

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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**13-Feb-67**

230

The eighth F-105 RTU Class 67FR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 22 Sep 66 with 15 pilots and consisted of 1 Lt Col, 4 Maj, 7 Capt, and 3 1Lts.

They named themselves "The Untouchables".

The class deployed 16 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 13 Jan - 3 Feb 67 with the 560 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Louis D. Braun, Jr. One of the students, Maj Francis P. Walsh, was the 100th pilot to enter the RTU program since it started in Jan 66. Student Lt Col Harry W. Schurr was awarded the Top Gun and Outstanding Pilot plaques.

The graduates were:

Lt Col Harry W. Schurr	Capt Robert D. Reese
Maj Robert T. Cavanaugh	Capt William J. Schaff
Maj Ward Kent Dodge	Capt Francis T. Torikai
Maj Benjamin M. Pollard	Capt Konrad Wigand "Konnie" Trautman
Maj Francis P. "Frenchy" Walsh	1Lt John William Bischoff
Capt Aquilla Friend Britt	1Lt Neil F. Blake
Capt Douglas G. Glime	1Lt John W. Ronemus
Capt Frank R. Jenkins	

Three of the pilots received Wild Weasel training at Nellis AFB, NV before reporting to South East Asia. They were Lt Col Schurr, Maj Cavanaugh, and Capt Schaff.

Born in France, "Maj Frank P. 'Frenchy' Walsh ... saw his home in France destroyed three times during World War II bombing raids." (Sawdee Flyer, Feb 23, 1968)

Unfortunately, these guys were hardly "untouchable". Within 8 months of graduation, five of the 15 graduates were lost. Two were killed in SEA and three others become POWs, one of whom died in prison.

*23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm MO554.*

**04-Mar-67**

924

In an attempt to meet the success of the Navy's A-6 aircraft with their superior radar, HQ PACAF "tasked the 41st Air Division [41 AD] at Yokota Air Base, Japan, to develop a training program for twenty-five F-105 pilots, which would qualify them to fly all-weather combat missions in North Vietnam."

The missions would be flown by the 388 TFW from Korat, RTAFB, Thailand. Upon their arrival at Korat on 24 April 1967, the planes and crews would be assigned to the 34 TFS and then, on 1 June 1967, to the 13 TFS. Once assigned to the 13 TFS, the Ryan's Raider dual-pilot crews were replaced by Wild Weasel crews and the Ryan's Raider pilots were released to fly strike missions in F-105Ds.

Under project "Northscope", technicians of the 441 Armament and Electronics (A&E) Maintenance Squadron at Yokota began modifying four F-105F aircraft. "Within a hectic three days, the unit planners at Yokota developed a plan and initiated ground training on 7 March. The first ten students were instructor pilots assigned to the 41st [Air Division] who had previously volunteered for SEA duty. These pilots completed the training on 17 March in time to serve as the front seat pilots for eight F-105 replacement strike pilots that had been diverted from their assignments to Korat and Takhli in Thailand." ("A Special Report on 'Ryan's Raiders', by Maj Albert L. Michael for Project Corona Harvest, Jan 1970, pgs 3 - 4.)

The first four Ryan's Raider crews, all pilots, were:  
Capt Donald Lester Heiliger with Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard

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Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan  
Capt Peter Potter Pitman with Capt Robert Allan Stewart  
Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

The program was originally called "Project Northscope", then "Operation Commando Probe" and finally "Commando Nail". Initial crews, however, referred to the program as "Ryan's Raiders".

Capt Lawrence E. Huggins and Capt Paul W. Hanson from Yokota's 35 TFS were two of the instructor pilots picked to train the initial Ryan's Raider crews at Yokota. Other instructor pilots came from the 80 TFS. Larry Huggins recalled, "PACAF directed the program to be started at Yokota [which] made sense since the other [PACAF F-105] unit was at Kadena and could not fly local TA/CM [Terrain Avoidance/Contour Mapping] sorties of any length. Wing Intel was involved before the 35th and 80th squadrons ... Maj Ken Furth, Ops Officer from the 35th was ops OIC.

"I was one of [the] pilots selected to 'set up and teach a night bombing program for SEA in the F-105F'. ... Don Heliger (80th), Nick Donelson (35th), Pete Pitman (35th), and Dave Burney (80th) were the other IPs. ... We were all IPs and were the guys with the best radar bomb scores. Our primary mission at the time was SIOP. Three or four F-105Fs from the 80th and 35th were locally modified with what became known as the Yokota Mod, and we flew them using the TA/CM mods through the local mountains ending up on our bombing target in Tokyo Bay (R-112). ... The Yokota mod birds were restricted from nuc alert since the radar mods had been done at Yokota by our radar techs. These F's were transferred to Korat right after the program ended at Yokota and still had the no nuc restriction carried in their 781s when we flew them at Korat a year later."

The aircraft were modified "... specifically for a night/all-weather radar bombing mission. ... The aircraft chosen for the mission ... had [already] been modified for ... Wild Weasel III ... with ER-142 and APR25/26 RHAW equipment. In addition ... the ... aircraft had their R-14A radars modified to allow an expanded scope picture and a faster sector sweep, ... (giving) a much greater duration to the radar return, resulting in a finer target definition on the scope. Additionally, the ... pilot's weapons release switch was wired in parallel to a rear cockpit weapons release switch ... ." The ER-142 radar warning receiver was located in the rear cockpit in the space normally used by the vertical tape altimeter and the airspeed indicator.

At Korat, the aircraft were repainted in an all-around camouflage scheme with tan and green replacing the gray on the bottom of the planes. The colors were applied to the wings and fuel tanks as well.

"The training program was designed to give the rear seat pilot maximum exposure to radar bombing techniques. After a ten-hour refresher course on the R-14A radar, the toss bomb computer (TBC), and radar interpretation techniques, the crews were given twelve flights within a short twenty hours flying time. Each sortie was planned as a radar navigation exercise with simulated bomb runs along the route. The missions were planned at medium altitudes between 10,000 to 15,000 feet above the terrain. The simulated targets were industrial complexes and other prominent cultural radar returns used by Yokota based pilots training for nuclear delivery. The program was indorsed by PACAF with one significant exception -- training missions at the medium altitudes were to be changed to low profiles at 500 to 2,000 feet." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 4 - 5.)

Major Ben M. Pollard was the senior officer appointed to the program. He had completed F-105 pilot training at McConnell AFB, Kansas, on 13 February 1967 in RTU Class 67FR, followed by jungle survival school at Clark AB in the Philippines. He was told to report to Yokota instead of Korat. "In the first briefing [I] was told, 'The Navy is over North Vietnam in the deep packages ... V and VI at night with the A-6, and the Air Force had no airplane that could do it. Politically, the Air Force was looking bad, and therefore, three-fingered Jack Ryan, (the PACAF) commander, ... said that he wanted us to do the job. He had looked into the B-58s and said we couldn't afford to lose a B-58; we couldn't afford to lose a B-52, and so we were going to have the F-105 do it at night against Package V and VI, single-ship, night, low-level, terrain-avoidance bombing ...."

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The group began calling themselves Ryan's Raiders. "We started practicing these missions all over Japan ... . We couldn't hit the broad side of a barn; the terrain avoidance wouldn't work, we weren't trained for this; nobody, even in the States, would ... fly this mission, ... and we were going to go over and check it out the first time in combat!"

The first training class consisted of five crews who initially operated as a provisional squadron under Maj Pollard as the senior officer. Capt Larry Huggins and Capt Paul Hanson were initially classroom instructors at Yokota. "Paul and I did not fly with any of these first class guys; we were making strip maps and teaching academics. We started flying after these guys left for Korat."

Maj Pollard continued, "We flew down to Kadena, Okinawa, to check out on bombing accuracy. I was flying [in the rear seat] with Don Heiliger. ... We got there, and they wanted us to immediately go out on this bombing range and check the accuracy of this new radar. ... We got a briefing, and we took off ... in a four-ship, ... two from Ryan's Raiders and two from Okinawa to lead us around the range and area. ... We dropped about three bombs, and then the weather just went to nothing. ... Lightning, pouring down rain ... . We floundered around, broke up into singles and finally got on the ground.

"... We flew three missions the next day. We were doing a little bit better. We were dropping ... 700-foot bombs. We had more ... right to left accuracy than with the normal bombing system, but all of our worst fears in terms of the terrain avoidance system ... we were still having.

"Then we flew back to Yokota and continued our training."

"The initial reliability of the radars was so poor on the heretofore unused systems that very little actual low level radar navigation or bombing was accomplished. In fact, some of the training had to be completed in Korea when bad weather over Japan prevented VFR flying. However, the first four crews were certified to have achieved sufficient radar bombing proficiency to deploy, on schedule, in late April." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 5 - 6.)

*WarbirdTECH Vol 18 Republic F-105 Thunderchief, pg 46 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1617 & Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pgs 13 -15 & Larry Huggins, e-mails 13 and 15 Dec 2004.*

### 22-Apr-67

926

The Ryan's Raiders crews, led by Maj Ben Pollard, in F-105F training at Yokota AB, Japan, were alerted for deployment to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Ben Pollard recalled, "... in late April, ... we got the word that we were going south. ... We were going to go to war and there was no warning."

"We flew down to Kadena that next morning ... before we jumped off to Thailand." The crews remained at Kadena overnight.

"The next morning (24 April 1967) we had four flyable airplanes. We had eight Ryan's Raiders aircraft, but only four of them were ready to go, and so four aircraft leaped out the next morning to fly with a tanker across from Okinawa to Korat. ... We were out about ... an hour or two. Number three or number four airplane got a hydraulic leak in their flight control system -- you always flew as pairs over the water -- so ... both of those airplanes turned back, and the other two of us pressed on. We flew on in, flew just south of the DMZ over Da Nang and let down and landed in Korat. We got there about dark."

The four dual-pilot crews were:

Capt Donald Lester Heiliger with Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard

Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan

Capt Peter Potter Pitman with Capt Robert Allan Stewart

Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

*Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pg 18.*

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24-Apr-67

1276

The first four Ryan's Raiders crews arrived at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand. They had been training on radar bombing at Yokota since March. These first crews, all F-105 pilots, were:

Capt Donald Heiliger with Maj Ben Pollard,  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan,  
Capt Peter P. Pitman with Capt Robert A. Stewart,  
Capt Dave Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt.

The four modified F-105Fs that they flew from Yokota were: 63-8269, 63-8312, 63-8345, and 63-8269.

The front seat pilots had been instructor pilots from the 35 TFS and 80 TFS at Yokota. Two of the IPs from the 35th, Capt Paul W. Hansen and Capt Lawrence E. Huggins, remained at Yokota. Larry Huggins explained why. "Paul Hansen did not deploy since he had already flown 100 missions over the north. I was not allowed to deploy because I had just finished revising the 5th AF SIOP target set and had a 'special' TS clearance." (Larry Huggins, e-mail 15 Dec 04.)

The rear seat pilots were recent graduates from McConnell's F-105 RTU. Captains Stewart and Forgan had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67ER on 6 January 1967. Maj Pollard and Capt Britt had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67FR on 13 February 1967.

Eleven other Ryan's Raider aircrew members arrived in May 1967. Four of these crews were:

Capt John F. Rehm with Capt Calvin Markwood  
Capt Donald D. Henry with Capt James Wright  
Capt George Bogert with Maj Donald S. Aunapu  
1Lt William W. Koelm with Capt Al Esser

The group was initially assigned to the 34 TFS under the command of Lt Col Alan G. Nelson, but later operated as a provisional unit within the 13 TFS commanded by Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald. On 1 June 1967, it was integrated as a separate operation of the 13 TFS when Lt Col Jim McInerney took over the squadron. The Ryan's Raiders were guided by Maj Ralph Kuster from the 469 TFS. Jim McInerney explained Maj Kuster's role: "... He was [388 TFW Commander] Colonel Chairsell's 'helper' having served under him at Spang."

Maj Frank L. Yow, Jr., the 388 TFW Weapons Officer, also helped the Raiders. "Maj Ralph Kuster and I worked with them and helped plan the missions although I disagreed with the way there were doing it."

"Because of changes in mission and compromise, the name of the project was changed from the original Project Northscope to Operation Commando Probe to Operation Commando Nail."

Before they had left Yokota, Capt Donelson recalled, "The crews called it Ryan's Raiders and created a special patch showing an F-105F with a golden screw through the rear cockpit. This represented the dissatisfaction of the pilots that had to occupy the rear cockpit." (Nicholas J. Donelson in *River Rats* Vol III, pgs 52 - 53.)

The 388 TFW history for the period October - December 1967 described the technical and operational problems encountered by the Raiders. "Several difficulties, some of which are not yet resolved, have complicated the operation of the Raiders. Chief among these was the challenge of electronics. Modifications were made to the R-14 radar. An expanded scope now provides an improved presentation. A fast sweep in the center of the scope allows the operation to have a fast constant paint of the target. New test equipment obtained from Yokota AFB have greatly improved the terrain avoidance and contour mapping capabilities. Still to come are replacement of the rear seat scope by a Cathode Ray Tube and the addition of a radar absolute altimeter. Daily improvements reflect the success of the efforts of our

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Armament and Electronics Squadron and our maintenance in general. Other difficulties encountered include incomplete maps and charts of North Vietnam, (a problem partly resolved by radar photography of these areas), and lack of experience in Raider operations and techniques, which necessitated exchange of information with the A-6 Intruder pilots of the Bonhomme Richard. Daily crew meetings under the inspiring leadership of Major Ralph L. Kuster, his knowledge and experience in the airplane, and devotion to duty, have been most successful in advancing the Raider program." (13 TFS history, 1 Apr - 31 July 1967, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0038 - 0040.)

*388 TFW history, Jan - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frames 1449 and 1582 & Corona Harvest Chronology of Significant Airpower Events in Southeast Asia, 1954 - 1967, pg 133 & Frank Yow letter dated Sept 1, 1986 to Bauke Jan Douma.*

**26-Apr-67**

5118

In a secret message to CINCPACAF (General Ryan), Hq 5th Air Force defined the daily reports that they would submit on the progress of crew training for the F-105F "Radar Level Bombing Training" under project "North Scope". The message reflected General Ryan's interest in the details of this program.

The crews were training at Yokota and Kadena and the message identified the "integrated crews" (all pilots) that had formed to date at each location.

At the 41 Air Division, Yokota:

Crew Alpha - Heiliger/Pollard  
Crew Bravo - Donelson/Forgan  
Crew Charlie - Burney/Britt  
Crew Delta - Pitman/Stewart

Crew Golf - Rehm/Markwood  
Crew Hotel - Bogert/Annapu  
Crew India - Koelm/Esser  
Crew Juliett - Henry/Wright

The message reported that "Crews Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta have deployed to Korat" (where they were assigned to the 34 TFS).

At the 18 TFW, Kadena:

Crew Echo - Beresik/Reece (Reece was identified as a Radar Navigator)  
Crew Foxtrot - Fullam/Scheer

The message listed the flying experience of the crews training at Kadena.

	Total Time	F-105 Time	Out Country Missions
Maj Eugene P. Beresik	3189:10	555:40	0
Capt H. M. Reece	3534:30	18:50	0
Maj Wayne E. Fullam	3398	1133	19
Capt Roger P. Scheer	2263	1250	14

The message provided detailed results of each training sortie in radar-modified North Scope F-105Fs by the crews at Kadena. For example, on 18 April 1967, the crew of Beresik/Reece flew two daylight sorties each at 2000 feet and 500 knots on land range R-178 using the plane's timer and Toss Bomb Computer (TBC) on each sortie. They had made two timer drops and four TBC drops of BDU-33 practice bombs. Their CEA for the timer drops on sortie 1 was 195' and on sortie 2 was 275'. The CEAs for their TBC drops were 982' and 862' for their first and second sortie, respectively.

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On 20 April 1967, the crew of Fullam/Scheer made one sortie under the same conditions flying six TBC drops of BDU-33/Bs. Their CEA was 930'.

*5AF/CC TWX 261015Z Apr 67 to CINCPACAF in PACAF DO Read File for 25 - 26 April 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518453.*

### 05-May-67

5600

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt David L. Burney and Capt Aquilla F. Britt flew a night North Scope Commando Nail mission against the Thai Nguyen railroad yard (JCS 21.11, BE 616-0409), North Vietnam. They flew F-105F 63-8346 with call sign "Torpedo". "Mission went as planned. Contoured into target. Flight was picked up by search lights, 37-mm, and automatic weapons all of which appeared to be accurately tracking. Released weapons in target area and began evasive maneuvers. No battle damage. ... Bomb appeared to impact on what looked to be rail line." They dropped six 750-lb bombs. They attacked the target at a heading of 110 degrees, 480 knots and 1500 feet MSL.

Capt Britt was awarded the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission. "... Captain Britt was instrumental in introducing the Air Force concept of night all weather bombing to the hostile forces in North Vietnam. Encountering heavy anti-aircraft fire and blinding searchlights, Captain Britt delivered all ordnance on this vital Joint Chiefs of Staff target. Relying solely upon instruments and radar, Captain Britt successfully evaded the deadly target defenses. ..."

*388 TFW TWX 062151Z May 67, in PACAF DO Read File, 6 - 8 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 898714 & Citation to Accompany the Award of The DFC (1st OLC) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 10-May-67

5538

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt David L. Burney and Capt Aquilla F. Britt flew the first night North Scope Commando Nail mission against the Vu Chua Rail Yard (BE 616-01833) at 21-26-15N and 106-20-35E in North Vietnam. Capt Britt was awarded the Silver Star for this mission. "... Flying 500 to 1,000 feet above the ground in adverse weather the single ship F-105F encountered intense antiaircraft fire while still sixty miles from the target. Undaunted, and maneuvering solely on instruments, Captain Britt pressed on to the target where he experienced heavy antiaircraft fire. Disregarding his own personal safety, Captain Britt accurately placed his bombs on this vital target and obtained numerous secondary explosions. ..."

*Citation to accompany the Award of the Silver Star to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 19-May-67

5539

Ryan's Raider rear-seat pilot Capt Aquilla F. Britt from the 34 TFS was awarded the first of the 22 Air Medals that he was awarded as an F-105 pilot. The award covered the period 28 April to 19 May 1967. He had arrived at Korat on 24 April with the first four Ryan's Raider crews.

*Citation to accompany the Award of the Air Medal to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 21-May-67

5125

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt David L. Burney and Capt Aquilla F. Britt flew a night North Scope mission in F-105F 63-8353 using call sign "Buckshot". They dropped six 750-pound bombs using BTIP and the TBC on target 1501, the Quang Khe Ferry Complex in RP 1, North Vietnam. "Calibrated terrain avoidance after takeoff. Refueled with White Anchor 65, started low-level navigation from CH 89. Dropped bombs on target and observed at least one dud. Returned to home base."

*388 TFW TWX 210245Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 20 - 22 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518470.*

### 22-May-67

5128

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt David L. Burney and Capt Aquilla F. Britt flew a night North Scope

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mission in F-105F 63-8293 using call sign "Garage". They dropped six 750-pound bombs on target 1463, the Nui Caay Seeding Segment in North Vietnam. Due to aircraft system malfunctions, they dropped their bombs at 20,000 feet from an MSQ radar signal. "Unable to calibrate terrain avoidance due to inop TA and CM. Refueled on Red Anchor. Diverted to 1463 due to inop Doppler and no video returns in middle of radar scope - radar unusable for navigation or bombing."

*388 TFW TWX 22035Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 20 - 22 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518470.*

### 24-May-67

5131

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt David L. Burney and Capt Aquilla F. Britt flew a night North Scope mission in F-105F 63-8281 using call sign "Seabird". They dropped six 750-pound bombs on target 195, the Dong Cuong Railroad Yard 23 NM north of Yen Bai, North Vietnam. "Calibrated TA and CM after takeoff. Refueled on Red Anchor. Began low-level navigation at Channel 97. Was in weather to target. Encountered several thunderstorms en route to target. Picked up Firecan and Fan Song Low upon egress. Released bombs in general target area and returned to home base. Due to poor radar resolution, was unable to positively identify target."

*388 TFW TWX 240640Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 23 - 24 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518489.*

### 01-Jun-67

4107

Lt Col James E. McNerney, Jr. replaced Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald as commander of the 13 TFS. Lt Col Fitzgerald had just completed 100 missions over North Vietnam as well as 13 missions over Laos. On this same date, the Ryan's Raider crews in the 34 TFS transferred to the 13 TFS.

Lt Col McNerney, along with his EWO Capt Fred W. Shannon, had reported in to the squadron in March 1967 after they both had completed Wild Weasel Class 67WWIII-8 at Nellis. Lt Col McNerney was the squadron's Wild Weasel Operations Officer. He continued transitioning the Wild Weasel crews into the Ryan's Raider operation and releasing the Ryan's Raider back-seat pilots into the strike force as F-105D pilots.

Most Ryan's Raider back seat pilots transferred as strike pilots to other 388 TFW squadrons. For example, Capt Aquilla F. Britt transferred from the 34 TFS to the 469 TFS. Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh a rear seat pilot transferred to the strike mission in the 13th. However, pilots Maj James B. Register and Maj Kenneth D. Oliver remained with the Ryan's Raider Commando Nail mission when they transferred to the 13 TFS and flew together. The Ryan's Raider crew of Capt George A. Bogert and Capt Donald S. Aunapu also transferred to the 13 TFS.

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583, frame 1494 & Jim McNerney, e-mail 1 Nov 2004 & Nancy Fitzgerald 5 Nov 85 letter to Bauke Jan Douma.*

### 06-Jun-67

1494

In a mission designated RT-56A-0033, "Thunderchief pilots from the 388 TFW strung bombs down the middle of the tracks at the Mo Trang railroad yard, 38 miles north-northeast of Hanoi, causing multiple rail cuts and extensive damage. The pilots estimated between 25 and 50 pieces of rolling stock were destroyed or damaged by their attack." The coordinates of the yard were 21-30-30N and 106-07-50E.

F-105D pilots striking the Mo Trang yard included Maj Richard E. Moser from the 44 TFS flying 61-0069, and Maj Randall R. Renken from the 469 TFS flying 60-0422. F-105D 61-0219 was also involved in the strike on the yard.

Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS flew his 64th mission to North Vietnam. "Pack 6; railroad." (Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.)

Under Hq 7 AF Special Order # G-1413, Capt Steven J. Savonen, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, received the Air Medal (Twelfth OLC) for meritorious achievement for bombing the yard.

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"... Captain Savonen was assigned to destroy the Mo Trang Railroad Classification yard and the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Works. While under fire from defending flak sites, Captain Savonen attacked and the destroyed the rail yard. ..."

Maj Randall R. Renken received the AM (13th OLC) for his mission today.

Two other 469 TFS pilots received Air Medals for missions today under the same Hq 7th Air Force order. (Award Citation approved by Hq 7 AF Special Order # G-1413 dated 11 September 1967.)

Maj Earl L. Thornton (2nd OLC)  
Capt Aquilla F. Britt (1st OLC)

"One mile away, other 388th pilots hit the Mo Trang railroad bridge causing considerable damage. Multiple rail cuts near the bridge also rendered a 15,000 foot segment of the tracks unserviceable." A pilot from the 34 TFS involved in the bridge strike was Maj Roderick G. Giffin flying F-105D 61-0124,

"Bombs were reported impacting throughout the target area when 388th pilots struck the Bac Giang railroad yard, 50 miles northeast of Hanoi. Pilots estimated eight to 10 pieces of rolling stock were in the southern end of the yard before the attack, but dense smoke prevented any damage assessment. Several fires were left burning in the yard by the striking aircraft and an 85-mm AAA site just west of the yard was destroyed." Capt Larry David Wiggins from the 469 TFS, flying F-105D 62-4316, struck the Bac Giang yard at coordinates 21-16-35N and 106-11-40E.

F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW also struck the nearby Bac Giang railroad and highway bridge (JCS 18.23) at coordinates 21-16-30N and 106-11-18E. Two F-105D pilots on this strike were Capt David C. Carter from the 34 TFS flying 61-0068 and Capt Francis D. Leonard, Jr. from the 13 TFS flying 61-0124. Capt Carter's strike camera film showed a good hit on the bridge. The 34 TFS pilots dropped five 3,000-pound bombs on the bridge's choke points. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", 1967, Film Report FR-816, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

Three pilots from the 355 TFW received Distinguished Flying Crosses for extraordinary achievement for missions they flew this day. They were Capt John Gary McGukin and Capt Joseph L. Ritter, Jr. from the 354 TFS and Capt William J. Schaff from the 357 TFS. (7th AF Special Order G-1730 dated 15 October 1967.) Capt Schaff's citation read, in part "... supporting a force of sixteen F-105s, Captain Schaff successfully attacked and destroyed a hostile surface-to-air missile control unit. During his attack he disregarded heavy flak and threats from several hostile surface-to-air missile sites in order to reach a perfect launch position for his radar homing missile."

For a mission flown on 6 June 1967, the PACAF Commander General John D. Ryan presented the Distinguished Flying Cross to F-105 pilot Capt Thomas T. Walker from the 13 TFS/44 TFS during Gen Ryan's visit to Korat the week of 10 December 1967. (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 11, Friday, Dec 15, 1967, pg 1.)

*388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1496 & NARA records "Air Strike Films, Vietnam, archive control number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720D.*

### 12-Jun-67

1332

F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Ha Gia railroad bridge (ART 1759) and the Viet Tri railroad yard (ART 5016) 19 and 20 miles north of Hanoi. No rolling stock was seen in the rail yards, but supported facilities and rail lines were damaged."

"The bridge's center section and south end were severely damaged. Capt Robert L. Dentino (469 TFS) said, 'I saw the bombs start on the approach and perform close order drill across the bridge.'"

Maj Robert B. Piper from the 44 TFS led the strike against the Viet Tri railroad yard. He received the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for this mission. "... Major Piper was the force commander of twenty F-105 Thunderchiefs



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and eight F-4C aircraft which attacked and destroyed the Viet Tri Railroad Yard. Despite intense anti-aircraft defenses, Major Piper led the force in an attack which denied the hostile forces the use of this important rail yard. ... "

Years later, Piper wrote, " ... I don't know why I got a Silver Star for that ... mission??? It was pretty routine - an extra long ingress and egress, but we all made it in and out??? The citation makes it sound like we destroyed the railyard, but they kept rebuilding their railyards. We had many missions against that particular yard. Thus, it was heavily defended."

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS received the Air Medal (11 OLC) for flying the mission against the Viet Tri Yard. "... Maj Britt was assigned to destroy a vital rail yard in North Vietnam. Despite bad weather, Major Britt navigated his aircraft to the target area and placed his bombs directly on their mark. He was credited with completely destroying the rail yard and cutting the main rail line. ..." (Citation to accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Eleventh Oak Leaf Cluster) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS flew his 69th mission to North Vietnam. "Pack 6; Viet Tri Railroad Yards west of Hanoi." He received an Air Medal for this mission. (Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.)

In a mission designated RT56A-039, Maj John R. Whaley from the 34 TFS struck a target at location 21-19.5N 105-52.75E. He flew F-105D 60-0422. (Nat'l Archives strike camera film control no. NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720C.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1755 and 1498 & Robert B. Piper, letter to Ron Thurlow, undated but around May - July 2000.*

### 13-Jun-67

5540

F-105s from the 388 TFW attacked Kep railroad yard at coordinates 21-24-48N and 106-17-36E in North Vietnam.

Capt Robert R. Lawler from the 469 TFS was one of Korat's pilots striking the Kep yard. He flew F-105D 61-0068.

Capt Aquila F. Britt, recently transferred from the 34 TFS to the 469 TFS, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying a mission against the rail yard. "... Capt Britt attacked an important rail yard on one of the major rail lines in North Vietnam. Direct hits were scored on the rail yard causing several secondary explosions, destroying numerous boxcars, and interdicting the rail line. ..." It was the first of six DFCs Britt received.

Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS flew his 70th mission to North Vietnam. "Pack 6; Wild Weasel escort" (Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.)

For the period 22 April to 13 June 1967, Capt Steven J Savonen, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, received four Air Medals (9th through the 11th OLC). (Awards approved by Hq 7 AF Special Order # G-1318 dated 23 August 1967.)

*NARA record "Air Strike Films, Vietnam" archive control number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720B & Citation to accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 10-Jul-67

3249

During armed reconnaissance, Air Force planes struck 4 targets on the Northeast rail line (RR 2) in North Vietnam.

The Bac Le vulnerable rail segment (BE 616-G0706) at 21-31-19N and 106-26-40E "...was reportedly interdicted on 10 July and 17 July. Pilots expended a total of 44 M-117s and six MK-82s from 5 sorties against this target."

The Cam Thon vulnerable rail segment (BE 616-G0575) at 21-25-20N and 106-18-09E "... was reportedly interdicted 10 July by 12 sorties expending 59 M-117s (and) 12 M-117s (with time delay fuzes). Also, a possible 15 rolling stock were reported destroyed/damaged." Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was one of the pilots who flew on this strike. He was awarded the Air Medal (7 OLC). "... Major Britt was a member of a flight of four F-105 Thunderchiefs

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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assigned to attack and destroy the Cam Thon railroad segment in North Vietnam. He attacked and with great skill placed his bombs directly on target despite intense and accurate antiaircraft fire. ... "

The Phu Xuyen railroad yard (BE 616-01396) at 21-20-15N and 106-15-24E was struck 10 July and 19 July by 21 sorties expending 100 M-117s, and 8 M-118s (1 with a time delay fuze). Pilots reported interdicting the yard and destroying or damaging 20 rail cars.

The Phu Xuyen vulnerable rail segment (BE 616-G0758) at 21-20-48N and 106-15-38E was struck on 10 July and 19 July by 13 sorties expending 66 M-117s, 12 MK-117s with time delay fuzes, and 4 M-118s. "Pilots reported numerous rail interdictions."

*PACAF 27 July 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 8 Jul - 23 Jul 67 & Citation to accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Seventh Oak Leaf Cluster) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt..*

### 11-Jul-67

5541

Pilots from the 388 TFW struck the Ha Gia highway bridge (JCS 18.36) at location 21-19-40N and 105-52-28E.

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was one of the pilots supporting this strike. He was awarded the Air Medal (8 OLC). "... Maj Britt was a member of a flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to support a strike on the Ha Gia highway bridge by suppressing or destroying any surface to air missile sites or radar controlled guns threatening the strike force. The flight attacked an occupied surface to air missile site inflicting damage to revetments, support equipment, and causing one secondary explosion. ..."

Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS flew his 87th mission into North Vietnam. "Pack 6; ammo dump just a little west of Thai Nguyen. ..." Others in his flight were:

Maj Roderick G. Giffin  
Capt Robert L. Martin  
Maj Dwight Everett Sullivan

*Citation to accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Eighth Oak Leaf Cluster) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt & Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.*

### 13-Jul-67

3232

F-105s attacked the Thai Nguyen Thermal Power Plant (JCS 82.16). "Strike pilots reported impacts on the generator hall with a secondary explosion." Strike photos showed bombs impacting on the transformer yard and additional impacts with the generator hall and boiler house partially obscured by smoke. Reconnaissance photos on 19 July indicated the coal treatment building, machine shop, coal receiving building, transformer yard, and a support building were heavily damaged. Intelligence estimated it would require 30 to 60 days for the North Vietnamese to repair the damage to the plant.

Pilots from the 469 TFS flew on this mission one of whom was Maj Aquilla F. Britt. He was awarded the Air Medal (9 OLC) for his meritorious achievement. "... Maj Britt was a member of the lead flight of a force of twenty F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to attack the Trai Hop Military Barracks in North Vietnam. Finding the primary target hidden by clouds the Thai Nguyen Thermal Power Plant was attacked and delivered a crippling blow without a single loss despite intense and accurate antiaircraft fire. ... "

Four pilots from the 34 TFS also attacked the power plant. For Capt Jack A. Phillips, it was his 88th mission into North Vietnam. He was awarded an Air Medal. Other flight members were:

Capt David C. Carter  
Maj Donald F. Fryauf  
Capt Rodney A. Skoglund

*PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 8 - 23 Jul 67 & Citation to Accompany the Award of*

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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*the Air Medal (Ninth Oak Leaf Cluster) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt & Jack Phillips  
Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.*

**18-Jul-67**

2408

The Kep railroad yards, (BE 616-01371, BE 616-01931, and BE 616-01932) on the Northeast rail line (RR 2) in RP-5, North Vietnam, struck yesterday on 17 July, was attacked again on 18 July. Thirty-one sorties expended a total of 143 M-117s, 5 M-117s with time-delay fuzes, and 4 MK-82s against this complex. A total of 95 pieces of rolling stock were sighted during these strikes with an unknown number destroyed or damaged. "Strike photo(s) showed bomb impacts and ... 35 pieces of rolling stock and 2 locomotives, all of which have been damaged or destroyed by repeated strikes on this facility."

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, at Korat, flew on this strike mission against the Kep Railroad Yard for which he was awarded the Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. He destroyed a large gun emplacement during this mission. He flew for 3 hours 55 minutes.

Capt Hugh W. Davis, 34 TFS, was awarded an Air Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster for a mission he flew today. "Captain Hugh W. Davis distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 18 July 1967. On that date, Captain Davis was a member of a flight of F-105s ordered to strike a vital target in North Vietnam. Despite the intense antiaircraft fire, Captain Davis delivered his ordnance directly on the target. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Captain Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Hugh Davis Award Citation)

Pilots from the 469 TFS also flew on the Kep strikes, one of whom was Maj Aquilla F. Britt who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC) for his extraordinary achievement. "... Major Britt was a member of a flight assigned to strike the Kep Railroad Yard located adjacent to the vital and heavily defended Kep Airfield. Despite intense antiaircraft fire, the flight destroyed the trains in an extremely accurate attack which resulted in several secondary explosions. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Second Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Capt George H. Teas was another 469th pilot awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC) for extraordinary achievement. His citation was identical to Maj Britt's.

Capt Winfield Scott Harpe from the 469 TFS was awarded the Silver Star (1OLC) for supporting the strike on Kep railroad yard. "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Silver Star to Captain Winfield Scott Harpe (AFSN: FR-62522), United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force while serving with the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron, in action over North Vietnam, on 18 July 1967. On that date, Captain Harpe led a flight of four F-105 Thunderchiefs on an attack against the rail yard supporting the Kep Airfield north of Hanoi. Instead of bombing the already heavily damaged rail yard, Captain Harpe led his flight down the tracks and deeper into the blistering anti-aircraft defenses that had already hit four aircraft in the force. Through an almost overwhelming hail of bursting flak and flying projectiles he dropped his bombs and destroyed two trains loaded with supplies. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Harpe has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force. (General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-1459 (September 20, 1967) (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24369>))

*PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 8 - 23 Jul 67 & BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000 & George Teas citation awarded under 7 AF SO G1843, 27 Oct 67.*

**19-Jul-67**

5542

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, was awarded the Air Medal (10 OLC) for extraordinary achievement on a mission he flew this day. "... [W]hile under intense and accurate fire from unfriendly forces, Maj Britt demonstrated courage, undaunted determination and superior skill in pressing devastating air attacks against hostile

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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positions. Persevering in the face of danger and death, he relentlessly and effectively aided in silencing two surface-to-air missile complexes. ..."

Capt Hugh W. Davis, 34 TFS, was awarded an Air Medal, Second Oak Leaf Cluster for a mission he flew today. "Captain Hugh W. Davis distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 19 July 1967. On that date, Captain Davis made a strike against a vital and heavily defended target in North Vietnam. Despite heavy cloud and intense antiaircraft fire, Captain Davis delivered his ordnance with devastating accuracy. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Captain Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

*Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Tenth Oak Leaf Cluster) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt & Hugh Davis award citation.*

### 27-Jul-67

1234

Despite bad weather over North Vietnam, Air Force planes struck two targets along the Hanoi-Thai Nguyen Rail Line (RR 5) in RP-6A.

F-105s struck the Ha Gia railroad bridge (BE 616-00223) on Route 3 approximately 16 NM north of Hanoi at 21-19-36N and 105-52-40E. Pilots reported direct hits on the bridge and its south approach. KA-71 BDA photos from strike planes showed a rail interdiction 200 feet south of the bridge.

Maj Aquila F. Britt from the 469 TFS, flying F-105D 61-0132, was one of the pilots attacking the bridge. His specific target was at coordinates 21-19-35N and 105-52-45E.

The bridge was struck again on 2 August.

The second rail target on the Hanoi-Thai Nguyen Rail Line was a vulnerable railroad segment (BE 616-00000) at 21-22-00N and 105-53-00E. Pilots reported 2 or 3 rail interdictions.

*PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & National Archives Strike Camera Records, Archive Control No. NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649.*

### 29-Jul-67

1344

F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Trai Thon army barracks (JCS 39.33) ( BE 616-0953) at coordinates 21-20-22N and 105-09-030E, in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The Trai Thon barracks was first approved for Rolling Thunder 57 on 20 July and this was the initial attack against this target.

Photos showed bomb impacts in "... the Trai Thon barracks area setting off what appears to be a secondary explosion." The barracks were bombed again on 31 July.

Maj Louis L. Levy from the 469 TFS flew a mission on this day for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (First Oak Leaf Cluster). "... Major Levy attacked and destroyed a vital assigned complex in the Republic of North Vietnam. Despite marginal weather conditions, heavy concentrated antiaircraft fire, and surface-to-air missile launches, he delivered his ordnance precisely on target. ... "

Maj Aquilla F. Britt, also from the 469 TFS, was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross (4 OLC) for extraordinary achievement on a mission he flew this day. "... Maj Britt attacked a heavily defended, high priority military target in North Vietnam. Despite adverse weather enroute to the target, he expertly positioned his aircraft so that all his bombs were dropped on target causing severe damage to the area. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & Lou Levy, award citation provided in reply to Ron Thurlow letter, 1 Oct 2001.*

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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**09-Aug-67**

1420

Air Force planes struck three targets along the Kep-Thai Nguyen Rail Line (RR 9) in RP-6A.

The first target was the Lang Lau railroad bridge (BE 616-00524) (ART 1524) at 21-33-06N and 105-53-40E. The bridge had remained unserviceable since the strike on 5 July. BDA photos on 9 August showed the west approach interdicted.

The Ban Dat railroad yard NNE (BE 616-M2419) (ART 5371) at 21-34-45N and 105-56-13E was struck on 9 August. BDA photos showed the yard and spur unserviceable.

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck both of these targets.

The Cau Da Vulnerable railroad segment (BE 616-G1550) at 21-34-38N and 106-00-03E was also struck on 9 August. BDA photos showed the segment was still serviceable.

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS flew a mission this day for which he received the 17th Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for meritorious achievement. "... Major Britt was a member of a flight of four F-105s assigned to strike a high priority military target. Major Britt placed his bombs directly on the target resulting in complete destruction of the immediate area. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Seventeenth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Maj William W. Raitt, flying with the 44 TFS, received a DFC for his mission today. "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 2, 1926, takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Major William W. Raitt (AFSN: FV-3029471), United States Air Force, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight in North Vietnam on 9 August 1967. On that date, Major Raitt was a member of Detroit Flight, assigned the mission of destroying a major railroad bridge. With unwavering calmness and courage, after three aircraft suffered battle damage, Major Raitt directed his ordnance on target under extremely hazardous conditions. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Major Raitt reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Orders No. 1868 (October 30, 1967), on-line at <http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24674>)

*PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756.*

**13-Aug-67**

3359

On 9 August 1967, in response to the Senate Armed Services Committee investigation into the bombing of North Vietnam led by Senator John Stennis, President Johnson had authorized strikes against several targets in the 25-mile deep Chinese buffer zone as add-on targets to Rolling Thunder 57.

On the morning of 13 August, PACAF forces simultaneously struck 3 main rail yards located in the China buffer zone along the Northeast rail line (RR 2). "As an additional harassment factor, time delay bombs were dropped on these three rail yards." (PACAF Briefing)

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Son railroad yard east, less than 10 miles from the Chinese border. The Lang Son railroad yard (BE 616-00042) was at 21-50-25N and 106-45-44E. Same-day BDA photos showed the yard was unserviceable with 8 of 30 rail cars damaged or destroyed. Strike photography acquired during the attack on the main Lang Son railroad yard confirmed the pilots' report of multiple rail cuts with direct hits on the center of the yard. Post-strike coverage of the yard showed at least 4 damaged or destroyed rail cars and all 4 though rails interdicted. (388 TFW History)

Three of the F-105D pilots from Korat who flew on this strike were Maj Donald W. Revers from the 34 TFS, Capt Hal

## **Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History**

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P. Henning from the 44 TFS flying F-105D 58-1157 and Capt Irving E. LeVine from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 62-4378. (Nat'l Archives film record)

Irv LeVine recalled this mission. "I was an airborne spare ... and ended up filling in as Green 16, Tail End Charlie. ... Our attack was from a feet-wet, east-to-west heading with a left roll in. Their guns were hammering us and Lead had us sliding and floating further and further north into China ... to get away from the flak. I was soon well into China and since we'd been climbing I was soon out of airspeed. I let the Thud 'float' and gave it time to get its nose down then chased after everyone else who had gone down the chute ahead of me. I was well behind and watched the yard exploding in front of me. I think it was the only time I attacked a target at a 45-degree angle like we did at McConnell. The Force turned east and the guns followed them. I pulled the trigger back to the first detent [to activate the gun camera] as glorious plumes of white smoke were shooting thousands of feet into the air. I assumed these were [railroad] engines blowing up as I'd seen such in combat films from WW II and Korea. No one shot at me all the way down that slide as they concentrated on the main force. I pickled my bombs and while keeping the camera going, I turned east and caught up with the Force.

"I really wanted a copy of that film but Photo Lab said they had fired it off to Saigon because it showed the hits and devastation we caused and they didn't have it to give me. I forgot to ask if they ever got a copy back from Saigon and so don't have any from that flight." (Irv LeVine, letter received 16 April 10.)

Another of the targets struck was the Lang Son railroad yard NNE (BE 616-M2588) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-52-07N and 106-45-45E. KA 71 BDA photos showed the yard interdicted and unserviceable and 30 of 40 rail cars damaged or destroyed.

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS received a Distinguished Flying Cross (3 OLC) for extraordinary achievement for the mission he flew on this day. "... Major Britt was a member of the lead flight in a force of twenty Thunderchiefs assigned to make the first strike against a strategic rail yard in the Chinese border buffer zone. The outstanding manner in which the strike was carried out and the exceptional results obtained were greatly enhanced by his courage and exemplary airmanship. ... " (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Third Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Maj Donald S. Aunapu from the 13 TFS received the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC) for the mission he flew today. "... Maj Aunapu was directed to attack a vital unfriendly railroad yard in North Vietnam. Although he was burdened by severe weather, he courageously pressed the attack through clouds and accurate hostile anti-aircraft fire, subsequently destroying the target. ..." (Award citation from Don Aunapu, 15 April 2013)

Air Force planes attacked eight other targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A. The Lang Son railroad and highway bridge (BE 616-00025) at 21-50-52N and 106-45-42E was struck on 13 August. BDA photos of 13 August showed the bridge was destroyed and one pier and possible 2 spans were down.

The Lang Son railroad bypass bridge (BE 616-02190) at 21-49-55N and 106-46-00E was struck. BDA photos from 14 August showed the bridge was probably serviceable.

The Na Phuoc railroad yard (BE 616-01372) at 21-45-56N and 106-44-22E was struck on 13 August. BDA photos from 13 August showed the yard was serviceable with serviceable rolling stock still in the yard.

The Bac Le railroad bridge (BE 616-01382) at 21-30-42N and 106-26-01E was struck. Pilots estimated the bridge was damaged.

A train on rail tracks at 21-42-00N and 106-44-00E was struck on 13 August. Pilots reported destroying or damaging 3 cars.

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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Another 10-car train was attacked at 21-36-00N and 106-32-20E but there was no BDA.  
A rail segment on the Northeast Rail Line at 21-33-13N and 106-30-15E was struck with no BDA given.

The Lang Giai railroad yard (BE 616-00041) at 21-41-50N and 106-39-58E was struck. BDA photos on 13 August showed the yard was unserviceable with only 2 damaged railcars out of the 52 recognizable in the photos. Pilots striking the Lang Giai railroad yard reported the destruction of 30 to 35 pieces of rolling stock, multiple secondary explosions, and damage to the support facilities. Post-strike photography revealed that all rail lines in the yard had been severed and the storage/transshipment area extensively damaged. Five damaged or destroyed pieces of rolling stock were visible in the yard.

*PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1756 and 1533 & Nat'l Archives record NWDNM(m)-342-USA-42649B.*

### 14-Aug-67

5543

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, was awarded the second through the sixth Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for his meritorious achievement during the period 20 May - 14 August 1967. "During this period, outstanding airmanship and courage were exhibited in the successful accomplishment of important missions under extremely hazardous conditions including the continuous possibility of hostile ground fire."

*Citation to accompany the award of the Air Medal (Second thru Sixth Oak Leaf Cluster to Aquilla F. Britt, provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 20-Aug-67

1422

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Huong Vi railroad yard (ART 5163).

Maj Aquilla F. Britt, 469 TFS, was awarded the 12th Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for a mission he flew this day. "... Major Britt led a strike force of eight F-105s against an important rail yard in North Vietnam. Despite extremely marginal weather the target was located and the mission successfully completed with numerous rail cuts in the yard and four pieces of rolling stock destroyed. ..."

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Twelfth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.*

### 23-Aug-67

1400

In the afternoon, F-105s from the 355 TFW and the 388 TFW and F-4s from the 8 TFW struck the Yen Vien railroad classification yard (JCS 19) (BE 616-00221) at coordinates 21-05-03N and 105-55-12E in RP-6A. It was the largest rail yard in North Vietnam and had been hit two days before.

The strike force approached the target in two waves. "Alpha" force consisted of four flights of F-105Ds from Korat (including pilots from the 34 TFS) in a box formation ("Vampire", the strike force lead; "Hotrod"; "Mallard"; and "Crossbow") followed by three flights of F-4Ds from Ubon ("Falcon", "Ford", and "????") in a triangular formation. These seven strike flights were supported by an Iron Hand flight from Korat ("Warhawk") made up of two F-105Fs and two F-105Ds positioned to the front right of the force, and an F-4C MIGCAP flight from Ubon, led by the 8 TFW commander Col Robin Olds, positioned on the left behind the F-105s.

"Alpha" force encountered numerous MiG-17s and MiG-21s. These encounters resulted in MiGs shooting down two F-4Ds, "Ford 1" and "Ford 4". A third F-4D, "Ford 3", was lost due to fuel starvation, and a fourth, "Falcon 3", was shot down by AAA.

Cannon fire from a MiG-17 damaged one F-105D, "Hotrod 3". "Hotrod 2" was Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS. Maj Britt was awarded the Silver Star (1 OLC) for gallantry in flying this mission. He "... led a flak suppression flight of four F-105s on a strike against a high priority military target. Though subjected to intense antiaircraft fire and attacks by MiG-17s, Major Britt successfully accomplished his mission and not a single F-105 was lost on this raid.

## Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History

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He further exposed himself to danger in order to aid one of his flight that had experienced difficulty over the target area. ... " (Citation to Accompany the Award of The Silver Star (First Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt, provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

An F-105D pilot, 1Lt David B. Waldrop, "Crossbow 3", was credited with destroying one MiG-17 and his flight lead, Maj Billy R. Givens, "Crossbow 1", was credited with "probably" destroying another MiG-17. Both pilots were from the 34 TFS. (Red Baron II Report, Event 11, pgs 97 - 117 and "Aces and Aerial Victories", pgs 65 - 66).

Takhli's "Bravo" force was 20 minutes behind "Alpha" force. It consisted of four F-105D strike flights ("Kingfish", "Bear", "Wolf", and "Wildcat") led by an all-F-105F Iron Hand Wild Weasel flight. These flights did not encounter MiGs and all returned safely.

Each flight in the strike force had four planes for a total of 44 F-105Ds and F-4Ds that went after the remainder of the box cars trapped in the yard.

Having spent the past two months resting and training, the North Vietnamese air force launched two MiG-21s and eight MiG-17s in defense of the rail yard. ("The -ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in The Journal of Military History, Jan 2003, pg 192.)

Five flights from the 388 TFW struck first, beginning at 0816Z. Each of the four F-105Ds in "Hotrod", "Crossbow", "Vampire", "Mallard", and "Warhawk" flights "... successfully struck the Yen Vien Classification Yard. ... The eight F-105Ds in "Mallard" and "Warhawk" flights ... landed at Udorn due to low fuel." One of the F-105s that landed at Udorn had an "... unexploded Soviet-built Sidewinder stuck through his vertical fin, half on one side and half on the other at about a 45-degree angle."

The 12 aircraft of the other three flights dropped a total of seventy-two M-117 bombs. Pilots reported "... an excess of 75 pieces of rolling stock located in the central part of the target." They estimated they damaged or destroyed 10 pieces "... but bomb smoke precluded accurate BDA."

"Crossbow flight engaged three MiG-17s with one definite kill on one of the MiG-17s. Damage to the other two is unknown. Hotrod sighted one MiG-21 but no engagement took place. No SAMS were sighted. Flights encountered intense 37/57/85-mm in the target area."

"During a mission near Hanoi on 23 August, Capt Richard W. Arnold (from the 13 TFS) was leading the Iron Hand ["Crossbow"] flight when the force was jumped by MiGs. He succeeded in positioning himself and obtaining a 'probable' kill on a MiG-17." (13 TFS history, Aug 67, microfilm NO584, frame 0054.) This "probable" kill was not officially recognized.

The twelve F-4Ds in the strike force, led by "Falcon" flight, followed by "Ford" and "???" flights from the 8 TFW, also attacked the Yen Vien rail yard. Four F-4s from the 555 TFS at Ubon were lost -- two "Ds" from "Ford" flight shot down at 0815Z by missiles from MiG-21s and one "D" from "Falcon" flight was hit by AAA at 0819Z as it was diving toward the target. At 0950Z, an F-4D from "Ford" flight ran out of fuel just as the plane was connecting to a tanker. Both crewmen ejected 54 NM east of Udorn. They were picked up by Jolly Greens and returned to Udorn about midnight. Of the eight F-4 crewmembers who ejected this day, two were rescued, four became POWs, and two died. It was the worst day in the Triple Nickel's history.

"The MiG-21s came out of a cloud layer at 25,000 feet, made a single firing pass from the rear, and fired three air-to-air missiles which downed the two F-4Ds. The MiGs then climbed back into the overcast and disappeared. This tactic clearly demonstrated a well-coordinated enemy ground controlled intercept capability." (CHECO).

F-4D pilot, Dick Collins, recalled their encounter with the MiGs. "The MiG-21s had been strangely inactive that



# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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summer, and we didn't know why. Some people at 7th Air Force knew, but that knowledge never made it out to the only people who needed it -- the fighter squadron guys going downtown every day. ... "

To find out why they didn't know about the MiG-21s, " ... the day after our losses, the Wing D.O., John Burns, and I jumped in an F-4 and flew to 7th Air Force in Saigon." What they learned was that, "the North Vietnamese did not have a sophisticated air defense system in place, and it became apparent that if they wanted to shoot down more strike aircraft and reduce their own losses then things had to change. So, that summer the Soviets showed up with pilots, ground radar controllers and ground radar technicians to implement Soviet air defense tactics. We learned that they had been practicing for months honing new skills, getting their training missions in when our MiG CAPs and strike forces were not in the area. ..."

"On August 23, NVN unveiled their new system at the Triple Nickel's expense. The wraps were off; the MiG-21s were back in action. They were scrambled from runway alert when we left the tankers, vectored to a perfect position at our six o'clock high. Then in a supersonic dive they were on top of us and in firing range without warning and before they could possibly be seen."

*388 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI 4201 Aug 67 OPREP-3/PINNACLE/012 388 TFW msg 231200Z Aug 67 & "Bad Day at Black Rock: An Old Movie" by F-4 pilot Dick Collins in MiG Sweep, Winter 2002 & CNA Database frame G-23 & Project CHECO Report, 17 Nov 67, pg 37.*

### 09-Sep-67

1428

The 388 TFW struck Kep airfield (JCS 9.1) (BE 616-8438) at coordinates 21-23-37N and 106-16-05E, in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The airfield had been attacked by F-4s during the previous week.

The strike was carried out by " ... a combined force from Ubon, Takhli, and Korat. Flak suppression aircraft reported 40 CBU-24s on AAA sites, and on an area south of the runway. Crews delivered 152 M-117s and 12 MK-82s on the runway and revetments. A possible POL fire with an orange fireball was reported north of the runway. Post strike photography reflected six craters on the runway and seven craters on aircraft revetments. However, not all revetments in the area were covered in post strike reconnaissance. One MiG-17 was noted destroyed and two damaged in post-strike photo reports." Reconnaissance photos taken on 17 September showed the airfield was still unserviceable.

One of the pilots on the strike was Maj Robert W. Barnett from the 44 TFS. He was awarded the Silver Star. "Maj Robert W. Barnett distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 9 September 1967. On this date, Major Barnett led a force of twenty F-105 Thunderchiefs on a successful attack against a hostile location. Despite intense hostile fire and weather which partially obscured the target, Major Barnett's attack heavily damaged this vital MiG base. ... "

Maj Aquilla Friend Britt from the 469 TFS received an Air Medal (21 OLC) for meritorious achievement for flying this mission. "... Major Britt was a member of Warhawk Flight assigned to strike a high priority military target in North Vietnam. Continuing on through extremely poor weather and intense hostile fire that damaged four aircraft in the force, Major Britt placed his bombs directly on target severely cratering the runway and rendering it unserviceable. ... " (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Twenty First Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Capt Hugh W. Davis, 34 TFS, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, First Oak Leaf Cluster for his mission today. "Captain Hugh W. Davis distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial fight as an F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 9 September 1967. On that date, Captain Davis was a member of a flight directed to attack a heavily defended airfield in North Vietnam. Despite adverse weather, surface-to-air missiles launched at his flight, intense anti-aircraft fire and attacks by hostile aircraft, Captain Davis pressed the attack and accurately released his ordnance on the target, which inflicted severe damage to the airfield. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Hugh Davis award citation)

## Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History

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Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky from the 34 TFS received a DFC for a mission he flew today. "The President of the United States of America, ... takes pleasure in presenting a Second Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Third Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Raymond Walter Vissotzky ... for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 9 September 1967. On that date, Major Vissotzky was a member of a flight of F-105's ordered to attack and destroy a high priority military target. Despite adverse weather, intense anti-aircraft fire, and hostile aircraft, Major Vissotzky maintained flight integrity and personally destroyed an entrenched anti-aircraft gun emplacement. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Major Vissotzky reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24829>)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Project CHECO Report, 17 November 1967, pg 43 & PACAF briefing to CINCPAC for the period 28 August - 17 September 1967.*

**03-Oct-67**

850

F-105s from the 388 TFW "heavily damaged the Dap Cau railroad and highway bridge (JCS 16), 20 miles northeast of Hanoi. Pilots also damaged at least three anti-aircraft sites near the bridge." The Rolling Thunder mission was RT56A-153 and the coordinates of the target were 21-12-15N 106-05-42E.

The 388 TFW also struck the Dap Cau bypass bridge one mile south of JCS 16 where one F-105D was lost and its pilot, Maj Robert W. Barnett from the 469 TFS, was captured.

1Lt Earl J. Henderson was a 469 TFS pilot in Bob Barnett's flight. It was his 19th combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Dap Cau Railroad Bridge 15 miles NNE of Hanoi

"Armament: 6x750 .01.

"Never made it to target. Lead aircraft hit by SAM one minute prior to target. Jettisoned everything and turned toward water with him. He bailed out about 1 mile inland. During RESCAP, two MiG-21s made two passes on me. Chased them for 30 miles, fired out of range, no hits."

Lt Henderson received the Silver Star for this mission. "... Lieutenant Henderson was a member of a flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to attack a target deep in hostile territory. When the lead aircraft in his flight was shot down, he circled the area, giving cover for his downed flight leader. During the rescue operation, he dodged a surface-to-air missile and evaded two attacks by MiG aircraft. Then by maneuvering his aircraft, he gained the advantage and successfully chased the MiGs out of the area and thus prevented their interference in the rescue operation. ..."

Pilots from the 34 TFS participating in the Dap Cau bridge strike were Maj Dwight E. Sullivan, Maj Kenneth W. Mays, Capt Robert B. Middleton flying F-105D 62-4283, Capt Robert M. Crane flying F-105D 62-4359, and Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying his 16th combat mission and his 7th in Route Pack 6. Dickson struck a target 8 nautical miles NE of Hanoi. He noted on the band of his post-mission cigar, "Rough. B. Barnett down". Dickson had known Barnett during their assignment to Perrin AFB, TX. (Nat'l Archive records & 20 Apr 09 letter from Carolyn Dickson giving annotation on cigar band dated 3 Oct 67.)

Maj Sullivan received a Silver Star for this mission. "Major Dwight E. Sullivan distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as mission commander over North Vietnam on 3 October 1967. On that date, Major Sullivan led the force of twenty aircraft against the heavily defended military target. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire and the ensuing attack by numerous surface-to-air missiles, Major Sullivan maintained the force's composure and led the force in on the target, delivered his ordnance with devastating accuracy causing severe damage to the target. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Sullivan has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.asp?ID=1085>)

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was awarded an Distinguished Flying Cross (5 OLC) for extraordinary achievement for a mission he flew this day. "... Maj Britt led a flight on a flak suppression mission in support of a major strike on a high priority military target. Major Britt overcame four SA-2 missiles and heavy hostile fire to personally destroy an active firing site. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr. and Capt Steven W. Long, Jr., both also from the 469 TFS, flew a mission against a nearby target at 21-09N and 106-46E. Gimmi flew F-105F 63-8268 and Capt Long flew F-105D 62-4387 on this Rolling Thunder RT56A-153 mission. (Nat'l Archives camera records)

*Sawadee Flyer, Friday, October 13, 1967, pg 3 & National Archives gun camera records, Archive Control No. NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.*

**05-Oct-67**

4826

On the day of his first combat mission over North Vietnam, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS, attended an aircrew briefing at Korat..

"On the 5th of October, all of the pilots were called to a briefing in the Base Theater. Col. Ed (Red) Burdett, our wing commander had just returned from a mandatory meeting in Saigon with General Momyer, the 7th Air Force commander. The purpose of the meeting was to relate to the wing commanders of all of the combat wings the concern that existed in Washington that civilians were being killed in our bombing attacks. I later appreciated the fact that you couldn't be too accurate when shells were flying by your cockpit so it was not a surprise that some bombs fell short. None-the-less, Col. Burdett dutifully passed on the admonition to be more accurate in our bombing -- he never alluded to the fact that he had been instructed to make this speech although we all knew this was the case. He was true to the modicum that commanders never alibi their directions on higher headquarters.

"Major Aquilla Britt of the 469 TFS rose to ask why we weren't trying to rescue Bob Barnett. His words were: 'Why are we bombing 'nit-noi' bridges when poor Bob Barnett is desperately calling for help. Col. Burdett didn't get a chance to respond because the vice wing commander, Col. Jack Flynn rose from his seat in the front row, faced the audience and said: 'Col. Burdett has requested a rescue effort and it has been denied. We don't know the rationale but Col. Burdett personally tried'. That satisfied the pilots. Ironically, the next day a rescue effort was attempted and several aircraft were shot up and they found that a North Vietnamese was now talking over the survival radio. Bob became a POW who was released with the others in 1973."

*Lt General (Ret) Sam Armstrong, unpublished manuscript in chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 6.*

**05-Oct-67**

1432

Under mission RT56A-155, the 388 TFW bombed the Dap Cau railroad yard and the nearby Bac Ninh railroad siding in North Vietnam. One of the pilots striking the Dap Cau yard at location 21-11-30N 106-05-01E was Capt Jeffery Thomas Ellis from the 34 TFS flying 59-1760.

Pilots from the 469 TFS attacking the Bac Ninh siding at location 21-10-30N and 106-03-32E were:

Maj Aquilla Friend Britt flying F-105D 62-4283  
Maj Robert M. Clark flying 61-0206  
Maj James Arlen Clements flying 61-0220  
Capt Richard A. Frederick in 62-4356  
Maj Sam H. Martin III in 62-4221

Maj Britt was awarded an Air Medal (20 OLC) for meritorious achievement for flying this mission. "... As deputy force commander, Major Britt assisted in planning the mission, navigation to the target, and maneuvering the force for

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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optimum attack on a vital rail yard. His accurate planning and excellent judgment contributed greatly to the successful accomplishment of the mission. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Twentieth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Nat'l Archives gun and strike camera film Archive Control Number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B.*

**07-Oct-67**

1303

The 388 TFW struck the Kep railroad yard and the Cu Van POL storage area in North Vietnam.

The Kep Railroad yards were targets BE 616-01371, BE 616-01931, and BE 616-01932 (ART 1270) on the Northeast rail line (RR 2) at coordinates 21-24-48N and 106-17-36E in RP-6A.

Maj Wayne E. Fullam, "Pistol 01" from the 469 TFS was shot down on the Kep rail yard strike. He was KIA. Also downed on the Kep mission was the Wild Weasel crew of Capt Joseph C. Howard and EWO Capt George L. Shamblee, "Warhawk 01" from the 44 TFS. Both were rescued but had broken legs.

The Cu Van POL storage area was target BE 616-01747 at coordinates 21-37-40N and 105-43-47E.

The wing's F-105s hit the Cu Van POL complex "... leaving it in flames with smoke billowing more than 5,000 feet in the air." Maj Donald W. Revers from the 34 TFS was mission commander. A 388 TFW press release described the mission. "'Today was a relatively easy mission. I feel that we really did a good job on this one. I feel the force did a tremendous job.' This is how the mission commander, Major Donald W. Revers, 34th TFS, described the attack against the Cu Van petroleum products storage area in North Vietnam by F-105 Thunderchiefs of the 388 TFW.

"He went on to say, 'Upon egress into the target, we had numerous MiG warnings, which posed no immediate threat to the strike force. The weather was a prime factor today. On ingress into the target, we were on top of an overcast until about four minutes of the target. After breaking through the undercast, the visibility was down to a couple of miles. Consequently target acquisition was very poor. I didn't notice too much antiaircraft activity as I rolled into the target. As my bombs exploded on the target I noticed numerous secondary explosions and fireballs coming out of the target area. As I egressed from the target area, I had a chance to look back and noticed black, billowing smoke coming out of the petroleum area. The column was raising to about 1000 feet and there were numerous fire balls in the area. This is the first time this target has been hit. On egress from the target, we had little SAM activity. We observed one launching and explode quite a ways from the target area. It did not affect the force in general.'

"Major George G. Clausen, commander of the 34th TFS, was also on the mission against the petroleum storage area. 'On our way up today, we were quite a bit hampered by weather. The visibility was rather poor and most of our route was undercast. However, we were able to acquire the target and roll into it. We were the lead flight in and the bombs observed as we pulled off looked like they had several secondary explosions and had done quite a bit of damage. The other flights following us confirmed this and reported other numerous secondary explosions. I think all-in-all today we had a real good mission. The defenses were actually very light today. This is something that has been unusual in the past. Normally we have been met by intense antiaircraft fire. However, today was a relatively easy mission. We saw numerous fireballs and dense black and grey smoke pouring out of the target after coming off. We also noted some possibility in the distance of some SAMs being launched. However, they were not launched against our force. They were observed bursting some distance away. The smoke was probably as high as 1500 feet above the target area. It's difficult to say how large the fireballs were especially at the speed coming off the target and looking back. However, I'd say the fireballs were 3 - 400 feet in diameter. I feel that this is one that we've really done a good job on.' " (388 TFW pilot interviews, undated draft, via e-mail from Don Revers, 30 March 2010)

Maj Revers was awarded the Silver Star. "Major Donald W. Revers distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 7 October 1967. On that date, Major Revers was the force commander of twenty-four aircraft ordered to strike a heavily defended storage facility located

## **Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History**

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seven miles northwest of Thai Nguyen. In spite of hostile aircraft, severe weather conditions, and intense anti-aircraft fire, Major Revers led his force through a highly successful attack and destroyed the storage facility. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Revers has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Award Citation via e-mail 30 March 2010.)

Another pilot on the Cu Van strike was Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS. It was his 18th combat mission and 9th mission into Route Pack 6. His target was 16 nautical miles from Hanoi. (20 Apr 09 letter from Carolyn Dickson giving annotation on cigar band undated but with "CU Wan" note.)

Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky from the 34 TFS received a DFC for the mission he flew today. "The President of the United States of America ... takes pleasure in presenting a Third Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Fourth Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Raymond Walter Vissotzky ... for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot over North Vietnam on 7 October 1967. On that date, Major Vissotzky was a member of a twenty aircraft strike force, ordered to strike a high priority military target. Despite intense anti-aircraft fire and numerous surface-to-air missiles, Major Vissotzky dropped his ordnance with unerring accuracy which resulted in destruction on the target area. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Major Vissotzky reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24829>)

"Congratulations were received by the 388 TFW from Gen. William Momyer [7 Air Force Commander] for a highly successful strike ... on the Cu Van POL products storage area in North Vietnam. 'I wish to add my own note of congratulations for the outstanding success in the execution of this mission,' wrote General Momyer. 'The professional manner in which the mission was carried out reflects outstandingly on the skill of all involved. Pass my 'well done' to all.' "

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was awarded an Air Medal (19 OLC) for meritorious achievement for a mission he flew on this day. "... Major Britt led a flight of four aircraft assigned to strike a high priority military target. Major Britt placed his bombs directly on the target area, causing an immediate secondary explosion and fire. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Nineteenth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Five days after arriving at Korat and joining the 34 TFS, Capt Jacob C. Shuler flew his first combat mission in F-105D 62-4269. He was number 2 in the two-ship "Cleveland" flight led by Capt Vernon D. Ellis, Capt Shuler's RTU classmate, who flew 61-0132. They took off at 15:25 against the target at location 17-42N and 105-46E in RP-1. "Flew to Channel 77 and turned toward target, which was the Mu Gia Pass just across border from Laos. Many BANDIT calls on guard channel from up North and hear that someone is down. Advised by Cricket that target is IFR and turned over to Bromo for a join up with Waco Flight for a Combat Sky Spot. We had just joined up at release point and all of us dropped 6 x 750#, two with 24-hr TDs. Return to field is routine and I finally caught up with the A/C. Before entering traffic, Vern has me practice some pod formation and 'roll-ins' as #2. Learned a lot! Pattern smooth and felt good. Problems [with] APR 25 malfunction and excess moisture from air conditioner. Found out later that Joe Howard (my UPT Classmate, Class 64-D, Webb AFB), leading Iron Hand flight, was hit by MiG-21s (6) and punched out over water near Da Nang. He was hit over 'the Wart'. The gaggle pressed on in and the mission commander Maj Fullam is hit by 85 over target and punched out over Little Thud Ridge. Two other birds are on ground at Da Nang with battle damage. They were part of Iron Hand flight." The mission lasted 1.7 hours. The flight's spare was Capt Robert M. Crane in 60-0512. (Jake Shuler's combat mission spreadsheet and "Mission #1 Narrative" via e-mail 28 July 2010.)

Also today, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., flying with the 34 TFS, flew his first combat mission as "Hartford 02". He dropped bombs in the Barrel Roll region of Northern Laos. "Troop artillery concentration. 100% in target area." He then flew a weather recce into RP-3.

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1756 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67,*

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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*USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1697 & Rufus Dye, Mission History log.*

**09-Oct-67**

1435

The 388 TFW struck the Ha Gia highway bridge (JCS 18.36) (BE 616-0074) at coordinates 21-19-40N and 105-52-28E in RP-6A, North Vietnam.

In an afternoon attack against the Quang Hien RR Causeway, Maj James Arlen Clements from the 469 TFS was shot down by a MiG-21 and captured. He spent the rest of the war as a POW.

Also today, Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 20th mission into North Vietnam and his 11th into Pack 6. He was in an Iron Hand flight supporting a strike on the Kep causeway. (20 Apr 09 letter from Carolyn Dickson giving annotation on cigar band dated 9 Oct 67.)

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for a mission he flew this day. "... Major Britt was a member of a flight of four F-105s assigned to strike a high priority military target. Major Britt distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while flying through missile-firing MiGs and heavy flak to place his bombs on the assigned target. ..."

Lt Col Richard F.B. Gimmi, Jr., the Director of the 388 TFW Tactical Unit Operations Center (TUOC or Command Post), flew a mission against a causeway west of Hanoi for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (2nd OLC). "Lieutenant Colonel Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr. distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Thunderchief pilot over North Vietnam on 9 October 1967. On that date, Colonel Gimmi was a member of a flight of four F-105s assigned to strike a vital railroad causeway deep inside North Vietnam. Colonel Gimmi distinguished himself by heroism while flying through missile firing MiGs and heavy flak to place his bombs on his assigned target. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Colonel Gimmi reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Gimmi Distinguished Flying Cross (2nd OLC) award citation in "Airman. The Life of Richard F. B. Gimmi", by Russell M. Gimmi, iUniverse, Inc., pg 313.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Sixth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt..*

**10-Oct-67**

5544

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, was awarded the 14th through the 16th Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for his meritorious achievement during the period 15 August - 10 October 1967. "During this period, outstanding airmanship and courage were exhibited in the successful accomplishment of important missions under extremely hazardous conditons including the continuous possiblility of hostile ground fire."

*Citation to accompany the award of the Air Medal (Fourteenth thru Sixteenth Oak Leaf Cluster to Aquilla F. Britt, provided my his son Bryan Britt.*

**16-Oct-67**

5530

Under mission RT56A-166, Maj Aquilla Friend Britt from the 469 TFS bombed the Hoi Thinh railroad yard in North Vietnam at location 21-12N and 106-05E. He flew F-105D 62-4283.

Capt Robert A. Zang, also from the 469 TFS and flying F-105D 62-4221, bombed the nearby Dao Loi railroad yard at 21-12-40N and 106-05-27E.

*Nat'l Archives gun and strike camera film records, archive control number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B.*

**17-Oct-67**

1439

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Dap Cau railroad yard (BE 616-00039) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-11-30N and 106-05-01E. "No BDA."

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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The planes dropped 750-pound bombs on the yard. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", report ending 25 November 1967, Film Report FR-856, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

Three F-105s from "Hot Rod" flight were lost to AAA and the pilots from the 34 TFS became POWs. In his memoirs, Maj Sam Armstrong commented on the losses. He had flown his 7th combat mission the day before. "The ... day was a no fly day for me. However, we lost three members of our squadron out of a flight of four at the Dap Cau railroad yard. Dwight Sullivan, Tony Andrews and 'Digger' O'Dell were all hit by 85mm fire just before roll-in on the target. This was the first 34th loss since the Summer so it was especially tough. There was only [one] beeper heard from the three of them and nobody saw a parachute. All three turned out to get out safely and become POW's although we didn't know that at the time."

Lt Col Robert W. Smith, also from the 34 TFS, flew his 8th combat mission against Dap Cau. He described the day in his autobiography.

"I would fly my 8th combat mission in 12 days and it proved to be one of the greatest eye openers of my flying career. A wakeup call for a morning flight and my entire tour of combat. More than any other it affected my view of what I was there for in a very positive way, because I was not only the commander but at age 39, an 'old man' of the squadron and had a job to comfort and encourage as well as set an example and lead.

"We arrived for the Wing briefing to find out this would be a tough day, but that was the ordinary. The target was announced to be Dap Cau railroad yards, located along the Song Cau river, near the larger city of Bac Ninh. That terminal was on the northwest line out of Hanoi, about 20 miles northeast of the capitol along a main highway (1A) and NVN's prime railroad tracks, northeast to China. The area was a hub of activities and therefore a defensive center for the enemy, as well. ...

"I was flying tail-end Charlie, number 4 in the 4th flight, thus be the last to roll in on the attack, so I would get a good view of all the others in their dives. Some believed the rear slots were more vulnerable, which is argumentative when there is enough anti-aircraft fire for everyone. I never felt it mattered where I was in the formation, when the dice were rolling, they didn't stop by tail number or flight position.

"We arrived at the tankers, this time over northern Laos, and took on full fuel in standard order of flight leader, 2, 3, then 4. The sequence assured the positions that used more fuel would depart for targets with the most. Each flight had its tanker and we flew formation with tankers in a racetrack pattern, until time to top off the fuel and depart for the target. The initial refueling of four took some time but the top off was brief, which assured maximum fuel for each and minimum variation within the flight.

"We flew north to about 20 degrees 45 minutes north latitude, then eastward into North Vietnam passing Dien Bien Phu, where the French had been badly defeated by the NVN. This was always a point for alertness, since the NVN had radar controlled 100 mm or 85s batteries scattered about and sometimes practiced on us in that vicinity. The entire country north is mountainous and rugged and up to a mile high, so visually acquiring them was impossible. We cruised east in spread formation for Mig watch to Thud Ridge, and there were warnings of Mig activity but no attack. Then tightened to formation flying southeast along the ridge to gain protection from SAMs, until about 20 miles north of 'Downtown'. From there we turned eastward and assumed ECM formation for the cruise to target, climbing to over 16,000 feet for our attack.

"I got my first full view of Hanoi and its' surroundings and of how large the Red River was and the great expanse of the huge delta going south of Hanoi. ...

"As we started a left turn I had a great view of Hanoi, the expansive Red River delta and very broad river. The delta had many rivers, one of which meandered past Bac Ninh, 20 miles east as we turned. ...

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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"We departed the ridge at about 12,000 feet, hit the burners and leveled at about 18,000 for the dive runs. The radar aimed 85 or 100 mm batteries, opened up with their large black burst around us as we approached. They posed a real threat, being lethal well above 20,000 feet. The target was to our right so I was sitting on the far left and above the last seven to make the turning roll-in to the dive before me. As the lead flights went into full dive one by one, I began to see the black bursts of the long range AAA. Then, as the lead flight started down, the smaller black puffs of 57 mm and finally the grayish puffs of 37s as the dives extended.

"Number four on the 3rd flight had rolled into his dive, so my leader would follow suit momentarily, but I was watching the diving line of attackers when an airplane from the attacking flight was blown to bits, then another was destroyed and almost simultaneously a third....three of my new squadron mates would not come home. It was a picture that was indelible yet momentary.

"Suddenly my element lead rolled in and it was my turn. Now I had only one thought and that was to place my 6 bombs on the railroad. With a rail yard's vulnerability and a careful effort, I knew I could place my entire load on target.

"When I rolled in for my dive bomb run I was completely focused and what I saw was out of mind: The best catharsis for fear on a dive bomb run and absolutely necessary to bombing accuracy. My intended 60 degree dive would be shallow, due to starting from the farthest outside of the formation, but I could adjust for it with a lower bomb release, faster speed and/or aim long. Fortunately, the railroad tracks were long and straight so only the cross-track miss distance was critical, a far easier situation. After release of ordnance I was free to make any break, keeping in mind the withdrawal direction to locate and rejoin my flight.

"We fueled in fours on our assigned tanker, inbound and out, but this time we arrived as five, because Capt. Floyd 'Skeets' Heinzig, the only flyer left in the air from the 3rd flight, joined us on our journey home. His moving in to join us really drove home the realization of what I witnessed, and I suddenly recalled the deadly reality of those black and white bursts around us all." (Robert W. Smith Autobiography at [http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch\\_5/iv.html](http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html))

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS flew on this mission for which he was awarded the Air Medal (18 OLC) for meritorious achievement. "... Major Britt was a member of Crossbow Flight assigned to attack a high priority military target. Intense and accurate hostile fire scored direct hits on three aircraft in the force. Major Britt continued on to deliver his bombs precisely on target destroying rolling stock and rendering the target area unserviceable. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Eighteenth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 10.*

### 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



## Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History

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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 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

# Aquila Friend Britt

## F-105 History

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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.

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.*

### 25-Oct-67

F-105D 591737 469 TFS 388 TFW Korat Landing accident. Collided with taxiing C-123K 54-0667. Crashed at Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam. 10-49N 106-39E Maj Aquilla Friend Britt 469 TFS pilot was killed in the ground collision with a C-123. Call sign: "Olympia 01".

#### History of Flight

"On 25 October 1967, C-123K, Serial Number 54-667, Call Sign Bookie 66, was on a routine airlift operation. The crew 'show time' was 0630H and was scheduled on mission 29W. Bookie 66 was fragged to depart Phan Rang AB, terminating at 1830H. Upon arrival at TSN, Bookie 66 required maintenance on number 2 engine propeller and the generators needed paralleling. Maintenance was completed approximately 1730H. Bookie 66 taxied for take-off to the approach end of runway 25L for run-up at approximately 1900H. The crew had received a two-hour crew duty extension from ALCC in order that the crew and aircraft could return to their home station. After advising ALCC of the expected take-off delay, the crew was given an extension to crew duty time of one hour. This was refused and the aircraft commander and ground control was advised that the flight was aborting and planned to RON. The first request to taxi back to the parking area was denied because a C-46 was taxiing down the parallel taxiway. When the C-46 parked for run-up near the approach end of 25L, the taxiway was blocked. Due to the other traffic backed up behind Bookie 66, the aircraft commander requested permission from ground control to taxi down the active runway to the intersection of the North-South runway. The ground controller asked for and received permission from the tower local

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controller at 1923H. Bookie 66 was cleared down the active runway with a left turn on the North-South runway.

"Also on 25 October 1967, F-105D, Ser No 59-1737, Call Sign Olympia 01, was fraged for a combat mission from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, over North Vietnam and return to Korat RTAFB. [The mission was to bomb the Paul Doumer Bridge in Hanoi.] Olympia 01 was the mission strike force commander. Take off was at 1530H (1430 hours Korat local time). (In order to prevent confusion and facilitate continuity, all times will be given in Saigon local time.) One air-to-air refueling with a recycle on the tanker to 'top off' the aircraft fuel tanks was accomplished prior to striking the target. TOT was approximately 1700H. During post-strike refueling, Olympia 01 was advised to divert to Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. A 'top off' refueling was accomplished in order to make the flight from the refueling area to Tan Son Nhut AB. Olympia 01 proceeded alone and was passed routinely through the tactical air control system and passed to Paris Control (Saigon) by Pyramid Control (Ban Me Thout) at 1839H. At this time, Paris descended Olympia 01 to 6000 feet and transferred control to Saigon Approach Control at 1847:30H. At 1848H, positive radio and radar contact was established between Saigon Approach Control and Olympia 01. Olympia 01 was passed from pick-up controller to feeder controller at 1849H. Olympia 01 was positioned and cleared for a TACAN straight-in approach to land on runway 25L, at 1852H. Olympia 01 was too high and made a missed approach. This was followed by a request for a box pattern and for more warning when to transition from feeder control positioning to the TACAN approach. At 1904H, Olympia 01 was passed to the GCA final controller for another approach. The final controller could not establish radar contact because of heavy precipitation and cleared him to continue on TACAN approach and landing. Olympia 01 missed this approach at 1907H and was again turned over to feeder controller. Radar contact was re-established at 1911H and vectors given to place Olympia on down-wind. (At this time 2 RF-4Cs were in the pattern.) The pilot declared minimum fuel at 1918H. At 1920H, Olympia 01 was advised that the precision radar was unusable at that time and requested his intentions. The pilot stated that he had 1800 pounds of fuel and then he was advised that he could be given a TACAN approach. The pilot accepted the TACAN approach and was given a vector of 240 degrees and 'cleared for a straight in TACAN approach runway two five left'. The pilot continued his TACAN approach.

"While Bookie 66 was taxing down the active runway, Olympia 01 touched down on the runway about 1000' from the approach end and collided with Bookie 66 approximately 2900' from the approach end of runway 25L. The right wing of Olympia 01 cut through the left side of Bookie 66 and the nose section of the F-105 impacted on the nacelle tank and continued forward knocking the left reciprocating engine off the C-123. The propeller and front case of the reciprocating engine were broken away from the power section at the time of impact and came to rest at the intersection of taxiway W-2 and runway 25L. The reciprocating engine came to rest at the intersection of the North-South runway and 25L.

"Fuel from the ruptured nacelle ignited instantly and both aircraft were engulfed in flames. The F-105 came to rest 5800 feet from the approach end of runway 25L. The pilot of the F-105 sustained fatal injuries. The IP of Bookie 66 evacuated the aircraft from the right front cockpit window. He sustained third-degree burns of both arms and hands. The pilot, load master, and flight mechanic exited through the left front entrance door. All sustained third-degree burns of the face, arms and hands. In addition, the pilot sustained a broken left wrist when he stumbled getting out of the cockpit." (AF Form 711 USAF Accident/ Incident Report 67-10-25-1, dated 2 Nov 67, signed by Col Ernest E. Biggs, President of Investigation Board.)

The crew of the C-123 consisted of:  
Capt Jack N. Dole - Instructor Pilot  
Lt Col Samuel R. Smith - Pilot  
SSgt Curtis Edward Stieferman - Loadmaster (died from burns)  
Sgt Thomas Clark, Jr. - Flight Mechanic

Walter Baade was a fellow loadmaster and friend of SSgt Stieferman. "Curtis got out safely but went back to rescue a fellow crewmember. He inhaled flames as well as receiving burns over most of his body. He was flown to Brooks Burn Center in San Antonio Texas, (his hometown) and died of his injuries. He was highly respected by his fellow

## **Aquila Friend Britt**

### **F-105 History**

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crewmembers and was a joy to fly with. A memorial service was held at Phan Rang AB Chapel (Vietnam) after he passed on. Three squadrons of aircrew members attended." (Walter Baade, 9 Nov 2002 e-mail posting to Curtis Stieferman's memorial page at <http://thewall-usa.com>.)

SSgt Stieferman was born 7 March 1939 and died on 4 November 1967. His name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall, Panel 29E Line 22. (Web site <http://the-wall-usa.com> on 11 May 2007.)

The 388 TFW history described this accident. "[An] F-105D, ... was fraged for a combat mission from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, over North Vietnam and return to Korat. ... During post-strike refueling, Olympia 01 was advised to divert to Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN. ... Olympia 01 was positioned and cleared for a TACAN straight-in approach to land on runway 25L, at 1852H. Olympia 01 was too high and made a missed approach. The final controller could not establish radar contact because of heavy precipitation and cleared him to continue on TACAN approach and landing. Olympia 01 missed this approach at 1907H... . Radar contact was re-established at 1911H and vectors given to place Olympia on down-wind. The pilot declared minimum fuel at 1918H. At 1920H, Olympia 01 was advised that the precision radar was unusable at that time and requested his intentions. The pilot stated that he had 1800 pounds of fuel and then he was advised that he could be given a TACAN approach. The pilot ... was given a vector of 240 degrees and 'cleared for a straight in TACAN approach runway two five left'. The pilot continued his TACAN approach."

"While C-123, Bookie 66, was taxiing down the active runway, Olympia 01 touched down on the runway about 1000' from the approach end and collided with Brookie 66 approximately 2900' from the approach end of runway 25L. The right wing of Olympia 01 cut through the left side of Bookie 66 and the nose section of the F-105 impacted on the nacelle tank and continued forward knocking the left reciprocating engine off the C-123. The propeller and front case of the reciprocating engine were broken away from the power section at the time of impact and came to rest at the intersection of taxiway W-2 and runway 25L. ..." The C-123K pilot, instructor pilot, load master, and flight mechanic escaped with third-degree burns. The C-123K with a "WM" tail code was from the 310 Air Commando Squadron, 315 Air Commando Wing, Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. (388 TFW history)

Maj Britt was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross for the combat mission he flew this day " ... as commander of a strike force of twenty F-105 Thunderchiefs against a heavily defended target in North Vietnam on 25 October 1967. Through extremely heavy barrages of surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft fire, Maj Britt, with undaunted determination and indomitable courage, safely guided the strike force on a devastating attack against the primary target. His superb planning, leadership, and gallantry, displayed under intense conditions were the key factors that led to the destruction of this highly significant military target ... " (Extract from "For Extraordinary Heroism - The Air Force Cross" by Maj Jeffery B. Floyd, provided by Ron Thurlow.)

Lt Col Harry Schurr, the commander of the 469 TFS, was Maj Britt's squadron commander and was in his F-105 RTU training class at McConnell. Col Schurr had flown in the first attack against the Paul Doumer bridge on 11 August 1967 and helped plan this second attack. "Britt was a great troop who got airsick on the initial T-33 rides used to get the troops oriented into fighter maneuvers (during RTU training at McConnell), fought it all the way, and became a top notch Thud driver and mission leader. He led the Wing on the Doumer Bridge Raid (it was his first Wing lead) and was requested to come to Saigon Headquarters for a press conference. ... Britt did not know he would recover at Tan Son Nhut before takeoff. He was ordered by radio to full load refuel and land at Tan Son Nhut. ... We raised so much hell about this, they said they would not do this again, instead they would send a T-39 to Korat for the aircrew." (Harry Schurr, e-mails, 30 Jul and 2 Aug 2003.)

Maj Britt was born 7 November 1937. He entered the service from El Cajon, California. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial Wall on panel 28E line 64.

*388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO583*

**17-Nov-68**

5245

The day the 469 TFS began flying F-4Es was a time to recap their accomplishments in the F-105. "While operating

## Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History

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the F-105 with the 388 TFW, the 469 TFS earned one Presidential Unit Citation and numerous Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat 'V' Device. The Presidential Unit Citation was given for the squadron's role in the destruction of the Thai Nguyen industrial facility and other targets in North Vietnam over the period 10 March to 1 May 1967. One Outstanding Unit Award was given for the 469th's participation on POL strikes in the immediate Hanoi area during 29 - 30 June 1966, while three others were received for performance over individual periods 1 July 1966 to 30 June 1967, 1 July 1967 to 30 June 1968, and 1 July 1968 to 15 September 1969. The latter award noted a period during which time the squadron flew both the F-105 and F-4." (Geer)

However, in its 4 years of flying the F-105, the 469 TFS paid a high price. Pilots assigned or attached to the squadron lost 59 planes to combat and accidents - enough to equip the squadron more than three times over. Twenty-one squadron pilots died in combat (KIA), six more in accidents. Eight pilots survived accidental crashes, ten were rescued from enemy territory, and 14 more became POWs, one of whom died in captivity. The following chronology recaps each of the squadron's 59 losses, the pilots involved, and their fate:

Date	F-105D	Last Name	Fate
1. 08 Jul 64	61-0091	Reynolds	Died (Ops while based at George)
2. 07 Nov 64	61-0144	Dose	Survived (Ops while based at McConnell)
3. 16 Nov 65	62-4332	Green	KIA
4. 18 Nov 65	61-0062	Mahaffey	Rescued
5. 08 Dec 65	62-4302	McCurdy	Survived (Ops)
6. 31 Jan 66	61-0210	Hamilton	KIA
7. 07 Mar 66	62-4410	Smith	KIA
8. 23 Mar 66	60-0473	Thomas, Jr.	Rescued
9. 15 Apr 66	58-1158	McCurdy	Died (Ops)
10. 24 Apr 66	61-0051	Cooper	KIA
11. 24 Apr 66	62-4340	Driscoll	POW
12. 05 May 66	61-0147	Thomas, Jr.	KIA
13. 08 May 66	62-4236	Ray	POW
14. 10 May 66	62-4255	Bailey	KIA
15. 22 May 66	58-1164	Hackford, Jr.	Rescued
16. 31 May 66	61-0120	Steen	KIA
17. 25 Jul 66	62-4271	Hiebert	Survived (Cbt)
18. 12 Sep 66	61-0201	Waggoner	POW
19. 25 Sep 66	62-4341	Cushman	KIA
20. 21 Oct 66	61-0057	Earll	KIA
21. 04 Nov 66	62-4366	Elmer	Rescued
22. 10 Nov 66	62-4288	Milliman, Jr.	Died (Ops)
23. 22 Nov 66	58-1160	Bowman	Survived (Ops)
24. 02 Dec 66	59-1820	Moorberg	KIA
25. 30 Jan 67	59-1768	Thurman	Rescued
26. 14 Mar 67	62-4325	Martin	Survived (Ops)
27. 26 Mar 67	61-0516	Spillers	Rescued
28. 26 Apr 67	58-1153	Meyer	KIA
29. 05 May 67	62-4352	Larson	POW
30. 05 May 67	62-4401	Hughes	POW
31. 30 Jun 67	62-4316	Kuster, Jr.	Rescued
32. 03 Sep 67	61-0078	Moore, Jr.	KIA
33. 12 Aug 67	62-4278	Norris	POW
34. 23 Sep 67	59-1749	Aunapu	Rescued
35. 03 Oct 67	59-1727	Barnett	POW

## Aquila Friend Britt F-105 History

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36. 07 Oct 67	60-0444	Fullam	KIA
37. 09 Oct 67	60-0434	Clements	POW
38. 16 Oct 67	60-0461	Butler	Survived (Ops)
39. 25 Oct 67	59-1737	Britt	Died (Ops)
40. 27 Oct 67	61-0126	Temperley	POW
41. 06 Nov 67	62-4286	Hagerman	KIA
42. 07 Nov 67	60-0430	Diehl, Jr.	POW (Died)
43. 18 Nov 67	60-0497	Reed	Rescued
44. 18 Nov 67	62-4283	Hauer	KIA
45. 19 Nov 67	61-0208	Klinck	KIA
46. 20 Nov 67	61-0124	Butler	POW
47. 14 Dec 67	59-1750	Sehorn	POW
48. 17 Dec 67	60-0422	Ellis	POW
49. 03 Jan 68	58-1157	Bean	POW
50. 05 Jan 68	61-0068	Jones	KIA
51. 14 Jan 68	60-0489	Horne	KIA
52. 17 Mar 68	61-0162	Hensley	KIA
53. 27 Mar 68	60-0462	Hornaday, Jr.	Died (Ops)
54. 30 May 68	60-0511	Phillips	Rescued
55. 26 Jun 68	58-1150	Heston	Survived (Ops)
56. 17 Aug 68	61-0219	Koontz, Jr.	Died (Ops)
57. 12 Sep 68	62-4359	Doty	Survived (Ops)
58. 19 Sep 68	60-0428	Capling	KIA
59. 27 Oct 68	62-4264	Edmunds, Jr.	KIA

*"The Republic F-105 Thunderchief Wing and Squadron Histories", by James Geer, Schiffer Publishing 2002, pg 256 & CNA Loss/Damage Database & USAF Accident Reports.*