e-mail 27 Apr 10)

His 100th was Maj Blakeslee's last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 385.6 hours in the airplane. (F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

*34 TFS web site accessed on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Carolyn Dickson, telephone interview, 23 Apr 09 & F-106 Delta Dart Forum at <http://forum.f-106deltadart.com/>*

**06-Jan-03**

6954

Lt Col (Ret) William M. Blakeslee died in Bellevue NE at age 74.

Born: 09 Dec 1928

Died: 06 Jan 2003

*Rick Versteeg, e-mail 19 July 2011.*