

# Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson

## F-105 History

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01-Nov-66

8258

(Approximate date) After a year on the USAF Inspector General's staff, Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson was assigned as the Deputy for Operations in Korat's 388 TFW. "Because I hadn't flown anything faster than a desk for the year I was in the IG job, I reported to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada, for F-105 orientation school. After five hours and a check ride in a T-33, I flew my ten flights in the Thud. Rules are rules. Fortunately, flying is much like riding a bicycle -- damn hard to forget once you've learned how it's done."

When he arrived at Korat, "Colonel Bill Chairsell, the wing commander of the 388th TAC Fighter Wing met me on the ramp. He was happy to have me aboard but quickly voiced his concern that I only had the mandatory minimum ten orientation checkout rides in the F-105 under my belt. 'Scrappy, I'd feel a lot better if I can send you to Kadena to get ten more rides before you start flying any mission, okay?' I figured I could hack the program with what I had, but since he was the boss, I went along with it. On Okinawa, I was assigned to the 67 TFS of my old 18th Fighter Group. Major Matt Mathews -- better known as 'Black Matt' -- was the commander. ... I flew those ten missions, which included some ground gunnery and dive bombing work, thus learning how to turn on all the gun and bomb switches."

*"Scrappy: Memoir of a U.S. Fighter Pilot in Korea and Vietnam", McFarland & Company, 2008, pp 199 -209.*

13-Dec-66

2380

Maj. Marlin R. Blake from the 13 TFS, Korat, RTAFB, Thailand, flew his 15th & 16th combat missions.

Mission 15. Four F-105Ds carrying six 750-pound bombs. "Refueled and dropped on truck and road. Cut road (major) and several minor cuts. Slight truck damage and strafed same."

"Mission 16. Four F-105s carrying six 750-pound bombs. 'Panda' flight:"

#1 - Maj Paul M. Kunichika  
#2 - Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, 388 TFW DO  
#3 - Maj. Marlin R. Blake  
#4 - 1Lt John M. Thigpen.

"Refueled and went to Hanoi in big flight. Dropped on rail yard and warehouses (Yen Vien RR Classification Yard, JCS 19). Big explosion and fires. Lots of MiGs, SAMs, and AAA. Refueled on way home. Beautiful mission except lost one F-105. Bailed out and I hope rescued." (Capt Sam Waters, "Vampire 03", KIA, SAM, 421 TFS, F-105D 61-0187).

This was Col Johnson's first Pack Six mission. "I had flown five missions into Laos and two into Pack One when I told the squadron ops officer to schedule me on a Pack Six mission. The adrenaline flowed as I taxied that big warbird out, but I quickly settled down once airborne. The mission target was a railroad yard just north of Hanoi and because it was partially obscured by clouds we had to dive almost straight down through a hole to hit it. As far as I know, I was the first full colonel to fly a mission into Package Six from the 388th Wing at Korat. While joining up and heading out of the area, a SAM hit an F-105 ahead of me and the pilot had to eject; there goes another guest for the Hanoi Hilton, I thought, as I tried to catch a glimpse of a chute. The rest of us made it back to Korat without further incident ..." ("Scrappy: Memoir of a U.S. Fighter Pilot in Korea and Vietnam", McFarland & Company, 2008, pg 203.)

Today's strike that dropped 91 750-pound bombs was the second time the rail yard had been attacked.

"BDA acquired on 14 Dec just prior to the strike of that day revealed that two tracks 230 ft in length were totally destroyed and two pieces of rolling stock were damaged or destroyed. Immediately outside the target area, 26 storage/warehouse buildings were destroyed/damaged. It cannot be

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determined if these results are attributed to strikes of 4 or 13 Dec." (Rolling Thunder Reporting and Analysis, CINCPACAF briefing to CINCPAC on 22 Dec 66.)

*100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 98.*

**19-Mar-67**

1133

In the program paralleling the "Ryan's Raiders", both the 355 TFW and 388 TFW flew F-105 radar bombing missions using the techniques developed by the Tactics Working Group directed on 13 March 1967 by the PACAF Commander, General Ryan. During the Sunday morning missions, both wings practiced the technique for the afternoon missions.

An F-105D from Korat crashed during the morning practice run and the pilot, Lt Col Joseph Clair Austin, the commander of the 34 TFS, was killed. Other members of "Warhawk" flight were #2 Capt Jack A. Phillips, #3 Maj Carl W. McKenzie, and #4 Capt David C. Carter. This was Capt Phillips' 21st combat mission into NVN.

Phillips recalled the circumstances of the mission. "The 34th had been tabbed to do a risky low level run on a power plant in bad weather; Carl McKenzie picked Dave Carter and me since it would be a 3 ship, in-the-trees run. The new squadron commander, Joe Austin, told Carl that he would lead the mission. Carl did not want this to occur and Austin told him it was an order. So we planned everything, but due to Austin's lack of experience, Carl insisted that we do a practice mission."

Maj Marlin Blake, a flight lead from the 13 TFS, was also concerned about Lt Col Austin leading the mission. "When I heard that Joe Austin was to fly on that mission ..., I told Col Scrappy Johnson [the 388 TFW DO] that I did not think Austin was a good enough pilot to be in that position. Of course I was ignored and after the tragic event occurred, I did not hear any more comments about it." (Marlin Blake, e-mail 30 July 2011.)

Jack Phillips further recalled, "Carl briefed the whole thing and went into great detail regarding the snake-eyes we would be using since Austin had never even seen one before. We headed off to a lower package and flew around 100 feet to get Austin some practice. He got the word that the primary weather was socked in and chose an alternate, which was only a bit better. We found the target okay, but for some reason Austin pulled up to about 3,000 feet and started a shallow dive run instead of a level delivery. I was number 2 and saw him pull hard enough to envelop the aircraft in vapor, then hit the side of a hill. No ejection and no beeper. I never even saw him release the bombs.

"After we recovered, the head shed would not let us fly the planned mission [in the afternoon], so we helped John Rowan and gave him all our stuff. They flew it later that day and it was a success. They went to give Rowan a silver star and he refused, saying it was an AF Cross mission; they relented and he got it. All in all, an unusual day. I think Chairsell was afraid of losing both the commander and ops officer of the 34th if he let us take the mission." (Jack Phillips, e-mail 21 Mar 2011.)

Also in the morning, a flight of four F-105s from the 355 TFW, at Takhli "... took off for a practice mission in Laos." "Gainful" flight consisted of Lt Col Danny Salmon lead, Maj Randy Plumb number 2, Maj Kenneth H. Bell, the Stan Eval Officer number 3, and Maj Ted Tolman number 4. "The plan was to penetrate the clouds over a target in Laos where a FAC could observe our radar bomb delivery and report the accuracy of the weapons. We would drop 500-pound retarded Snakeye bombs using a simple radar technique called 'lay-down bombing'. ... Once in the air, we got to our rendezvous point with the FAC only to learn that he was too busy to handle us. Colonel Salmon decided to divert to Route Pack One and find a target on our own. ..."

After flying to the coast where the weather was bad and a SAM site threatened them, they flew back to the Mu Gia Pass area. "Colonel Salmon finally found a suitable radar target on a road

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junction in a narrow valley, and we dropped our bombs together on his command. Twenty-four Snakeye bombs rippled off the racks and disappeared into the murk below us. The bombing system worked, but it was impossible to tell how accurately."

For this mission, Lt Col Salmon received the Silver Star "for gallantry while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force ...." (Hq 7th AF SO G-582 dated 21 April 1967.)

*Jack Phillips mission summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11 & "100 Missions North", pp 202 - 207*

### 25-Mar-67

2600

Maj. Marlin R. Blake from the 13 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat, RTAFB, Thailand, flew a non-counter combat mission in northern Laos. He led four F-105Ds each carrying six 750-pound bombs.

"Moonglow" flight. Takeoff at 1425. TOT 1530.  
Moonglow 1 - Major Marlin R. Blake flying 60-0430  
Moonglow 2 - Maj George H. Williams flying 60-0421  
Moonglow 3 - Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson flying 59-1750  
Moonglow 4 - Lt Col Fred A. "Fritz" Treyz flying 60-0449  
Spare - Capt Charles F. "Fred" Wilhelm in 61-0124

Moonglow was the second of five F-105 flights from Korat: Cadillac (Iron Hand), Moonglow, Knife, Flintstone, Dagger. Renault flight was F-4 CAP. Blackstone and Outlaw were EB-66 ECM support flights.

"Refueled and went to Barrel Roll Route 7 and bombed road and trucks. No BDA and no counter." The target was at coordinates 19-16N and 104-23E.

*100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake*

### 08-Apr-67

1286

In RP-1, Air Force planes cut Route 137 at location 17-21N and 106-14E.

Pilots from the 388 TFW triggered two unusually large secondary explosions on separate strikes. "Twenty-nine miles west of Dong Hoi, a brilliant orange fireball sent black smoke billowing 5,000 feet skyward as a result of what turned a road interdiction strike into a big score for two pilots. 'I spotted the target through the clouds,' Maj Randell Renken [469 TFS] said, 'and after my first pass I noticed debris flying off the road. It looked like a barrel landing 50 yards on the side of the mountain and started a fuel fire that resulted in a big explosion. Then Capt William Meyer, my wingman, dropped his ordnance and set off another big secondary.' "

In RP-1, Air Force planes cut Route 15 in two locations: 17-45-30N and 105-46-30E and 17-47N and 105-47E.

"Grey-black smoke rose 2,500 feet after F-105s struck Route 15, six miles north of Mu Gia Pass. Lead pilot, Maj Marlin R. Blake [13 TFS] recalled, 'The visibility was poor; however, when my number three man, Col Howard Johnson (the 388 TFW DO) dropped his bombs, they triggered a huge secondary explosion that looked like he may have hit a petroleum storage area. It was a bright fireball with billowing smoke that turned to dark grey as it rose up to 2,500 feet.' "

This was Maj Blake's 73rd combat mission. He led "Falcon" flight, four F-105Ds from the 13 TFS each carrying six 750-pound bombs. Takeoff at 0710. TOT 0823. Falcon was the third of five F-105 flights from Korat: Wedge (Iron Hand), Duke, Falcon, Cactus, Maverick. Chicago and Flamingo flights were F-4 CAPs. "Refueled and went to RP-1 and recycled Blue to count. Undercast. Dive bombed in Mu Gia Pass and we got a huge secondary explosion. I think #3 got it. ...." The flight's lineup was:

Falcon 1 - Major Marlin R. Blake flying 58-1157

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Falcon 2 - Capt Charles F. "Fred" Wilhelm flying 60-0422  
Falcon 3 - Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson flying 60-0434  
Falcon 4 - Capt Edgar W. "Ed" Michie flying 60-0464  
Spare - Capt David H. Coats in 62-4359

"A truck park was hit 22 miles west-northwest of Dong Hoi by Thunderchiefs from the 388 TFW that resulted in another secondary explosion and a large red fireball rising 2,000 feet."

Maj Richard E. Moser from the 421 TFS at Korat flew a mission on this day for which he was awarded the Air Medal (13 OLC). Major Moser participated in a combat strike mission against a two lane, three span bridge in North Vietnam and against fifty hostile supply trucks in Mu Gia Pass, North Vietnam. During the attack on the bridge, Major Moser's bombs were successfully placed on target and the bridge was destroyed. He also made three successful strafing passes on fifty hostile supply trucks, leaving eight trucks burning. His accurate planning, skill, and good judgement contributed greatly to the successful accomplishment of the mission." (Moser award citation, provided by his son, Rick Moser)

*PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for the period 3 - 23 Apr 1967 & 388 TFW History, Jan - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frame 1465 & 100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake.*

### 07-May-67

1474

"Five barges were destroyed when (388 TFW) Thunderchief pilots struck 21 miles northwest of Dong Hoi. Maj Jackie E. Moothart said, 'Fire was visible throughout the target area and a large orange secondary explosion went off that sent smoke and flames up to 1,000 feet in the air.' "

"Three bridges were knocked out by a flight of F-105s, 100 miles west-northwest of Vinh. The bridges (one dirt/wood framed and two wood framed) were destroyed."

"Thunderchief pilots severely damaged eight supply-loaded rafts, 68 miles west-northwest of Vinh. A road near the strike was also out in two locations. The target area had been used as a raft construction site, but when the fighter-bomber pilots finished their strike, the construction capability was destroyed."

"A flight of (388 TFW) F-105s ... destroyed the Xom Khe railroad bridge, 22 miles north-northwest of Mu Gia Pass. The rail line was also cut on the north approach."

"Kansas" flight from the 13 TFS destroyed a bridge and ford at coordinates 20-51N and 104-39E. The flight consisted of four F-105Ds each carrying two 3,000-pound bombs. They took off at 0630 with a scheduled TOT of 0801. Kansas' flight lineup was:

Kansas 1 - Major Marlin R. Blake flying 60-0464 on his 89th combat mission.  
Kansas 2 - Maj Robert J. Lines flying 61-0208  
Kansas 3 - Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson flying 60-0422  
Kansas 4 - Maj Glen R. Wilson flying 60-4270  
Spare - Capt Charles F. "Fred" Wilhelm in 61-0126

"Refueled and went to RP-5 on Route 6. Dropped ??? ford and bridge. Complete destruction of bridge/ford and all approaches. Some SAM activity but no SAMs. Me, Bob Lines, Col Johnson, Maj Wilhelm, Glen."

Kansas was the third of five F-105 flights from Korat: Sword (Iron Hand), Ace, Kansas, Creep, Devil. Vegas and Atlanta were F-4 CAP flights. A second strike force included five more F-105 flights: Reuben (Iron Hand), Stinger, Acorn (Force Commander), Neptune, Rattler. Ginko and Flat were the F-4 CAP flights.

Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS flew his 51st combat mission into NVN. "Pack 6."

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388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1480 & 100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake & Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.

**15-May-67**

6433

(Approximate Date). Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr., assigned as a strike pilot in the 13 TFS, was appointed as Director of the 388 TFW Tactical Unit Operations Center, the wing command post.

In a meeting with Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, the 388 TFW DO, Gimmi had requested to be selected as the commander of the 13 TFS upon the departure of Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald. Col Johnson refused Gimmi's request but offered him the command post position. "While it wasn't a command, the Tactical Unit Operations Center (TUOC) was still a key leadership position in the wing. Gimmi accepted Johnson's offer on the spot." With this wing-level assignment, he began flying missions with the 469 TFS. He also accepted a one-year tour.

*"Airman. The Life of Richard F. B. Gimmi", by Russell M. Gimmi, iUniverse, Inc., pp 248 - 250.*

**19-May-67**

1324

"Flights of (388 TFW) F-105s returned to the Hanoi area for the first time in five days, dropping bombs on the Kep Army barracks (South) (JCS 39.43), 37 miles northeast of the capital ..." at coordinates 21-21-35N and 106-16-00E in RP-6A, North Vietnam. Two pilots on the strike were Maj Wray C. Lasswell, 13 TFS, flying F-105D 61-0069, and 1Lt Donald O. Austin, 34 TFS, in 61-0124. The 34 TFS hit the Kep Army Barracks again on 31 May. Twenty-four sorties were flown against this target in these two raids. (CHECO & Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", 1967, Film Report FR-816, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

F-105 flights from the 333 TFS from Takhli struck "... Hoa Lac airfield, 20 miles west of the city." The planes dropped 750-pound bombs and four pods of CBU-24s. They encountered heavy ground fire. (CHECO & Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", 1967, Film Report FR-816, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

"Heavy enemy defenses hampered bomb damage assessment on the Army barracks, located just southwest of the airfield at Kep. Numerous buildings were damaged as ordnance was observed impacting on structures in the area. 'We could see large fires in the barracks area and then another large secondary explosion in an ammo area,' said one pilot."

"A 120-mm rocket launcher was blown up by 750-pound bombs dropped by pilots of the 388 TFW in an area 43 miles southeast of Dong Hoi."

"Several small fires triggered a large secondary explosion that sent black smoke to 1,000 feet when Thunderchief pilots of the 388th ... struck a SAM complex, 16 miles south-southeast of Vinh. The site was heavily damaged."

"Additional 388th jets demolished a 125-foot single-track railroad bridge, 22 miles north-northeast of Mu Gia pass and a three-span highway bridge, 19 miles north of the pass."

Two F-105Ds, each carrying four 750-pound bombs and two CBU-24s, hit targets in the DMZ. "Speedo" flight took off at 17:05 and reached their target at 18:10. The two pilots in the flight from the 13 TFS were:  
Speedo 1 - Maj Robert J. Lines flying 59-1739  
Speedo 2 - Major Marlin R. Blake flying 62-4278 was flight spare replacing 1Lt Guy H. Morgan who aborted in 61-0152. It was Maj Blake's 96th combat mission. "Refueled and went to DMZ. Dropped on artillery pieces and combat troops. Ten CBA. Lots of flak. Bob Lines, and Me."

The 388 TFW DCO, Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson flying with the 44 TFS, was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross (5 OLC) for extraordinary achievement for a mission he flew this day. (7 AF SO G-970 8 Jul 67)

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"USN F-8 Crusader pilots, on 19 May, downed four MiG-17s while A-4, A-6 and F-4 pilots struck the Hanoi TPP (JCS 81) 1.1 miles north of the center of the city and the Van Dien SAM support facility 5 miles south." (MACV Press Release 15 June 1967 on line at [www.vietnam.ttu.edu/star/images/107/1070204001.pdf](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/star/images/107/1070204001.pdf).)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1755 and 1485 & National Archives motion picture film shot list control No. NWDNM(m)-342-USA-41720B & 100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake & CHECO, Rolling Thunder, 17 Nov 1967, pg 19.*

**22-May-67**

103

Starting in the afternoon, the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, hosted the first Red River Valley Fighter Pilot's Tactics Conference. The conference was initiated by the 388 TFW Director of Operations, Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson and sanctioned by the 388 TFW commander BG William S. Chairsell, so that "... Fighter, Bomber, Escort and Tanker folks could talk it over face-to-face." The project officer was Maj Alfred J. "Lash" Lagrou from the 13 TFS. Col Robin Olds, commander of the 8 TFW, and his vice commander, Col Chappie James, attended the conference as did Brigadier General William D. Dunham, 7th AF Deputy Chief of Staff.

Maj Frank L. Yow, Jr., the 388 TFW Weapons Officer who was assigned to the 469 TFS, attended the tactics conference. "Representatives from all the outfits that flew up 'North' and the supporting tankers, ECM, etc. along with several VIPs from Saigon came. We met for a few hours. This is where the 'Snoopy' message originated. This was a message the designated Mission Commander sent to the other outfits each night telling them how he wanted them to ingress and at what time, etc.

"Then we started partying!!! And what a party!!!! It was formal. Everyone had to wear dark trousers and a light colored shirt. 'Chappie' James made a speech and sang some songs after dinner and then it was fun and games for the rest of the night. A few digits and a couple of ankles got broken, but nothing serious. The next morning we had the two Korat Goonie Birds, 'Grunt 1' and 'Grunt 2' shuttle us all down to Bangkok where we had reservations at the Siam Intercontinental, a pretty nice hotel where the party continued. This is where Robin Olds suggested we organize and proposed the name of 'River Rats'. We did and the official title became 'The Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association'." (Frank L. Yow letter dated September 1, 1986 to Bauke Jan Douma.)

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr. from the 13 TFS was also at the conference. ("Airman. The Life of Richard F. B. Gimmi", by Russell M. Gimmi, iUniverse, Inc., pp 255 - 257.)

Maj Edward C. Jones from the 34 TFS also attended. (Ed Jones, phone interview 29 Apr 10)

The reunion was on the day Maj Kenneth D. Oliver arrived at Korat to become a front-seat pilot in the Ryan's Raiders assigned to the 34 TFS. "In anticipation of the end of the war and a desire to have future reunions, a series of 'practice reunions' were held in SE Asia. The 1st practice reunion was held at Korat ... the day I got to Korat. Each major organization from Korat, Takhli, Ubon and others were asked to create candidate emblems for the River Rats."(Ken Oliver letter to Rick Versteeg dated 9/11/98)

Maj Kenneth H. Bell and Lt Col Nelson McDonald were the only representatives from the 355 TFW. The other wing officers remained at Takhli for the 100-mission party for Lt Col Phil Gast, the only one of the last three 354 TFS commanders to have survived his combat tour.

Scrappy Johnson recalled the activities. "... Robin and Chappie were elevated to the tops of the first two elephants and led the parade. If the six elephants weren't impressive enough, we had the Royal Thai Provincial Police Band from Korat following to firm up attention. We stopped off at Wing Headquarters and held the tactics meeting for two hours. The most productive thing to come from that was "Snoopy" report. It was the one exchanged by Wings regarding their targets for the day. We had been flying up north hitting targets and not knowing what the other wings were

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hitting. We passed this report back and forth ourselves. We didn't have to depend on the Seventh Air Force -- we sent it to each other on our own. After the meeting we headed back to the elephants ready for phase two." (Scrappy Johnson, e-mail to CASBAR via Dave Brog, January 21, 2005.)

In addition to producing the "Snoopy Report" that dealt with "the monumental task of getting the 'ALPHA' task force in and out", the conference held a parade and a party. The parade from the flight line to the Officer's Club featured six elephants. "Chappy" James was the guest speaker at the dinner party with "... fun and games administered by 'Mo' Seaver." Col Robin Olds introduced the "River Rat Mig Sweep".

"The RRVPA gathering was dubbed a practice reunion in honor of all prisoners of war being held in North Vietnam." The second reunion was held at Ubon on 18 August 1967.

The "River Rats" became dedicated to providing college scholarships for children of aircrew members who died in the Vietnam war.

*History of the 388 TFW, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO583 & "100 Missions North", pgs 239 - 242 & "River Rat History" by Col Howard C. Johnson, printed in 27th Anniversary Reunion program booklet, 27 Apr - 1 May 1994 & MIG Sweep #42, summer 1983.*

### 26-May-67

1329

The 388 TFW bombed the Mo Trang (ART 5162) and Huong Vi (ART 5162) railroad yards, in RP-6A, North Vietnam.

"Thirty-nine miles north-northeast of Hanoi, F-105 pilots ... Observed two to four trains, a total of 50 pieces of rolling stock, in the Mo Trang rail yards when they hit the target at 9 a.m. Both choke points were destroyed, enabling the pilots to drop their ordnance on boxcars which occupied almost every available foot of yard space. One large secondary explosion and a petroleum fire covered the yard. 'We must have hit a fuel or oil storage car,' said Maj Samuel H. Martin. 'There was a huge fire boiling up to 800 or 900 feet immediately. As we looked back, the whole yard was covered by smoke.'"

"Multiple rail cuts were also made by 388 TFW F-105s on the Huong Vi yards, 39 miles northeast of Hanoi where choke points were extensively damaged, according to Col Howard Johnson." Col Howard "Scrappy" Johnson was the 388 TFW Deputy Commander for Operations.

"For the first time in the war, the Thai Nguyen ... SAM training area, 40 miles north of Hanoi was blasted by more 388th ... F-105s. Three structures in the barracks area were destroyed and three others heavily damaged. Bomb damage assessment on the last runs was hampered by smoke and dust covering the target. 'By the time I got there, the whole area was covered with one big smoke cloud,' Maj William S. Van Gilder [469 TFS] said, 'I think we all had a little special incentive today because it was a SAM training area and we don't care too much for them.'"

Under RT56C-026, Capt Peter B. Lane from the 469 TFS bombed a target at 21-31N and 106-01E.

"... ART 5310, the Thai Nguyen SAM Training Area, BE 616-G0700, at 21-36-30N and 105-55-59E, was hit with 78 M-117s by 16 aircraft from Korat's 388th TFW. Pilots claimed at least three buildings destroyed and damage to the messing facilities and barracks." (7th Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS) for the week of 26 May - 1 Jun 67, IRIS # 1015461, pg 4.)

Capt Steven J. Savonen from the 469 TFS flying F-105D 61-0124, was one of the 16 pilots who struck the Thai Nguyen SAM training area. (Nat'l Archives film record)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1490 - 1491 and 1755 & Nat'l Archives gun camera film record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720B.*

### 01-Aug-67

3332

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Planes also struck three other targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A including the Bac Ninh railroad siding (BE 616-02435) at 21-10-30N and 106-05-01E previously struck on 28 July. BDA photos of 31 July showed the yard was still serviceable so it was struck again on 1 August. Pilots estimated the yard was interdicted with 25 pieces of rolling stock damaged or destroyed.

Col Cleo M. Bishop, flying F-105D 61-0132 with the 44 TFS from Korat, was one of the pilots on this strike. His strike camera film showed M-117 bombs dropping and bombs exploding on the target.

Col Howard C "Scrappy" Johnson led the 388 TFW on this strike. "On the first day of August, I led the wing on a very successful strike against the Bac Ninh railway yard siding. The weather was crappy and we had to bob and weave our way in and around the clouds to reach the objective. Luckily, the target was clear when we arrived and despite some heavy flak, we managed to destroy scores of railway cars. And we chewed up a lot of track. Colonel 'Cleo' Bishop, the new wing vice commander, flew this mission and during the debriefing told me how impressed he was with the professionalism of the pilots." ("Scrappy: Memoir of a U.S. Fighter Pilot in Korea and Vietnam", McFarland & Company, 2008, pg 222.)

The Hoang Mai railroad siding (BE 616-01793) at 21-15-04N and 106-06-30E was struck on 1 August. Pilots estimated the yard was interdicted and 6 pieces of rolling stock were damaged or destroyed.

The Phu Cuo railroad siding (BE 616-02463) at 21-08-45N and 106-01-26E was also struck on 1 August. Pilots estimated the yard was interdicted.

*PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & Nat'l Archives record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B.*

### 02-Oct-67

3809

At the 388 TFW, "the Deputy Commander for Operations, Colonel Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, completed 100 missions over North Vietnam as well as his one year tour in Southeast Asia and was replaced by Colonel James E. Bean ... . The Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations continued to be Colonel James L. Stewart."

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 67, Vol II, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 0030.*

### 09-Oct-67

8256

Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, the 388 TFW DO flew the F-105 for the last time. Since his first flight in the aircraft on 1 Oct 66 he had accumulated 329.5 hours in the Thunderchief.

*F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.*

### 25-Apr-69

### 27-Apr-69

262

The Red River Valley Fighter Pilot's Association held their first official "practice" reunion at McConnell AFB KS. Approximately 725 fighter pilots attended the reunion held at the Lassen Motor Hotel in Wichita KS. The 23 TFW's Transient Alert parked, serviced, and launched 191 different types of planes flown in by reunion participants. This reunion was a follow-on to the tactics conferences held in SEA during 1967 - 68.

"Wichita became the 'Fighter Pilot Capital of the World' Friday as more than 600 fliers from three armed services gathered here for the first official reunion of the Red River Valley Fighter Pilot's Association.

"The association, more commonly known as the Red River Rats, is composed of pilots who have flown at least one mission over the Hanoi area of North Vietnam.

"Members of the association from the Navy, Marines, and Air Force began arriving at McConnell Air Force Base early Friday from their home bases throughout the United States. They flew here



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on nearly every type of aircraft, from the latest supersonic jet fighters to lumbering C-47 cargo aircraft of World War II vintage, for the three-day convention at the Lassen Motor Hotel.

"The idea to form the River Rats was conceived by Col Howard (Scrappy) Johnson, now of the 835 Air Division, Perrin Air Force Base at Sherman, Tex., as a way for pilots flying over North Vietnam to get together and discuss ways of penetrating the defenses around Hanoi.

"... Friday night some 600 of these veterans of missions over the North -- many with a 100 or more to their credit -- were gathered at the Lassen. Their flying suits were of nearly as many colors as the aircraft they arrived in. More colorful were the shoulder patches each flier wore to designate the unit to which he currently is attached as well as one to show the unit he had served with in Southeast Asia.

"... One non-flier at the reunion, AF Chaplain Chris Martin, Oxnard Air Force Base, Calif., said he was here because he had served at two bases in Thailand where pilots flying missions against the North were based. 'I am here because I was invited,' Chaplain Martin said, 'and of course out of interest. I think these men did a terrific job over there.'"

River Rats attending included BG William S. Chairsell, Col Robert T. Scott, Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, Col Lawrence J. Pickett, and Maj. Robert V. "Boris" Baird. "Five Air Force officers, each with more than 100 flying mission to his credit over probably the most sophisticated air defense system in the world, said here Saturday they were firm believers in the effectiveness of bombing North Vietnam. All officers agreed that they thought the American fighting effort has been hurt and American lives lost due to the bombing halt called by President Lyndon Johnson on March 31, 1968. The men ... were quick to agree, however, that their 'job was not to argue about the bombing policy, but to put the bombs where the man (president) wanted them,' as Gen. Chairsell said.

"... The officers said there is no doubt enemy attack capability in South Vietnam has been increased since the halt. 'When we stopped the bombing,' said Gen. Chairsell, 'they (Viet Cong) were bound to get more equipment and more ammunition from the north. They are able to move supplies more freely now throughout the length and breadth of North Vietnam,' Col Scott said. Anti-aircraft guns have been moved south since the halt, he said, and 'we are losing a few more airplanes now than we did before. The pilots that have returned recently tell us the anti-aircraft (flak) is heavier.'

"... After the bombing halt, 'we also had insurgency action in Thailand that didn't happen before,' said Col. Scott, who as commander of the 355 TFW based at Takhli AB, Thailand, led his wing of F-105 Thunderchiefs in many strikes into 'package six'. On March 26, 1967, he joined the elite group of American 'MiG killers' by downing a MiG-17 in aerial combat.

"The bombing pause has allowed the North Vietnamese 'to repair all their bridges and now they are moving a lot more trucks down the Ho Chi Minh Trail,' Gen. Chairsell said. 'They are moving their supplies with impunity.' "

Gen Chairsell retired 1 July 1973 and died 27 November 1994. (USAF Bio of MG William S. Chairsell at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?biolD=4966>)

*23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 69, USAF microfilm MO555, frames 0570 and 0618 - 0619, reproducing pages from the Wichita Eagle and Beacon 26 Apr 69, pg 2A and 27 Apr 69, pg 5A.*

**27-Jan-19**

8028

"Colonel (Ret) Howard 'Scrappy' Johnson is our oldest living River Rat at 98 and was the first National River Rat President. He, along with Robin Olds and Larry Pickett, were the River Rat founding fathers. Below is part of his bio mentioning the F-104 record flight in 1953.

"He flew in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. In 1953, Major Johnson transferred to Hamilton AFB where

# Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson

## F-105 History

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he had the first opportunity to hear about the Air Force's newest, fastest airplane, the F-104. In 1958, with only 30 hours of flight time in the Starfighter, he shattered the World's Altitude Record zooming to 91,243 feet. In recognition of the record, Vice President Richard Nixon presented him with the Robert J. Collier trophy for aeronautical achievement."

*Dave Brog e-mail 27 Jan 2019.*

**02-Feb-20**

8257

Veteran pilot, 'Scrappy,' still sharp at 100.

The Super Bowl dominated much of the nation's attention Sunday, but a soon-to-be 100-year-old former fighter pilot drew a large audience himself hours before kickoff.

Surrounded by family, friends and fellow veterans, Howard 'Scrappy' Johnson celebrated his milestone birthday Sunday with a party at Abacoa Golf Club.

More than 120 people attended the event honoring the Palm Beach Gardens resident and retired Air Force colonel who trained pilots in World War II and flew fighter planes in Korea and Vietnam.

'This is impressive,' said Johnson, who clocked 7,000 hours in 15 fighter planes and set the world altitude record in 1958 by flying to 91,249 feet in an F-104 Starfighter. 'I'm overwhelmed.'

Johnson's altitude feat made national headlines. But the man who earned his nickname as a teenager after confronting a bigger boy who kept teasing him also has drawn attention for his work in creating the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association.

Founded in 1969, the nonprofit strives to raise awareness of military service and sacrifice and support family members of uniformed aircrew personnel who were prisoners of war, missing in action or killed in action during the Vietnam War through the present.

Since 1970, it has awarded more than 1,130 scholarship grants worth \$2.3 million to the children and spouses of Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps aircrew members.

Members meet annually, and a handful attended Johnson's birthday party.

'There's so much camaraderie,' said Kathy O'Brien, Johnson's stepdaughter. 'It means so much to be able to keep these pilots together.'

Johnson, a great-grandfather of 17 who was honored by the Palm Beach Gardens City Council in 2018 for his service and achievements, remains actively involved with the River Rats, O'Brien said.

He spends much of his time on the computer corresponding with fellow veterans as well as with family members and friends.

'He's as sharp as a tack,' O'Brien said. 'When people ask what has helped his longevity, we say the keys are two martinis at night and eight ounces of Chardonnay at lunch. He also eats bacon and watermelon for breakfast. The man is just unbelievable.'

For information on the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, visit [www.river-rats.org/](http://www.river-rats.org/).

By Jodie Wagner. Posted Feb 5, 2020 at 5:04 PM.

[jwagner@pbpost.com](mailto:jwagner@pbpost.com)

*Palm Beach Post, 5 Feb 2020.*

**05-Feb-20**

8170

Stan Goldstein described the gathering in Palm Beach Gardens, FL for Retired Col Howard C.

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# Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson

## F-105 History

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"Scrappy" Johnson for his 100th birthday party.

Scrappy 100th Birthday Celebration & Tactics Conference 2/2/2020 After Action Report

River Rats, Wild Weasels, Casbarians and friends came from all over the country to Southern Florida, not for the Superbowl but to honor Scrappy aka 'Sir and Handsome Howard' Howard C. Johnson on his 100th Birthday. TOT was 1130 hrs at the Abacoa Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens. The 110 attendees signed in and lined up to say hello and share a few words with Scrappy. I had Scrappy re-autograph a copy of his autobiography, and presented him with a set of F-105 wings designed by Gary Barnhill for the F-105 Fighter Pilot reunion held last Sept at the Dayton NMUSAF. Scrappy proudly pinned them on his Jacket (N.B. there are still several sets of wings that will be available at the SAT RR Reunion in April, for a small donation to the RRVA Scholarship and AWCF funds). Brunch and adult libations continued on to 1300hrs when the "formal" program commenced.

Tom Hanton then led us in the pledge of Allegiance. Tom also explained the significance of the Missing Man table and spoke of the book that his now deceased wife, Margot Theis Raven, "America's White Table" had written to explain the table. Scrappy has ordered copies of Margot's great work to be given to his grand children.

Scrappy had been asking for donations to the Joint Missions foundation charity that he and his deceased wife Elena had founded to help Veterans who had fallen on Hard times... And the donations keep rolling into the RRVA and AWCF foundation. The Executive Directors of Both Organizations were there to present the proceeds collected to date to Howard for his foundation ....Dave Brog, AWCF ED compiled the funds and presented a check for \$3200 and a certificate with the names of those who had contributed \$100 or more to the Joint mission. BTW each of those names received a beautiful Joint mission challenge coin . I've got mine and it's not too late to get yours. ( [www. airwarriorcourage.org](http://www.airwarriorcourage.org) to make a donation)

Jack McEncroe (Crow) sent a truly heart warming letter to Scrappy that Tom as MC read...

Scrappy,

As you approach this 'minor' milestone, Anita and I were wondering what to get you. We donated but that seemed trivial and before you suggest we donate more (which was at the forefront of your 'brain housing group'), I harkened back to the question 'what do you get someone who has everything'? However, I decided on 'what do you get someone who has done everything'? There are probably just a few of us left who remember that you were once a cattle rancher, an excellent golfer, a superb hell raiser, a leader of men under the most trying of circumstances, the first CINC of the Rats, and an outstanding judge of who to marry.

In addition to being a great Fighter Pilot, Test Pilot, husband, father, and dear friend you were the founder of an organization like no other. That one remark to Robin, 'we ought to start an organization' spawned a philanthropic brotherhood that will never be equaled. You afforded us the opportunity to meet like- minded fun-loving patriots to share what we experienced in The Red River Valley but, more importantly, to experience the peaks and valleys of the rest of our lives with. In the past 52 years we have all formed bonds that will never be broken, earned headaches that will never be cured, experienced laughter until it hurt..... BAD, met the best America has to offer, and I have the 'scars' to prove it.

So on this momentous occasion, we decided on our expression of all of our appreciation. You have positively touched more lives than anyone I know or have ever heard of. You 'done good', Scrappy .... carry on I will be in the area all day :)!

Happy 100Th!  
With Respect,  
Crow and With love, The Tennessee Gal

# Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson

## F-105 History

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Tom had procured a unique and relatively smooth bottle of Jeremiah Weed to toast Scrappy with, which we did after the duty glass of Champagne had been downed...Scrappy wearing his "Go-Hell Mission Hat" and thud wings then blew out the ten candles (one for each decade). We topped it off with an off-key singing of 'Save a Fighter Pilot's Ass.' Tins and other lies were then traded until dispersal time. Some retired to Scrappy's hootch to continue the party... and then several handfulls of us rejoined at a local pub to reflect on the great gathering and oh yes watch some football game won by the "good guys".

In reflection it was a great gathering of Eagles and Band of Brothers.

Some interesting attendee Stats of who were there.

- 1 Birthday Boy : Scrappy
- 2 POW's : Tom Hanton and Mel Pollack
- 2 Executive Directors;: Greg Lewis-RRVA, Dave Brog-AWCF
- 3 River Rat Board Members; Rich 'Smokey' Powell (VCINCRAT), Ron 'Spook' Bartlett (Treasurer), Greg 'Porky' Lewis (Exec. Dir)
- 4 Former Cincs: Scrappy, BC Connelly, George Acree, and Dave Brog 4 Wild Weasels: George Acree, Tom Hanton, Dave Brog, Stan Goldstein
- 5 River Rats of the Year: Scrappy, BC Connelly, Tom Hanton, Dave Brog and Stan Goldstein
- 11 River Rats  
( I get a nickle every time I type Tom & Dave's name)

Conclusion :It was a fantastic Party, Celebration and TC that could not been achieved without the great efforts of Kathryn O'Brien

Stan Goldstein  
LSDO

P.S. If the Lord is willing and Scrappy's health holds up, we may get see and toast Scrappy in San Antonio.

*Stan Goldstein, e-mail to Wild Weasel Group, 5 Feb 2020.*

**11-Oct-20**

8229

Thanks for the update, Kathryn, I am passing it on to all of his friends.

This is the latest from Kathryn on Scrappy.[Col Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson.]

Prayers remain up for his complete recovery.

Dave

HELLO EVERYONE:

SCRAPPY ASKED ME TO LET YOU ALL KNOW THAT HE'S 'STILL HERE' BUT HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF THE HOSPITAL FOR THE PAST MONTH. HE CURRENTLY IS IN THE HOSPITAL RECOVERING FROM AN OPERATION TO REMOVE A TUMOR CAUSING A BLOCKAGE IN HIS INTESTINES. HE IS DOING WELL AND CURRENTLY RECEIVING SOME REHABILITATION TO GET HIM UP AND MOVING AROUND AGAIN. HE LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT AND MUSCLE, BUT I'M HOPING HE CAN COME HOME WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS. HE'S BEEN AMAZING ME WITH HIS POWER OF RECUPERATION. KEEP HIM IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS.

I'LL TRY TO UPDATE YOU AGAIN NEXT WEEK.

KATHRYN

# Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson

## F-105 History

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*Dave Brog , E-mail 11 Oct 20 to Weasel Net.*

**09-Dec-20**

8255

DEAR FRIENDS AND COMRADS OF SCRAPPY, (Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson).

IT IS WITH SADNESS THAT I WRITE TO YOU FROM SCRAPPY'S EMAIL THAT HE PASSED ON PEACEFULLY AND WITH NO PAIN AT HIS HOME THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 9, 2020. SCRAPPY ASKED ME TO NOTIFY YOU AFTER HIS DEATH THAT HE 'FLEW WEST', IN THOSE WORDS. HE HAD BEEN HOSPITALIZED FOUR TIMES SINCE HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY LAST YEAR, AND WITH EACH HOSPITALIZATION HE GREW WEAKER - IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS WAS UNABLE TO LEAVE HIS BED. MY DAUGHTER VALERIE AND I WERE BY HIS SIDE WHEN HE PASSED, ALONG WITH HIS BELOVED DOG MOLLY. HE DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES. HE WOULD HAVE TURNED 101 ON FEBRUARY 2, 2021. WE MISS HIM VERY MUCH. THE HOUSE IS SO EMPTY WITHOUT HIS PRESENCE, BUT I KNOW HE'S HAPPY TO BE FLYING ON HIS OWN AGAIN. THERE WAS NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY THE DAY HE PASSED AND VALERIE SAID IT WAS AS IF HE WAS GIVEN A BIG CLEAR PASSAGE ON HIS FLIGHT TO HEAVEN.

DUE TO THE COVID PANDEMIC, WE ARE PLANNING A SMALL OUTDOOR MEMORIAL SERVICE AT THE VETERANS' MEMORIAL AT PALM BEACH GARDENS CITY HALL, IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. I WILL SEND OUT MORE DETAILS AS THEY BECOME MORE FIRM. IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, SCRAPPY REQUESTED DONATIONS BE MADE TO THE RIVER RATS MUSEUM:

<https://www.aviationheritagepark.com/support/donate/>

FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT KNOW, SCRAPPY WAS THE CO-FOUNDER OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY FIGHTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION AND MUCH OF HIS DOCUMENTS AND MEMORABILIA WILL BE DONATED TO THE MUSEUM.

MY BEST WISHES TO YOU -- HAVE A MARTINI IN SCRAPPY'S HONOR TONIGHT!

"IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT, LET'S GET DRUNK AND BE SOMEBODY, AS OL' STEELY EYES USED TO SAY." - SCRAPPY

KATHRYN O'BRIEN - Step Daughter.

*Dave Brog e-mail forwarding announcement in e-mail 9 Jan 2021.*