

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

11-Jun-68

246

The twentieth F-105 RTU Class 68JR graduated at the 23 TFW, McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 16 January 1968 with 30 students. Twenty six graduated -- 2 Lt Cols, 8 Maj's, 11 Capt's and 5 Lts.

The class deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 14 - 29 May 1968 with the 560 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Robert L. Fair.

The student pilots were:

Lt Col Earl F. Bancroft	Capt Adolph M. Guidi
Lt Col James H. Broussard	Capt Jerry W. Hoyt
Maj Charles Richard Brownlee	Capt Brian D. Mauden
Maj Vincent Colasuonno	Capt Larry B. "Tex" McBride
Maj Altman Doty	Capt Leonard A. Morgan
Maj Donald L. "Buns" Fraizer	Capt Chester H. Thatcher, Jr.
Maj John E. Perkins	Capt Richard E. Tracey
Maj David L. Perry	Capt Ronald M. Walker
Maj John N. Sexton	Capt Leland B. "Les" Ransom III
Maj Grant V. Swinford	1Lt Omar R. Wiseman
Capt John Martin Brucher	2Lt Robert Clifton Edmunds, Jr.
Capt Jackie E. Crouch	2Lt Gary M Goebel
Capt Arthur G. Dunston IV	2 Lt Terry E. Paasch

Maj Charles R. Brownlee was the Outstanding Graduate.

Four of the class's pilots received further training in Commando Nail radar bombing when they were joined by navigator/bombardiers. They were assigned in September 1968 to the 44 TFS at Korat as the first F-105F crews trained only for Commando Nail missions. The pilots were:

Capt John M. Brucher
Capt Larry B. McBride
Capt Leonard A. Morgan
Maj Grant V. Swinford

Within eight months of graduating, six of the class' 26 pilots were shot down in Vietnam. Four of them died, including Maj Brownlee killed on 24 Dec 68.

Two students later received awards for airmanship. Maj John E. Perkins, then assigned to the 333 TFS, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, was named TAC Pilot of Distinction for December 1968 for successfully coping with an in-flight emergency during his training at McConnell. Also in December 1968, 1Lt Terry E. Paasch, assigned to the 354 TFS, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand received the PACAF Able Aeronaut Award for successfully recovering an F-105 after a malfunction caused loss of throttle control while en route to an air strike over North Vietnam.

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 68, USAF microfilm MO554 & 355 TFW History, Oct - Dec 68, microfilm NO465.

05-Jul-68

6787

In a letter to his wife Marie, Maj Vincent Colasuonno from the 34 TFS described what happened to him today.

"... I dropped my bombs on the range here at Korat and landed after burning out fuel to landing weight. Dropped the bombs safe, and they should have been duds. After dropping from 2800', I rolled up to watch. At least 2 detonated. The fireball was spectacular. I could hear the explosion in the aircraft and the shock wave rocked my plane.

"It was a very vivid demonstration of how adept man is at killing his fellow man. If humans would only follow the

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

teachings of our Lord, the world would be a wonderful place, rather than the hate filled world that it is. I guess prayer is the only way. It has helped me so very, very much. In addition to prayer, I have decided to bless myself (sign of the cross) as I climb in my aircraft on each mission. Some people have already said that it doesn't help, but I don't care what they say. It is not a shallow, exterior sign to me, but a reverent sign of my faith. I shall pray as if everything depended on the Lord, and fly as if everything depended on me."

Colasuonno letter posted on line at <http://staffweb.psdschools.org/sdev/fnf/2010/5/5.htm> accessed 16 Mar 2011.

20-Jul-68

6786

In a letter to his wife Marie, Maj Vincent Colasuonno from the 34 TFS described what happened to him on today's mission.

"The children need not know about this one. As I had mentioned before, I had not seen anyone shooting at us, nor did I today -- I expected it would come. It did -- shot off my right wing fuel tank and put a bullet hole in the leading edge of my right wing. This aircraft is so marvelous I did not even know I was hit! We were flying early today and made a road cut with our bombs, then went to another place in NVN for strafing some trucks the FAC had found in the weeds. I was intact on the bomb runs -- must have taken the hit on the strafing passes (two). When we got back to the tanker, the boom operator called me and said there was a clamp loose on the radome and he thought he saw a hole in my right wing. My head snapped clockwise about the time the flight lead (who was on my right side for the first time after coming off target) said 'Holy Toledo, your fuel tank is gone.' I saw the bullet hole, the missing tank, and the nose of the ECM pod was also gone. It is amazing that I had not seen, heard or felt a thing! From here on, I shall check my aircraft after each pass.

"I tell you this not to appear heroic, spectacular, or scare you, but because I think you would want me to be honest with you. It really was only minor battle damage, and I am awfully lucky. There is no doubt about that. It was ironic in that I was thinking while on the beach that this is a mad world. There I was completely relaxed and at peace with the world, and the next day I would be killing people and they trying to get me. The Lord must have been with me, for as I rolled in, I knew I was not set up properly. I should have pulled off immediately on a dry run, but I pressed on knowing I would get lower than I wanted to, if I were going to hit the target. I did -- went to 2000 feet which is too damn low, and I almost paid the price. I feel the Lord was with me because I have now seen the dramatic results of a mistake -- one that I shall never make again. So I learned the lesson and got off scott free with minor damage. When you don't see gunfire, I really didn't believe it was there. Now I know beyond a doubt that it is there, even when I (or anyone else) don't see it. It was a lesson I will never forget -- of this you can rest assured."

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Colasuonno letter posted on line at <http://staffweb.psdschools.org/sdev/fnf/2010/5/5.htm> accessed 16 Mar 2011.

27-Aug-68

763

"... (In) the Dong Hoi area, ... 388 TFW Thunderchief pilots cut a highway segment in 15 places, 26 miles west of the coastal city. Five of the pilots were Majors Vincent Colasuonno (34 TFS), and Douglas A. Roysdon (34 TFS), and Captains Jack S. Houser (469 TFS), Ralph E. Durnbaugh (34 TFS), and Anthony F. Germann (34 TFS)."

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

Sawadee Flyer, Saturday, September 7, 1968, pg 1 & 4.

31-Aug-68

4134

The 388 TFW history listed the aircrews assigned to the 34 TFS and the number of sorties each had flown as of the end of August 1968.

34 TFS	Sorties	Counters
Lt Col Klingensmith	59	43
Maj Langford	91	86
Capt Barr	84	67
Capt Sechler	105	87
Capt Murphy	107	97
Lt Col Christensen	118	105
Maj Roysdon	109	89
Capt J. Hartman	116	94
Col Douglas	47	43
Capt Durnbaugh	65	56
Maj Goodrich	115	97
Maj Matthews	75	61
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.	109	104
Capt Ahrens	79	59
Lt Col Dye	114	101
Capt Germann	97	86
Capt Thatcher	34	29
Maj Shunney	107	95
Capt Brooks	80	66
Capt Bogemann	115	97
Capt Fuhrman	118	99
Lt Col Shaver	80	66
1Lt Confer	33	28
Capt Pharmer	114	99 (Capt Pharmer had flown 100 missions by the end of Aug)
Capt Durkee	111	99 (Capt Durkee had flown 100 missions by the end of Aug)
Capt Everett	69	56
Lt Col Ross	122	108
Col Stewart	118	110
Capt Bell	70	57
Maj White	75	58
1Lt Venturi	36	29
1Lt Hoffmeyer	38	33
Capt Ducton	31	27
Capt Crouch	32	27
Lt Col Bancroft	20	16
Maj Colasuonno	33	29
1Lt Stafford	34	31
1Lt D. Hartman	33	27
Lt Col Glass	6	6
Maj Holly	4	3
Maj Knapp	8	5

388 TFW History, July - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 0250 - 0251.

31-Aug-68

4199

Ten pilots from the 34 TFS received medals approved by 7 AF in August 1968 for missions flown earlier. They

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

were:

Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen DFC (10 OLC) SO G-2685 29 Aug 1968 (14 Dec 67)
Maj James E. James, Jr. DFC 5 (OLC) SO G-2627 24 Aug 1968 (14 Dec 67)
Capt Arthur G. Duston AM SO G-2606 22 Aug 68, (6 Jul - 28 Jul 68)
Capt Chester H. Thatcher, Jr. AM SO G-2606 22 Aug 68 (28 Jun - 17 Jul 68)
Lt Col Earl F. Bancroft AM (10 OLC) SO G-2607 22 Aug 68 (7 Jul - 28 Jul 68)
Maj Vincent Colasuonno AM SO G-2607 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 23 Jul 68)
1Lt David S. Hartman, Jr. AM SO G-2605 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 21 Jul 68)
1Lt Ronald A. Hoffmeyer AM SO G-2605 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 21 Jul 68)
Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. AM (19 - 27 OLC) SO G2603 22 Aug 68 (7 Nov 67 - 19 Jul 68)
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. AM (1 - 9 OLC) SO G-2601 22 Aug 68 (2 Feb - 29 May 68)

Capt Thomas departed Korat on 31 August 1968 for his next duty assignment with the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Kadena AB, Okinawa, where he arrived on 1 September. He was joined in Okinawa by his wife, Mary Jane, and a son and daughter.

388 TFW history, Oct - Dec 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 1765 & Capt Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

27-Dec-68

1134

"The following letter was written by Major Vincent Colasuonno, 333 TFS, 355 TFW, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand. It is dated December 27, 1968, and was written in response to letters from Fourth Graders in a parochial school in Wichita, Kansas, where his children attended and, I think, his wife was a teacher. It is provided without comment and no spelling corrections. This was written before his fatal ejection from an F-105D near Udorn RTAFB, Thailand."

Dec 27, 1968

Dear Fourth Graders,

I cannot tell you what great pleasure I received from reading your wonderful letters. Children's thoughts are always honest and sincere, and yours have made this Christmas just a bit more meaningful for me. Your simple prayers for my safety, and hope that I have a Merry Christmas are very comforting.

Some of you asked how it feels to be so far away from my family. Well, it is a terribly lonely feeling, but I have received much comfort through prayer. Our Lord is very kind indeed, and He will help you carry your burden if you but ask. Without His help I do not know what I would do. Not only has He eased my loneliness, but He has given me the courage to face the dangers of war.

A few of you asked what war is like - the questions came from boys. I'll tell you what it is not like. It is not a glamorous, daredevil existence where the "good guys" always win. It is not a fearless fighter pilot jumping into his airplane to shoot down the enemy. It is not a game which you play, (and which I played as a child) where you go home to a good supper and a warm bed after it is over. War is fought by real human beings, not Hollywood stars - men like your Daddy's and perhaps older brother. We all face a moment of truth when we must overcome our fears and do what must be done, no matter how difficult. War is a time of tears when we must overcome our sorrow for our fallen comrades and do what must be done, no matter how difficult. War is the curse of mankind because he will not listen to God's will. War is the agony of mankind because he will not love his neighbor, because he is greedy and selfish, because he is proud and arrogant, because he covets what his neighbor has and would rather try to take from him than build it for himself. War is all the horrible things a human being can do to another human being because he has not learned to love - rather, to hate.

And this is the great, and yet unheard message of Christ - to love. If we all did this, there would be no wars, for man does not hurt that which he loves. Perhaps your generation can accomplish this - it seems that mine has failed.

God bless you, dear children. Learn God's message well and do not allow adults to teach you to hate - for no reason, and against no man. And pray for me.

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

Love,
Maj. Colasuonno

On 12 February 1969, less than six weeks after writing this letter, Maj Colasuonno died from injuries suffered in the crash of his F-105D while returning from a combat mission in Laos.

E-mail from Jim E. Bradley <jamesb@kansas.net> posted on RATNET Digest - 31 Dec 2000 to 7 Jan 2001 (#2001-2)

01-Feb-69

1160

Some of the pilots included in a list of the aircrews of the 333 TFS, 355 TFW at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, were:

Maj James L. Gorman - "A" Flight. Flight Leader Qualified.
Maj Vincent Colasuonno - "D" Flight. Flight Lead qualified.
Maj Eugene E. Cirillo - Attached Pilot. Flight Lead qualified.

Aircrew Roster 333 TFS 1 Feb 1969 provided by Gene Cirillo

12-Feb-69

F-105D 600417 333 TFS 355 TFW Takhli Aircraft had flight control problems after attacking a storage area in Laos. Crashed in Thailand. 15-53N 104-24E Maj Vincent Colasuonno 333 TFS pilot ejected at high speed. He was rescued but died from his injuries. Call sign: "Hotrod 01". During a night mission, "the aircraft encountered flight problems over Laos and crashed in Thailand. Rescued by a Jolly Green helicopter crew, the critically injured pilot was flown to Ubon RTAFB. He succumbed to his injuries while being air evacuated via C-47 to Don Muang RTAFB."

"While egressing from the target, the aircraft began oscillating about the longitudinal axis, with the pilot stating he had lost control. As the aircraft began a tight spiral towards the terrain, the pilot ejected at a high airspeed. Owing to severe oscillations and excessive velocity upon ejection, the injuries sustained were terminal. Cause was attributed to hostile fire."

[A report on this accident is not in the USAF Safety Center records. (Louie Alley, e-mail 4 Jun 07.)]

The crew members of the HH-3 rescue helicopter from Detachment 1, 40 ARRS, were: Lt Col John H. Morse, pilot; Capt Gerald E. McCullough, copilot; SSgt Coy W. Calhoon, flight engineer; and PJs A1C Leonard C. Johnson, A1C Robert J. Sully. TSgt Aaron D. Fariior was the PJ in the High Bird. (Bob LaPointe, e-mail 16 Jan 04)

Rescue Mission Narrative Report (2-3-011, 12 Feb 69) submitted by Lt Col John H. I. Morse, Rescue Crew Commander.

"At 0935L, 12 February 1969, Compress launched JOLLY GREEN 37 and 17 to go to the aid of HOT ROD 01, F-105 from Takhli RTAFB who had bailed out while refueling. JOLLY GREEN 37 took off at 0945L to proceed to 328/49/51. JOLLY GREEN 20 took off at 0958 replacing JOLLY GREEN 17 who had maintenance difficulties. JOLLY GREEN 37 arrived in the area at 1035L after receiving DF steers from NAIL 30 and CROWN who were on scene. Crown was sighted at 1037L while circling the survivor. JOLLY GREEN 37 landed in a dry rice paddy approximately 40 yards from the survivor at 1043. Two Pararescuemen went to aid the survivor who was surrounded by many villagers from the nearby village. The villagers had removed the chute, boots, and survival equipment from the pilot, apparently in an attempt to help him. The rescue specialist found the survivor to be in serious condition due to internal injuries, multiple fractures and bleeding. The rescue specialist put the survivor on board and JOLLY GREEN 37 took off at 1055L for Channel 51.

"JOLLY GREEN 37 arrived at Channel 51 at 1115 where a waiting ambulance took the survivor to the local hospital. JOLLY GREEN 20 with 3 Thai Army personnel and 1 Air Force Security Policeman aboard and JOLLY GREEN 37 took off from Channel 51 at 1225L. JOLLY GREEN 20 was to drop the passengers off at the crash site, given as

Vincent Colasuonno

F-105 History

320/41/51, en route to Channel 89. After spending approximately twenty minutes in search, JOLLY GREEN 20 landed at two villages inquiring as to the whereabouts of the crash site with negative results. SAR alert commitment at Channel 89 prevented further airborne search. The passengers were discharged at a Thai Army outpost and JOLLY GREEN 37 and 20 returned to Channel 89 landing at 1445L. Weather was clear, visibility limited to 3 miles in haze, during the entire mission.

"The name of the survivor is: Vincent Colasuonno, Major, USAF 333rd TFS, 355 TFW. He died later that day en route from Ubon AB to the Fifth Field Hospital at Bangkok.

"Crewmembers of JOLLY GREENS:

JOLLY GREEN 37 (Low)
Lt Col John H. I. Morse RCC
Capt Gerald E. McCullough RCCP
SSgt Coy W. Calhoon FE
A1C Leonard C. Johnson RS
A1C Robert J. Sully, Jr.

JOLLY GREEN 20 (High)
Capt John L. Harvell RCC
Capt Marshall B. Nash RCCP
SSgt David M. Cutillo FE
TSgt Aaron D. Farrior RS

Maj Colasuonno was born 18 January 1930. He entered the service from New York, New York. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall on panel 32W line 19.

The name on the right side of the plane's canopy was "Maj Gene Cirillo". "417 was considered to be the 'Dog' of the Wing. The airplane was assigned to me and I normally flew it when it was operational, which wasn't much. However, after awhile I developed my own ground rules as far as flying the airplane went: If scheduling tripped up and assigned 417 to another pilot to fly on the day I was flying, and gave me a different airplane, I would check and see who the pilot was, if he had at least the same experience level as I, I just kept my mouth shut and let him take his chances with 417 that day. If however, the pilot assigned to fly 417 was a junior officer and/or new to SEA, then I would call the Command Post and get the airplane reassigned to me for that day's mission." (Gene Cirillo, e-mail 16 Feb 00).

In a ceremony at McConnell in the fall of 1969, Col LeRoy J. Manor, 835th Air Division commander, presented posthumous awards to Maj Colasuonno's wife Mrs. Marie A. Colasuonno. "Also attending the ceremony were Major Colasuonno's two sons, Kenneth and Bobby, and daughter, Patty." Awards for Maj Colasuonno's actions in Southeast Asia included the DFC, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and the Purple Heart. (23 TFW history, Oct - Dec 69, USAF microfilm MO555, frame 1109.)

355 TFW History, Jan - Mar 69, USAF microfilms NO466 & NO467