

# Thurston F. "Snapper" Knapp

## F-105 History

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**09-Apr-67**

681

Maj Dale R. McKenzie, an F-105 instructor pilot with the 563 TFS, 23 TFW, from McConnell AFB, Kansas, died in the crash of a private plane near Bull Shoals Dam in Arkansas. Injured in the crash of the Cessna 172 was the plane's pilot, Capt Thurston F. Knapp, an F-105 student pilot from McConnell's RTU Class 67HR.

Also injured were F-105 instructor pilots Capt George H. Peacock of the 23 TFW Academic Division and Maj Kenneth G. Frank from the 563 TFS. Maj Frank and Capt Peacock had flown 100 missions over North Vietnam. In Southeast Asia, Maj Peacock had been assigned to the 357 TFS and Maj Frank to the 421 TFS.

The men were returning to McConnell from a fishing trip when, during takeoff, the plane clipped a tree, hit some power lines and fell into a wooded area about three miles south of Bull Shoals Dam.

*23 TFW History, 1 January - 30 June 1967, USAF microfilm MO554*

**18-May-67**

232

In the 23 TFW, the tenth F-105 RTU class graduated at McConnell AFB KS. Class 67HRM started on 28 Nov 66 with 21 pilots. It was named "The Spartans" and consisted of 8 Maj's, 8 Capt's, and 5 1Lt's. However, two students washed back one class, two students were eliminated, and one was gained from Seymour Johnson AFB when the 4 TFW closed their F-105 RTU course. Nineteen students graduated. Capt Thurston F. Knapp was one of the pilots who did not graduate with this class due to his injuries in a private plane crash.

The class began flying on 4 Jan 1967 and deployed 20 F-105 aircraft for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 23 Mar - 7 Apr 67 with the 562 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col James A. Young. The class was originally scheduled to graduate on 20 April 1967, however, on 29 March 1967, while the class was at George, Hq TAC extended RTU courses for an additional 15 sorties.

The students were:

Maj Franklin A. Billingsley	Capt John E. Nolan
Maj James L. Davis	Capt Russell Edwin Temperley
Maj Richard C. Fontaine	1Lt Jeffery Thomas Ellis
Maj Earl M. Freeman, Jr.	1Lt Vernon D. Ellis
Maj Jack W. Hart	Maj Alan R. Iverson
Maj Robert R. Huntley	Maj Harold J. "Jim" Steinke, Jr.
Maj Myron L. Savage	Capt Lawrence P. Gould
Capt Clyde L. Falls, Jr.	Capt Jacob C. "Jake" Shuler
Capt David A. Holland	Capt Herbert W. Moore
Capt Irving E. LeVine	

Maj James L. Davis won the Top Gun award and Maj Robert R. Huntley won the Outstanding Pilot plaque. Huntley's previous assignment had been at Aviano AB, Italy, where he ran the command post in the 7227 Combat Support Group. In this job, he scheduled rotational F-100 units to the Maniago air-to-ground bombing range. Previously he had flown F-89s, F-94Bs and F-102s in ADC units.

Both Davis and Huntley left the class early since they were selected to train as Wild Weasel pilots. Huntley recalled, "My instructor pilot, Bob Pielin, told me that I needed to volunteer since I was going to Weasel school whether I volunteered or not." They attended Wild Weasel Class 67WWIII-12 that started on 9 May 1967 at Nellis AFB, NV. Both men were then assigned to the 354 TFS at

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Takhli. (Bob Huntley telephone interview 20 May 2010)

"After his initial pilot training Major Clyde L. Falls Jr, served as a F-86D pilot with the 41st FIS Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, from Sept 1958 to March 1960. The 41st FIS provided air defense coverage for units assigned to Andersen AB. In mid 1960, Falls was reassigned to the 3640th Pilot Training Wing's 3641 Student Squadron at Laredo AFB, TX where he was an Academic Instructor in the Lockheed T-33 "T-Bird" and Northrop T-38 Talon." After F-105 training, he arrived at Korat on 6 July 1967 and was assigned to the 34 TFS. (<http://www.318fis.com/318TH%20FIS%20-%20PERSONNEL%20-%20NOTABLE%20-%20FALLS.htm>)

Capt LeVine had come from assignments flying B-47s and B-52s in SAC and C-130s in MAC. After his F-105 training, he went to jungle survival school in the Phillipines; "... short course ... no Escape and Evasion." He also was assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat, where he arrived on 14 June 1967.

Capt Jeffrey T. Ellis was a T-37 IP at Laughlin AFB, Texas. He set an academic record for the RTU program with his 99.7% average for the Top Academic Award. After his F-105 training, he was assigned to the 469 TFS.

Capt Ellis and Capt Jacob C. "Jake" Shuler, another T-37 IP from the 3645 Pilot Training Squadron at Laughlin, had initially received orders to RTU Class 67-CRS at Seymour Johnson. (Shuler, then a 1st Lt, received 3646 PTW PCS Order A-1286 dated 27 Sept 1966. Ellis' order # was A-1287.) This class would have been the third F-105 RTU at Seymour. However, the class was cancelled when the 4 TFW was notified in September 1966 that their F-105s were to be replaced by F-4Ds. On 5 October 1966, Shuler's and Ellis' orders were amended (by HQ 3646 Plt Tng Wg SO A-1314) to send them to McConnell's RTU Class 67-GRM. They ended up joining the next class at McConnell 67-HRM.

Capt Shuler had received his wings in December 1963 in UPT Class 64-D at Webb AFB, Big Spring TX. He attended Pilot Instructor Training (PIT) at, Williams AFB AZ, , then served as a T-37 Instructor Pilot in the 3645 Pilot Training Squadron at Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, TX, from May 1964 until receiving his F-105 assignment in September 1966. After marrying on June 18th, he moved his wife into a duplex in Del Rio then to on-base housing in August. Upon receipt of his F-105 assignment, he moved his wife to St. Matthews, SC while he attend survival training at Fairchild AFB, WA, then to Wichita, KS for F-105 training at McConnell in December 1966.

While at McConnell, between 6 December 1966 and 17 April 1967, he flew 50 F-105 training sorties. After completing his F-105 upgrade, his assignment to SEA was deferred pending the birth of their child and he returned to Laughlin as a T-37 IP. Their son was born on 13 July 67 and, after moving his wife for the 6th time in 13 months, he reported to McConnell on 25 August for F-105 Category IV refresher training. This time he flew an additional seven F-105 sorties between 25 August and 7 September 1967. With 90.8 hours in the F-105, he then departed for his combat assignment to the 34 TFS.

En route to Korat, between 22 - 27 September 1967, he completed the PACAF Jungle Survival School at Clark AB, Phillipines.

Maj Earl Freeman was born in Meridian, Miss. in 1925. "When he was '2 or '3' his family moved to Akron, Ohio. Freeman spent 3 years in Naval Submarine Service, got out, went to college and was commissioned in the Air Force." (Van K. McCarty, e-mail 28 Jun 14.) He was assigned to the 333 TFS, Takhli.

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*23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 67, USAF microfilm MO554 & Clyde Falls AF Form 11 & Irv LeVine, letter received*

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## F-105 History

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*16 Apr 10 & Jake Shuler, biographical sketch, via e-mail 19 May 2010, and F-105 mission spreadsheet, and e-mail 5 Jul 2010 forwarding PCS orders.*

### 31-Aug-68

4134

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

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

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

### 30-Sep-68

4136

The 388 TFW history listed the twenty F-105Ds belonging to the 34 TFS on 30 September 1968:

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58-1152	61-0092
59-1167	61-0104
59-1743	61-0175
59-1759	62-4248
59-1760	62-4264
60-0435	62-4270
60-0449	62-4346
60-0488	62-4360
60-0505	62-4361
60-5381	62-4387

"During recent months the 34 TFS maintenance has experienced difficulties in bringing aircraft with discrepancies to an operational ready status. The primary reason for this problem is a shortage of qualified maintenance specialists during May and June, a tremendous demand has been placed on the training of personnel. All recent inputs to the 34 TFS maintenance have been three level specialists. It has been pointed out by the maintenance officer that mass training of personnel while maintaining aircraft in a combat environment is nearly an impossible task. All time is spent just meeting the daily aircraft requirements. In order to alleviate this problem, all maintenance specialists have been put on twelve hour shifts for six days per week. Previously the work schedule was eight hours a day for six days a week. The increase is quite a substantial one and it is anticipated that morale problems may increase. Major Knapp, [Maj Thurston F. "Snapper" Knapp] the 34 TFS Maintenance Officer, hopes to be in a position to decrease the workday to ten hours by the latter part of November."

*388 TFW history, July - September 1968, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 0296 and 0806.*