

Melvin L. Irwin

F-105 History

24-Nov-67

237

The fifteenth F-105 RTU Class 68DR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 23 June 1967 with 22 student pilots. They deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 3 - 22 Nov 67 with the 563 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Joe W. Pickett.

Members of the class and their SEA squadron assignments were:

Maj Julius W. "Z" Szenegeto - 357 TFS	Maj Otto M. Stewart - 357 TFS
Lt Col Rufus M. "Mike" Monts III - 469 TFS	Maj William A. Wiese - 354 TFS
Lt Col Donald L. Nangle - 354 TFS	Capt Roger T. Chesson, Jr. - 333 TFS
Maj Robert E. Belli - 354 TFS	Capt Gary G. Durkee - 34 TFS
Maj David B. Coon - 357 TFS	Capt Nobe Ray Koontz, Jr. - 469 TFS
Maj Robert F. Daley - ???	Capt James J. Mizner - 469 TFS
Maj John P. Gee - 354 TFS	Capt George M. Nygaard - 354 TFS
Maj Melvin L. Irwin - 34 TFS	Capt Lamont H. "Monty" Pharmer - 34 TFS
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. - 34 TFS	Capt Robert L. Riedenauer - 469 TFS
Capt Dean C. Wood - 357 TFS	Capt David M. Roeder - 469 TFS

"On 22 November 1967, the unit returned to McConnell AFB [from George AFB]. On this return mission the 563 TFS and Class 68DR completed the first 'Operation Full Sweat'. Operation Full Sweat was designed to simulate very closely conditions that exist during F-105 operations in Southeast Asia. This was very realistic and very appropriate to complete training, since the entire class had received assignments for combat duty in SEA." (23 TFW history)

When asked about "Operation Full Sweat", Capt Monty Pharmer replied, "I don't ever remember hearing that name. Towards the end of our training at McConnell, we made live ordnance deliveries, did night refueling and in general, flew in more mission oriented flights. ... I thought what we were doing was part of the normal training sequence." (Monty Pharmer, e-mail 16 Sep 2006.)

Maj Robert E. Belli was presented the top over-all student award.

Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. won the Top Gun and top academic awards. Thomas had earned his wings while assigned to the 3615 Student Squadron, Craig AFB AL in 1962 and 1963. Since 28 December 1963, he had been assigned to the 34th Bomb Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB OH, first as a B-52 copilot then as pilot. As a 1Lt copilot, he had been a member of the senior standardization board. (Bill Thomas, AF Form 11)

Thomas was a 1962 graduate of the Citadel. Jake Shuler, also a student at the Citadel, recalled, "Although Bill and I were in different companies/battalions, we were close friends since we were both in Air Force ROTC and had pilot contracts. ... He was the most physically fit member of our class and an exceptional individual in so many other ways." (Jake Shuler e-mail 1 June 2010).

One of the student pilots in this RTU class, Monty Pharmer, recalled vying for class honors with Thomas. "Bill was a great guy and a real competitor. In F-105 training at McConnell he and I were in constant competition to finish number one in the class. As I remember, he finished No. 1 and I was No. 2." (Monty Pharmer e-mail 2 June 2010.)

Pharmer first entered pilot training as an Aviation Cadet in 1956. He graduated from Basic Pilot Training at Bryan AFB, Texas, in November 1957. From there he went into Advanced Pilot Training and Fighter Gunnery in the F-86 at Williams AFB, Arizona, and then into the F-100 Fighter Gunnery program at Nellis AFB, Nevada. "At the time of graduating from that program my entire

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class was "Shanghai'd" into SAC B-47s. What a bummer. It was my last choice out of Pilot Training. ... I spent 5 years [in B-47s] and finally was upgraded to Aircraft Commander in 1962. Still trying to get out of SAC, I volunteered for the Air Commando program and was fortunate enough to get an assignment to Panama in the C-47."

In June 1964, he was assigned to the 605th Air Commando Squadron located at Howard AFB, CZ. For three years he flew counterinsurgency missions throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean area. There he also trained Latino pilots in the C-47 in counterinsurgency operations and how to land at night in sugar cane fields, highways, golf courses, etc. As he recalled, "In retrospect it was almost as hazardous as combat."

Capt Pharmer was initially assigned to F-105 training at Nellis AFB, Class 68-B in April 1967, and attended a jet re-qualification course in the T-33 at MacDill AFB, Florida prior to arriving there. At Nellis he found that the program was backed up with entrants and he would have to remain there for several months before he could start training. As a result, he requested a transfer to the F-105 training program at McConnell AFB in Kansas and was reassigned there to F-105 RTU Class 68DR. (Monty Pharmer, e-mails 16 and 25 Sep 2006 & 1 and 4 June 2010.)

Two pilots from this RTU class received seven weeks of Wild Weasel training at Nellis in WW Class 68WW III-18 before reporting to their SEA squadrons. They were:

Maj Elmer W. Otto to the 354 TFS at Takhli.
Maj Francis A. "Frosty" Sheridan to the 44 TFS at Korat.

Since 19 April 1960, Maj Frosty Sheridan had been a B-52 copilot and B-52 Aircraft Commander, where his last assignment was with the 337 Bomb Squadron, Dyess AFB, TX.

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 67, USAF microfilm MO554, frames 1063 - 1066 & Francis A. Sheridan's AF Form 11 Officer Military Record.

10-Feb-68

4872

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a Sky Spot mission into Laos. The flight took off from Korat at 0700. Its line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0530
#2 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW DO
#3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
#4 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

This was Maj Armstrong's 62nd mission. "Weather bad in Pack VI. Our flight was diverted prior to take-off to Laos. We were instructed on the tankers to go Sky Spot over southeast of Mu Gia Pass, which we did. An easy counter." Their mission lasted 2 hours 50 minutes.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 25.

19-Feb-68

3848

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck Phuc Yen (JCS 6) airfield using radar signals from Commando Club. "The Iron Hand flight providing support for the strike fired one Shrike at a Fansong signal located approximately one mile from Phuc Yen. Aircrews estimated some damage to the radar, which ceased to operate 70 seconds after launch."

Another 388 TFW flight, also under Commando Club control, dropped 24 MK-117s on Yen Bai airfield in RP-5. There was no BDA due to weather. Four pilots from the 34 TFS in "Scuba" flight flew this mission. The flight took off at 1355. Their line up was:

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- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1760
- #2 - Capt Ben J. Fuhrman
- #3 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III
- #4 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

It was Maj Armstrong's 70th combat mission. "This was a first alternate radar drop on Yen Bay. There were no MiG calls on the way up or back. We had some 85-mm bursts out of Yen Bay as usual but it wasn't too close. All in all it was a pretty uneventful mission." Their mission lasted 3 hours. (Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 28.)

Former West Point football star, Lt Col Felix A. "Doc" Blanchard, flew his first combat mission 5 days after arriving at Korat on 14 February 1968. He was assigned as the 388 TFW Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 86th combat mission against Route 7 in RP-3 -- his target area for his last two missions.

Using the Commando Club radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 3" against the Ban Nakay truck park in Northern Laos. He then flew armed recce in RP-3. "No significant sightings." It was his 44th combat mission.

388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0462, 0504 and 0511 - 0512 & Sam Armstrong's mission log & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 19 Feb 68 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

23-Feb-68

4882

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS bombed guns south of Mu Gia Pass in Laos. They took off at 0600. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-5381
- #3 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #4 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

This was Maj Armstrong's 73rd combat mission. "I was the super spare today and was very lucky to get airborne. The original #2 man had tank feeding troubles and I took his place. We went over to Laos about 20 miles south of Mu Gia Pass and dropped on some V.C. gun positions. We got one secondary fire started. After that we went over into Pack I looking for a hole in the clouds." They flew for 2 hours 20 minutes.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 29.

27-Feb-68

5874

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 91st combat mission. He struck five trucks in Mu Gia Pass, in RP-1, North Vietnam.

Another flight of 34th pilots also flew a mission over North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his eighth mission
- #3 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #4 - Maj Douglas A. Roysdon

Capt Sechler logged 2:35 flying hours.

Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 27 Feb 68.

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29-Feb-68

5164

Four pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat completed flying 100 missions during February 1968. They were:

Capt Irving E. LeVine - Flown 5 Feb 68 on his birthday.

Capt Vernon D. Ellis

Maj Kenneth W. Mays - 23 Feb 68

Capt Harry Guy Paddon III - Flew his 100th on 29 Feb 1968. "Good old leap year."

Capt Paddon left Korat in March 1968 and was next assigned to Moody AFB, GA as a T-38 IP.

Capt LeVine had flown 99 missions in December 1967, "... and could have gone home when my 100 were done but Ray Vissotzky [Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky], a real, trained LSO, had been shot down [and had become a POW on 19 November 1967] and they needed someone to fill his shoes as Life Support Officer. I had 120+ parachute [jumps] but as Ray had 'penciled me in' as his assistant, the Powers That Be thought that was good enough. I said I'd stay if they let me fly my 100th Mission on my [34th] birthday ... Feb 5th 1968 and the deal was sealed."

Capt LeVine left Korat in May 1968 and was assigned to the F-111 program at Nellis AFB, NV. He remained at Nellis until he retired on 1 October 1972.

Also on this day, a flight of 34th pilots flew a mission over North Vietnam. The lineup was:

#1 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

#2 - Capt John S. Murphy

#3 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

#4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his tenth mission.

Capt Sechler logged 2:55 flying hours. (Joe Sechler flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10)

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Harry Paddon, e-mail 31 March 2010 & Irv LeVine, letter received 16 Apr 10 & Irv LeVine, e-mail 17 Apr 10.

07-Apr-68

4912

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS hit trucks in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1240 and returned after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes. The line up was:

#1 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

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

#3 - Capt John E. Hartman

#4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

This was Maj Armstrong's 93rd combat mission. "We were going to a fragged target in Pack I. Cricket diverted us to a Misty (F-100) FAC at the north end of Mu Gia Pass as he had some trucks cornered. We dropped our 750# bombs in the area and I fired 36 x 2.75" rockets at the area. We then strafed some trucks on a road just south. We got one truck destroyed and 3 damaged. I fired 281 rounds of ammo. The weather there was clear with good visibility."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 35 - 36.

11-Apr-68

4915

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS hit a "Sky Spot" target in RP-1, North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0830 and returned after flying for 3 hours 10 minutes. The line up was:

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- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Moore [???
- #3 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 97th combat mission. "The weather over along the coast was really rotten this morning. We were originally scheduled to work with a FAC in South Vietnam. The weather there was too bad for a visual delivery. They were going to set us up for a Sky Spot in the same area. Fortunately for us, the Sky Spot facility was pretty well stacked up with flights so I got Hillsboro to set us up with another agency for a Sky Spot just over the DMZ and got a 'counter' the only possible way."

Using Sky Spot radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Crossbow 3" to attack a road segment in South Vietnam. It was his 58th combat mission.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 37 & Rufus Dye Mission History log..

31-Jul-68

4153

During July 1968, three pilots from the 34 TFS completed 100 missions over North Vietnam. They were: Lt Col Kenneth M. Hiltz, Maj Melvin L. Irwin, and Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

His 100th mission on 18 July 1968 was the last F-105 flight for Ken Hiltz. Since his first flight at McConnell on 1 June 1967, he had accumulated 359.1 flying hours in the airplane.

His 100th was also Maj Irwin's last F-105 flight. Since his first flight at McConnell in June 1967, he had accumulated 410.5 hours in the airplane.

Capt Thomas was next assigned to the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, at Kadena AB, Okinawa.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., who worked in the 388 TFW command post but was attached to the 34 TFS, flew his 100th mission on 19 July. He flew his first mission on 7 October 1967. By the time of his last flight, he had accumulated 475.3 hours in the F-105.

The 34 TFS commander was Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr. and the Operations Officer was Maj Clarence E. Langford.

388 TFW History, Jul - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 0803 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.

30-Sep-68

4155

"A total of nine 34 TFS pilots completed one hundred combat missions over North Vietnam during August and September 1968. One pilot, Maj Douglas A. Roysdon, has completed his second Southeast Asia tour. His first tour was spent at Bien Hoa and Pleiku where he accumulated a total of 500 combat hours in the A-1E and A-1H aircraft."

The other eight pilots were: Maj Clarence E. Langford, Capt Joseph S. Sechler, Capt John S. Murphy, Maj William P. Shunney, Maj Ivor K. Goodrich, Capt Ben J. Fuhrman, Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann, and Capt John E. Hartman.

Maj Langford flew his 100th on 26 September 1968. This was his last flight in the F-105. Since his first flight during RTU training in August 1967, he had accumulated 385.8 hours in the airplane.

Capt Sechler flew his 100th on 28 September 1968. It was his last F-105 flight. He had accumulated 421.4 hours in the airplane. He was reassigned in December 1968 as a T-38 IP at

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Laughlin AFB, TX. He later had two tours in F-5s. (Joe Sechler, e-mail 28 Apr 10)

Maj Goodrich flew his 100th mission on 3 September 1968. This was his last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 404.1 flying hours in the airplane.

Maj Shunney's 100th on 5 September was his last F-105 flight. He had accumulated 383.8 hours in the airplane.

Capt Fuhrman flew his 100th on 3 September 1968 with Larry Bogemann and Ivor Goodrich. (Ben Fuhrman, e-mail 19 Feb 2011.) When he retired as a Lt Col he had accumulated 456.5 hours in the F-105.

Capt Bogemann flew his 100th mission on 3 September 1968. It was his last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 416.8 hours in the plane. He was reassigned to the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena CA under AFIT, where he received an MS in Aeronautical Engineering. (Larry Bogemann, e-mail 27 Apr 10)

Capt Hartman flew his 100th on 2 September 1968. It was his last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 416.1 flying hours in the airplane.

During this period, the 34 TFS commander was Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr. and the Operations Officer was Lt Col Earl F. Bancroft.

"During August and September the 34 TFS received eight new pilot inputs from the replacement training unit (RTU) at McConnell AFB, Kansas. All eight pilots fall under the one year tour criterion which began on 1 July 1968, rather than the 100 mission criterion which affects pilots with arrival dates prior to July 1968. After receiving three days of procedural briefings, the new pilots are given one local area training flight prior to flying combat. On this flight, pilots are shown the emergency landing fields available, jettison ranges and range procedures, and local landing pattern procedures. Pilots are also given practice refueling and several practice bombing runs at the Chandy RTAF bombing range located twenty miles west of Korat. The Chandy Range facility has proven itself valuable for checking out pilots in the use of the continuous solution sight modifications which is now installed on all but one aircraft possessed by the 34 TFS."

Fourteen pilots from the 34 TFS received medals approved by 7 AF during September 1968. They were:

Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr. DFC SO G-2978 26 Sep 1968 (10 Jun 68)
Maj William P. Shunney AM (1 - 9 OLC) SO G-2910 21 Sep 68 (1 Mar - 5 Sep 68)
Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann AM (3 - 11 OLC) SO G-2913 21 Sep 68 (1 Mar - 3 Sep 68)
Capt Ben J. Fuhrman AM (1 - 9 OLC) SO G-2913 21 Sep 68 (27 Feb - 3 Sep 68)
Capt Joseph S. Sechler DFC (1 OLC) SO G-2809 11 Sep 68 (9 Jun 68)
Capt Lamont H. Pharmer DFC (1 OLC) SO G-2809 11 Sep 68 (25 May 68)
Capt John E. Hartman DFC SO G-2799 11 Sep 68 (25 May 68)
Capt Edward C. Jones DFC SO G-2799 11 Sep 68 (7 Nov 66)
Capt James V. Barr DFC SO G-2798 11 Sep 68 (9 Jun 68)
Maj Clarence E. Langford DFC SO G-2797 11 Sep 68 (25 May 68)
Lt Col James B. Ross AM (14 OLC) SO G-2732 3 Sep 68 (21 Jun - 2 Aug 68)
Maj Melvin L. Irwin AM (1 - 9 OLC) SO G-2731 3 Sep 68 (7 Feb - 31 Jul 68)
Maj Carl B. Light AM (11 - 15 OLC) SO G-2731 3 Sep 68 (11 Feb - 5 Jun 68)
Capt Gary G. Durkee (AM (3 - 11 OLC) SO G-2727 3 Sep 68 (4 Feb - 3 Aug 68)

388 TFW History, Jul - Sep 68, and Oct - Dec 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 0807 and 0808 and 1766 & F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma & Jack Phillips, e-mail 18 Mar 11.

Melvin L. Irwin F-105 History

16-Dec-15

7660

"Mel had Alzheimer's & passed away Dec. 16."

Obituary for Lt. Col Melvin L. Irwin

"Lt. Col Melvin Irwin of Mayersville, Mississippi, age 81, passed away on December 16, 2015. Mr. Irwin was in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years. Mr. Irwin was a member of the Church of Christ in Summerdale, Al and an avid golfer. He is preceded in death by his father, Archie Irwin, mother, Bonnie Irwin, and daughter, Angela Irwin Curry. He is survived by wife, Iris Irwin, sisters Ann Mabe, and Betty Sue Sterling. In lieu of flowers please donate to the Veterans of Foreign Wars."

Iris Irwin, e-mail to Jake Shuler March 9, 2016 & <http://www.pinerestfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Melvin-Irwin#!/Obituary>