

Billy R. Givens

F-105 History

23-Jun-67

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The eleventh F-105 RTU Class 67IR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 9 January 1967 with 21 pilots. However only 17 pilots graduated with the class, which was named "The Reluctant Hog-Herders".

The class deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 25 May - 16 June 1967 with the 563 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Joe W. Pickett.

Capt Steven W. Long, Jr. won both Outstanding Pilot and Top Gun awards. Maj Kenneth W. Mays won the Academic award. The other 15 pilots in the class were:

Maj Robert Warren Barnett
Maj James Arlen Clements
Maj Rudolph Edward Fiedor
Maj Crosley James Fitton, Jr.
Maj Billy R. Givens
Maj Robert W. Kennedy
Capt George D. Smith
Maj Robert B. Abernathy

Maj William L. King, Jr.
Maj Donald W. Revers
Maj James L. Taylor - 34 TFS
Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky
Maj Jay M. Barker
Capt Robert M. Elliot
Maj Donald Myrick Russell

23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm MO554 & Ken Mays, e-mail 4 Mar 2005.

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. 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.

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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 flight 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 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. ..."

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"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.

23-Aug-67

455

During the attack on the Yen Vien RR Classification Yard (JCS 19), 1Lt David B. Waldrop III, "Crossbow 3" from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, shot down a MiG-17 and claimed a second MiG kill that was not credited. It was Lt Waldrop's 53rd mission over North Vietnam. He flew F-105D 61-0132 on the mission that lasted 2.9 hours. The crew chief of Lt Waldrop's F-105 was SSgt James W. Henderson.

The 388 TFW OPREP reported Waldrop's MiG encounter this way. "At 0820Z, coming off JCS 19.00, Crossbow flight noted at least three MiG-17s closing on a flight of F-105s. Crossbow Number 1 engaged one MiG and fired but damage to the MiG is unknown until gun camera film is reviewed."

"Crossbow 3 (Lt Waldrop) engaged one MiG-17 and fired. Pilot noticed hits on MiG's left wing and stopped firing and when MiG did not blow up he then closed again to less than 1,000 feet and fired again getting hits around the canopy area. Crossbow 3 followed the MiG until he impacted the ground. Crossbow 4 confirmed impact. Crossbow 4 engaged one MiG-17 and fired at him but damage to the MiG is unknown until gun camera film is reviewed. The flight engaged MiGs 4 NM NE of Phuc Yen airfield. ... MiG crashed at 21-17N and 105-50E."

Lt Waldrop described his MiG kill: "As I rolled to the right, I looked down and saw two MIG-17's. One was on the tail of an F-105 at the time. I picked up one and broke in on him. I plugged in my afterburner, picked up a little airspeed, closed in, and started hosing off my cannon at him. Shortly afterwards, some fire shot out from his wingtips and about midway across the wing and he started a slow roll over to the right. I backed off and fired again. He continued rolling right on in and blew up when he hit the ground."

"His second kill came when he jumped the other MIG and pumped rounds into the aircraft's canopy area. The enemy plane rolled over and disappeared in the clouds." On 5 December 1967, the Seventh Air Force Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation board denied credit for 1Lt Waldrop's first MiG.

In later ceremonies, Lt Waldrop was awarded the second cluster to the Silver Star for this mission. (7th Air Force Special Order G-2166, 4 Dec 67)

Capt Nicholas J. Donelson, one of the original Ryan's Raider pilots on TDY to the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, from Yokota AB, Japan, was the mission commander on the strike against the railyard. He led 28 strike and 4 MIGCAP aircraft in bombing the target. During the same April 1968 ceremony at Yokota in which Lt Waldrop received his Silver Star, Capt Donelson was awarded the Air Force Cross. His citation read that Capt Donelson "... was the mission commander for a force of thirty-two aircraft attacking a heavily defended rail yard in the vicinity of Hanoi. Repeated attacks against his force by hostile aircraft destroyed two friendly aircraft, and the intense barrage of antiaircraft fire downed a third and severely damaged a fourth. In spite of the intense opposition, Captain Donelson, at great personal risk, led his force to the target and pressed the attack, inflicting severe damage to the rail yard and destroying a large amount of rolling stock. ... "

Donelson described the mission this way. "Robin Olds was my MiG escort and they flew two ships off each wing as we proceeded down Thud Ridge. An F-4 strike force from Ubon had joined up with us as planned and were in trail. We were around 15K ft with an overcast about 5K above us. MiGs were being called out on the Bullseye broadcast circling to the north. They popped out of the clouds at the rear of the F-4 formation and salvoed Atolls into the force.

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When MiGs at 6 were called out, I turned hard left and saw two F-4s in flat spins burning. Olds' flight took off in pursuit of the MiGs. (Col) John Flynn, ... Vice Commander of the 388 TFW at Korat was my #2 (on) his first Pack Six flight."

"We regrouped, pressed in and hit the target. If I remember correctly, (we) encountered MiGs coming off the target. I saw one on the tail of a 105 in a tight spiraling turn, the MiG's guns blazing. I turned hard left to roll in on the flight but two F-105s in fighting wing were fast closing on the MiG and I broke off and climbed out. It was Barry Waldrop and he got the MiG. I remember also about the same time a call from a sister flight member that called he was hit (Capt Hal P. Henning) When we reviewed (the) MiG kill gun camera film, Hal had flown between the MiG and Waldrop blazing away and you could see what appeared to be a hit on the right drop tank. Hal made it back OK." (N. J. Donelson, e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 17 July 2001).

Capt Henning from the 44 TFS received a Silver Star for this mission. His flight record shows he flew an F-105D for 2.9 hours. (Hal Henning, e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 28 Jun 2001).

"As far as Lt. David B. Waldrop III and many others were concerned, he did score a double on August 23rd, 1967, but the Seventh Air Force Evaluation Board eventually disallowed his first kill. ... The kill was witnessed and confirmed by none other than Colonel Robin Olds who was flying the lead MIGCAP F-4D that mission. He stated for the record, "It was beautiful. The MIG-17 was diving toward the ground with flames coming out of his tailpipe. It wasn't the afterburner; he was on fire. There was that great, great, huge THUD right behind him with fire coming out of his nose. It looked like a shark chasing a minnow. The MIG-17 was diving straight for the ground and I saw no parachute."

"Shortly after this confrontation, Waldrop and his wingman pursued two more MIG-17's. He engaged one which resulted in significant damage to the MIG-17. The MIG exploded, rolled into an inverted position, and impacted the ground."

"The 388th TFW's Enemy Aircraft Claims Board did in fact review and validate both of Waldrop's claims for 23 August using all available data (gun camera film, wingman testimony, testimony from other witnesses including Col. Robin Olds' account and operations reports). But when the claims were processed by the Seventh Air Force Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation Board at a later date, the board confirmed Waldrop's second claim but denied his first. Apparently, the evidence was insufficient to warrant an award for the first encounter." (Paul Osborne, e-mail to the centuryseries Web site, Apr 18, 2000).

Maj Billy R. Givens from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, also claimed a probable kill of a MiG-17 but his claim was eventually denied.

388 /JOPREP/OPREP-3/PINNACLE/013 & Aces & Aerial Victories, pp 65 & 66 & Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol. III, No. 1, September, 1967 & Sawadee Flyer, 20 Apr 68, pg 1 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756.

03-Jan-68

2229

Although strike activity in the RP-6A area was confined to the period on 3 through 5 January, "... significant results were achieved against the rail network during those three days."

"Beginning in January 1968, MiG pilots were less prone to flee toward China. Instead, they became more aggressive and frequently returned for a second pass against American strike aircraft. The number of their kills increased and the MiG threat became more significant. U.S. forces therefore scheduled more MIGCAP missions and, at the same time, reduced the size of strike forces to provide better force protection." (Aces)

"On January 3, two large Air Force raids, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, hit North Vietnamese railroad yards." (Clashes)

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F-105 History

The first MiG confrontation of the new year took place on the morning of 3 January. (Aces)

A major strike effort was frugged this morning to strike targets in the Hanoi area. The aircraft were divided into two forces [ALPHA and BRAVO].

"ALPHA force was scheduled to strike the Kinh No Railroad Classification Yard, 21-09N and 105-51E. The mission was subsequently cancelled due to adverse weather and the force was diverted to an alternate target the Dong Dau Railroad Bridge at 21-06N and 105-54E. (TOT: 0845 - 0853H.)

The force consisted of four F-105 strike flights from Korat with call signs "Hatchet", Simmer", Pistol", and "Crossbow". Two F-4D flights from Udorn provided MIGCAP and two flights of F-105 from Korat flew IRON HAND anti-SAM missions. This force was attacked by MiG-21s on its approach to the target.

"Cactus" was one of Korat's Iron Hand flights supporting the morning strike against the Kinh No rail yard. The flight took off at 05:50; their mission lasted 3.4 hours. The lineup was:

#1 - Maj Michael S. Muskat and EWO Capt Kyle Stouder from the 44 TFS flying F-105F 63-8306
#2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr., 34 TFS, flying F-105D 58-1152 on his 58th mission, his 29th into RP- 6.
#3 - Capt Harry N. Gainer and EWO Capt John A. Stetson from the 44 TFS flying F-105F 63-8353
#4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler, 34 TFS, flying F-105D 60-0449 on his 5th IH and 41st combat mission
Spare: Capt Harry Guy Paddon III from the 34 TFS in F-105D 58-1157. (NOTE: This plane was downed in today's afternoon mission and its pilot, Col James E. Bean, the 388 TFW DO, became a POW.) (Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet, mission card, and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 3 Jan 68.)

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS was one of Korat's four strike flights in the ALPHA force. The flight left Korat at 0600. Its line up was:

#1 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
#2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0072.
#3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
#4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 46th combat mission. "The target was Kinh No railroad yard 6 miles north of Hanoi. We went in via the land route with the sun in our face. There were no clouds in the delta but the visibility was very poor with the haze and sun. We should never have continued in. We started getting MiG calls shortly after crossing the border. They closed to 15 miles and the F-4s went after them. As we came into the delta along the Red River, the MiGs stayed on our tail and the SAMs and flak stayed down. One MiG-17 came up along side Simmer and fired a missile at Pistol 3 but miraculously missed. Two MiG-21s fired 4 missiles at Crossbow flight. The flak (mainly 85-mm) got real heavy on the way out 'til Hoa Lac. Everybody had to jettison bombs as the MiGs plus weather caused us to not get to the target. Nobody got hit luckily." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 50 minutes. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 19.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong described this mission in more detail. "The next morning, 3 January, was barely clear enough over Pack VIA for Saigon to order us to go primary target which was the Kinh No railroad yard 6 miles North of Hanoi. This time I was flying #2 in the CBU flight. We flew the land route and were going to be making a right hand roll-in so my flight was north of the lead flight and I was on my lead's right wing looking to the north for MiGs. There were several MiG calls so we accelerated and raced them to the SA-2 ring as was our normal tactic hoping that the MiGs would break off short of the SA-2 ring for their own safety. Much to our surprise, they held the SA-2's and flak down this day and let the MiGs follow us right up to roll-in. A MiG-17 pulled up on my right side and fired a missile at Pistol #3. Simmer lead, Lt. Col. Red Evans [Lt Col Robert A. Evans, the 44 TFS commander],

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spotted the missile launch and called: 'Simmer #3 break right!' Obviously Pistol #3 didn't do anything. The next call from Red was: 'It's okay, he missed you'. Since this all took place on my blind side the first thing I saw was our #4 man, Billy Givens, roll over the top of us. He said he took a shot at the MiG but he certainly didn't hit him.

"Then two MiG-21's fired 4 missiles at our trailing flight, Crossbow, but fortunately nobody got hit. By this time the flak started coming up and the mission commander couldn't find the target due to these distractions and the morning sun glinting off the rice paddies. So we were all ordered to jettison our bombs safe and get out of there. We didn't lose any aircraft but were shook up over the audacity of the MiG pilots.

"In the mission debrief, Red Evans asked Vern Ellis [Capt Vernon D. Ellis] who was Pistol #3 that mission why he didn't break when he called him. Vern naturally replied that nobody called him to break. I verified that this was the case and played the transmissions back to Red from my tape recorder. Red then acknowledged that he had screwed up big time and that Vern was lucky the missile missed because the rest of us had let him down." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 25 - 26).

"BRAVO force was fragged against the Trung Quang Railroad Yard at 21-06N and 105-56E (TOT: 0850 - 0853H) [on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2)]. The force consisted of three strike flights (twelve F-4Ds) from Ubon, ... one F-4D flak suppression flight from Ubon; two F-4D MIGCAP flights ... from Ubon and two F-105 IRON HAND flights from Takhli." (Red Baron II, Event 82, pp 316 - 331)

The BRAVO force was attacked by MiG-17s during withdrawal. One strike F-4D and one MIGCAP F-4D from the 8 TFW at Ubon each shot down a MiG-17. The crew of the strike F-4D was Lt Col Clayton K. Squier and 1Lt Michael D. Muldoon from the 435 TFS. They shot an AIM-4 to down the MiG-17. The crew of the MIGCAP F-4D was Maj Bernard J. Bogoslofski and Capt Richard L. Husky from the 433 TFS who fired a 20-mm gun pod to hit their MiG-17. (Aces)

One of the IRON HAND flights from Takhli on the BRAVO force included the Wild Weasel crew of Capt Malcolm D. Winter and EWO Maj William H. Wheeler from the 354 TFS. They flew F-105F 63-8301 as "Barracuda 4". It was Maj Winter's 78th combat mission. "Supported 8th TFW on RR yard. 5462; about 10 miles from Hanoi on NE RR. ... 4+00, 4 refuelings."

"Post strike photography obtained on 5 January revealed that 5 of the 7 tracks were interdicted and 3 pieces of rolling stock were destroyed or damaged." (Briefing)

"Aces and Aerial Victories", pgs 74 - 75 & "Clashes", pg 143 & Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 January 1968 & combat mission log of Mal Winter transcribed by his son, Mike Winter.

16-Jan-68

4866

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS used the Commando Club radar against a target in Laos. The flight took off at 1415. Its line up was:

- #1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #2 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1759
- #4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 56th combat mission. "We were originally the mission commander's flight. Due to weather, we went Commando Club instead on a target in Laos. We hit the target almost with no effort and started home when we got a call to go on a RESCAP in Pack I where 2 F-4s had gone down. We went over and picked up one beeper. Although the weather was completely undercast, we orbited just 10 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass and finally established radio contact with 2 or 3 of the crew members on the ground. They were OK and in a non-populated area.

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We had to leave for low fuel and go to the tanker just as the A-1E and HH-43s started in. We refueled and came back but [there was] nothing we could do with the undercast. One A-1E got under the undercast and vectored a chopper in. We came home and as we got out of range, they still hadn't picked anybody up." Their mission lasted for 3 hours 30 minutes.

The two F-4s were in "Hanger" flight from the 480 TFS, 366 TFW out of Da Nang. They went down when a bomb on one of the planes exploded and blew them both out of the sky. The crew of the F-4C, Maj C. E. Lewis and 1Lt J. L. Kelly, were rescued. The pilot of the F-4D, Capt Scott B. Stovin was also rescued, but his back seater, 1Lt Thomas Nelson Moe, was captured and became a POW.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 23 & CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF losses 805 and 806, pg M24.

17-Jan-68

4867

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 57th combat mission. He was a ground running spare in F-105D 61-0092 and became "Goose 1" when he replaced an aircraft that air aborted. He took off at 0650 and joined Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68) who flew as "Goose 2".

"I was again super spare and sat out on the end of the runway while 22 aircraft took off with no sweat. Everybody was going to first alternate targets. Finally I gave up and taxied back in and shut down. Just then, a maintenance sergeant came running up and told me that one aircraft had experienced AC generator failure and was air aborting. I took off and joined the other spare and (I replaced Carl Lasiter [Capt Carl William Lasiter, POW, 4 Feb 68] who was originally the #1 airborne spare) we did a Combat Sky Spot in Pack I. Uneventful once I got airborne." He flew for 2 hours 20 minutes on this mission.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 23

18-Feb-68

5871

In a repeat of his 6 and 12 February missions, Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 85th combat mission against Route 7 in RP-3.

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

- #1 - Maj Billy R. Givens
- #2 - Maj William P. Shunney
- #3 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler

Capt Sechler logged 2:25 flying hours.

Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 18 Feb 68 & Joe Sechler flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.

07-Mar-68

4890

The four pilots in "Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in southern Laos. They took off at 0540 and returned after 2 hours 25 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #2 - Maj William P. Shunney
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (Killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 81st combat mission. "We were carrying CBUs today. Bill Shunney was a spare so he had 500# bombs. We went to Steel Tiger, Laos, south of Mu Gia Pass about 30 miles and worked with a FAC. The

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visibility was really bad in the haze and we had a hard time seeing the ground. Our target was some suspected AAA sites along the road. We put all of our ordnance on the target but didn't get any secondary explosions. Afterwards, we crossed Pack I all the way over to the coast and back but the undercast was solid."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 31.

20-Mar-68

4906

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a road in RP-1. They took off at 1355 and returned after 4 hours 10 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik (KIA, 31 May 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0409
- #4 - Capt Anthony F. Germann

This was Maj Armstrong's 89th combat mission. "We got words at the last minute today to go primary. It looked pretty good for awhile but we started running into clouds right at Tanker drop-off. It was undercast there just short of the coast and we had to weather abort about 25 miles from the target (just abeam Gia Lam Airfield) 2 miles from the heart of Hanoi. We took our bombs out and finally got to the tankers after being given the run-around for 15 minutes by the radar agency. We took our bombs over into Pack I and dropped them on a road and recovered with very little fuel after hitting a tanker in White Anchor."

Lt Gen Armstrong mentioned this mission in his memoirs. "My last Pack VIA mission was my 89th. This was a target close to Gia Lam Airfield in Hanoi and we found the weather completely undercast dropping off the tankers in the Gulf. Lt. Col. Ross was the mission commander and I was his deputy. I concurred when he called the abort and we dropped our bombs in Pack I on our own recognizance."

"Pancho" was another 34th flight on a mission to RP-6 but was diverted due to weather. Its lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Roger D. Ingvalson
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens
- #3 - Maj William P. Shunney
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 19th mission. He logged 3:50 flying time. "RP 6 (Wx abort 10 mi N of Hung Yen)"

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 34 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 42 & Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.

23-Mar-68

4907

The four pilots from the 34 TFS in "Scuba" flight bombed a target in Laos. They took off at 0625 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #4 - Capt John E. Hartman

This was Maj Armstrong's 90th combat mission. "I went 'Golden' with this mission. That means I don't go to Pack VI anymore. We were supposed to go to a target in Pack I where there had been a big buildup but it was solid undercast so we went into middle Laos and hit a vulnerable road segment. Nothing too different about that."

On his 51st combat mission, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Pancho 1" to bomb a storage area in northern

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F-105 History

Laos. He then flew armed recce in RP3. "No significant sightings."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 34 & Rufus Dye Mission History log

09-Apr-68

4913

"Gator" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in South Vietnam and some boats in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1510 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0435
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 95th combat mission. "Our target was a road in South Vietnam. We went in and dropped on it although the ceiling was about 9,000' and the visibility was poor but 3 of us hit where we were supposed to. Afterwards, we went up to Pack I and strafed some boats just north of the DMZ."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 36.

25-Apr-68

F-105D 600436 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Operational loss due to the pilot's fuel mismanagement. Crashed short of the runway at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. 14-56N 102-05E Maj Billy R. Givens 34 TFS pilot died in the crash. He was the 388 TFW Chief of Safety. Call sign: "Bobbin 4". "... An F-105D, ... Piloted by Maj Billy R. Givens, 34 TFS, wing Chief of Safety, crashed while attempting a landing at Korat RTAB. Maj Givens was an element of a flight of four returning from a combat mission. He did not post-strike refuel his aircraft as he felt he had sufficient fuel to return to base. After transition from Korat approach control to local feeder control, Givens requested a minimum fuel type approach. When his aircraft was one to two miles out on a final, it was observed to be descending rapidly. He was informed by the tower on downwind that he would be number two to land. He responded he was minimum fuel and was going to land ahead of the tactical on GCA, who was given a missed approach. Givens' aircraft was observed in a very close-in and nose low turn to final with landing gear extended. The aircraft impacted 1,626 feet short of the end of the runway, and 124 feet left of the centerline. Givens was killed. The primary cause of the accident was found to be pilot error in that the pilot did not maintain control of the aircraft in the VFR traffic pattern. A contributing factor was the pilot's failure to utilize proper fuel management procedures. Additional findings were the failure of the feeder controller to issue timely descent instructions, coupled with an apparent further delay by the pilot before starting descent, preventing successful completion of the approach." (388 TFW History)

The aircraft had been assigned to the 469 TFS.

History of Flight

"On the morning of 25 April 1968, Bobbin, a flight of four F-105D aircraft, was scheduled for a tactical combat mission over North Vietnam. The mission and flight briefings were standard and conducted in accordance with applicable briefing guides and checklists. Maj Billy R. Givens was scheduled to fly as Bobbin Four and was assigned aircraft F-105D-10RE #60-436. Bobbin flight was fraged for a 0818L departure. Aircraft preflight, engine start, take-off, prestrike refueling and ingress into the target were as briefed. In the target area, Bobbin four made one bombing and one rocket pass. Both pull offs appeared to be at least 4,500 feet AGL with no ground fire observed by Bobbin flight members nor reported by the forward air controller. All aircraft in Bobbin flight were visually checked for battle damage and hung ordnance during egress from the target.

"Target egress and post-strike tanker rendezvous were accomplished with no difficulties encountered. Rendezvous with the tanker occurred on a heading of 270 degrees and an altitude of 22,000 feet approximately 160 NM northeast of Korat RTAFB. Bobbin lead called for a fuel state check prior to beginning refueling with Bobbin two calling 4500 pounds, three stating 4700 pounds and four reporting 6,200 pounds. At this time, Bobbin lead had 6200 pounds. The

Billy R. Givens

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flight lead told all members to refuel to 6,500 pounds for the return to Korat RTAFB. The refueling order was standard with one, three, and two off loading their required fuel. At this point in the refueling track, the tanker was required to turn to a heading of 090 degrees to stay within the assigned refueling track. Since this reciprocal heading would be away from Korat, Bobbin lead again requested Bobbin four's fuel state to which he replied that he had a sufficient amount of fuel for landing without refueling. Briefed fuel state for point Roscoe, the initial approach fix (IAF) for Korat, was 5000 pounds. After departing the tanker, Bobbin stayed at FL 220 on a southwesterly heading to intercept point Roscoe, which is located on the 068-degree radial at 55 NM off the Korat TACAN. A clean en route descent to FL 170 was accomplished and flight airspeed was reduced to holding airspeed prior to arrival at the IAF.

"The first aircraft to be penetrated for a GCA/GCI was Bobbin four. After transition from Korat approach control to local feeder control, Bobbin four requested a minimum fuel type approach. Because of heavy precipitation located 15 to 18 NM west of Korat, the feeder controller kept all aircraft in Bobbin flight close in to the field with turns to GCA final at 12 NM. Normal feeder control techniques and voice communications were followed with initial descent from FL 170 to 5000 feet being accomplished at 35 NM DME and descent from 5000 to 2000 feet being given in a 90-degree turn to the final approach course. Bobbin four experienced difficulties in his initial attempt to contact the GCA precision controller, but radio contact was made on the second attempt. Precision radar contact was not established at the time of hand-off by the final controller. All attempts by the final controller to establish radar contact, which included requests for the aircraft DME and altitude, were unsuccessful until Bobbin four was one to two miles out on a final during which time the aircraft was observed to be descending rapidly. Prior to this at approximately three NM, the final controller had issued missed approach instructions, which were not acknowledged by Bobbin four. Bobbin four changed to tower discrete frequency without notifying GCA and called on the break for a VFR pattern. Witnesses indicate that the break occurred at the approach end of the runway at an estimated 500 feet AGL with the aircraft initiating a right climbing turn to downwind. Afterburner light was heard during the turn to downwind. The entire pattern as flown was extremely tight and close in to the field for an F-105 with only a momentary leveling of the aircraft on downwind leg. The pilot was informed by the tower on downwind that he would be number two to land behind a tactical on a four-mile final. He responded that he was minimum fuel and was going to land ahead of the tactical on GCA who was given a missed approach. The aircraft was observed in a very close in and nose low turn to final with landing gear extended. The aircraft developed a high rate of sink after approximately 90 degrees of turn. This sink rate continued until the aircraft, in a nose high and wings level attitude, impacted 1,626 feet short of the end of the runway and 124 feet to the left of the centerline. The right main gear separated from the aircraft prior to the aircraft contacting a ditch, located 275 feet past the initial impact point where major aircraft disintegration commenced. The aircraft came to a stop 1012 feet from initial impact and 144 feet to the left of the overrun centerline. The aircraft was totally destroyed by impact, subsequent disintegration, and fire. The pilot was fatally injured." (AF Form 711 USAF Accident/ Incident Report 68-4-25-1, undated, signed by Maj John F. Unangst, Investigating Officer.)

In his memoir, Lt Gen Spence "Sam" Armstrong commented on this accident. "One day I was sitting in the command post working on my assignment when I heard an explosion out on the runway. I raced out to see the flame and smoke coming from the approach end of the runway. I later learned that the pilot killed in this crash was Maj. Billy Givens. It was his 98th mission. He was sent around by the tower for some traffic concern and this apparently upset him. He used his afterburner to do the closed pattern and was very tight on his downwind. As he tried to horse his F-105D around the base leg, he pulled it into a high speed stall and impacted on the far side of the runway at a high sink rate. Billy was an Air Defense Command pilot who had been marginal during his tour in the 34th. However, that didn't ease the pain to his family!" (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 49.)

The local base rescue helicopter responded to the crash. "The primary crash phone was activated at 0330Z, 25 Apr 68, and the alert crew scrambled. Fire and smoke at the approach end of the runway was visible as the alert crew ran to the helicopter. An F-105 had touched down about 1200 ft short of runway 06 threshold lined up to the left of the runway. It was a high impact touchdown, and aircraft disintegration started immediately. After about 300 ft the aircraft hit a ditch running perpendicular to the runway, increasing the rate of disintegration, and finally came to rest about 300 ft

Billy R. Givens

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short of the runway threshold on the left side of the overrun. The aircraft was completely engulfed in flames when it came to a stop. Pedro 33 RCC deployed the FSK and crew on the upwind side of the aircraft. An entry path was cut through the intensely burning fire to the nose of the aircraft. Ammunition was exploding during this time. It was then determined (the flames and smoke now suppressed) that the cockpit was not with the main fuselage section. As the Rescue Specialists were withdrawing, the Medical Technician located the deceased pilot about 300 feet from the aircraft, back along its line of travel. A fire truck had arrived and started to fight the fire from the downwind side as the RS's had made their entry to the cockpit area and now as additional ground equipment had arrived the crew was recalled and the mission terminated.

"No survivors.

"The crewmembers of Pedro 33 were:

RCC Major Norbert D. Dunham
RCCP Major Marcus W. Galyean
RS SSgt Gary D. Hughes
MT MSgt James R. Gordon
*FE SSgt Robert M. Warfield
RS Sgt Robert W. Greer
*FSK hookup man."

(ARRS Mission Narrative Report (4-38-4 25 April 68) in AFHRA Rescue Report Folder Call # K318.2411-5 IRIS 1018923.)

Olin J. Everett from the 34 TFS was in Mobile Control near the flight line and witnessed the crash. (Joe Sechler mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.)

Maj Joseph C. Morrison became the 388 TFW Chief of Safety on 4 May 1968. Maj James Mizner replaced him on 4 June 1968.

Maj Givens was born 31 August 1928. He entered the service from Dunmor, Kentucky. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall on panel 52E line 5.

388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0770 - 0773.