

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

21-Nov-66

531

Twenty pilots of Class 67BRS completed the 4 TFW's second F-105 RTU course 111506E at Seymour Johnson AFB NC. The class had begun on 15 July 1966 with 25 students. This was the final F-105 RTU class for the 4 TFW. The class was initially assigned to the 335 TFS and then to the 334 TFS after they had completed training Class 67ARS that graduated on 23 July 1966.

On 8 Nov 66, student pilot Maj Donald J. Hemmer was killed when he ejected from F-105F 63-8322. "The flight consisting of four aircraft, and using the call sign of Hawk, was briefed for a practice conventional weapons delivery mission on Marine Range BT-9 and Air Force Dare County Range. Major Peter H. Karalus was scheduled to lead the flight with Captain Kenneth Gardner, the instructor pilot, flying the number two position. Major Hemmer was pilot of the number three aircraft with Captain John R. Stell as backup instructor pilot for the flight in the rear cockpit. Captain Harry Pawlik was the pilot of the number four aircraft." Capt Stell ejected and was recovered uninjured. (USAF Accident/ Incident Report 66-11-8-1, 23 Nov 66)

The class' graduation speaker was Lt. Gen. Albert P. Clark, Vice Commander, TAC who had been a POW in Germany during WW II. As a Spitfire pilot in the 31st Fighter Group in England, "he was shot down over Abbeville, France, in July 1942 and was a prisoner of war until April 1945." (<http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5006>)

The F-105 pilots and their SEA assignments were:

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr. - 13 TFS	Maj Harold E. "Hal" McKinney - 13 TFS
Maj Joseph Clair Austin - 34 TFS	Maj Kenneth D. Oliver - Yokota, Ryan's Raider tng
Capt Paul A. Seymour - 354 TFS	Maj Charles B. Penney - 421 TFS
Maj Earl Johnston - 34 TFS	Maj Herbert B. Schimsk - 421 TFS
Maj Peter H. Karalus - 421 TFS	Maj Jack C. Spillers - 469 TFS
Maj Clarence J. Kough, Jr. - 34 TFS	Maj William T. "Ted" Twinting - 13 TFS
Maj Francis D. Leonard, Jr. - 13 TFS	Maj Glen R. Wilson - 13 TFS
Maj Raymond L. Loisselle - 469 TFS	Capt James F. Gunby, Jr. - 421 TFS
Maj Eugene L. Main - 13 TFS	Capt Harry Pawlik - 34 TFS
Maj Thomas H. Maus - 357 TFS	Capt Charles A. Priester - 35 TFS at Yokota

Forty-five years old, Lt Col Gimmi, with over 5,000 flying hours, was the oldest graduate of his class. Gimmi had earned his wings on 30 August 1943 and by 9 November 1944 had flown 70 combat missions over Italy as a B-25 pilot. As a major in 1956 at Bergstrom AFB, he began flying F-84Fs in SAC. In 1957 he was assigned to Osan AB, Korea, where he flew the F-86. On 19 January 1966 when he was an instructor at ACSC at Maxwell AFB, he received orders to fly F-105s in SEA.

Capt Pawlik was born in Poland on Dec 19, 1929. When he was 10 years old, the Nazis invaded Poland and captured him and his family. They were sent to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. His family died but Pawlik survived his slave labor imprisonment and moved to the U.S. in 1947. He joined the Air Force in 1954 after graduating from the University of North Carolina. ("Concentration camp survivor to fighter pilot: 'Freedom a beautiful thing'", posted on line 6/27/2013, Air Force web site at <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123354152>.)

4 TFW History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1966, USAF microfilm MO293 & "Airman. The Life of Richard F. B. Gimmi by Russell M. Gimmi, pp 11, 97 - 98, 225.

22-May-67

3814

By 22 May 1967, eleven more Ryan's Raiders pilots had arrived at Korat from training at Yokota. These were the third set of crews for the Ryan's Raiders flying F-105Fs. The men, all pilots, were assigned to the 34 TFS.

This group was the last of the original pilot/pilot crews assigned to the Ryan's Raider program.

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

Don Henry, one of the front seat pilots who had arrived from Kadena on 4 May 1967, recalled that these crews "... traveled by various modes of transport (military cargo to Korat or commercial to Bangkok etc.) and arrived on various days." (Don Henry, E-mail, 28 March 2005.)

The pilots were:

Maj Kenneth D. Oliver
Maj James B. Register
Maj Harold D. Wilson
Maj James R. Bassett

Capt Tom T. Walker, graduated from McConnell's RTU Class 67ER on 6 January 1967.

Five other pilots graduated from F-105 RTU Class 67FR on 13 February 1967. They were:

Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh
Capt Konrad W. Trautman
Maj Robert D. Reese
Capt Douglas G. Glime
Capt Neil F. Blake

Don Henry recalled, "... during May and June, there were more backseaters than frontseaters and crew pairings were not always the way we flew each mission. (Don Henry, E-mail, 28 March 2005.)

Maj Oliver was teamed with Maj Walsh. "I was very fortunate to have Major Frank Walsh as my backseater. In addition to being a pilot he was a former SAC Navigator/Radar Specialist and we really made a good team. Frank and I flew about 52 missions over North Vietnam before we ever saw it in the daytime. We had about 65 missions when he was moved to the F-105D day mission. From there on, I flew with a number of different backseaters and 'graduated' to flying Wild Weasel support missions for the B-52 'Arc light' strikes in the southern part of North Vietnam." (Frank Oliver letter to Rick Versteeg, dated 9/11/98.)

The crews who arrived in April and May, "... flew a total of 98 missions in the high risk Route Packages 5 and 6A during the next 80 days. They are credited with the first night, low-level, single ship attacks on targets such as the Thai Nguyen steel mill, Kep airfield, Yen Bai railroad yard, and the Bac Kan trans-shipment point."

388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 13 TFS history, 1 Apr - 31 July, microfilm NO584, frames 0044 - 0045 & "A Special Report on 'Ryan's Raiders', by Maj Albert L. Michael for Project Corona Harvest, Jan 1970, pg 6.

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

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

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 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.

28-May-67

5138

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Maj Kenneth D. Oliver and Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh flew a night North Scope mission in F-105F 63-8312 using call sign "Portland". They manually dropped six 500-pound bombs on target 1474, the Quang Khi Ferry. "Takeoff was on time. Radar calibration was accomplished as briefed. Refueling was normal. En route flight to target area was

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

normal. Turning on IP, it was evident that flares were being dropped over our target area. Target area was highly illuminated by four flares at approximately 3,000' to 2,500' (above our altitude) so attack was not possible on the precise target. Bombs were dropped manually in an attempt to hit Route 1A to the north of ferry. Bombs impacted at the approximate position of Route 1A, [5000 feet north of target]. Escape from target area was normal and mission completed as planned. ... [There was] a conflict in scheduling of TOT. Attack by other aircraft and flareships over designated target at our TOT. This conflict prevented our strike from hitting designated target. Alleycat Control did advise us of a possible conflict when entering his control area." The aircraft encountered intermittent 1-ring Firecan signals for 30 seconds while turning over Nakhon Phanom.

388 TFW TWX 280720Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 27 - 29 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518474.

01-Jun-67

4107

Lt Col James E. McInerney, Jr. replaced Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald as commander of the 13 TFS. Lt Col Fitzgerald had just completed 100 missions over North Vietnam as well as 13 missions over Laos. On this same date, the Ryan's Raider crews in the 34 TFS transferred to the 13 TFS.

Lt Col McInerney, along with his EWO Capt Fred W. Shannon, had reported in to the squadron in March 1967 after they both had completed Wild Weasel Class 67WWIII-8 at Nellis. Lt Col McInerney was the squadron's Wild Weasel Operations Officer. He continued transitioning the Wild Weasel crews into the Ryan's Raider operation and releasing the Ryan's Raider back-seat pilots into the strike force as F-105D pilots.

Most Ryan's Raider back seat pilots transferred as strike pilots to other 388 TFW squadrons. For example, Capt Aquilla F. Britt transferred from the 34 TFS to the 469 TFS. Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh a rear seat pilot transferred to the strike mission in the 13th. However, pilots Maj James B. Register and Maj Kenneth D. Oliver remained with the Ryan's Raider Commando Nail mission when they transferred to the 13 TFS and flew together. The Ryan's Raider crew of Capt George A. Bogert and Capt Donald S. Aunapu also transferred to the 13 TFS.

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583, frame 1494 & Jim McInerney, e-mail 1 Nov 2004 & Nancy Fitzgerald 5 Nov 85 letter to Bauke Jan Douma.

02-Aug-67

3818

The F-105F Ryan's Raider crew of Maj Kenneth D. Oliver and Maj Francis P. Walsh from the 13 TFS led 16 F-105s on an experimental strike against the Phu Tho army barracks (JCS 39.38) in North Vietnam. Using its enhanced radar, the Raider plane was used as a pathfinder for the main strike force that flew formation on the lead plane and dropped their bombs on a signal from the F-105F.

"The purpose of this flight was to determine the feasibility of maneuvering a large number of airplanes while maintaining ECM jamming mutual support and a defensive posture against any potential aggressors and to bring all the aircraft to a common release point in order to hit the target. In this respect the mission was extremely successful; however, incorrect range calibration of the radar equipment in the lead aircraft resulted in the bombs being long and to the north of the target area. All aircraft assigned to Raider missions have since been recalibrated and peaked to the maximum possible in order to preclude similar results in future operations."

388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 13 TFS history, 1 - 31 August, microfilm NO584, frame 0053.

03-Aug-67

3817

"Early in the month Major Ralph L. Kuster (from the 469 TFS), who had so much to do with setting up the (Ryan's Raider) program from basic organization to tactics and procedures, returned to the United States upon completion of his 100 missions over North Vietnam. ... His next assignment in the Plans and Tactics Branch at the Pentagon should prove to be of great benefit to all concerned. Major Kenneth D. Oliver became the new Raider Operations Officer upon Major Kuster's

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

departure."

A Ryan's Raider pilot completing his 100 missions on 3 August was Capt John H. Rehm. "He returned to his organization, the 12 TFS at Kadena AB, Okinawa. His flying partner, Capt Calvin H. Markwood, was released immediately to the day strike force."

388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 13 TFS history, 1 Apr - 31 July, microfilm NO584, frame 0053.

18-Aug-67

2223

The 8 TFW at Ubon hosted the second Red River Valley Fighter Pilots tactics conference. After a welcoming parade, "... The tactics conference began at 2:30 at the wing conference room, and the items were discussed that sought to improve the effectiveness of North Vietnamese air operations on a daily level. Soon after the second reunion, permission was given to strike NVN airfields, so the discussion must have had an effect on someone."

Attendees included Col John C. Giraud, commander of the 355 TFW at Takhli.

The group adopted the nickname "River Rats" during its reunion at Ubon. A contest was held to select the group emblem and nickname and the pilots of the 469 TFS submitted the winning entry." (<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/vietnam/469th/p49.htm>)

Maj Kenneth D. Oliver, one of the early Ryan's Raiders from the 34 TFS who had remained in the 34 TFS after the program moved to the 13 TFS, was involved in the design of the River Rat patch. "Major Dave Forgan and I were working in the 388 TFW Operations Office as an additional duty. We came up with our concept and it was selected as 'the patch' at the [second] practice reunion at Ubon, Thailand. River Rats is self explanatory, The diagonal line represents the Red River, the red star is Hanoi and the green is the famous mountain ridge know as "Thud Ridge'." (Ken Oliver letter to Rick Versteeg dated 9/11/98)

MiG Sweep #43, Summer 1983, pages 6 - 10.

01-Oct-67

18-Oct-67

847

Under PACAF Movement Order 35, dated 20 September 1967, the 13 TFS designation was transferred from the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, to an F-4 squadron at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. The departure of the 13 TFS left the 388 TFW with the 34 TFS, 469 TFS, and 44 TFS. The reduction to three squadrons was a result of combat losses of the F-105.

Under 388 CSG special order AB-3874, sixty officers were transferred from the 13 TFS to the 44 TFS. On 1 October 1967, personnel and F-105F aircraft of the 13 TFS began being absorbed into the 44 TFS, which had arrived at Korat from Kadena on 25 April 1967. The 44 TFS distributed their twenty-one F-105Ds to the 34 TFS and 469 TFS and picked up the Wild Weasel and Ryan's Raider missions from the 13 TFS. The changeover was completed on 18 October 1967.

The 388 TFW commander, Col Edward B. Burdett, led the change of command ceremony. Lt Col James E. McInerney, Jr., who had been commander of the 13 TFS, replaced Lt Col Fred A. Treyz as commander of the 44 TFS.

Korat's base newspaper, "The Sawadee Flyer", reported the event but got its facts wrong. "It was noted that the retiring 13 TFS, which came to Korat in June 1965 [wrong year. It was June 1966] from Kadena AFB, Okinawa, had been an offspring of the 44th. A cycle is now completed: from the 44 TFS in March 1965, [1966] then the 13 TFS for over two [one] years and back again to the 44 TFS in September 1967".

One of the 13 TFS Wild Weasel crews transferring to the 44 TFS was Capt Robert E. Dorough and his EWO Maj Clarence S. Summers. Another crew, this one assigned to night raider missions, was Maj Kenneth D. Oliver and Maj James B. Register. Capt Norman E. Powell was a Wild Weasel pilot who transferred to the 44 TFS.

Kenneth David Oliver

F-105 History

Capt Calvin H. Markwood, a former Ryan's Raider pilot who was now a strike pilot, transferred to the 44 TFS.

About this time, Maj Robert W. Barnett transferred from the 44 TFS to the 469 TFS. Maj Eugene L. Main transferred from the 13 TFS to the 469 TFS.

While at Korat, Lt Col Treyz flew 107 combat missions in F-105s. He was next assigned to the USAF IG at Norton AFB, CA. (USAF bio Brigadier General Fred A. Treyz)

Maj Donald S. Aunapu transferred from the 469 TFS to the 44 TFS.

Wild Weasel pilot Capt Rowland F. "Frank" Smith, Jr. transferred from the 13 TFS to the 44 TFS as did Maj James H. Mirehouse.

Sawadee Flyer, Friday, October 13, 1967 388 TFW history, 1 Oct - 31 Dec 67, USAF microfilms NO584, frame 0031 and NO583 frame 1721.

12-Dec-67

1312

Maj Kenneth D. Oliver, 36, Dayton, OH, and Maj James B. Register, 35, Pomona Park, FL, from the 44 TFS, 388 TFW, became the first two "Ryan's Raider" pilots to complete 100 night radar-bombing missions over North Vietnam.

This was Maj Oliver's last flight in the F-105. Since his first flight on 1 July 1966 he had accumulated 356.3 hours in the airplane. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

The two were among the four 44 TFS pilots and one EWO to celebrate the end of their combat tours on this day. The two other pilots were Capt Roger A. Hermeling, 28, Cincinnati, OH, Capt Rowland F. Smith, Jr., 29, Bellport, NY, and EWO 1Lt David H. Williams, 26, Coral Gables, FL.

Capt Smith was next assigned as an F-105 instructor pilot at McConnell.

Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 12, Friday, Dec 22, 1967, pg 4 in USAF microfilm NO583, frame 1974.

23-May-08

7734

RIP Lt. Col. Kenneth David Oliver (1931 - 2008). "Sincere sympathy to all who mourn the loss of our Patriot. ..."

On May 23, 2008, Kenneth D. Oliver slipped the surly bonds of earth, reached out his hand and touched the face of God.

Ken was born March 9, 1931, in Dayton, Ohio. He took his first flight in Dayton at about age 8 and that experience set in motion his quest to be a flyer and pilot and dominated his career goals for the next half century.

He flew 5,300 flying hours in the USAF in over 20 different aircraft. His total military service (including USNR) was over 30 years. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster and the Air Medal with 16 oak leaf clusters plus numerous service and unit awards. After retirement from the Air Force he was employed by Lockheed Aircraft Service Corporation in Ontario, Canada, where he was Director of Research and Development for over nine of his 15 years.

He is survived by two sons, Kelly and David, two daughters-in-law, two grandsons and three granddaughters.

Published Online in Northwest Florida Daily News on June 1, 2008

Rick Versteeg e-mail, 1 Nov 16.